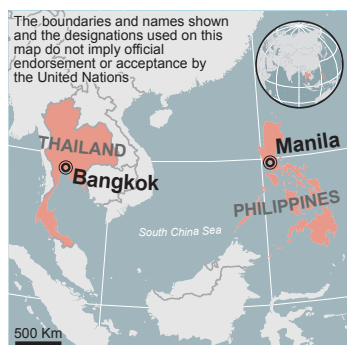


Economic and Social Empowerment of Returned Victims of Trafficking in Thailand and the Philippines



UN Trust Fund for Human Security



Fast Facts

Country: Thailand and the Philippines

Duration: April 2006 to May 2009

Implementing UN Agencies: ILO

Other Implementing Partners: National Ministries and Provincial Departments; Civil Society Organizations

Budget: \$1,977,116.39

Key Words: Human trafficking; women; social inclusion; access to health care; access to justice; access to education; improved governance

BACKGROUND

In Thailand and the Philippines, trafficking in persons has been recognized as a grave human security threat, cutting across the different dimensions of poverty, migration, education, employment, child labour, and governance. Women have been particularly prone to trafficking, many of whom were unwittingly recruited during their efforts to migrate for job opportunities. While responses have been underway to reduce the incidences of trafficking, gaps in the return and reintegration process have continued to leave victims

and those at risk highly vulnerable. As a result, returned trafficked victims have faced a repertoire of challenges ranging from psychological and physical trauma, to the breakdown of relationships and social rejection, as well as economic insecurity stemming from lack of employment opportunities and the job skills required. Therefore, without adequate and holistic support during the return and the reintegration process, returnees have remained vulnerable to further exploitation and even re-trafficking.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The project aimed to contribute to the reduction of human trafficking for sexual and labour exploitation, particularly women, in Thailand and the Philippines. By focusing on the provision of a core set of social services that strengthened the long-term economic and social empowerment of returned trafficked victims, the primary objectives of the project were to: (i) assist,

empower and protect victims from being re-trafficked through immediate intervention and long-term socio-economic reintegration; and (ii) improve the capacity of service providers to reintegrate victims through referral services, career counselling, vocational training, and case documentation.

BENEFICIARIES

In Thailand, the project directly benefitted 729 women, 331 families, 50 children, 71 men, and 20 case managers in the provinces of Chiang Rai, Phayao and the metropolitan area of Bangkok. In the Philippines, 480 women and 150 children in Manila,

Pampanga and Central Luzon were direct beneficiaries. In addition, in both countries, the returnees' communities of origin indirectly benefited from community education and other project activities.

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

(i) In both countries, the project successfully provided assistance to more beneficiaries than initially envisaged. Through home visits, legal and psychosocial counselling services, as well as referrals to health, non-formal education and law enforcement assistance, returned trafficked victims were empowered to regain control of their lives. In addition, their respective communities were mobilized to support their full reintegration back into social and communal life. Lastly, in order to promote long-term empowerment and to reduce the risk of re-trafficking, returnees received educational and employment services which resulted in significant improvements in their economic security.

(ii) A notable achievement of the project was its community-based approach. Since a significant portion of trafficked victims returned through unofficial channels, providing reintegration assistance through formal channels had proved to be a major barrier in assisting and reintegrating trafficked

victims. Therefore, in order to better identify returnees, the project employed a community-based approach that raised awareness on safe migration and encouraged victims to seek support through a network of governmental, non-governmental and employer organizations that provided peer to peer support and direct assistance.

(iii) Multiple trainings held in both countries for relevant Ministries and agencies as well as community leaders and village volunteers, resulted in stronger institutional capacity to effectively manage and fill the primary gaps in the return and reintegration process. As a result, relevant stakeholders had a better understanding of safe and secure migration, in addition to improved knowledge of how best to assist returnees at various points during the return process over the long-term. Moreover, to further institutionalize the knowledge gained, the project produced guides and handbooks, which were broadly distributed nationwide in both countries.

LESSONS LEARNED

The project illustrated the added value of the human security protection and empowerment framework for developing sustainable solutions to complex insecurities. The individually-focused empowerment measures allowed assistance to be tailored to the specific needs and concerns of each victim, which reduced the risk of further exploitation and improved personal and economic security. Protection measures included the institutionalization of good practices garnered from project activities. For example, the majority of the provinces in both countries integrated

these lessons into strategic planning processes and/or agency guidelines that could be further mainstreamed into their Action Plans. Together, the protection and empowerment measures addressed the primary gaps in the return and the reintegration process. Such an approach further highlighted the importance of engaging all relevant stakeholders, including local communities and the private sector, in order to reduce incidences of human trafficking and to increase the success of the reintegration processes.