



Human Trafficking in Lao PDR

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World Vision

Lao Trafficking Situation 2008

Human Trafficking within and from Lao PDR occurs in a context of mass migration, where a significant percentage of the population (especially the young) migrate looking for work. The majority of this migration is due to widespread poverty, limited education, economic hardships and growing consumerism.

In areas of high migration such as Savannakhet Province, up to 7% of the total population may migrate, especially to Thailand. Out of all these migrants, a small percentage disappear and although it cannot be ascertained, it is feared, that these migrants have fallen victim to severe trafficking situations. A much larger but indeterminate percentage will experience undesired situations of exploitation such as hazardous working conditions, refused promised wages and physical abuse.

Those most likely affected by trafficking and in danger, are those in vulnerable social positions, particularly young women facing problems at home, or those without well-established cross-border networks of relatives and friends.

Young people are the most vulnerable migrants to human trafficking. Their motivations for migrating include a complex mix of aspirations for modernity, obligations to remit money to parents, which weigh particularly upon young women; under-employment, lack of useful education, uncertainty of income and poverty in their home communities. On a smaller scale, Lao PDR also serves as a transit point and destination country for Vietnamese and Chinese victims.

WorldVision is responding to this serious problem by assisting in the prevention of human trafficking, the protection of vulnerable people groups and victims, and the prosecution of offenders. With the help of World Vision, several countries in Southeast Asia, including the Lao PDR are working together to tackle the problem of human trafficking.

References:

Haughton, James. "Situational Analysis of Human Trafficking in Lao PDR: With Emphasis on Savannakhet". World Vision Lao PDR, 2006.
Doussantousse, Serge and Bea Keovongchit. "Migration of Children and Youth from Savannakhet Province, Laos to Thailand". World Vision Lao PDR, 2006.



Child Advocacy Network (CAN) committee members participating in Trafficking Awareness Event in Naphaekngai Village.

Trafficking Snapshot

- Lao PDR is a small landlocked nation in South East Asia with a population of 5.7 million. Over 80% of the population lives in rural areas and it is estimated that at least 30% are living in poverty.
- Approximately 80% of migrants cross borders in search of better economic opportunities, the majority of which comprise the lowest socio-economic group
- 44% of parents whose children had migrated to Thailand admitted that they don't know where their children were. Of young Lao people that returned home, 50% said their migration experience was terrible, 40% had been denied freedom of movement, and 13% had been sexually abused. [Footnote Doussantousse report]
- The Thai government estimates that there are at least 50,000 illegal Laotian laborers working in Bangkok, and another 45,000 that work along the Lao-Thai border.
- Children and youth between the ages of 14-24 are the primary migrants from Lao PDR to Thailand, with girls outnumbering the boys
- According to the UNICEF/Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MoLSW) study conducted in 2004, of those victims trafficked into Thailand, 35% were forced into prostitution, 32% into domestic labor, 17% into factory work, 12% into agricultural work, and 4% worked on fishing boats.

World Vision's **RESPONSE**



Child Advocacy Network (CAN) committee members sharing about Rights of the Child.

Solutions

- In order to put an end to trafficking of persons, particularly children in Lao PDR several things need to be done.
- Protection mechanisms at the village level need to be strengthened to identify and mitigate risky migration practices and the practices of unscrupulous brokers.
- Increase awareness raising in communities to attitudes and actions of adults that “push” young and other vulnerable people to migrate.
- Strengthen law enforcement agencies in their ability to coordinate with neighboring country counterparts in identifying and apprehending traffickers and those exploiting migrants.
- Practice better communication between anti-trafficking agencies in places of source, transit and destination areas.
- Conduct more extensive research into the “pull factors” that encourage young people to migrate.
- Support government agencies to implement various regional agreements signed with regard to trafficking prevention, protection (including return and re-integration) and prosecution.
- Increase information dissemination among migrants as to the risks of migration and information on how to seek help when confronted by exploitative and abusive practices.
- Facilitate the expansion and flexibility of migration through formal legal channels, rather than using high risk, informal, illegal methods

¹LO/IPEC, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, 2003, Labor Migration Survey in Khammuaane, Savannakhet and Champasack.

²Lao News Agency No. 2145/2000, August 10, 2000.

³ILO/IPEC, January 2003, pg. 11

⁴UNICEF/MoLSW, Broken Promises, Shattered Dreams. (Based on interviews with 253 victims)

World Vision is a leading advocate against human trafficking and other exploitative practices in Southeast Asia, partnering with governments, authorities and other NGOs. In Laos, World Vision is using the following projects to battle trafficking in persons:

Voices of Victims (VOV) project:

The goal of this project is to reduce the number of youth from Laos trafficked to Thailand. In order to do this, the VOV project is working to establish a pilot Migrant Advice Center in a major transit area where most cross-border movements take place; providing trafficking prevention education through peer educators in select communities and schools; and establishing child and youth protection committees (CYPC) in select source villages, with watchdog volunteers and an effective referral network.

Regional Response

Mekong Delta Regional Trafficking Strategy 2 (MDRTS2) Project:

World Vision's Mekong Delta Regional Trafficking Strategy project is researching and addressing the issues of trafficking in five countries simultaneously - Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Thailand and Myanmar.

Regional Advocacy anti-Child Trafficking Project (RACTP)

As a regional project, RACTP covers Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. Its main goal is to improve the policy environment towards eliminating trafficking in persons, especially children in the Greater Mekong Sub-regions. RACTP is working to achieve this goal by increasing the staff and institutional capacity of World Vision National Offices to advocate to government institutions on trafficking in persons, especially child trafficking and by strengthening the actions of governments to effectively combat human trafficking at the community, national and regional levels.

Further information:

www.wvasiapacific.org

www.UNICEF.org



To find out more on Human Trafficking, contact:

www.wvasiapacific.org
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