

After Trafficking

Experiences and Challenges in the (Re)integration of
Trafficked Persons in the Greater Mekong Sub-region

Summary report



UNIAP
United Nations Inter-Agency
Project on Human Trafficking

COMMIT

COORDINATED MEKONG MINISTERIAL INITIATIVE AGAINST TRAFFICKING



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Summary Report

Rebecca Surtees, NEXUS Institute

United Nations Inter-agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP)

October 2013

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Foreword

We, the six COMMIT governments of the Greater Mekong Sub-region (Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam) would like to sincerely thank all of the individuals, NGOs, International Organisations and donor nations, and in particular, the NEXUS Institute and the report's author, Rebecca Surtees, for their tireless efforts in bringing this report on the (re)integration of human trafficking victims in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region to fruition.

In 2009, the end of the second year of the COMMIT Special Plan of Action II (2008-2010), we, the six COMMIT governments, identified improving (re)integration assistance as one of the highest anti-trafficking priorities for the Mekong Sub-region. Following this, in 2010, a regional working group of IOM, the NEXUS Institute, Save the Children, UNIAP, UNICEF and World Vision was convened to provide united support to our governments to (a) map out existing (re)integration assistance mechanisms in the region, and (b) get perspectives from actual victims of trafficking regarding their post-trafficking experiences and needs. In addition, a series of national practitioner forums were held in our six countries throughout late 2010 to map out and analyse existing (re)integration assistance mechanisms in the region. These consultations laid the foundations for the development of this report, and marked the beginning of an on-going effort by us, the COMMIT governments, to improve (re)integration experiences, as well as overall services and aftercare to victims of trafficking and their families.

As we, the COMMIT governments, continue to increase our focus and allocation of resources to the crucial task of ending the trafficking of persons, sound, in-depth research such as this will continue to be one of the most important tools in combatting the crime. It is because of this type of research that we have been able to better understand the plight of victims of this terrible crime, and by gaining this understanding, are able to continually improve and further develop our (re)integration services and aftercare to trafficking victims and their families.

This report will provide guidance to us and anti-trafficking practitioners alike in the planning of future assistance services to victims, and where to allocate resources in the region. Continued strong partnerships between governments, anti-trafficking practitioners and researchers will ensure an effective, evidence based approach to counter-trafficking, and most importantly, to the provision of care to the victims.



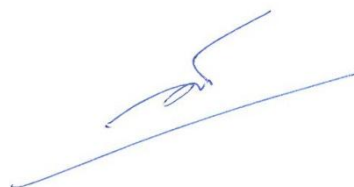
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I would also like to acknowledge the six COMMIT governments which not only prioritised the issue of (re)integration but equally recognised the importance of learning directly from trafficked persons about how to improve policy and practice in this critical field of work. The research study was funded by a number of donors as well as with contributions from different organisations and agencies. Thanks are due to: ANESVAD Foundation, Australian Agency for International Development, New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and US Department of State. Other partner agencies include IOM, Save the Children, Somaly Mam Foundation, UNICEF, World Vision and NEXUS Institute.

The initiative was led and coordinated by UNIAP. I am grateful to the staff of UNIAP's Regional Management Office (RMO) in Bangkok and to each of the country project offices, which worked on the research project in different capacities, at different stages. All UNIAP staff involved in the research initiative are listed in the full length study. The (re)integration initiative was overseen by a Regional Working Group comprised of various organisations and agencies. Thanks to: Save the Children UK, World Vision International, IOM, UNICEF, NEXUS Institute and UNIAP. At a national level, various organisations and institutions were involved in implementing the study, particularly in facilitating access to respondents and providing feedback on the preliminary findings for the study during the national consultation process. Sincere thanks to all, a full list of which appears in the full-length version of the study.

In each country, interviews were conducted by a team of highly qualified researchers and overseen by a field supervisor. I sincerely thank each member of the national research teams with whom it was my pleasure to work and who, in spite of facing a raft of complications and constraints during data collection, collected invaluable information about the experiences and needs of trafficked persons in their countries. Their names appear in the full length version.

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Rebecca Surtees
Senior researcher
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Introduction

(Re)integration is a process that involves many steps after the individual's exit from trafficking. In an ideal situation, trafficked persons were identified as trafficked at the site of exploitation or after escape, provided with initial (voluntary) assistance abroad and then assisted to return to their home country or community where they were provided a range of services to support their social and economic (re)integration. Another "ideal" variation was individuals who were identified as trafficked in the destination country and provided with assistance to integrate into that society. In both scenarios, practitioners interacted with trafficking victims in ways that afforded them the protection that they were entitled to and which was guaranteed under law.

Many trafficked persons interviewed for this study were assisted and supported in these ways. Others were not fully supported through these stages but nonetheless did receive assistance that was valuable toward their recovery and (re)integration. Interviews with trafficked persons yielded many positive (re)integration examples and experiences, including the important role played by various actors, agencies and (re)integration services in their recovery and (re)integration processes.

Nonetheless, many trafficked persons in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) did not have access to these "ideal" pathways, and their experiences following a trafficking experience were neither linear nor simple. Many trafficked persons in the GMS went unidentified and unassisted as trafficking victims, which meant they did not receive support to aid in their recovery and sustainable (re)integration. Many went unidentified in the destination country and were deported or had to find (and fund) their own way home, ending up in debt as a consequence. Some were identified and returned, but faced problems with their families and communities, complicating (re)integration and even sometimes leading to re-migration. Some trafficked persons received some forms of assistance but not the full range of services that they required (and were entitled to) to move on from their trafficking experience and (re)integrate successfully into society. Equally important was the finding that some trafficked persons went voluntarily unassisted, choosing to decline some or all of the support offered to them. Understanding these diverse and complex post-trafficking trajectories sheds light on a wide range of issues and dynamics at play in the (re)integration processes in the GMS. It also highlights both the strengths and weaknesses of existing (re)integration mechanisms and processes.

The central focus of the study was to understand the individual (re)integration experiences of trafficked persons – what was positive, what was less successful and what might be done in the future to either replicate good practices or avoid problematic ones. Importantly, the focus of the interviews was not only on what anti-trafficking actors did (or intended to do) but rather on how victims themselves understood and experienced these interventions. For example, it was not only about what support and assistance was provided, but about how victims perceived, experienced and valued that support and assistance, and how it did (and sometimes did not) contribute to their (re)integration experience. By presenting the real life experiences and needs of trafficked persons, it allows practitioners and policy makers to develop the foundations of forthcoming (re)integration policies and programmes in the GMS based on the first-hand accounts of those affected.

The study was based on in-depth interviews with 252 trafficked persons about their experiences of (re)integration, including successes and challenges, and future plans and aspirations. Trafficked

persons interviewed for this study came from all six countries in the GMS and included men, women and children, trafficked for various forms of forced labour, sexual exploitation, begging and/or forced marriage. The study included persons who had been identified and assisted, as well as those who were not identified and/or did not receive assistance. Findings are centred around the gaps and issues that trafficked persons themselves identified in speaking about their experiences after leaving their trafficking situation, and the challenges they faced as they sought to move on from trafficking and (re)integrate into society.

Findings presented in this study should not be read as specific to any one country but rather as a reflection of the overarching issues identified throughout the region. As importantly, the findings are not reflective of any one organisation or institution but rather as an overview of general patterns documented in multiple cases and contexts throughout the region, and in some cases, further afield.

In presenting the experiences and feedback of trafficked persons, the intention is not to unduly criticise anti-trafficking professionals or the anti-trafficking efforts being undertaken in the region. Rather, the intention is to give voice to trafficked persons in the design and implementation of (re)integration responses, and in so doing, to learn what works and what needs improvement in terms of (re)integration from the perspective of trafficked persons. Listening to and learning from trafficked persons can be of great help in assisting organisations and institutions seeking to better support trafficked persons in moving on from their trafficking experiences. These findings and recommendations are offered in the interest of improving programming and policies, and sustaining the commitment of the anti-trafficking sector to (re)integration efforts in the region.

This research study was undertaken in the context of a region-wide (re)integration initiative under Project Proposal Concept 5 (PPC5) within the 2nd COMMIT Sub-regional Plan of Action (2008-2010), which aimed to assess the effectiveness of (re)integration processes and structures in the region. It continued under the 3rd COMMIT Sub-regional Plan of Action (2011-2013) under Area 3, Protection. While the study is intended for anti-trafficking policymakers and practitioners in the GMS, these findings also have relevance for practitioners and policy makers in other countries and regions who are seeking to enhance their anti-trafficking (re)integration responses, in line with the interests and experiences of trafficked persons.

Research methodology, data collection and ethical issues

Research methodology and approach

The research study focused on mapping victims' post-trafficking experiences as a means of understanding (re)integration experiences and challenges. In-depth data collection was undertaken with a diverse sample of trafficking victims, to learn about their pre-trafficking conditions, migration and trafficking experiences, assistance needs, concerns and future aspirations. While some attention was paid to the specifics of their trafficking experience, the main focus was on understanding and analysing (re)integration processes, recognising the wide variation in experiences between respondents. Interviews equally focused on understanding how trafficked persons perceived and experienced these processes. Data was collected according to a standardised questionnaire, although researchers adapted their lines of inquiry according to the specifics of the individual's experiences. Standardised probes assisted researchers in maintaining commonality and consistency in terms of lines of inquiry.

Interviews were undertaken by national researchers in each country after being trained by the lead researcher. All researchers had past experience in interviewing vulnerable populations, including trafficking victims, and, in addition, were trained and supervised by the lead researcher and national field supervisor. Interviews were translated by an accredited translator and validated by the national field supervisor. Validated interview/transcripts were then sent to the lead researcher based in Bangkok for data cleaning, entry and analysis. Data analysis followed the principles of thematic analysis, using the data analysis software NVivo9®.

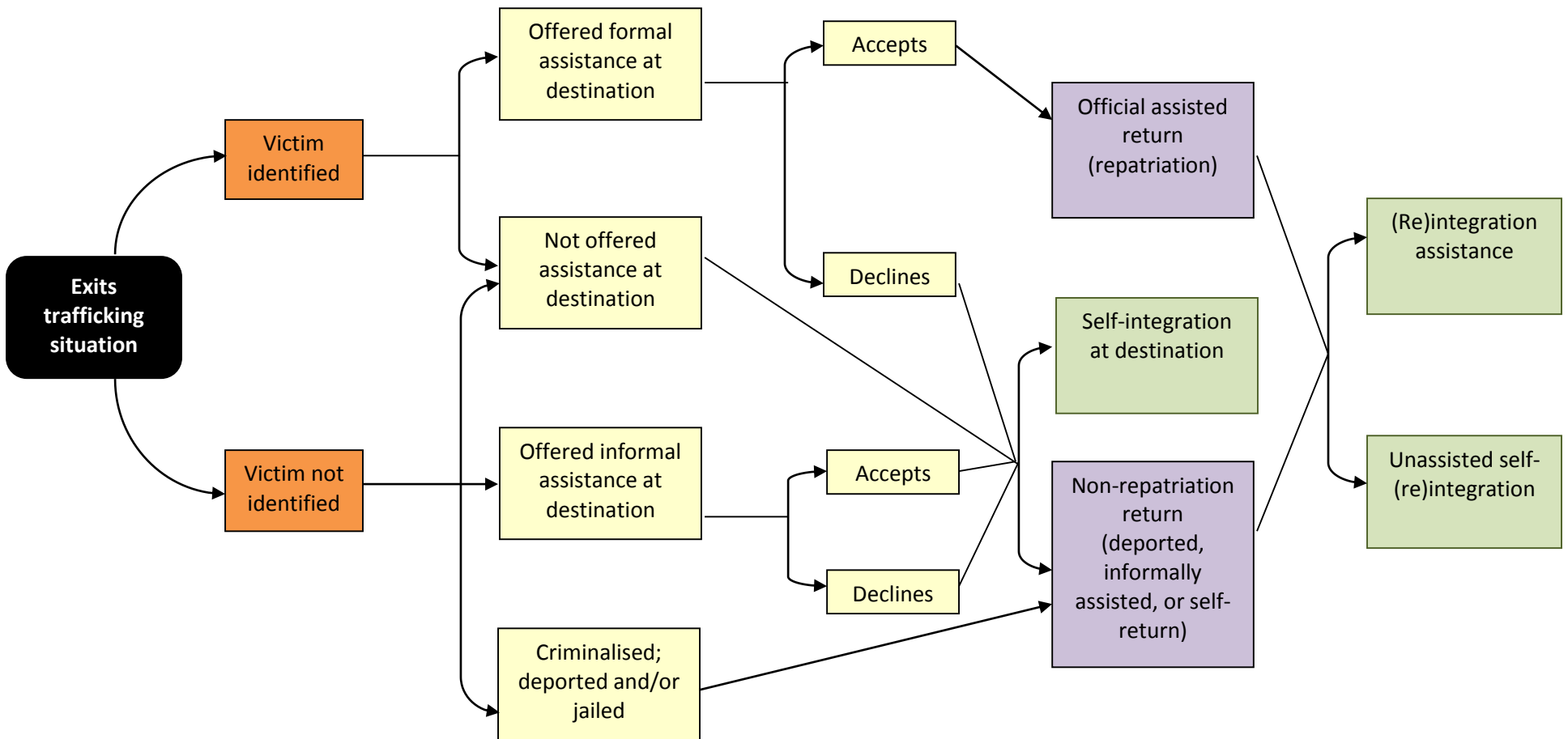
Sampling frame

Because most trafficking research is focused on identified and assisted trafficking victims, this study sought also to interview trafficked persons who were never identified as trafficked and/or those who were never assisted to understand any differences in their experiences and needs. Respondents were sought from four categories of trafficked persons:

1. **Identified and assisted trafficking victims.** Identified as trafficked by anti-trafficking stakeholders and assisted within the anti-trafficking (AT) framework or through the social assistance system;
2. **Identified but unassisted trafficking victims.** Identified as trafficked but not assisted within the anti-trafficking or general social assistance framework because 1) assistance was not offered or available, 2) s/he did not need assistance, and/or 3) s/he declined assistance;
3. **Unidentified but assisted trafficking victims.** Not identified as trafficked but have received formal assistance, either anti-trafficking or social assistance; and
4. **Unidentified and unassisted trafficking victims.** Not identified as trafficked and did not receive any formal assistance, either anti-trafficking or social assistance;

The intention was to capture as diverse a sample as possible, as a lens into the widest range of (re)integration experiences and needs and also to capture, to the extent possible, an in-depth understanding of different variations of such experiences. The diagram below presents the various post trafficking pathways trafficked persons followed. The purpose of the study was not to capture a representative sample; the study makes no claims of representativity.

Avenues of (non)identification and (non)assistance after trafficking



About the respondents

Research was conducted with 252 former victims of trafficking in each of the six GMS countries. While most respondents were interviewed in their country of origin (at various stages of (re)integration), some were interviewed while assisted in the country of destination.

Total number of respondents	252 trafficked persons
Sex	78 – male 174 – female
Age (when trafficked)	145 – adults 107 – children (under 18 years when trafficked)
Country of origin	62 – Cambodia 8 – China 28 – Lao PDR 79 – Myanmar 9 – Thailand 66 – Vietnam

The majority of respondents were trafficked within the GMS region – Cambodia (16), China (59), Lao PDR (3), Myanmar (8), Thailand (102) and Vietnam (17). However, others were trafficked to Malaysia (41), Indonesia (4), Singapore (4), Hong Kong, China (2), Israel (2), Japan (2), Taiwan, China (2), Yemen (2), Italy (1) and the United Kingdom (1). The number of destinations (n=266) exceeds the number respondents (n=252); some were exploited in more than one destination.

Respondents were trafficked for different forms of exploitation – labour (123), sexual exploitation (62), forced marriage (35), begging and street selling (20) and a combination of labour and sexual exploitation (2). Seven escaped before being exploited; three did not wish to discuss their trafficking experience.

Sexual exploitation	61 (including 9 escaped before exploited)
Labour	123 ¹ (including 5 – escaped before exploited) Agriculture/plantation – 14 Construction – 13 Domestic work – 25 Factory – 35 Fishing – 37 Service sector (shops, restaurant) – 8
Forced marriage	35 (including 4 escaped before exploited)
Begging and street selling	20
Sexual exploitation and labour	3
Escaped before exploited²	7
Unknown³	3
Total	252

¹ The forms of labour exceed 123 because some trafficked persons were exploited for different forms of labour.

² Strong indications were that they were to be trafficked for prostitution or forced marriage.

³ Interviews focused on life after trafficking; respondents were not required to discuss their trafficking experience.

Ethical issues and considerations

Sampling was approached carefully and cautiously, in close cooperation with local anti-trafficking organisations in each country and field site. Particular attention was paid to respecting the privacy, confidentiality and safety of research respondents (as well as researchers). Only if a safe and ethical channel could be identified to reach out to these “hard to reach” and vulnerable persons were they approached. Respondents were, under no circumstances, persuaded or pressured to participate in the study. Each interview began with a detailed process of informed consent, which included an explanation of what the interview would involve, the questions that would be asked, their right to decline to answer any questions or end the interview at any time, and assurances of confidentiality. They were given time before the interview to decide whether they agreed or not. Researchers were also equipped with current referral information about services and agencies providing different types of support and assistance. All respondents were offered referral sheets as part of the interview process. All interviews were strictly confidential and transcripts were shared only with the lead researcher. Confidentiality was assured to all research participants except in situations where it was likely that they intended to harm themselves or others. A response plan was developed in the event that respondents disclosed a need for protection.

Only children aged 13 years and older were included in the study. Due to the complicated and sensitive nature of the study, the research team sought additional safeguards in involving children as respondents. Wherever possible, older children (nearing the age of majority) were interviewed. In other cases, adults who were trafficked as children were interviewed. This approach was taken because of the greater capacity of youth and adults to detail and reflect upon their experiences. This method was also utilised to avoid unduly taxing younger children who may have found the questionnaire challenging and stressful. In all countries, at least one researcher (and generally more than one) had previous experience interviewing vulnerable children, including trafficking victims. Researchers were further trained in the ethical interviewing of trafficked children. For children, consent was gained from the child, as well as, where appropriate, the parent or guardian.

Compensation was determined in each country, consistent with local conditions and the individual’s situation. Researchers clearly outlined to respondents the intention of the compensation – e.g. for time, travel, lost earnings, etc. In some cases, when deemed more appropriate, compensation was provided in the form of a small “gift” (e.g. some food items or snacks), to thank respondents for their time and involvement.

Research limitations

- *Access to respondents differed by country.* There is an unequal distribution of cases between countries and nationalities. Sometimes respondents could not be approached ethically; some declined to be interviewed.
- *Time factor.* Respondents included recently trafficked and those who had been trafficked in the past, to accommodate the long term nature of (re)integration. Some policies, practices and procedures may have since changed/improved.
- *Representativity.* The study was not representative. The intention was to learn from as wide a range of trafficked persons as possible – to understand their (re)integration pathways and needs. Because this is not a representative sample, numbers cannot be extrapolated to draw conclusions to the broader population of trafficked persons.

Framing the discussion. Defining the terms and concepts

What is (re)integration?

(Re)integration is the process of recovery, and economic and social inclusion following a trafficking experience. The specific outcomes which cumulatively constitute “successful (re)integration” are outlined in the table, below. Often key in achieving successful (re)integration outcomes, as presented above, is the provision of appropriate, adequate, sensitive and high quality assistance to trafficked persons. A central aspect of successful (re)integration is the empowerment of trafficking victims.

What is successful (re)integration in the GMS? ⁴	
(Re)integration outcomes	Description
Safe, satisfactory, affordable accommodation	Access to a safe, satisfactory and affordable place to live, whether provided by an organisation, institution or privately arranged.
Physical well-being	Healthy physical condition and a general sense of physical well-being.
Mental well-being	Mental well-being, including self-esteem, confidence and self-acceptance.
Legal status	Having legal status as a citizen (i.e. having been registered at birth) and access to her/his identity documents, or in the case of foreign trafficking victims, being provided with temporary or permanent residency. This may include issues of legal guardianship in the case of children.
Safety and security	Being physically safe and well, including safety from exposure to threats or violence by the trafficker or by others within the family or community/country.
Economic well-being including professional employment and economic opportunities	A satisfactory economic situation – for example, the ability to earn money, support family members and so on – as well as access to economic opportunities, which might include employment or income generation activities.
Education and training opportunities	Access to school re-enrolment, educational and training opportunities, including formal and informal schooling, professional/vocational training, life skills and so on. This is critical for children under the minimum level of schooling.
Healthy social environment and interpersonal relationships	Positive and healthy social relations, including <i>vis a vis</i> peers, family, spouses/intimate partner and the community. This includes not being exposed to discrimination, stigma, marginalisation and so on. Children require stable family relationships (ideally reunification) or other family based options.
Best interests assured in the legal process	Involvement in the legal/judicial process related to trafficking is undertaken in their best interests and with informed consent.
Well-being of victims’ families and dependents	The overall well-being of trafficked persons’ dependents, including children, spouses, parents, siblings and so on.

⁴ Adapted from Surtees, R. (2010) *Monitoring anti-trafficking re/integration programmes. A manual*. Brussels: KBF & Washington: NEXUS Institute.

KEY FINDINGS SECTION 1

Challenges in the (re)integration process



A group of irregular Cambodian migrants being returned from Thailand through Poi Pet, Cambodia, a system where trafficked persons can often go unidentified and unassisted.

Key Findings Section 1 - Challenges in the (re)integration process

Issue 1.1 Going unassisted

Large numbers of trafficked persons were unassisted (or inadequately assisted).

Assistance was often reported as being integral to the recovery and (re)integration of trafficked persons. Many trafficked persons described positive and helpful assistance experiences, both in countries of destination and origin. Nonetheless, large numbers of trafficked persons in the GMS were unassisted following their trafficking experience. In the study sample, 113 trafficked persons were unassisted in the country of destination; 45 were unassisted in their country of origin; and 39 received no assistance either at home or abroad.

Going unassisted in the GMS	
Unassisted at destination	55.7% (113 of 203)
Unassisted at origin	18.8% (45 of 239)
Unassisted at both origin and destination	20.5% (39 of 190)

The number of those in need of assistance increased substantially when including the number of trafficked persons who were formally identified as trafficked but “basically assisted” – that is, they received only the most basic support/assistance following identification. For example, it was common for trafficked persons to be assisted in returning to their home countries, but this assistance only consisted of being sent home without any further support or follow-up. Others initially received a humanitarian package (e.g. clothes, basic food stuffs) but nothing beyond that. While technically assisted, this very limited support should be considered more a part of return assistance (or initial crisis intervention) and not (re)integration assistance. The number of trafficked persons who fit within this category was significant – 45 trafficked persons interviewed for this study.

Trafficked persons went unassisted for a variety of reasons. In some cases, being unassisted was a function of the assistance framework itself – for example, lack of identification and referral, (un)availability of services (including funding issues) or programme criteria. In other cases, being unassisted was related to the individual perspective, choices and knowledge of trafficked persons – for example, not being aware of assistance, discomfort in asking for assistance or acceptance of bad working/migration experiences. In general, there were seven key reasons why trafficking victims went unassisted:

1. **Being unidentified⁵**
2. **No services were available – abroad or at home**
3. **Services were not available for some types of victims**
4. **Trafficked persons were not referred for assistance**
5. **Trafficked persons were not aware of available assistance**
6. **Discomfort in asking for assistance**
7. **Accepted bad experiences as normal; “it’s normal for people like me”**

⁵ 60.1% (122 of 203) trafficked persons in destination countries went unidentified; 18.8% (45 of 239) went unidentified in their country of origin and 16.8% (32 of 190) went unidentified at both origin and destination.

Going unassisted meant not having received any formal support following one's trafficking experience. Not only was it frequently stressful for individual victims, but it also directly impeded (re)integration outcomes and potentially exposed them to additional vulnerabilities that could have led to further exploitation and even re-trafficking. Going unassisted generally meant trafficked persons returned to the same (or a very similar) situation that made them vulnerable to trafficking in the first place. There were also social and interpersonal implications, with trafficked persons and their families often experiencing high levels of distress or even trauma. Having to cope on one's own was challenging and stressful, and it sometimes left trafficked persons in very fragile positions – both socially and emotionally.

CASE STUDIES DIFFERENT SITUATIONS IN WHICH TRAFFICKED PERSONS WENT UNASSISTED

One Cambodian man, trafficked to Thailand for labour, was neither identified nor assisted. He was arrested at his work site and deported. He was not identified by authorities in Thailand nor in Cambodia upon his return. He returned on his own to his village. When asked about whether people in his situation knew where to go for assistance, he explained that he did not know and neither did other people in his village. In his village there were no organisations that offered support to people in need. He had never heard of anyone receiving such assistance.

One woman from Myanmar trafficked to Thailand for sexual exploitation had received some initial assistance but required additional support. However, when she contacted the organisation, they informed her that they could not provide support at that time due to funding shortages in their programme. They did not direct her to another organisation for support.

One Vietnamese woman, trafficked for forced marriage, went unassisted for many years after her return from China. When she first got back, she was in contact with the commune level authorities, who should have instructed her on completing and submitting the form for anti-trafficking assistance. However, as she saw it, "they didn't care" and so she did not have access to information about assistance options. She received assistance only ten years after her return.

Issue 1.2 Declining assistance

Some trafficked persons declined some or all forms of (re)integration assistance.

The study found that in 37 instances, trafficked persons made decisions that involved some aspect of declining (re)integration assistance. In some cases, trafficked persons refused some type of assistance (e.g. legal assistance or vocational training). In more extreme cases, trafficked persons declined to be assisted altogether. Of particular significance was that many trafficked persons were in very difficult economic and social circumstances after trafficking and would have benefited from assistance but nonetheless declined this support. In addition, a number of respondents said that they would have preferred to decline assistance but were not in a position to decline anything given their dire situation.

Understanding reasons for declining assistance is of significance in ensuring that (re)integration interventions are responsive to the needs of a wide range of trafficked persons. There were various reasons why trafficked persons declined assistance. Some were linked to the trafficked persons' personal and family situation; others were a function of how the assistance framework

was designed and implemented; in still others cases, trafficked persons were essentially “declined” by service providers. Reasons for declining assistance included:

1. Declining assistance because of individual and family circumstances

- 1.1 Did not need assistance; managed on their own
- 1.2 Wanted to reunite with their families
- 1.3 Feelings of shame, embarrassment, discomfort
- 1.4 Issues of trust
- 1.5 Not in a position to make decisions when assistance was offered
- 1.6 Feelings of obligation, gratitude, being indebted

2. Declining assistance because of issues in the assistance framework

- 2.1 Cannot afford assistance; need to earn money
- 2.2 Assistance does not meet their needs
- 2.3 Concerned about the conditions of assistance
- 2.4 Assistance was “identifying”
- 2.5 Wanted to stay and work; assistance meant going home

3. Service providers “declined” trafficking victims

- 3.1 Lack of resources and funding shortages
- 3.2 Programmes not designed to assist “that type of victim”
- 3.3 Victims require a service that the organisation/institution does not provide
- 3.4 Assistance not offered in that area/region

CASE STUDIES

DIFFERENT SITUATIONS IN WHICH TRAFFICKED PERSONS DECLINED ASSISTANCE

One Vietnamese girl, trafficked to Cambodia for prostitution, was certified by authorities as a trafficking victim upon her return to Vietnam and offered assistance. She accepted financial assistance but not an apprenticeship because she needed to earn money to feed her children.

One Vietnamese woman, trafficked to Cambodia for prostitution, was offered vocational training. However, it involved staying in a shelter in another town. She declined because she had small children to look after and she did not want to be separated from them.

VICTIM EMPOWERMENT LESSON LEARNED

DECLINING AND ACCEPTING ASSISTANCE CAN BE TEMPORARY; OFFERS OF ASSISTANCE SHOULD BE ONGOING AND WITHOUT PRESSURE

Decisions about accepting and declining assistance sometimes changed over time, in response to evolving life circumstances and the availability of different services. Trafficked persons made different decisions about assistance at different stages of their post-trafficking lives, highlighting the importance of assistance opportunities being visible and available to formerly trafficked persons whenever (and wherever) they need these services. Equally important was that trafficked persons knew that they could access assistance after having initially chosen to decline – that offers of assistance were open and on-going.

Some trafficked persons who initially declined assistance later came to accept this support; thus, their declining assistance was temporary. For some, this was a function of time and reflection, and, arguably, also of trust and comfort. Having had time to recover from their exploitation, they were better equipped to make decisions about their future and the various assistance options on offer. Others accepted assistance at a later stage because their life circumstances had changed since their initial return home. Some, who had not formerly needed assistance, found themselves in a position of requiring support. In some cases, the initial return to live with one's family was not viable, which led to accepting assistance previously declined.

By contrast, some trafficked persons who initially accepted assistance later left programmes that they did not find useful or suitable in their recovery and (re)integration. Some dropped out of programmes or did not complete a course or service; some entered shelters but ended up leaving. Some trafficked children dropped out of school because they needed to work to help contribute to their family income. Some also declined because the conditions and circumstances of assistance were constraining, problematic or not flexible enough for them.

Even in a highly constrained assistance environment, trafficked persons made decisions and took actions to essentially decline assistance. This was particularly striking when trafficked persons were in closed shelter programmes. Many talked about the pressure and stress of being in closed shelter facilities and wanting to leave these programmes and not being permitted to do so. Some trafficked persons escaped from these facilities or opted for deportation as a preferred alternative - in essence, declining assistance.

Issue 1.3 Forced assistance

Assistance was not always voluntary; some trafficked persons were forcibly assisted.

Not all (re)integration assistance and support was voluntary. Some trafficked persons were "forcibly assisted". In some cases, they were not provided with full information about what assistance entailed, meaning their consent was not informed. In other cases, trafficked persons were not offered the opportunity to decline assistance, in spite of trafficking victims having the right in all countries in the GMS to decline assistance. The two main types of "forced assistance" generally centred around shelter stays, both in countries of origin and destination.

CASE STUDIES
SOME TRAFFICKED PERSONS WERE “FORCIBLY ASSISTED” ABROAD

One woman from Myanmar, trafficked to China for forced marriage, escaped and went to the police to explain what had happened. The police understood the situation and brought charges against her trafficker. However, she was unable to return home immediately while her identity was confirmed and her family was traced in Myanmar. She waited one year for this process to be resolved, after which she was accompanied to the border by Chinese police officers.

... OTHERS WERE “FORCIBLY ASSISTED” AT HOME

One Thai boy, trafficked for fishing, was assisted to return to Thailand and then referred to a shelter for assistance. He explained that when he arrived in Thailand he was told that he would first be taken to a shelter for a week and then he would be able to go home. He was also told that he would receive legal assistance in prosecuting the trafficker. In fact he stayed many months at the shelter against his will. He attempted to escape because he did not want to stay there: “It turned out that I stayed in the shelter for seven or eight months... I did not understand why I had to stay for such a long time at the shelter.”

One woman, trafficked to China from Myanmar for forced marriage, was frustrated at being required to stay so long in shelters after her return home. She spent 27 days in one shelter, an additional 20 days in another and another 20 days in a third shelter. During this time she received no services and was not allowed to leave the facilities.

Being “forcibly assisted” for long periods of time was a source of considerable stress for many trafficked person, regardless of being assisted at home or abroad. In many situations when trafficked persons were forcibly assisted, there was a lack of appropriate services and support provided. Certainly this was the case when trafficked persons were held in prisons, police stations and detention facilities. However, this was also the case for many trafficked persons who faced compulsory shelter stays, both abroad and at home. As a result, some trafficked persons experienced and described this forced assistance as a “waste of time.”

Trafficked persons were also generally anxious to return home to their families and communities in order to move on from their trafficking experience. As a result, long, compulsory shelter stays had enormous potential to delay and even undermine recovery and (re)integration. This was particularly pressing in the case of trafficked children who were not uncommonly amongst those who were forcibly assisted, sometimes for long periods of time.

Forced assistance also did a great deal to compromise trust and confidence in service providers who, some felt, had given them incomplete or inaccurate information about assistance and/or prevented them from making an informed decision about assistance. When trust was compromised, this had a long-term impact on victim’s relationship with assistance programmes and service providers. This initial mistrust may have potentially compromised their willingness to seek out or accept other assistance in the future, even in situations of acute need.

GOOD PRACTICE
ALTERNATIVES TO COMPULSORY STAYS IN CLOSED SHELTERS ABROAD

Trafficked men assisted in Thailand were, in some cases, permitted to work while staying at state shelters. The shelter staff assisted them in finding good jobs and obtaining legal registration as migrant workers. Men typically stayed in the shelters but were able to move about freely. In cases where trafficked men had legal documentation (e.g. worker registration), they were able to live off-site, typically in accommodation provided by their employer. Many men spoke about the importance of this opportunity to work while being assisted abroad, and also of the importance of freedom of movement during this time. For many, this was the most important form of support they received.

Thai men trafficked to Israel were assisted by a local organisation to bring a legal case against their traffickers. During the legal process, they were assisted to find good, fairly paid jobs. They lived in an open shelter provided by the organisation and were able to move about freely.

Issue 1.4 Weak referral, coordination and cooperation

Inadequate national and transnational referral mechanisms.

Models of national referral in each GMS country varied significantly, as did their stages of development, scope and extent of implementation. Moreover, transnational referral mechanisms varied within the region – with quite structured government-to-government referral procedures between some countries, and less articulated and implemented procedures between others. While recognising these differences, interviews with trafficked persons found that, overall, there were inadequate referral, coordination and cooperation between agencies and institutions, between countries as well as when assisting trafficked persons within a country. There were two main issues at hand:

1. **Lack of referral and cooperation from country to country (transnational referral mechanisms)**, including unassisted return, inadequate referral of cases transnationally, lack of cooperative case planning and management and administrative procedures prior to return.
2. **Lack of referral and cooperation within a country (national referral mechanisms)**, including lack of referral/cooperation between anti-trafficking organisations and institutions within a country, and a lack of referral/cooperation between anti-trafficking organisations/institutions and the general social assistance framework.

GOOD PRACTICE
STRONG REFERRAL PROCESSES CONTRIBUTED TO RECOVERY AND (RE)INTEGRATION

One Thai man, trafficked to Israel for labour, initially stayed abroad to work, but later decided to return home. The assistance organisation made the return arrangements. Before leaving, the organisation asked whether he wanted to receive any help at home, and asked for his consent to refer his case to a service provider in Thailand. He agreed and upon arrival in Thailand he was met at the airport by the staff of an assistance organisation that interviewed him about his trafficking experience, and the assistance he required. He was assisted to return home and a state social worker followed up with him about his long term assistance needs.

One Vietnamese woman returned home and reported her case to the commune authorities. Shortly thereafter she was contacted by staff of the state social work department. She received various forms of assistance as a result of this referral, including vocational training, accommodation, a stipend while in training, financial support for her family and assistance in finding a job after completing her training.

CASE STUDIES

LACK OF REFERRAL BETWEEN ANTI-TRAFFICKING ASSISTANCE ORGANISATIONS

One woman, trafficked from Myanmar to China for forced marriage, was identified by the anti-trafficking police upon her return home. She described being well-treated by authorities when interviewed but she heard nothing further from them nor did they refer her for assistance.

Issue 1.5 Inadequate provision of information

Not fully informed about status as “trafficking victim” and their rights to assistance.

Key to ensuring that trafficking victims are adequately supported in the (re)integration process is making certain that they are actively engaged in, and fully informed about, decisions and options in their post-trafficking lives. This requires that full information be provided about their status as trafficking victims, their rights and the various forms of assistance available to them at home and abroad (including where and how to access it). This needs to take into account issues including, but not limited to, age, education, language, capacity and state of mind. It is also important to allow time for victims to process the information, to make informed and carefully considered decisions. Victims should also be informed about their immediate assistance options and also given the choice to access support options at a later date should they initially decline.

Some trafficked persons were fully informed about their trafficking status and options as illustrated by the experience of one trafficked person related below:

The police and the assistance organisation came to the plantation to take us out and arrested the employer. They told us that they came to help... The police told me he could help looking for a better job and employer for me with fair salary and that I did not have to worry... The police and the assistance organisation let us choose whether we wanted to get a new job or go home. They helped us to prosecute the employer.

However, many trafficked persons were not aware of their formal, legal status as trafficking victims and the rights that this entitled them to, either in the destination country or at home.

Lack of awareness of their status and the associated rights was attributable to two main factors:

- 1. Lack of complete and comprehensible information provided about trafficking status, rights and assistance options.**
- 2. Barriers to understanding information provided about their status and assistance options,** including language barriers, lack of exposure to and experience of assistance options, issues of comprehension, age and stage of development, state of mind or never having been formally identified as trafficked.

CASE STUDIES

INFORMATION ABOUT TRAFFICKING STATUS WAS NOT COMPLETE OR COMPREHENSIBLE

One Vietnamese woman trafficked to China for forced marriage was assisted only some time after her return to Vietnam. As she explained, even though she had reported her case to the local administration, they did not tell her anything about available assistance options nor had they provided her with the forms needed to request assistance as a trafficked person.

One Laotian woman trafficked to Thailand explained how the police did not give correct information about the legal process and the length of her shelter stay: “After staying here for one week, I started to talk with other [women] who were here before me and I found out that I will have to be here longer than what the police told me. They said they were told that they would be here only a few days but in fact they had already been here for six or seven months.”

Issue 1.6 Administrative requirements and procedures

Some regulations and procedures undermined victim autonomy and (re)integration.

Some procedures in the formal (re)integration process may, in fact, serve to impede (re)integration success as well as potentially violate trafficked person’s rights. In some cases, these were formal and obligatory administrative procedures. In other cases, these were standard practices rather than legally or administratively required. These procedures included:

1. **Obligatory return to home community.** In some countries, trafficked persons were required to return to their home community after trafficking. Tied intimately with this was the requirement that trafficked persons (including adults) were “returned” to their family who received, and in some cases, “signed” for them. It was unclear why this procedure was necessary, particularly for adults for whom such procedures were, arguably, infantilising and undermined their autonomy and right to self-determination.
2. **Involvement of local authorities in the return of trafficking victims.** Returning and receiving trafficked persons involved the (generally highly visible) presence of officials in the family home and village environment, including being escorted and accompanied home or being received by the village chief upon return home. In many instances the visibility of this return process essentially “outed” people as victims of trafficking (or at least as vulnerable or failed migrants) to their families and communities. This process, at minimum, violated their right to privacy and confidentiality, and at worst, had the potential to cause enormous harm in terms of safety and security, as well as long term discrimination and ostracisation within their families and communities.

ETHICAL LESSON LEARNED

LEGAL AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

Administrative procedures can raise a raft of ethical issues, particularly in terms of trafficked persons’ right to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality, as well as issues of safety and security. There is a need to review and amend administrative procedures, rules and practices that negatively impact trafficked persons. These changes should be made in consultation and with the inputs of trafficking victims.

Existing procedures also pose potential risks to trafficked persons if they are not accompanied by codes of conduct for relevant staff and ethical protocols such as confidentiality, anonymity, privacy and best interests of the victim, especially in the case of a child. For example, if officials and authorities are not bound by a duty of confidentiality in handling cases, they may share private information that could “out” trafficked persons in their families and communities without their consent, leading to discrimination and stigmatisation. One woman in Myanmar described how her village chief referred publically to the mother of her friend (with whom she had been exploited) as “the trafficking victim’s mother.”

There is a need to develop ethical protocols for the handling of all cases throughout the various stages of (re)integration, including the return to the community. In one instance, a Laotian girl returned to her community, described how the organisation spoke with the village chief about keeping her experience confidential and how this was very important to her. All staff and personnel who come into contact with trafficked persons must be trained in these ethical protocols, including community leaders, administrators, drivers, translators and so on.

Issue 1.7 Resources, funding and sustainability

(Re)integration is under resourced by national governments and foreign donors.

Interviews with trafficked persons highlighted the overall lack of resources for (re)integration support within government departments and by NGOs and IOs. In many instances, access to assistance was limited as a result of a lack of resources for (re)integration. Resource gaps in (re)integration work were due to:

1. **Lack of government resources for (re)integration work.** Some (re)integration assistance was provided by national governments in the GMS including through general assistance schemes that were mobilised to support trafficked persons, such as medical care for the socially vulnerable, vocational training programmes, poverty reduction schemes, job placement agencies, formal and informal education programmes and social welfare. However, no government in the region offered (and funded) a comprehensive package of (re)integration support for trafficked persons and on-going case management.
2. **Inadequate resources within NGOs and IOs funded by foreign donors.** In large part, (re)integration assistance programmes were funded by external sources (foreign donors, international organisations and United Nations agencies) and implemented by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international organisations (IOs). Services offered by NGOs and IOs were typically better resourced than government services and assistance was generally more comprehensive. Staff working for NGOs and IOs seemed to have more contact with trafficked persons over time, suggesting resources were used to hire case workers and manage/monitor cases in the long term. However, these programmes were sometimes also affected by limited resources and funding shortages, limiting trafficked persons’ access to comprehensive (re)integration support.

KEY FINDINGS SECTION 2

Issues in the provision of individualised (re)integration services



A psychosocial counsellor from the Cambodian NGO Transnational Psychosocial Organization (TPO) offers counselling home visits to client victims of trafficking.

Key Findings Section 2 - Issues in the provision of individualised (re)integration services

Issue 2.1 Lack of individualised support

(Re)integration assistance was not always tailored to individual needs and situations.

Many organisations offered a standard package of assistance to all beneficiaries. However, for a number of trafficked persons, the services and support they received (and the way these services were designed) was not sufficiently tailored to their individual needs, situation, interests or capacities. There were a number of factors that contributed to the lack of individualised assistance in many programmes and institutions. These generally centred around inadequate attention and time spent working with trafficked persons to assess their specific situation, needs and interests. These include:

1. **Lack of individual needs assessments**
2. **Inadequate time spent assessing needs**
3. **Limited beneficiary participation**
4. **Limited communication between destination and origin countries**

The two main consequences of the lack of individualised, tailored services for trafficked persons were that assistance was **ill fitting (did not meet the needs of trafficked persons)** or was **unavailable**. Both had long term (and negative) implications for (re)integration outcomes.

CASE STUDIES

ASSISTANCE OFFERS WERE NOT TAILORED TO INDIVIDUAL NEEDS AND SITUATION

One young man from Vietnam, trafficked to China for labour, wanted to take an automobile repair course but this option was not available through the agency assisting him. Instead he was offered work in a leather export company or training to repair motorcycles. Neither option appealed to him nor did they offer viable employment options. He declined the assistance.

... AND LIMITED BENEFICIARY PARTICIPATION IN IMPLEMENTING (RE)INTEGRATION PLANS

One Cambodian man, trafficked to Thailand for labour, described miscommunication with the assistance organisation which meant he was offered services that were not what he wanted or needed. He was offered vocational training but he was still recovering from his trafficking injuries and the training was in a field of work that he was not interested in. His wife was also pregnant and he needed to work to support his family. He wanted to set up a small grocery shop in his village for which he needed capital. Instead he received some animals to raise, all of which died. When asked if there was some problem he could not get help with, he expressed frustration saying: "They did not understand my situation at all."

One girl from Myanmar expressed frustration at not having been actively involved in decision making about her assistance and life. She explained that when assistance staff came to meet her they spoke only to her mother and did not consult with her.

GOOD PRACTICE

VICTIMS NEEDS WERE ASSESSED (AND REASSESSED) OVER THE COURSE OF (RE)INTEGRATION

One young man trafficked internally within Myanmar for labour described regular contact and individualised assistance. The service provider meets with him every three months to see how things are going and to discuss any problems or needs that have come up since they last met. He explained that for him this type of on-going contact and support was very important to his (re)integration.

One Thai woman, who was trafficked for prostitution to Japan, was in regular contact with her social worker. The social worker called her from time to time to see how she was doing and if she had any assistance needs. She had a chronic medical condition that required medication so the social worker also checked to ensure that she had access to the medication she needed.

Issue 2.2 Lack of comprehensive services

Comprehensive services were not available to all trafficked persons.

Many trafficked persons described how a comprehensive package of individualised services and support contributed to their successful (re)integration. Of the trafficked persons interviewed for this study, 73 received what could be categorised as comprehensive (re)integration support. However, overall, many trafficked persons did not receive a comprehensive package of (re)integration services following their trafficking experience. More commonly trafficking victims were “under-assisted,” in that they received some (sometimes many) forms of assistance but not a comprehensive set of services tailored to their individual needs and situations.

The provision of a full package of services varied greatly by organisation, institution and country. Nonetheless, there were three main patterns identified in terms of who did (and did not) generally have access to comprehensive (re)integration services in the region.

1. **Comprehensive services were available in shelters, not communities.** Comprehensive (re)integration services were generally more widely available through shelter-based programmes with a raft of assistance offered. Less common was comprehensive support when trafficked persons returned to live in their homes/communities.
2. **Limited (re)integration assistance for trafficked men and boys.** In a number of cases, trafficked males were officially recognised as trafficked but received very limited support. A handful went completely unassisted. Even when trafficked men were assisted, this assistance was generally far from comprehensive. Assistance was often geared toward return and basic needs rather than long term (re)integration. Some men essentially received support to return home – a combination of transportation, and in some cases, brief shelter stays with few to no services while there (i.e. “basically assisted”). Of note, trafficked boys were also “basically assisted” or “under-assisted”. Only 5 trafficked boys received what could be considered comprehensive (re)integration assistance, contrasting sharply with girls of the same age (sometimes with very similar trafficking experiences) who generally received more comprehensive shelter based care.
3. **Comprehensive services varied by organisation and institution.** The quality and extent of (re)integration services received by trafficked persons was also significantly influenced

by which organisation and/or institution was involved in supporting them. Trafficked persons within a country received different levels and quality of care relative to where they lived (i.e. which organisations or institutions were working in their area) and who had come into contact with them (i.e. the organisation that identified them). In many instances trafficked persons with very similar experiences and needs received vastly different levels of support depending upon which agency was assisting them.

Not taking into account the full range of assistance needs was, in many cases, directly correlated with (re)integration setbacks and even, in some cases, longer term (re)integration failure. This highlights the need for minimum standards for (re)integration assistance and support.

GOOD PRACTICE COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES CONTRIBUTED TO SUCCESSFUL (RE)INTEGRATION

One Cambodian man trafficked to Thailand for work in a food processing factory was rescued when the Thai and Cambodian police conducted a joint raid on the factory. After being screened and identified as a trafficking victim, he was referred to a shelter and a case was opened against his trafficker. He stayed at the shelter for three months during which time he was able to work. He described being treated well, with respect and dignity, by the assistance staff. He was escorted to the Cambodian border by embassy staff and accommodated overnight in a transit centre before being given money to go home to his village. Once home he received some initial support and then was later provided with some pigs to raise as a means of income generation. He also worked in construction. He was living again with his family and relations within his family and community were good.

One Thai man, trafficked to Israel for agricultural labour, was assisted in Israel in initiating a compensation claim against his employer for outstanding wages. He was also assisted in finding a properly paid job, and was provided with accommodation and various other services. Upon his return to Thailand he was met by a social worker who provided him with some financial assistance to return home. Shortly afterward a state social worker visited his house and talked with him about his assistance needs. As he intended to return to farming he was provided with a grant, which he spent on tools, seed and other farming implements.

CASE STUDIES

TRAFFICKED PERSONS WHO WERE UNDERASSISTED FACED CHALLENGES IN (RE)INTEGRATION

One Cambodian woman received legal assistance to claim compensation from her trafficker but no vocational training or support in finding a job or setting up a small business, which meant she had to cope economically on her own. When asked about her economic situation, she explained that she survived by selling fruit and baked goods in a local school.

One Laotian girl, trafficked abroad, was returned home to live with her family who was very poor and had a range of needs. The services offered, however, were *ad hoc* and limited – she received funds to attend school, some training in mushroom planting and also some rice for her family. However, the family did not receive economic assistance, which would have helped them improve their economic situation and, which, in turn, would have supported her (re)integration.

One Cambodian man, who was trafficked onto a fishing boat, was provided with a water pump and his son, also trafficked for fishing, was provided with a motorbike. The assistance was one-off and he had not had contact with the assistance organisation since.

Issue 2.3 Lack of appropriate accommodation

Accommodation options were not always safe, satisfactory or affordable.

One measure of successful (re)integration was that trafficked persons had a suitable place to live in the short and long term. This meant housing that was safe, affordable and of a satisfactory standard. In the short term, accommodation needs were met for some trafficked persons through the provision of shelters. That being said, not all trafficked persons had access to (even temporary) housing in the immediate aftermath of trafficking. Some trafficked persons were accommodated in prisons, jails and detention centres rather than appropriate shelter facilities. This was particularly common for trafficked men, for whom facilities were generally not available. However, it was also an issue in some destination countries where trafficked women and children also stayed in jails and police stations.

Residential programmes are intended as a short term (or sometimes interim) measure. But it is necessary to identify longer term accommodation options. For most trafficked persons this meant returning to their families and communities – e.g. to live with parents, spouses, children, siblings or extended family. However, trafficked persons faced barriers, including:

1. **No place to live**
2. **Home was not safe**
3. **Unsatisfactory living conditions**
4. **Housing was not affordable**

CASE STUDIES
HOME WAS NOT AVAILABLE, SAFE, ADEQUATE OR AFFORDABLE

One man from Myanmar trafficked aboard a fishing boat in Thailand was facing economic problems at home and decided to migrate. He mortgaged his house for 30,000 kyats [approx. 34 USD] to try to manage their economic problems and then needed to migrate to repay the debt. Because he was unable to send money home while trafficked, his family could not pay back the debt in time and lost their house, and in addition, had a debt of 60,000 kyats [approx. 70 USD].

One Vietnamese woman trafficked to China for forced marriage faced threats from her trafficker when she returned home. This continued for some time and eventually her family arranged for her to live in another town to be safe. No one but her family knew of her whereabouts.

One Vietnamese girl, trafficked to Cambodia for prostitution, urgently need assistance in rebuilding her family home which was in extremely bad condition. As she put it: "We do not have a real house. My house does not look like a house."

Issue 2.4 Poor physical health and well-being

Not addressing the health/medical needs compromised (re)integration.

Trafficked persons had a wide range of (often very serious) health problems and medical needs. This was the case for male and female victims, as well as adults and children regardless of the form of trafficking suffered, although often health needs were specific to the nature of exploitation. Causes of health problems for trafficked persons included the following:

1. **Violence and abuse suffered while trafficked**
2. **The impact of living and working conditions while trafficked**
3. **Limited access to medical care while trafficked**
4. **Insufficient access to medical services after trafficking**

When trafficked persons received medical care, this was often key to their recovery and (re)integration success. By contrast, being physically unwell had a (negative) impact on many aspects of life and factored into a constrained (re)integration process. Health problems, left unaddressed (or inadequately addressed), significantly impeded (re)integration success for many trafficked persons. Poor health and medical problems impacted trafficked persons in different ways but most significantly in the following ways:

1. **Medical care costs led to economic problems, including debt**
2. **Health problems inhibited victims' ability to work**
3. **Poor health had a negative effective on victims' sense of well-being**

CASE STUDIES
SERIOUS HEALTH PROBLEMS BECAUSE OF VIOLENCE AND ABUSE SUFFERED WHILE
TRAFFICKED

One man trafficked from Myanmar to Thailand described extreme violence and injuries suffered by men trafficked onto fishing boats: "I saw that the owner did not like the workers to take time off even when they were not feeling well. They whistled to start working, and if some did not appear, they would pour boiling water on them. Some died from the injuries. They also threw ice at them, beat them with tools. One Thai man died from the beatings he suffered. I also saw one [foreign-looking] man who was beaten up and lost his teeth because he could not work well as he did not understand the language and instructions. I also saw some people die from accidents [on board]. If someone fell into the water, they would not bother rescuing them."

One Vietnamese woman, trafficked to Malaysia for domestic labour, was required to cook and clean house and care for fighting gamecocks. After a few months, the "employer" started beating and torturing her when the gamecocks were ill or when he was otherwise dissatisfied with her work. She was, at different stages, tied up with rope, had her legs chained and was throttled. She was also cut with knives and scissors and exposed to electric shocks.

....HEALTH PROBLEMS FROM HARSH LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS WHILE TRAFFICKED

One Vietnamese man trafficked for work in a Chinese brick factory, had his hand injured by falling bricks. He did not receive any treatment and the injury deteriorated, requiring surgery. He was then forced to return to work after only a few days following the surgery. He described how both Chinese and Vietnamese people working in the brick factory suffered injuries and illness as a result of the hazardous working conditions, injuries that went largely untreated.

One Cambodian girl, trafficked internally for prostitution at 16 years old, was kept in a brothel and was forced to have sexual intercourse with men without condoms. She contracted HIV.

HEALTH PROBLEMS AND INJURIES WERE UN- OR INADEQUATELY TREATED WHILE TRAFFICKED

One Vietnamese woman, trafficked to China for prostitution, contracted a serious gynaecological infection as a result of forced sexual intercourse. At the local health clinic she described receiving "the cheapest services and poor treatment" and her infection did not heal.

One man from Myanmar trafficked on a fishing boat was seriously injured in an accident on the boat. The bones in his arm and hand were crushed. The captain took him to the hospital; metal pins were put in his arm where the bone had been crushed. After a few days, long before the injury was healed, he was forced to return to work. While he later received further treatment and underwent surgery, the injury had not healed and he lost the use of his hand.

MANY TRAFFICKED PERSONS DID NOT RECEIVE (ADEQUATE) MEDICAL CARE POST-
TRAFFICKING

One man from Myanmar contracted malaria while trafficked for labour to Thailand. He received no treatment upon his return home and was initially unable to work. At the time of his interview

he was working (he and his wife sold food in the market) and when working, they were able to meet their daily needs. However, his malaria was recurring and he often needed to take time off work – sometimes as much as two days off for every day he worked.

One Vietnamese woman trafficked to China for sexual exploitation was brutalised by her exploiters and suffered severe injuries as a result. After attempting to escape she was badly beaten with metal instruments, sustaining injuries that continue to impact her health many years after her return. She did not receive medical care when she returned home, and because of her injuries, she was still unable to work outside the home at the time of the interview.

Issue 2.5 Stress, anxiety, depression and trauma

Inadequate provision of psychological support and counselling meant feeling unwell.

Many trafficked persons described feeling “unwell” at some stage of their post trafficking lives. They described feeling stressed and angry; anxious and depressed; desperate and hopeless. Being psychologically “unwell” had two main sources –

1. **Difficulties caused by trafficking.** Trafficked persons were exposed to a wide range of horrific experiences while trafficked. They were abused and violated, they witnessed the abuse of others, they suffered harsh living and working conditions, they had no freedom or choices, did not have access to medical care and so forth. In addition, they were separated from their families and communities for long periods of time and generally lacked support of any kind while trafficked. As a consequence, many trafficked persons suffered great stress and trauma as a result of trafficking. Many described being anxious and depressed and feeling hopeless and desperate. Of particular concern must be the psychosocial impact of trafficking on children who typically have less developed coping skills due to their age, maturity and stage of development.
2. **Difficulties faced when trying to recover from and move on from trafficking.** For many trafficked persons, escape or exit from trafficking was not an immediate salve. Not only were they still coping with their trafficking experiences but also faced a range of problems and stressors including:
 - a. Returning home without money. Debt incurred through migration and/or the inability to remit money;
 - b. Being unemployed after returning home and/or being unable to work;
 - c. Tensions within the family;
 - d. Lack of emotional support within the family or community;
 - e. Stigma and discrimination in the family or community; and
 - f. Lack of assistance and support to cope with life after trafficking.

Many trafficked persons talked about the importance of being able to share their experiences with others, and receiving encouragement and support. Those who had had access to counselling often found this an important type of assistance. Some trafficked persons talked about wanting the opportunity to speak with someone about their problems and identified this lack of opportunity as a gap in the available assistance.

I didn't want to keep all the bad experiences to myself. I felt relief to talk to someone who could understand my situation.

In some cases, trafficked persons received psychological counselling and support. There were some trained professionals who were qualified to provide psychological support and counselling in the region. Some programmes employed an “in-house” professional psychologist or counsellor. However, this was not the norm and this form of assistance was not always readily available to trafficked persons in the region. Issues in the provision of psychological support and counselling included:

1. **Limited access to psychological support or counselling**
2. **Too few professionals trained in psychological support and counselling**
3. **Lack of specialised psychological support to trafficked children**
4. **Language barriers; counselling in a foreign language**

CASE STUDIES

TRAFFICKED PERSONS WERE STRESSED, ANXIOUS, DEPRESSED TRAUMATISED

One man trafficked from Myanmar to Thailand to work on a fishing boat described being ashamed after his return home as he had not been able to bring home any money. His friends invited him to socialise in the evenings but he did not feel like going out. He described “feeling small” because he lost his house, was in debt and faced many economic and personal problems.

One Cambodian woman trafficked for domestic work to Malaysia described being mentally unwell and unhappy since her return, suffering from “a disease of the spirit.” This also prevented her from being able to work, even five years after trafficking. This was a source of considerable stress; she spoke about wanting to be healthy and working in a job that she liked.

One Vietnamese woman who was trafficked to China for forced marriage described feeling upset and depressed after returning home, even contemplating committing suicide at one stage.

One Vietnamese woman, trafficked to Hong Kong for domestic work, felt ashamed for her failed migration and did not even want to leave the house after returning home. She described how she cried and cried during the first months after her return and how even the encouraging words and support of her family did not help, it only made her feel worse and somehow inferior.

Issue 2.6 Legal and administrative issues

Trafficked persons faced problems in resolving legal and administrative issues.

Trafficked persons faced a range of legal and administrative issues post trafficking, both in countries of destination and at home. Some were a direct function of trafficking – for example, needing to replace lost documents taken while trafficked. Others, for example divorce and custody issues, were not a direct product of trafficking, but, when left unaddressed, adversely effected (re)integration outcomes. In some cases, administrative issues were those of the individual trafficked persons; in other cases, needs were related to family members, particularly children. The main issues included:

1. **Identity documents and other forms of legal registration**
2. **Civil/birth registration of trafficking victims and their children**
3. **Residence registration**
4. **Permits and registration when staying abroad**
5. **Certification as a trafficking victim**
6. **Other legal issues, such as divorce and child custody**

CASE STUDIES

LACK OF IDENTITY DOCUMENTS WAS A CHALLENGE WHEN (RE)INTEGRATING

One young man who was trafficked for begging within China when he was a boy explained that he faced many problems because he didn't have an identity card: "I wish I could get a job. I don't have an identity card so I can't get one and there is no one in this centre who can help me get one. I also don't know what kind of documents I need to get one. I am already really alienated from my family and I will not travel back to [my hometown] to get my identity card."

One woman from Myanmar, trafficked to China for forced marriage, lost her identity card while exploited in China. Since her return she had been unable to obtain a new one as she didn't have a birth certificate or a family book/list because she had been raised by foster parents.

RESIDENCE REGISTRATION POSED CHALLENGES FOR SOME TRAFFICKED PERSONS

One Laotian girl required the signature of local authorities before she was permitted to leave her village and stay at a shelter for assistance. For her, the process was unclear: "The organisation asked me to process the documents and I had to go to the village chief and district officer to sign the documents for me. It was a bit confusing and difficult for me."

OBSTACLES IN GAINING STATUS AS VOTs (AND THE ASSOCIATED RIGHTS AND ASSISTANCE)

One Vietnamese woman, trafficked to China for forced marriage, approached the commune level authorities when she returned to Vietnam. She later learned that they should have explained to her how to complete a form requesting assistance as a trafficking victim. They did not. As she put it: "They didn't care." As a result she did not receive any information about assistance she could receive and went unassisted for some time.

Critically, resolving these issues were complicated by various barriers, including:

1. **Complicated, confusing and sometimes circular procedures;**
2. **High (often prohibitive) costs;**
3. **Obstructive and sometimes discriminatory behaviour of authorities; and**
4. **Various practical barriers (such as travel to an administrative centre, loss of income when not able to work and needing childcare when dealing with these issues).**

GOOD PRACTICE
SUPPORT IN ACCESSING IDENTITY DOCUMENTS AT HOME

One woman from Myanmar trafficked to China for forced marriage explained how state social work staff assisted her in getting new identity documents after her return to Myanmar by preparing a certified letter to confirm her identity. In addition, an assistance organisation paid the fees required for processing these documents.

One girl from Myanmar, trafficked to Thailand for prostitution, was assisted by the police in Myanmar in obtaining an identity card. The police provided her with a recommendation letter, which she took to the appropriate authorities. There was no cost for issuing her identity card.

ACCESS TO LEGAL REGISTRATION IN DESTINATION COUNTRIES

One man from Myanmar trafficked aboard a fishing boat in Thailand escaped the boat and was hidden by a woman who then helped him get work on another boat. He worked there for a few months and was regularly paid but he feared encountering the previous bosses and brokers. He went to another town where he found work in a local sawmill. He worked there for one year and was assisted by his employer to get his migrant worker documents.

Issue 2.7 Economic needs

Current economic assistance models did not always lead to an improved economic situation.

Economic assistance was often the primary need identified by trafficked persons upon exit from trafficking and/or upon their return home. Trafficked persons needed to work and earn money to support themselves and their families, as well as to redress economic problems that resulted from being trafficked. Many victims of trafficking migrated originally because of economic problems and needs at home. For many, their economic situation had further deteriorated since and as a result of being trafficked. Some had incurred debt to fund their migration and had been unable to pay off this debt due to their trafficking experience. Others incurred debt to pay for their travel home or as a ransom to be freed from their trafficking situation. Many trafficked persons were unable to work after trafficking because of illness or injury, or being unable to find work. This meant that they were not able to earn money, often compounding their economic difficulties by incurring debt (or further levels of debt).

CASE STUDIES
TRAFFICKED PERSONS FACED ECONOMIC PROBLEMS BEFORE AND AS A RESULT OF
TRAFFICKING

One man from Myanmar explained that he borrowed 1,200,000 kyats [approx. 1360 USD] to migrate to Malaysia for work and 200,000 kyats [approx. 225 USD] more for his wife to give birth. With a 10% interest rate, he had been unable to clear the debt. He still owed about one million kyat [approx. 1135 USD], including interest.

One Vietnamese woman trafficked as a housemaid to Hong Kong explained how her migration/trafficking contributed to financial and interpersonal problems in her family. To fund her migration, the family borrowed 25 million VND [approx. 1200 USD] from the bank and then needed to sell their agricultural machinery to pay it back when she was trafficked and was unable to remit any money. After paying off the debt, she borrowed another 30 million VND [approx. 1500 USD] to buy farmland to support her family but was unable to repay the loan. She is now in a constant cycle of debt, borrowing money to pay back others from whom she has borrowed. This problem has been on-going since 2006. Due to this large debt, she and her husband argue a great deal, which affects her family's happiness and her children's performance at school. Her oldest son sometimes leaves school to work to help pay off the debt.

In some cases, economic empowerment programmes were well-designed and implemented by economic empowerment specialists. They were based on knowledge of the local labour market needs, and access to (high quality) vocational training and staff who had experience working with trafficked persons to build their capacity (and confidence) to meet labour market needs. These programmes had well-thought-out processes, such as: exit exams upon completion of training, apprenticeship programmes, job readiness programmes, piloting skills before funding a business, offering business management training, etc. Some were also offered ancillary support – like literacy classes, counselling and life skills – that further enhanced work place skills (and long term outcomes/success). These programmes were also monitored for a longer period and, when needed, additional support and counselling was provided.

GOOD PRACTICE
TRAFFICKED PERSONS HAD ACCESS TO WELL-DESIGNED AND EFFECTIVE ECONOMIC
EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES

One Cambodian man described how the assistance organisation came to his home and offered him a range of choices for training and work. He opted to be trained as a barber as there was a need for that skill in his village, and the organisation sent him to nearby town for nine months of vocational training. Having completed his training he was given implements to set up his barber business. As he explained, “I now work as a barber. I have about three clients a day and I earn Riels 2,000 [approx. 0.50 USD] per client. I like doing this barber service, including making modern hair styles, fancy styles and also classical style for the elders.” He was planning to expand his business – to buy a motorcycle and sell his services in nearby villages.

One Cambodian woman was receiving training in hairdressing, a course that runs for a year and a half. Upon completion of this training, the organisation has a requisite exit exam, which if she passes, means that the organisation will help her find an apprenticeship and practice her skills for three months. After this, she will be able to request tools to set up a hairdressing salon, a request that is based on a set of criteria, which she must meet.

One man trafficked internally within Myanmar for labour was trained in animal husbandry and managing a small business after which he was given funds to buy pigs. After six months he sold one pig and bought another one with the profit. He then received an additional small grant to expand his pig breeding and attended training on micro-credit and savings groups. The profit from the pigs was not sufficient for his needs and he was looking for ways to expand his work by raising chickens and doing flower cultivation in order to ultimately open a grocery store. The service provider visited him every three months to monitor his progress. When asked how he would fund his business ideas, he explained that he would borrow from a micro-credit programme; he did not expect it from the assistance organisation as he was doing well.

However, in other cases, economic empowerment efforts were less well-designed, and as a consequence, less effective. Economic empowerment was complex and involved a raft of challenges, listed and discussed below, any of which could directly inform the individual’s opportunities for success (or failure).

- 1. Lack of professional capacity in economic empowerment work**
- 2. Vocational training was unavailable or did not provide a satisfactory level of skill**
- 3. Limited training and job options; limited attention to individual interests/skills**
- 4. Economic plans did not align with the local economic situation**
- 5. Business training was not offered, under-supported or ill conceived**
- 6. Lack of economic opportunities – in home communities, new communities and abroad**
- 7. Few options for trafficked persons with special needs**
- 8. Inadequate attention to other assistance needs, including the needs of victims’ families**
- 9. Lack of confidence in one’s own capacity**
- 10. Practical barriers to economic empowerment**
- 11. Limited monitoring of and support to economic empowerment**

CASE STUDIES
POORLY DESIGNED ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES LED TO FAILURE AND
SETBACKS

One Vietnamese woman was trained in producing handicrafts through a shelter programme. She was trained and worked there for three years during which time she was separated from her children (her parents looked after them). She received a small stipend in this time. After three years, the programme closed because the handicrafts were not marketable. She returned home to her children without a marketable skill, or a viable job or business opportunity.

One Chinese woman trafficked internally for prostitution received vocational training in baking. However, she faced difficulty in finding a good job, and upon reflection, she wished she had been better counselled in the choice of training.

One Cambodian man was provided with funds to raise ducks in his village. However, he lacked the skills and resources to raise the ducks and, after a few months, the ducks died. He went into debt to buy more ducklings, which also died. The organisation did not monitor his case and, when interviewed, he was unemployed and in debt.

Issue 2.8 Pursuing legal cases

Victims' rights and best interests were not always protected in the legal process.

Many trafficked persons were involved as victim/witnesses in legal proceedings against their traffickers – criminal cases and compensation claims, abroad and at home. In some cases, trafficked persons were interested in being involved in legal cases, generally in the context of compensation claims. Some were also concerned about justice and that their trafficker(s) be punished for what they had done to them. In some cases, trafficked persons described positive experiences as victim/witnesses whereby their rights were protected in the legal process and they were able to speak out against their exploiters.

However, in spite of some positive experiences and outcomes, trafficked persons also identified a number of issues and problems in the legal process, based on their experience and involvement as victims/witnesses. These included:

1. **Lack of full information and informed consent; no option to decline to be involved**
2. **Long, compulsory shelter stays during legal proceedings abroad**
3. **(Unnecessarily) long legal proceedings**
4. **Re-interviewing and providing multiple statements**
5. **Not being regularly updated and informed about the legal process**
6. **Risks to victims/witnesses**
7. **Delays and complications in receiving compensation**
8. **Maltreatment by law enforcement and legal actors**
9. **No funds available for costs incurred by victims/witnesses**
10. **Stress, fear, anxiety of being victims/witness**
11. **Language barriers**

It merits mention that many cases involved trafficked children, which raises questions about how the rights and best interests of children were (and were not) protected in the legal process.

CASE STUDIES

VICTIM/WITNESSES WAS NOT ALWAYS VOLUNTARY AND FULLY INFORMED

One girl from Myanmar, exploited in Thailand, described being pressured to prosecute her trafficker. She explained that she was encouraged by the police to prosecute the trafficker but did not want to because she was afraid of going to court. She explained how she explicitly told the police officer that she did not want to participate in court proceedings but they opened the case anyway: "I had to go to the court. There was no choice for me." Upon reflection and despite her trafficker being imprisoned, she would have preferred not to be involved in the case.

INTERVIEWED AND GAVE STATEMENTS/TESTIMONY ON MULTIPLE OCCASIONS

One Thai woman, trafficked to Japan for prostitution, had many health problems and was not psychologically well when she arrived at the shelter in Japan. Nonetheless, police interviewed her, which she found upsetting. She described not being ready to speak about her experiences at that time and being irritated and stressed by the interview.

NOT KEPT INFORMED ABOUT STATUS OF THEIR CASE

One Laotian woman, trafficked internally, wanted to know the progress of her legal case but had not received this information from assistance providers in spite of calling many times. She was told she must wait because they were dealing with so many cases. For her, this was a barrier in (re)integration. She wanted to put this behind her and start her new life but she did not feel able to do so unless she won the compensation claim.

SECURITY ISSUES WHEN VICTIMS/WITNESSES

One woman, trafficked internally within Myanmar for prostitution, was attacked by her trafficker after reporting her case to the police. The broker and her sister attacked her – pulling her hair, slapping her and hitting the wounds on her leg.

DELAYS IN RECEIVING COMPENSATION

One man from Myanmar trafficked to Malaysia was seriously injured in the factory where he was exploited. He was granted compensation in the amount of 7,000,000 kyats [approximately 7,400 USD] but had received only 2,000,000 [approx. 2,100 USD] to date.

MALTREATMENT IN THE LEGAL PROCESS

One Vietnamese girl, trafficked to Cambodia for prostitution, was visited by the police one week after her. She explained how she and her family were badly treated by the police: "They threatened me. They banged their hand on the table whilst telling me to be honest. They threatened to arrest me if I did not give a statement. They claimed that we gave false statements so they sent a written invitation to give a statement at the commune police station."

INVOLVEMENT IN THE LEGAL PROCESS WAS STRESSFUL AND DIFFICULT

One woman trafficked internally within Myanmar for prostitution was upset and distressed at having to testify in court. Having to appear repeatedly in court to confront her trafficker was a source of further stress and anxiety for her. While she was happy that her trafficker had been punished, she made it clear that the experience in court had been a very difficult one.

GOOD PRACTICE

TRAFFICKED PERSONS WERE FULLY INFORMED ABOUT THE LEGAL PROCESS

One Thai man trafficked to Israel was rescued by the police and a local assistance organisation. An interpreter was on hand to translate and ensure that he understood what was happening and his different options. The police and assistance organisation asked whether he would like to go home or get a new job in the country. He was also asked whether he would like to prosecute his employer/exploiter for unpaid wages. The police and assistance staff explained what this process would entail, including that court proceedings would take some time to complete and they could not be assured of a positive result. However, they also explained that if he did win the claim, he would receive money as compensation for unpaid wages. The man agreed to pursue this compensation claim through the courts (as did eleven of the victims identified in the raid). During legal proceedings, the organisation regularly updated the man and his colleagues about the status of the legal case and what to expect in the coming period.

Issue 2.9 Unsafe and insecure

Safety and security issues were barriers to (re)integration.

An unsafe and unpredictable social environment was not conducive to recovery and (re)integration after trafficking. In a noteworthy number of cases, trafficked persons faced very real safety and security problems after escaping their trafficking experience. For some, this involved risks to their physical safety and well-being, including exposure to threats or violence by persons involved in their trafficking, or acting on behalf of their trafficker. In other cases, trafficked persons faced safety and security issues in their personal environment – from their family or the broader community. In still other cases, trafficked persons had not been violated or threatened but they feared that this would happen, a source of considerable stress for trafficked persons as well as their families. Violence suffered by trafficked persons had a very direct and tangible effect on their physical well-being. There was also the psychological effect of this violence (and the threat of violence) as well as the fear of potential retribution.

The main safety and security concerns trafficked persons faced in (re)integration included:

1. Risks posed by “traffickers”
2. Risks and safety concerns with the community and local environment
3. Safety issues in the family environment
4. Feeling unsafe

CASE STUDIES

HARM BY TRAFFICKERS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

One woman, trafficked from Myanmar to China for forced marriage, was threatened by her trafficker when brought a case against her. Even when the trafficker was in jail, she continued to threaten to kill the victim. The victim and her husband were so frightened that they considered moving to live with in-laws in spite of tense relations: “I do not even dare to go out and work since I am afraid that the trafficker would ask some bad people to harm me.”

One woman from Myanmar, trafficked for prostitution in Thailand, was returned home to live with her husband. She told her husband that she had been trafficked for labour but he suspected that she had been in prostitution. Shortly after he began to physically abuse her.

One Cambodian girl, trafficked to Thailand for begging, had parents who abused alcohol, and when drunk, beat her and her siblings. She was being assisted in a shelter programme at the time of the interview, but when she goes home for visits her mother still sometimes beats her.

One woman from Myanmar, trafficked to Malaysia for labour, was widowed while trafficked and returned home with her children. People in the community gossiped about her, saying she was a prostitute in Malaysia. Men harassed her, calling her a prostitute. Her neighbour threatened her, saying he’d come and sleep at her house.

Issue 2.10 Working with families

Failure to recognise the family context and assistance needs undermined (re)integration.

The family environment to which trafficked persons returned was an important variable in terms of successful (re)integration. Family dynamics and relationships had the potential to either support or undermine the (re)integration process. In supportive settings, family did a great deal to smooth the trafficked persons’ (re)integration. When relations were more difficult, the family was, at times, a barrier to (re)integration success.

There were two main areas of need in terms of working with trafficking victims and their families to ensure successful (re)integration.

1. **Managing and mediating relations within the family.** Trafficked persons faced a variety of different family situations when returning home, some positive, some negative. Even in the best circumstances and most positive family contexts, the post-trafficking period often involved challenging interpersonal relations between victims and their families. Moreover, these relationships often changed (for better or worse) over the course of the (re)integration process. Tensions and problems, when they existed, often inhibited trafficked persons’ ability to move on from the trafficking experience, and to (re)integrate into their families and communities. There were different sources of tension within families that required consideration, and often, also intervention – i.e. tensions and conflict because of economic difficulties and tensions in interpersonal relationships.

CASE STUDIES

TENSIONS IN THE FAMILY ENVIRONMENT BECAUSE OF ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

One woman, trafficked to Thailand for labour, returned to Myanmar to live with her family. Returning home without money was a source of tension; she described fighting frequently with her mother who was angry that she had not sent home money for the family to buy a house.

One woman, trafficked from Vietnam to Hong Kong for domestic work, described how having returned home without money led to tensions and conflict with her husband. She described relations with him as glacial; he nagged her frequently for the first years after her return. Her husband's family was also upset that she had returned with nothing. Even today (some years later), her husband sometimes complains about her having returned home without money.

One Vietnamese woman, trafficked to Malaysia for sexual exploitation, was rescued by her family who negotiated and paid a ransom for her release. When asked how she was treated in her family when she returned, she described how her brother would get drunk and verbally abuse her, calling her "good for nothing." Her mother was generally kind to her, but she also sometimes complained about the ransom and occasionally also cursed her because of it.

INTERPERSONAL TENSIONS BETWEEN TRAFFICKED PERSONS AND FAMILIES

One woman, trafficked from Myanmar to Thailand for labour, described her homecoming as strained. Her children were not familiar or comfortable with her and tensions remained for some time. It took time for the children to relate to her and treat her as a mother.

One Vietnamese woman, trafficked for forced marriage to China, escaped and returned to her husband and three children in Vietnam. However, her relationship with her husband deteriorated because of community gossip about the family – that her husband had sold her for money. Her husband became depressed, began drinking and stopped working. She and her husband eventually divorced and she assumed sole responsibility for their three children.

One woman, trafficked to Thailand from Myanmar, returned home with a small child. She explained that her mother was angry because she came back with a baby but without a husband. One day after a fight, her mother got angry and hit her and told her to leave the house with her son. She had no way to support her son but her mother would not allow him to live with her in her home. The woman was forced to give her son to relatives. She explained how very sad she felt about giving her son away but felt that she didn't have any other options.

2. **Meeting the assistance needs of family members.** In some cases, assistance needs of family members were paramount, as explained by trafficked persons themselves:

I want to send a message [to service providers] to extend assistance to both victims and their families, especially families who are poor and desperately in need (Cambodian girl trafficked internally for prostitution).

When you help trafficking victims, you should also help their families (Cambodian man trafficked for fishing in Indonesia).

Myriad family assistance needs were identified but priority issues included:

- a. Economic assistance (due to unemployment, debt and/or low salaries);**
- b. Healthcare;**
- c. Education;**
- d. The psychological impact of trafficking on family members; and**
- e. Alcohol and substance abuse.**

Some families had assistance needs that were pre-existing, and in some cases, had contributed to their being trafficked. In these cases, the pre-emptive provision of such assistance to vulnerable families may have prevented the person from being trafficked altogether. Some problems were related to, and caused directly by, the individual's trafficking experience. In these cases the family members essentially became "secondary victims of trafficking".

CASE STUDIES ASSISTANCE NEEDS OF FAMILY MEMBERS

One man, trafficked aboard a fishing boat, accepted this work when his nine-year-old son was diagnosed with cancer. He needed to repay the loan for his son's operations and treatment.

One boy, trafficked internally for labour, accepted the work offered because his father had injured his leg at work and was unable to walk or work anymore. In addition, his mother was ill, with a lump on her neck, and the family did not have money to go to the clinic for treatment.

One man trafficked for labour migrated to earn money for his daughter's education. When asked what assistance he needed after trafficking, he explained that the most important assistance was education for this daughter: "I want my oldest daughter to continue her education. I would like organisations to provide assistance for her to continue her education."

One girl, trafficked for street selling, came from an alcoholic family. After returning home, she requested assistance for her mother to be admitted to an alcohol detoxification programme.

Some organisations did take into account the family situation of trafficked persons. In some cases they assisted family members, or referred them to other agencies for assistance. In many instances, this was an important contributor to (re)integration, or in galvanising (re)integration successes. However, many assistance programmes did not have the scope or resources to assist the family members of trafficking victims directly, and many also did not refer their cases to other agencies or institutions for support. Not taking into account the assistance needs of victim's family members impacted (sometimes very immediately and directly) (re)integration success. Some trafficked persons intended to migrate again because they were unable to meet the needs of family members. Others were simply unable to move forward in a positive way because of these often urgent family assistance needs.

Issue 2.11 Case management and monitoring

Adequate time, ancillary support and on-going monitoring is needed for sustainable (re)integration.

(Re)integration was a long term process. It generally took years before sustainable (re)integration was realised, and along the way, trafficked persons often faced “setbacks” and “failures”, which risked undermining their efforts to recover and move on from trafficking. Some faced setbacks in the (re)integration process, which led to making decisions that negatively impacted their (re)integration. Some felt that they had no alternative but to re-migrate, potentially putting them at risk of exploitation or even re-trafficking. Case management, including on-going monitoring work, played an important role in anticipating and addressing issues and problems faced by trafficked persons over the course of the (re)integration process in the following ways:

1. **Backstopped (re)integration**
2. **Led to referrals**
3. **Contributed to a better understanding of (re)integration**

Some organisations or institutions in the region monitored beneficiaries for two to three years, conducting regular follow up on cases, and as importantly, were available to victims in periods of crisis. That being said, the long-term management of cases and on-going contact was not the norm for many trafficked persons. Indeed many respondents reported that, once home, they had limited and sometimes no further contact with assistance organisations or social support institutions. Assistance was often a “one-off” service or short-term assistance.

GOOD PRACTICE

TRAFFICKED PERSONS WERE MONITORED AND SUPPORTED IN THE LONGER TERM

One Laotian woman had been assisted over a period of a few years while she was trained in hairdressing and supported to set up her shop. She no longer received assistance, but the service provider was nonetheless in regular contact: “I am not currently receiving any assistance but [the organisation] calls me once a month to ask if I am okay with my job.”

One woman from Myanmar, trafficked to China for forced marriage, when asked what assistance was the most helpful, said that it was the on-going contact were social workers who visited and checked in on her and her family. She explained: “I like that assistance the most.”

Issue 2.12 Language barriers

Victims faced language barriers in the provision of (re)integration support.

Some trafficked persons faced language barriers in the provision of (re)integration assistance. There were different ways that language was an issue, including:

1. **Language barriers in destination countries.** Language barriers posed an obstacle when trafficked persons were assisted abroad, as service providers often did not share a common language with and/or did not speak the language of programme beneficiaries.

2. **Language barriers at home.** Some trafficked persons faced language barriers when assisted in their own country – e.g. when trafficked persons were from an ethnic minority and did not speak the majority language.
3. **Limited language skills and literacy.** In some cases, trafficked persons had lost (or never developed) language abilities after spending many years exploited in a foreign country. This was especially an issue for trafficked children who did not have sufficient education or opportunity at home to acquire fluency or even functional literacy. Language was also a barrier for children born of trafficking. Having been born and raised for a time abroad, many did not speak (or speak fluently) the national language when they returned home.

The inability to communicate with trafficked persons necessarily inhibited the provision of services, which, by implication, negatively affected (re)integration outcomes. In some assistance programmes interpretation services were available. However, this was far from practical in the long term. It was not only cumbersome but also very expensive, and meant that communication was only possible when an interpreter was available. In other situations, service providers relied on trafficked persons to provide interpretation for one another. This practice intruded on trafficked persons who were already coping with difficult experiences. It also meant that all discussions of assistance needs went through a third person in the shelter (the victim/“interpreter”), which breached confidentiality and anonymity, and likely inhibited trafficked persons’ willingness to divulge their needs and experiences. Sharing and being able to communicate in a common language was also an important factor in building trust and rapport. Moreover, some assistance cannot be provided appropriately or effectively through interpretation – e.g. counselling, education and training.

CASE STUDIES

SOME TRAFFICKED PERSONS FACED LANGUAGE BARRIERS ABROAD....

One woman was trafficked from Cambodia to Thailand for sexual exploitation. She was accommodated at the shelter for more than one year in which time none of the staff working there spoke Khmer. Communication was done through a Khmer interpreter. After one year, she learned enough Thai to communicate with the staff.

.... SOME FACED LANGUAGE BARRIERS IN THEIR HOME COUNTRY

One woman trafficked to Malaysia for prostitution, faced language problems when she returned to Myanmar because she didn’t speak the national language. She was able to speak Thai (as she had been assisted in Thailand after being deported from Malaysia) and Shan (her mother tongue). However, none of the staff in the shelter in Myanmar spoke either language and she felt lonely and isolated as a result. Even the assistance organisation in her community did not speak her language. She described how they were forced to communicate with body language. When asked what would have made her assistance experience better she explained that it would have been better if the shelter staff in Myanmar spoke Shan language.

KEY FINDINGS SECTION 3

Issues in the philosophies, capacities and behaviours of practitioners and authorities working on (re)integration



As a particularly vulnerable group, working with trafficked children requires specialised training and increased ethical sensitivities.

Key Findings Section 3 - Issues in the philosophies, capacities and behaviours of practitioners and authorities working on (re)integration

Issue 3.1 Rules, requirements and restrictions

Some programme rules and restrictions undermined victim autonomy and empowerment.

Assistance programmes involved many rules, requirements and restrictions that did not always seem to be consistent with the needs and/or situation of shelter beneficiaries. Careful consideration is needed to establish when these rules and requirements contributed to effective programming, and by implication, (re)integration success, versus when they served to undermine the autonomy of trafficked persons, and arguably, worked against their empowerment. In some cases, rules and restrictions seemed to be less about fostering a functional communal living space and more about maintaining control over trafficked persons. As importantly, many rules and restrictions were negatively experienced by beneficiaries, which equally factored into their empowerment and (re)integration outcomes.

While rules, requirements and restrictions varied by organisation/programme and country, there were some common issues raised throughout the region, including:

1. **Restricted freedom of movement.** In many cases, trafficked persons stayed in closed shelters and were unable to leave the facility. Such restrictions on freedom of movement were striking when shelters were, in principle, intended to support the trafficked persons' (re)integration in society and yet they prevented their interactions with family and community. Separation from family and community, a feature of the closed shelter approach, served to undermine (re)integration. Trafficked persons described stress, frustration and anxiety as a result of being literally locked in shelters.
2. **Restrictions and control over personal contacts.** Trafficked persons, both at home and abroad, often had limited contact with family members while in shelters. Even in countries of origin, home visits were generally irregular and many trafficked persons were not able to receive visitors (or only had limited visits). Given that strong and positive family relationships were often the cornerstone of successful (re)integration, it was striking how little investment was made in some programmes to foster positive relationships between trafficked persons and their families during shelter stays. Lack of contact with family was perhaps most striking and potentially debilitating for trafficked children whose relationship with family would (or should) be central to (re)integration. When communication was allowed, it was often controlled – e.g. confiscation of mobile phones, limited (or monitored) use of telephones. Intimate relationships were also controlled – e.g. limited contact with friends or boyfriends/girlfriends while assisted.
3. **Daily schedule and structure.** Some shelters had very structured timetables and schedules for residents. This was the case for adults as well as children. Many trafficked persons expressed frustration and discomfort with rigid schedules. Some spoke about having enjoyed more freedom over their daily life while trafficked than while assisted.

4. **Use of discipline and punishment.** Trafficked persons (both adults and children) were disciplined and punished when they broke rules or did not behave in ways that shelter staff approved of. Some trafficked persons were scolded and reprimanded for mistakes they made or even for “infractions” like laughing when they should not. In others cases, more active forms of punishments were used, including being obliged to clean toilets or staff offices. Some trafficked persons were required to do tasks that had little to do with their recovery and (re)integration or the positive functioning of the shelter.

There is a need to carefully consider and (regularly) evaluate the rules and restrictions in place in (re)integration programmes, including how they impact overall effectiveness in advancing the recovery and (re)integration of beneficiaries. An evaluatory approach to rules, requirements and restrictions is also important when some processes seem to be less about supporting (re)integration and more about meshing with administrative procedures. Other rules and restrictions seem to be, at least in part, about controlling victims’ movements (i.e. closed shelters) because service providers fear professional repercussions if trafficked persons leave shelters. In still other cases, it might be argued that rules and restrictions were about exerting control over victims and “rehabilitating” them. Rules and requirements should be regularly evaluated by the shelter manager and staff, with inputs from shelter residents. Rules and requirements should be developed in conformity with national law and regulations on minimum standards for (re)integration of trafficked persons. External monitoring and evaluation should also be undertaken. Beneficiaries should be involved in the development and tailoring of any rules and restrictions, including being able to express how these may affect them (negatively or positively). This opportunity was not apparent amongst those interviewed for this study.

CASE STUDIES

DISCOMFORT WITH RULES AND RESTRICTIONS IN MANY SHELTER PROGRAMMES

One woman, trafficked from Myanmar to Thailand, was assisted at a shelter in Myanmar upon her return. She described problems in the shelter, including the many rules that the residents were required to follow. She described some restrictions as problematic and unnecessary, for example, being scolded for laughing in the kitchen. She described being scolded regularly by staff who she felt “did not understand us.”

One woman, trafficked to China for forced marriage, was assisted in a shelter after her return to Myanmar. She described being unhappy with the shelter because residents were locked in the shelter for 24 hours and she did not understand why this was necessary.

One girl, trafficked to China for forced marriage, was assisted in a shelter programme upon her return to Myanmar. She described being obliged to do things for the staff at the shelter – like give them massages and clean their office. She (and others staying there) were told that this was “training” for them and they would not be allowed to go home if they didn’t do it properly.

Issue 3.2 Quality of care

Poor quality assistance and limited professional capacity in some (re)integration programmes.

In some cases, trafficked persons described receiving high quality services and being assisted by highly skilled and competent (re)integration professionals. This was the case for various forms of assistance received, both in countries of destination and origin.

The trainers were skilful and qualified. They behaved politely and respectfully. I could choose any skill that I wished. (Cambodian woman assisted in a shelter programme in Cambodia)

I like this place very much because I got full support and assistance. I thank the teachers because they take care of me very well. (Young girl assisted in a shelter programme in Myanmar after returning from Thailand)

The teacher of the cooking class was very kind. He helped many of my classmates to find a job in Hanoi. (Vietnamese woman trained in cooking in Vietnamese training programme).

However, this was not always the case and the quality of care received differed quite substantially between countries, as well as between organisations and institutions within a country. In a significant number of instances, trafficked persons described services that were of poor (even sub-standard) quality and/or practitioners with less than satisfactory professional capacities and qualifications.

1. **Professional capacity of service providers.** In some cases, poor quality of care was linked to, and sometimes limited to, the capacity of services providers to offer (re)integration services. Some service providers did not seem to have a firm grasp as to what constituted human trafficking. Even amongst more knowledgeable and experienced (re)integration professionals there were gaps in their educational background and professional capacity. Throughout the region there was an inadequate supply of professionally trained social workers and psychologists. The prolific use of (often untrained) volunteers also impacted the provision of high quality professional care. There were also seemingly no codes of conduct or ethical/legal principles in place, nor were there systems of professional monitoring and accountability.
2. **Quality of (re)integration support and services.** Respondents also described having received poor quality assistance. This observation was made throughout the region, although it varied by country and organisation. Some trafficked persons were accommodated in substandard shelters, with poor living conditions and where the adequate provision of even the most basic needs was often lacking and trafficked persons reported not receiving services while in residence. Reports of poor quality services were not unique to shelter programmes, and proved to be a broader issue across the full range of service areas.

(Re)integration services need to adhere to a minimum standard of care and yet such standards were generally lacking in the region. Wide variation of service provision within individual countries (e.g. by region or by organisation) was evidence that, even where standards existed, they were not fully (or evenly) implemented. There also need to be professional care standards and codes of conduct for all practitioners working directly with trafficked persons, including volunteers (as well as ancillary staff like interpreters, drivers and administrative staff).

CASE STUDIES

TRAFFICKED PERSONS RECEIVED POOR QUALITY SERVICES WHILE ASSISTED

One woman, trafficked to China for forced marriage, was assisted in two different shelters after her return to Myanmar. She was there for almost a month but received no services while there. As she put it, “I had nothing to do there.”

One Thai man, trafficked to Israel for labour, received medical care while abroad but his health issues had not been resolved. He said that, because he was a foreigner, he did not have access to the medication needed to treat his illness.

One Chinese woman, trafficked internally for prostitution, received counselling while assisted in a shelter. However, counselling was done by volunteers who lacked professional training or experience. She described dreading these counselling sessions.

One woman from Myanmar, trafficked to China for forced marriage, requested assistance in registering her son (born from her Chinese “husband”) upon her return. The assistance organisation informed her that they did not know how to do this and provided her with no support in resolving this problem. This issue remained unresolved at the time of the interview.

Issue 3.3 Insensitivity, discrimination and maltreatment in care

Instances of insensitivity, discrimination and maltreatment while in care.

Trafficked persons were generally well treated by staff; respondents reported many instances of a very high standard of care and sensitivity from assistance staff. For many trafficked persons the assistance they received was integral to their recovery and (re)integration. Many trafficked persons described receiving sensitive and appropriate treatment by service providers.

Staff is skilful and conscientious in teaching and explaining. They had good behaviour and used good words and [were] gentle. (Woman assisted in a shelter programme at home)

All the help was good. I liked all of it. They staff were also very nice and friendly. They gave us encouragement and it was good. (Girl assisted in a shelter abroad)

All assistance I was received to date is very valuable to me. [Social work] staff treated me in a polite and sympathetic way. (Woman assisted at home)

[The organisation’s] assistance was very useful and I have been assisted for a year. This organisation’s officials are friendly and humorous. (Girl assisted in a shelter at home)

Nonetheless, a number of trafficked persons reported far less positive experiences while assisted including, in some cases, detrimental behaviours and attitudes on the part of anti-trafficking professionals and service providers. In some instances, this involved discrimination and disrespectful behaviour; in other instances, this involved verbal and physical abuse.

1. **Discrimination and insensitivity.** Trafficked persons reported instances of discrimination and insensitive treatment by assistance staff. Some felt that service providers discriminated against them and looked down on them as “bad girls” and “prostitutes”. Others spoke about being called “victims,” and being negatively perceived and badly treated as a result. A number of trafficked persons described what they felt was unequal treatment by staff, with some beneficiaries receiving better treatment and support. Trafficked victims assisted alongside other vulnerable groups reported being treated more poorly than non-trafficked beneficiaries.

Some staff was good to me, taking care of me, using gentle words and advising me to follow a good path. However, some staff was not happy with me. They used rude words [when speaking to me].

At the centre, I have learned some skills like cooking and sewing. Some people were good to me, caring for me and asking about my welfare. Some others were arrogant, unhappy with me.

Staff in the shelter treated us badly and even the interviews were conducted in a way that discriminated against us. It was not like this kind of interview and they did not treat us warmly like you do to me right now. They looked down on us and did not care for us.

2. **(Verbal and physical) abuse.** In a very small number of cases, trafficked persons were abused while in assistance programmes. This must be of great concern to practitioners and policymakers. These abuses were all the more egregious because some cases involved children. Most commonly trafficked persons were subjected to verbal abuse, which went far beyond discrimination and insensitivity, as illustrated below.

[The shelter staff] said that if we could not learn from our experiences and continue being stupid, we should be killed by stabbing a knife in ourselves. And she said that she couldn't teach us anything because her mouth got dry just talking to us.

However, in addition, in two instances, trafficked children were physically abused while in care.

The impact of discrimination, maltreatment and abuse of trafficked persons, individuals who were often already deeply traumatised by their experience, cannot be overstated. In the short term, this worked against their recovery, preventing them from regaining a sense of control and safety in their lives. It also contributed to stress, anxiety, depression and on-going trauma for many trafficked persons. In the longer term, these poor (or some cases extremely negative) experiences of assistance impacted trafficked persons' trust in service providers and officials more generally, which would likely translate into a reluctance or resistance to seeking out or accepting assistance in the future, even at the risk of (re)integration setbacks or failure. Of particular concern were that many instances of discrimination, insensitivity and abuse involved children for whom the

impact was likely to be greater than adults, and who had less developed coping skills to manage and overcome these experiences.

CASE STUDIES

DISCRIMINATION AND MALTREATMENT WHILE BEING ASSISTED

Q. Do you have message for people working with trafficking victims to help us improve assistance to trafficked persons?

A. I want social officers to share with us. Whenever they are sad or angry, they should share this with us rather than scold us. (Girl assisted in a shelter in her home country)

A. I want warmth and no discrimination from anyone and for staff to give hope to the victim. (Woman assisted in a shelter after her return)

A. Teachers were very strict and scolded me a lot. I want them to trust us and forgive us. (Girl assisted in shelter at home)

A. My message for [shelter staff in my country] is to treat us warmly, not as victims. (Woman assisted in a shelter at home)

A. Please use polite words to victims like me. Do not only help the victims who please the staff. (Woman assisted in her home country)

KEY FINDINGS SECTION 4

Critical issues in the (re)integration of trafficked children



Children are trafficked for many different forms of exploitation and there are a host of different unique challenges to their successful (re)integration.

Key Findings Section 4 - Critical issues in the (re)integration of trafficked children

Issue 4.1 Children's trafficking experiences

Trafficked children endured varied forms of exploitation, were trafficked from young ages and suffered extreme abuse.

Trafficked children accounted for approximately 40% of the study's respondents and appeared in each country's sample – Cambodia (21), China (7), Lao PDR (18), Myanmar (29), Thailand (3) and Vietnam (29). This included 24 boys and 83 girls.

Cambodia	13 (8 Cambodians internally trafficked; 5 foreign nationals)
China	21 (7 Chinese internally trafficked; 14 foreign nationals)
Indonesia	1 (1 foreign national)
Lao PDR	2 (2 internally trafficked)
Malaysia	7 (7 foreign nationals)
Myanmar	5 (5 internally trafficked)
Thailand	42 (2 internally trafficked; 40 foreign nationals)
Vietnam	17 (13 internally trafficked; 4 foreign nationals)
Total	108

Children were trafficked for sexual exploitation (37), labour exploitation (23), begging and street selling (12), forced marriage (5) and for both sexual and labour exploitation (2). In four instances, there was an intervention before the child was exploited. The table below summarises the various forms of trafficking suffered by these children.



While the experiences and lives of these children were diverse, there were some common issues and patterns that emerged. Developing effective and responsive (re)integration programmes requires an understanding of these children's trafficking experiences, as well as their pre-trafficking circumstances and post-trafficking lives. Critical issues, with very direct impacts on (re)integration outcomes, included:

1. **Exploited from a young age.** Children were exploited from very young ages – six years of age and under (4), 7-9 years (13), 10-12 years (15), 13-14 years (24), 15-17 years (49) and unknown (2). This necessarily impacted their physical and psychological development. Moreover, separation from their families or support networks from young ages necessarily impacted their sense of identity, security and well-being.
2. **Experienced and witnessed extreme violence while trafficked.** All trafficked children suffered violence while trafficked, regardless of the form of exploitation. This included physical, sexual and psychological violence. Moreover, trafficked children described witnessing extreme violence and abuse of others with whom they were trafficked.
3. **Harsh working and living conditions while trafficked.** Trafficked children suffered physical problems as a result of the harsh and sometimes brutal working and living conditions to which they were exposed. While all of the children faced problems, these differed in scale relative to the type of trafficking to which they were subjected.
4. **Long periods of exploitation and multiple trafficking experiences.** Trafficked children spent long periods of time trafficked, literally years in many cases. In some cases, trafficked children faced multiple trafficking experiences.
5. **Negative experiences of family (or no experience of family).** Some children returned to positive and healthy families that supported their (re)integration. However, other trafficked children had negative experiences in their families prior to being trafficked, which included, most commonly, parents who were abusive and/or who abused drugs and alcohol. In some cases, family members were complicit in trafficking. A small number of trafficked children had little to no experience of family, having been trafficked at very young ages and socialised in a trafficking environment.

CASE STUDIES

TRAFFICKED CHILDREN WITNESSED AND EXPERIENCED HIGH LEVELS OF VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

One girl from Myanmar, trafficked to Thailand at age ten, worked in a seafood processing factory where she experienced and witnessed great brutality. If someone tried to escape the supervisors would force him (or her) to undress, lie naked on the floor and beat him (or her) in front of the other workers as a warning. Watching this punishment was mandatory and if someone refused to watch, they would be beaten also.

One boy, trafficked within China for labour, described witnessing extreme violence while working in a brick factory. He described how people were beaten if they didn't work and some went mad after these beatings. One worker was beaten to death. The supervisors also threw stones at the workers. He himself had also been beaten when he arrived, and they told him he would work without pay. When he protested, they beat him again.

One girl was trafficked from Myanmar to Thailand when she was six to sell candy on the street. She was beaten and tortured when she did not sell all of her sweets, including putting chilli in her anus or vagina.

.... SUFFERED HARSH WORKING AND LIVING CONDITIONS

One Thai boy, trafficked aboard a fishing boat in Indonesian waters, suffered extremely harsh working and living conditions. He worked from early morning until late at night, putting nets in the sea, pulling up nets and sorting, packing and freezing fish. There was only a short time to rest and eat. If the supervisor was not satisfied, he was yelled at and abused. He could not escape because the boat was far out at sea for long periods of time.

One girl, trafficked from Myanmar to Thailand, worked all day long, wrapping small candies that she was then forced to sell each night from 6pm until midnight. She worked seven days a week. She was never given enough food to eat.

One girl from Myanmar was trafficked to Thailand for prostitution at age 13. She was forced to provide sexual services to customers, as well as drink alcohol with them. She contracted a sexually transmitted disease but was not allowed to go to a health clinic or get any medicine for treatment. She was not allowed to rest while she had the sexually transmitted disease.

One boy trafficked internally for begging in China spent all day begging on the street. There were supervisors everywhere, monitoring him and if he rested a little, he was beaten and forced to beg even longer the next day. He lived together in a very small room with ten other children who were also forced to beg, but he spent most of his time on the streets.

... HAD NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES OF FAMILY

One boy, trafficked within China for begging, was badly treated and abused by his family while he was growing up. They would often deprive him of food and beat him. When talking about his family, he was very upset and said he could never forgive them for how they had treated him as a child. He planned never to return home or meet them again.

One girl, trafficked from Myanmar to Thailand for street selling, described a dysfunctional family environment, with her mother abusing alcohol. Her mother was likely complicit in her trafficking experience, although this was a difficult and sensitive topic to approach with the respondent.

Issue 4.2 Gaps in specialised services for children

Children had assistance needs that were not always met.

Trafficked children, by virtue of their age, maturity and trafficking experience, had specific and often specialised assistance needs. Some (re)integration organisations were specialised in supporting the (re)integration of trafficked children and offered comprehensive and tailored services to children of different ages and at different stages of development. However, amongst the trafficked children interviewed for this study, specialised assistance and age appropriate

services were not always available. In some cases, (re)integration services for children did not differ substantially from those for adults and most children did not describe assistance tailored to their individual needs as children. Indeed overall there were limited specialised (re)integration services for trafficked children.

Issues in the provision of child-specific (re)integration support centred around various different service areas including:

1. **Appropriate accommodation for trafficked children**
2. **Medical assistance**
3. **Psychosocial support and counselling**
4. **Education, including integration into formal schooling**
5. **Life skills education**
6. **Vocational training**
7. **Economic assistance (to the trafficked child/youth or their family)**
8. **Legal assistance and support during legal proceedings**
9. **Family mediation and counselling**
10. **Case management and follow-up after (re)integration**
11. **Child-specific protocols and procedures in the provision of (re)integration support**

Issue 4.3. Children of trafficked persons

Assistance needs of children left behind and children born of trafficking.

Children were very directly affected by the circumstances faced by their trafficked parents who typically faced a raft of issues upon their return. Some of these issues included: economic problems, stress and trauma, physical injuries and/or illness, tensions and problems within the family environment, as well as issues of safety and security. Difficulty in coping with these (re)integration challenges had a direct impact on their children, including their opportunities for a safe and healthy family and social environment. There were two main categories of children of trafficked persons identified in this study who required (re)integration support – children left behind by migrating parent(s) and children born of trafficking. While these children had many similar needs and issues, there were also some important distinctions between the two groups.

1. **Children left behind.** Many trafficked persons had children when they migrated, leaving them behind to be cared for by the remaining parent or relatives. In returning home, parents and children faced three key challenges in family and community reintegration:
 - a. Economic problems after trafficking;
 - b. Tensions in relation to trafficked parents; and
 - c. Stigma and discrimination against the trafficked parent.

CASE STUDIES ISSUES FACED BY CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND

One woman, trafficked from Vietnam to China for forced marriage, migrated initially to support her children who she was raising alone after her divorce. In the three years that she was exploited in China, their economic situation worsened: “The first thing I was concerned about when I came back was my children. They didn’t have enough food and looked so miserable. My

priority was to work to buy rice for them. I started to work for the people in the commune. I did anything they wanted to hire me to do”.

One Vietnamese woman was trafficked to China for forced marriage when her eldest child was seven and the youngest two. She was exploited for seven years and was not able to have any contact with her children during this time. When asked about her relationship with her children upon her return, she described having faced a very difficult situation upon her return, and how she struggled to rebuild her relationships. She explained that it had taken quite some time to re-establish her place in her children’s lives.

2. **Children born of trafficking.** A particular sub-group of trafficked children who required further specialisation in terms of (re)integration were those born of trafficking experiences – that is, when their mothers were in trafficking situations. This occurred most typically when women were trafficked for forced marriage and the child was fathered by the “husband,” or when women were trafficked for sexual exploitation and had a child fathered by their trafficker or client.

Children born of trafficking needed specific support and assistance to integrate into the family and community of their mother, with five main issues faced during (re)integration:

- a. The physical and psychological impact of trafficking;
- b. Relationships and maternal attachment;
- c. Family reactions to children born of trafficking;
- d. Community reactions to children born of trafficking; and
- e. Access to assistance and integration opportunities.

CASE STUDIES ISSUES FACED BY CHILDREN BORN OF TRAFFICKING

One Vietnamese woman, trafficked to China for forced marriage, described very poor living conditions in China for herself and her children. Her life there was poor and hard; she was the only one working to feed her two children. Her husband spent all of his money on gambling.

One woman trafficked to China for forced marriage returned to Myanmar pregnant with the child of her Chinese “husband.” Her husband in Myanmar, with whom she had two other children before being trafficked, agreed to accept her only if she abandoned the baby when it was born. With no job, no income and no home, the woman felt unable to make any other choice. She was also worried about not seeing her other children if she kept the baby.

One Vietnamese woman returned home from China after being trafficked for marriage with the two children she had with her Chinese “husband.” Life was difficult as her children had neither identity documents nor family books, and were not allowed to attend school as a result. Moreover, when they first returned they barely spoke the Vietnamese language, which was an additional barrier in the integration process. She described this period of their lives as a terrible, difficult time when she regularly felt discouraged.

Conclusion

Trafficked persons throughout the GMS have suffered diverse and often complex and traumatic trafficking experiences. Many received a range of assistance and support in their post-trafficking lives, intended to help them overcome and move on from their experiences. Trafficked persons have often experienced very positive post-trafficking pathways. Many have been identified in a timely and sensitive manner, referred for assistance in the immediate aftermath of trafficking, assisted to return home and offered a raft of support and services toward their sustainable (re)integration in their home community and country. A number of trafficked persons interviewed for this study were now successfully (re)integrated in their families and communities and had moved on from their trafficking experience. Much can be learned from these experiences and “successes” in the design of (re)integration programmes and policies.

In spite of these important successes, many trafficked persons had far less positive post-trafficking experiences and were not privy to the support and assistance to recover and (re)integrate after trafficking. One significant finding was that the (re)integration process does not always run smoothly and according to the range of national or international laws, policies, standards and principles. For example, many trafficked persons went unassisted or under-assisted and too few trafficked persons received what could be reasonably termed “comprehensive care.” Others declined assistance, sometimes in the face of acute need, because it did not meet their needs or mesh with their life situation after trafficking. Still others received assistance where the quality and scope of services were inadequate. Issues of discrimination, maltreatment and substandard care were also present. Much can be learned from these less successful experiences, not least in terms of how to improve and enhance work on the identification, return and (re)integration assistance to trafficked persons. These findings are a starting point for moving forward in this direction. Findings from this study are not specific to any one country, organisation or institution. Rather, they represent common themes and issues raised by trafficked persons in each of the six countries of the GMS. In spite of the many good practices, there is also a great deal of scope for change and improvement. In the broadest of brush strokes these improvements and changes should centre on the following themes:

Challenges in the (re)integration process. There are overarching issues and challenges in current (re)integration process, which need urgent and immediate remedy. The most pressing is the substantial number of trafficked persons whose assistance needs were not met because of how the (re)integration response was designed and functioned. This included large numbers of persons going unassisted or under-assisted, others who (in spite of acute need) declined assistance and still others who were forcibly assisted. Tackling some of the issues identified in this section – i.e. of lack of information, weak referral, administrative barriers and a lack of resources – will go some way in addressing these challenges and issues. However, overcoming challenges in (re)integration will also involve careful consideration of the overarching (re)integration framework in place in each country, including how existing programmes and policies do (and sometimes do not) support successful (re)integration outcomes. Moreover, this cannot be a “one-off” exercise. Tracking and addressing challenges in a country’s (or region’s) (re)integration programming and policies is an on-going process and one which needs to continue to engage (a diverse sample of) trafficked persons at the centre of this discussion.

Issues in the provision of individualised (re)integration services. Practitioners working on reintegration provide vital services to trafficked persons, and yet there are significant issues in the

provision of these services. In all service areas, and in spite of some strong programming, there is space for improvement and further development. Making these improvements will involve training and capacity building of programme staff, professional commitment and adequate (re)integration resources. It will also require flexibility to ensure appropriateness and relevance of services for a diverse sample of trafficked persons. Ensuring that improvements are made in these service areas will require monitoring the (re)integration of individual trafficked persons and, as importantly, national level monitoring of (re)integration assistance by government agencies. All programme implementation and monitoring should increasingly be implemented according to ethical standards, which, ideally, should also be enshrined in law.

Issues in the philosophies, capacities and behaviours of practitioners and authorities working on (re)integration. Practitioners and service providers are the most important resource in any (re)integration programme. (Re)integration is a complex and labour intensive process, which requires highly skilled, sensitive, ethical and committed professionals who work with trafficked persons over time. This, in turn, requires investment in professional development and capacity of service providers. Building capacity and skills can have an immediate impact on how (re)integration takes place. Also important is self-care of service providers; ensuring their psychological well-being will go some way towards improving the quality of care. Implicit in any discussion of professional capacity is ensuring sensitive and ethical behaviour on the part of service providers. Systems of accountability are needed to ensure professionals working on (re)integration adhere to the highest professional and ethical standards.

Critical issues in the (re)integration of trafficked children. Trafficked children were significantly represented in this study, signalling that children in the region are prolifically at risk of exploitation, and have been exposed to human trafficking. At the same time, the response to their specific needs and situation does not always seem to be adequately developed. Greater attention (and resources) are needed to the specific and yet diverse needs of trafficking children to more adequately support them in moving on from their trafficking experiences. This will involve not only improving the capacity of anti-trafficking professionals working with children, but also to mainstream trafficking into the social protection framework which should, in principle, be equipped with specialised skills in working with vulnerable children. Critically, trafficked children need to be (voluntarily) involved in the development and monitoring of (re)integration programmes designed to assist them. Only with their participation and input will (re)integration programmes and policies in the region be able to meet their needs and interests.

How these four themes (and the myriad issues embedded within them) can and should be addressed in each of the six countries covered in this study will differ. Each country has a different (re)integration framework and response in place. Each country also faces its own unique set of opportunities and challenges in terms of offering (re)integration support. However, there is much that can be learned by each country from the experiences of trafficked persons interviewed throughout the region. And as the COMMIT governments continue to work to combat human trafficking in the region, it is hoped that these findings – drawn from the real world experiences of trafficked persons throughout the region – can contribute to successful (re)integration pathways in the future.



IOM International Organization for Migration

