

An Assessment of the Role of Nongovernment Organizations in Combating Trafficking of Women and Children in Cambodia and Viet Nam

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Abstract

Human trafficking in general, and the trafficking of women and children in particular, is a major concern worldwide, including in the countries of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS). Many nongovernment organizations (NGOs) in the GMS play an active role in supporting anti-trafficking programs. These include the Save the Children Cross-Border Project Against Trafficking and Exploitation of Migrant and Vulnerable Children, and the Combating Human Trafficking in Vietnam program of the Asia Foundation. Despite many successes, NGOs are still confronted with numerous difficulties in effectively implementing anti-trafficking programs.

This study investigates the roles of NGOs in combating the trafficking of women and children in Cambodia and Viet Nam. It assesses the coordination mechanism between the government and NGOs, as well as among NGOs. It also evaluates the NGOs' effectiveness in combating trafficking in women and children in the two GMS countries.

The study uses both primary and secondary data. Primary data were gathered through structured interviews with NGO staff in charge of women and children anti-trafficking programs and projects in Cambodia and Viet Nam. Secondary data include published books, reports, and materials from the government and NGOs. The data are analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively to draw out results and make recommendations.

Introduction

Human trafficking in general, and the trafficking of women and children in particular, takes place in almost all countries. It is estimated that 200,000–225,000 women and children are

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trafficked annually from Southeast Asia and more than 150,000 are trafficked from South Asia (Ren 2004). World Vision (2005), estimate that 250,000 people in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) are trafficked annually and some 1.2 million children are trafficking victims worldwide. Women and children are trafficked for domestic work, begging, and child adoption, and to be sold as brides.

Cambodia and Viet Nam, both located in the GMS, faced human trafficking problems. Human trafficking is both a domestic and cross-border issue for both countries. In Viet Nam, domestic trafficking is closely linked to migration from rural and mountainous areas to urban areas, and it mainly involves trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation to destinations where prostitution is prevalent, such as Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City. Trafficking for labor exploitation also occurs within the country in sectors such as agriculture and construction, as well as in factories, sweatshops, and karaoke bars (UNIAP 2008, Hoang 2008).¹

Viet Nam remains largely a source country for cross-border human trafficking. Since the end of the Cold War, it is estimated that nearly 400,000 Vietnamese women and children have been trafficked across the country's borders, mainly via paths and border gates in the north and southwest (Lam 2005, UNIAP 2008). Children and women are trafficked from Viet Nam's northern provinces (e.g., Lang Son, Lao Cai, and Quang Ninh) to Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and Yunnan Province in the People's Republic of China (PRC) (Wang 2005). Vietnamese women and children are trafficked to the PRC for marriage, sexual exploitation, and labor exploitation. A considerable number of babies are trafficked for adoption. Baby trafficking is a lucrative business in Viet Nam, where babies can be sold for up to \$50,000 each (Orhant 2000). Vietnamese women trafficked to the PRC account for 70% of the total number of trafficked Vietnamese women worldwide (UNIAP 2008) and about 4,000 Vietnamese women are trafficked for prostitution in Cambodia (IOM 2007). Viet Nam is also a destination country for trafficked Cambodians and a transit country for PRC children into Cambodia (IOM 2000, UNIAP 2008, Hoang 2008).

Similarly, Cambodia is a source, destination, and transit country for men, women, and children trafficked across national borders, chiefly to Malaysia, Thailand, and Viet Nam for forced labor and sexual exploitation (US Department of State 2007, ECPAT-Cambodia n.d.). The borders between Cambodia, the PRC, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Viet Nam are open and porous, allowing thousands of people to be trafficked each year. For example, unofficial estimates suggest that there are as many as 15,000 prostituted persons in Siem Reap, and that up to 35% of victims have been smuggled into Cambodia from Viet Nam, mostly from the southwestern provinces (such as Can Tho, Hau Giang, and Tay Ninh). A report from the National Assembly of the Kingdom of Cambodia, which chaired the Senate Commission on Human Rights and Reception of Complaints, indicates that there are more than 14,000 women and children working in prostitution in Phnom Penh alone (Oung 2002). Based on actual counts, Steinfatt (2003) estimated that there were 18,256 sex workers across Cambodia in 2002–2003, of which 2,000 women and children were classified as trafficked.

Cambodia also acts as a transit point in the trafficking network through which PRC and Vietnamese nationals are sent to Thailand or more distant locations abroad (IOM 2000,

¹ Hoang (2008: 3) further argues that the stringent migration policy adopted by the Government of Viet Nam, which is meant to protect women from exploitation, can lead to more irregular migration and may aggravate trafficking because it "has diverted the flow of migrants away from established migration routes to the most dangerous and least populated areas."

UNIAP 2008, Hansson 2001). Trafficking of Cambodian men, women, and children to Malaysia includes sexual exploitation, labor exploitation (especially factory and construction work), and domestic work.

The governments of Cambodia and Viet Nam face various obstacles in their efforts to combat human trafficking. These include the lack of an effective data collection system; the absence of empirical studies on human trafficking; the clandestine and illegal nature of trafficking; the lack of strong bilateral cooperation between neighboring countries; the insufficiency and ineffectiveness of rehabilitation programs, which often results in trafficked individuals becoming traffickers; gaps in multisector efforts in countering trafficking, particularly in the legislative, judiciary, and law enforcement areas; and corruption in the police force. Cambodia's anti-trafficking regulation and programs are considered weak (US Department of State 2008) despite the government's efforts to counter trafficking, such as the enactment of the Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation 2008 and the establishment of an anti-trafficking taskforce. Furthermore, accurate recording of trafficking incidents in Cambodia and obtainment of reliable estimates of the number of victims and offenders have been hampered by a lack of harmonization of the methodologies employed in trafficking research and limited cooperation between the agencies involved in data collection.

Objectives, Methodology, and Limitations

This study investigates the roles of nongovernment organizations (NGOs) in combating the trafficking of women and children in Cambodia and Viet Nam. It assesses the coordination mechanism between the government and NGOs, as well as among NGOs. It also evaluates the effectiveness of NGOs in combating the trafficking of women and children in the two GMS countries.

Research Method and Data

The study used a survey questionnaire to identify NGOs' roles in combating the trafficking of women and children in Cambodia and Viet Nam. The questionnaire was designed and implemented according to the Dillman Total Design Method (1978), which has been found to improve response rates and data quality. To assess the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, a pretest was conducted. Following the pretest, some modifications were made to the questionnaire. The revised questionnaire was translated into the Khmer and Vietnamese languages, and administered using face-to-face interviews with NGO staff.

In Viet Nam, 20 NGOs that have implemented anti-trafficking projects and programs were identified. Of these organizations, 15 are based in Ha Noi, 2 in Ho Chi Minh City, 1 in Nghe An Province, 1 in Da Dang City, and 1 in Hue City. Due to the difficulties in accessing appropriate program staff, only 13 NGOs, both local and international, were identified and interviewed using face-to-face interviews. International organizations and United Nations (UN) agencies in the country, such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP), declined to participate in the interview as they do not consider their organization to be an NGO, but they assisted by providing some information.

Accessing NGO staff in Cambodia was also problematic because staff did not find the interview useful, were busy with their jobs, and/or wanted to keep their opinion or information on the subject confidential. A total of 25 NGOs, both local and international, were identified and interviewed face-to-face. They included international organizations, such as the International Labour Organization; and UN agencies, such as the UNIAP.

The list of NGOs interviewed in Cambodia and in Viet Nam is in Appendix 1.

Limitations

When administering the survey questionnaire in Cambodia and Viet Nam, it was difficult to obtain the full cooperation of the NGOs interviewed because of the sensitive nature of human trafficking. This prevented the study from carrying out a detailed statistical analysis, and consequently affected the robustness of the research results and findings. The research considered only the perspectives of the NGOs. It did not obtain the views of the beneficiaries of NGO anti-trafficking projects and programs because of the difficulty and sensitivity of identifying and accessing trafficked victims.

In addition, for reasons of confidentiality, not all of the survey questions were answered by the NGO staff. For example, most Vietnamese NGOs refused to give the number of trafficking cases they had investigated. Similarly, most Cambodian NGOs preferred to answer only general questions to protect the privacy of trafficked victims. Some Vietnamese NGO respondents could not reveal information related to crimes, arrests, or prosecutions because their organizations did not engage in investigating them. Similar limitations also applied in the case of Cambodia.

Most NGOs in the two countries use the term “human trafficking” when providing information on trafficking of women and/or children. Consequently, the data provided reflect human trafficking in general (i.e., men, women, and children) rather than the number of women and children trafficked. This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that there is no specific definition of women or children trafficking and the definition of trafficking is still ambiguous between different agencies.

Overview of Nongovernment Organizations Combating Human Trafficking in Cambodia and Viet Nam

The number of NGOs in Viet Nam involved in anti-trafficking activities is modest. Combatting trafficking is not a focus for most NGOs, and their programs and projects focus mainly on furthering economic development, providing health and education services, overcoming the consequences of war, eliminating hunger and reducing poverty, and combating environmental problems. For many small or medium-sized NGOs, anti-trafficking activities are a subproject or minor project under one program (e.g., human rights, women’s rights, children’s rights, or immigration). For this reason, they frequently do not see themselves as professional anti-trafficking NGOs. Moreover, some NGOs’ anti-trafficking programs are short-term because they depend largely on donor funding; the programs are terminated once donor support ends. Some NGOs cannot perform their anti-trafficking programs effectively because of the lack of effective administrative personnel, weak cooperation with other NGOs, lack of coherent and cohesive government policies to address the abuse and exploitation of women, and the absence of relevant information and accurate data about trafficking.

According to the Asia Foundation (2008), there are 222 local NGOs in Viet Nam. The number of international NGOs in Viet Nam increased from approximately 200 in the early 1990s to 750 in 2009. International NGOs' activities span all 63 provinces and cities in the country. Similarly, there are almost 400 local NGOs and nearly 600 associations registered with the Government of Cambodia, which is a dramatic increase from the figure in 1991. In addition, more than 40 NGO sector and issue working groups, both formal and informal, come together on issues of common interest in support of the development of the Cambodian NGO community (Cambodian NGO Statement 2002).

NGOs in Cambodia have helped rescue child trafficking victims, provided legal assistance to child victims, conducted a comparative legal study on Cambodian laws and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and developed a legal handbook to assist law enforcement officers. Several local NGOs have been involved in more general activities to raise public awareness on the nature of human trafficking in Cambodia. For example, the Women's Media Centre and the Cambodian Women's Crisis Center have been working on producing radio and television messages, and the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights has created posters to increase awareness about trafficking. International agencies have also been engaged in trafficking prevention in Cambodia. For example, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) has initiated and supported several programs involving advocacy, awareness raising, information gathering, and policy planning focusing on child trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation. The IOM, in cooperation with the Ministry of Women's and Veterans' Affairs launched a 3-year capacity-building project in 2000 for the prevention of all forms of trafficking in women and children in Cambodia (IOM 2000).

Findings and Results

Profile of Respondents

Table 1 summarizes the profile of respondents from NGOs in both countries. Most of the respondents are officers, coordinators, and managers who have been working on anti-trafficking programs for 1–4 years. The dominant age group of respondents is 26–35 years. More than half of the Vietnamese respondents hold a master's degree; while the highest level of educational attainment of almost three-quarters of the Cambodian respondents is a bachelor's degree. Most of the NGOs in Cambodia and Viet Nam have been implementing anti-trafficking programs for 4–6 years, although some NGOs in Cambodia (about 15%) have been conducting programs for more than 6 years.

General Information on Women and Children Anti-Trafficking Programs

NGOs based in Viet Nam commenced anti-trafficking programs for women and children between 2002 and 2006, which was the period when many bilateral and multilateral treaties were signed between Viet Nam and neighboring countries. For example, in February 2002, Viet Nam participated in the first Regional Ministerial Conference on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime (the Bali Ministerial Process). Since 2000, the Government of Viet Nam together with four other members of the GMS (Cambodia,

Table 1: Profile of Nongovernment Organization Respondents

Item	Cambodia	Viet Nam
Presence of anti-trafficking programs	56%	100%
Proportion of female staff working on anti-trafficking programs	36%	100%
Dominant age groups	26–35 years old = 57% 36–45 years old = 21.4%	26–35 years old = 61.5% 36–45 years old = 38.5%
Highest educational attainment	Bachelor's degree = 71.4% Master's degree = 21.4%	Bachelor's degree = 46.2% Master's degree = 53.8%
Respondents at:		
officer level	42.9%	30.8%
coordinator level	14.3%	30.8%
manager level	21.4%	38.5%
Years working on anti-trafficking programs	Less than 1 year = 21.4% 1–4 years = 43.8% More than 4 years = 35.7%	Less than 1 year = 0.0% 1–4 years = 38.5% More than 4 years = 61.6%
Average number of employees	92	33
Average number of years implementing anti-trafficking programs	Less than 3 years = 7.1% 4–6 years = 14.4% More than 6 years = 14.4%	Less than 3 years = 23% 4–6 years = 38.5% More than 6 years = 7.1%

Source: Authors' calculations based on a survey interview in April 2011.

the PRC, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Thailand) signed an agreement with the International Labour Organization through the Mekong Sub-regional Project to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women. Moreover, on 14 July 2004, the National Plan of Action on Combating Trafficking in Women and Children 2004–2010 was ratified by the Prime Minister. These internal and external factors provided the impetus for governments and agencies, including NGOs, to implement anti-trafficking activities.

Cambodia-based NGOs have done a great deal of work to raise awareness of children's rights—especially the issue of trafficking and sexual exploitation of children—through radio and TV programs; workshops; dramas; rallies and marches; and the production and dissemination of awareness-raising materials such as posters, bulletins, newsletters, and calendars (CRF 2001). In terms of protection measures, the government has established investigation groups and a legal executive task force to uncover offenses and bring offenders to justice. An on-call team and a 24-hour hotline have been set up. NGOs have engaged in investigating trafficking cases, helping rescue child victims, and providing legal assistance; conducting a comparative legal study on Cambodian laws and the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and developing a legal handbook for law enforcement officers. Training courses have been conducted in ministries, and national and international organizations (CRF 2001).

Funding Sources

NGOs in Cambodia and Viet Nam access various funding sources to support their anti-trafficking programs. Table 2 shows that most NGOs have used external sources of funding to develop their programs. About 70% of Vietnamese NGO funds are from external sources such as the European Commission; the IOM; the United States Agency for International

Table 2: Funding Sources for Women and Children Anti-Trafficking Programs

Source	Cambodia (N =14)	Viet Nam (N = 13)
Own sources	7.7	30.8
United Nations agencies	15.4	7.7
Foreign donors (International Monetary Fund, World Bank) and bilateral sources	30.8	7.7
Cofunding with other nongovernment organizations (Asia Foundation, International Organization for Migration, Oxfam)	23.1	0.0
Other sources	61.5	69.2

Source: Authors' calculations based on a survey interview in April 2011.

Development; and the embassies of Australia, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In Cambodia, about 62% of NGO funds come from the Asia Foundation, the IOM, Oxfam, and the United States Agency for International Development; while about 31% are provided by foreign donors such as the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank. The high degree of dependence on external funds has made the implementation of programs and projects unsustainable.

Staff Training

The provision of training courses on how to identify and respond to women and children trafficking cases is the main activity conducted by the NGOs to build the capacity of staff in charge of anti-trafficking projects and programs. Participation by NGO staff in regional and national conferences and workshops also provides knowledge and ideas that help in the design of anti-trafficking programs. Surveyed NGOs indicated that they have adopted training programs in the form of in-house training and local workshops (Table 3). Cambodian NGOs use mainly in-house trainers, while NGOs in Viet Nam use mostly international trainers.

However, the training programs provided are generally inadequate. NGOs cited two reasons for the lack of training provision: First, there is a shortage of qualified national and international trainers in both countries. In some cases, training activities provide only a brief introduction to the human trafficking situation, and do not teach skills to enable staff to deal with specific problems and issues. Second, there is a lack of suitable training curriculum and communication materials. Most materials are not applicable to the country context and require translation from a foreign language.

Prevention and Rehabilitation Programs to Reduce Vulnerability to Human Trafficking

The main focus of the NGOs surveyed in both countries was prevention and protection, followed by policy and advocacy (Table 4). Of the NGOs in Viet Nam, 46% focus on working with the media, while 43% of NGOs in Cambodia take part in networking and information-sharing programs. The NGOs stressed that prevention was the most important factor in helping combat human trafficking. If prevention activities are adequate and well implemented, then the people will not have to confront the consequences of trafficking. Rehabilitation programs

Table 3: Training Course Provision

Type of Course	Cambodia (%)	Viet Nam (%)
Training provided to staff in charge of anti-trafficking projects and programs on how to identify and respond to women or children trafficking cases	100	38.5
Type of training provided to staff in charge of anti-trafficking projects and programs:		
In-house training	28.6	15.4
Local workshops	92.9	23.1
Regional conferences	42.9	15.4
National conferences	42.9	23.1
Number of training programs provided:		
1–3	50.0	7.7
4–6	14.3	15.4
Provision of training:		
Independent consultants or trainers	35.7	7.7
Trainers from the organization	71.4	15.4
Local trainers	42.9	7.7
International trainers	50.0	23.1
Number of trainers used in nongovernment organizations:		
1–2	28.6	23.1
3–4	28.6	0.0

Source: Authors' calculations based on a survey interview in April 2011.

Table 4: Prevention and Rehabilitation Programs

Item	Cambodia	Viet Nam
Main types of anti-trafficking programs and projects implemented	Prevention = 71.4% Protection and victim support = 71.4% Policy and advocacy = 61.5% Legal framework and law = 50%	Prevention = 100% Rehabilitation and reintegration = 84.6% Protection and victim support = 46.2% Policy and advocacy = 38.5%
Main types of prevention activity	Education = 57.1% Awareness and advocacy = 57.1% Networking and information = 42.9%	Education = 92.3% Awareness and advocacy = 92.3% Working with media = 46.2%
Main types of protection and victim support activities	Legal assistance = 57.1% Health care = 35.7%	Vocational training = 61.5% Health care = 46.2% Legal assistance = 46.2%

Note: The figures indicate the percentage of the total number of nongovernment organizations surveyed.

Source: Authors' calculations based on a survey interview in April 2011.

generally suffer from insufficient funding and a lack of commitment by trafficking victims to stay in the community, which makes it hard to access them.

Protection and rehabilitation programs play a crucial role in supporting trafficking victims after their return. If the returned victims cannot earn a living and reintegrate socially with others in their community, they are easily re-trafficked. The protection and rehabilitation programs run by NGOs in the two countries differ in focus. Viet Nam's NGOs stress vocational training to help provide the poor and disadvantaged people in rural areas with skills to get jobs and earn

an income. It also helps trafficking victims to reintegrate faster into the community. NGOs in Cambodia pay more attention to prevention programs than they do to repatriation programs. A minority of NGOs provide other types of rehabilitation activities, such as shelter, financial assistance, and health care.

Development of Legal Frameworks

All NGOs in Viet Nam have been working on international criminal law, and three NGOs have also been working on national laws (Table 5). Few NGOs in Cambodia are engaged in international trafficking and human rights law, and most of them tend to focus more on building national laws related to trafficking.

Table 5: Legal Framework Activities

Activity	Cambodia	Viet Nam
Main types of legal framework activity	National laws = 42.9%	International criminal law = 100%
Main types of law enforcement activity	Investigation of complaints = 28.6%	Trial of trafficking cases = 100% Protection of victims = 69.2%
Main types of policy and advocacy activities	Advocacy = 42.9% Information = 28.6%	Advocacy = 76.9% Information = 69.2%

Note: The figures indicate the percentage of the total number of nongovernment organizations surveyed.

Source: Authors' calculations based on a survey interview in April 2011.

All NGOs in Viet Nam support or assist in trials of trafficking cases, and about 70% are engaged in the protection of trafficking victims. About 77% conduct policy and advocacy activities (e.g., advocacy on related laws, plans, and strategies); and almost 70% of NGOs are also involved in information collection, collation, and dissemination. In contrast, only about 29% of NGOs in Cambodia take part in investigating complaints, and more than half of them do not assist in any law enforcement activities. This is because NGOs in Cambodia are not directly involved in policy making; their roles are focused on lobbying, advocacy, and resource mobilization for anti-trafficking strategies. Their law enforcement activities extend to the provision of training on trafficking-related laws for local partners and communities.

Support from the Government

All NGOs interviewed in Viet Nam reported that they are receiving support from the government. In Cambodia, the figure was about 71%. The government has greatly contributed to NGO performance as cooperative partners in carrying out anti-trafficking activities, and as a bridge between NGOs and vulnerable and trafficked victims. Government agencies assist NGOs in accessing victims and selecting high-risk localities, and collaborate in conducting community communication events and awareness-raising activities.

The government agency that was most frequently mentioned as supporting anti-trafficking activities by the NGOs is the Women's Union in Viet Nam (85%) and mass media in Cambodia (57%). The Women's Union, whose functions are to care for the economic, social, mental, and physical well-being of women and children, has members in the rural areas who are vulnerable

Table 6: Government Support Received

Item	Cambodia	Viet Nam
Received support from the government	71.4%	100%
Government agencies that gave support	Mass media = 57.1% Youth union = 14.3%	Women's Union = 84.6% Ministry of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs = 38.5%

Note: The figures indicate the percentage of total number of nongovernment organizations surveyed.

Source: Authors' calculations based on a survey interview in April 2011.

to trafficking because of their need for better employment and income. It also has a mandate to implement certain policies and laws related to women. For example, in August 2002, the Government of Viet Nam suspended the marriage licenses mediation services and transferred the function to the Women's Union. The community communication network of the Women's Union has also assisted NGOs in their information, education, and communication campaigns on the prevention of human trafficking, and in the establishment and maintenance of shelters for trafficking victims.

Viet Nam has a high proportion of trafficking victims in the 25–39 age group, mainly because of the high demand for sex workers, domestic workers, and laborers (Table 7). Other reasons are high unemployment, poverty in the countryside, bereavement, and divorce. Similar reasons account for the dominance of the under-18 age group trafficked in Cambodia. The data on child trafficking are even more alarming. For example, in Cambodia, 29% of the NGOs reported that the average age of most children trafficked is 5–10 years, and 21% reported that the average age of children trafficked was 11–15 years. Information about the age of children trafficked in Viet Nam is not reliable as most NGOs interviewed were not involved in anti-trafficking activities involving children. These activities are integrated with child rights programs implemented by their organizations.

While 10 of the NGOs interviewed in Cambodia reported that the victims of trafficking approached the NGOs themselves, self-referral is not common among the NGOs in Viet Nam. Most NGOs in Viet Nam (9 of 13) reported that local law enforcement agencies referred the trafficking victims to them. The victims were also referred to the NGOs by neighbors or

Table 7: Average Age of Women and Children Trafficked

Age Range	Cambodia (%)	Viet Nam (%)
Age of women trafficked since 2005:		
Less than 18 years old	71.4	15.4
18–24 years old	7.1	46.2
25–29 years old	7.1	84.6
30–39 years old	0.0	68.2
Age of children trafficked since 2005:		
Less than 5 years old	7.1	7.7
5–10 years old	28.6	7.7
11–15 years old	21.4	15.4
16–18 years old	0.0	15.4

Note: The figures indicate the percentage of the total number of nongovernment organizations surveyed.

Source: Authors' calculations based on a survey interview in April 2011.

concerned citizens and other service providers. Rather than searching directly for victims, the NGOs conduct surveys to identify the high-risk localities targeted by traffickers and areas where trafficking has reached alarming levels. Local authorities, law enforcement agencies, and civic organizations that work closely with victims introduce the victims of trafficking to the NGOs. Thus, the NGOs' anti-trafficking actions depend largely on the cooperation and assistance of related agencies and organizations.

Of the NGOs in Cambodia, 79% reported that Thailand was the major trafficking destination of Cambodian women, whereas 92% of the NGOs in Viet Nam cited the PRC as the main trafficking destination for Vietnamese women (Table 8). Besides illiterate rural women, a new generation of girls and women from urban areas who have a certain level of education are also traded by organized gangs. The traffickers often search for lonely girls on the internet and lure them to participate in profitable projects or lucrative jobs in big cities. They then sell the girls into brothels in the foreign country.

Similarly, 79% of the NGOs in Cambodia cited Thailand as the major trafficking destination of Cambodian children, whereas 31% Viet Nam NGOs cited the PRC as the main trafficking destination for Vietnamese children. The key reason that children are trafficked both in Cambodia and Viet Nam was found to be poverty and poor educational opportunities.

Methods frequently used by traffickers to lure women and children include the promise of job, marriage, or a better life (Table 9). All NGOs in Viet Nam and 79% of NGOs in Cambodia acknowledged that the promise of a job is the trick most often used by human traffickers because of the victims' desire for higher incomes and a better life. There is also an increasing demand from PRC men for Vietnamese wives, and many young Vietnamese girls believe that marriage to a foreigner will enable them to have a better life. This is a major reason that the PRC is the main destination for trafficked Vietnamese women. Upon arrival in the PRC, the women are often sold to other men, to brothels, or to families as laborers.

Cambodia is the second-largest trafficking destination of Vietnamese women and children. The main purpose is prostitution. Hence, prostitution and pornography are the dominant crimes associated with trafficking of women and children reported by Cambodian NGOs (79%) and Vietnamese NGOs (92%). In Viet Nam, prostitutes use pornographic

Table 8: Destinations of Trafficked Women and Children

Destination	Cambodia (%)	Viet Nam (%)
Trafficking destinations for women since 2005:		
Cambodia	0.0	30.8
People's Republic of China	7.1	92.3
Republic of Korea	28.6	7.7
Taipei, China	35.7	15.4
Thailand	78.6	15.4
Trafficking destinations for children since 2005:		
Cambodia	0.0	7.7
People's Republic of China	7.1	30.8
Republic of Korea	14.3	0.0
Taipei, China	14.3	7.7
Thailand	78.6	7.7

Note: The figures indicate the percentage of the total number of nongovernment organizations surveyed.

Source: Authors' calculations based on a survey interview in April 2011.

Table 9: Methods Used to Trick Women and Children and Crimes Associated with Trafficking

Method	Cambodia (%)	Viet Nam (%)
Methods often used to trick women and children:		
Good job	78.6	100
Marriage	64.3	84.6
Labor market	64.3	30.8
Better life	42.9	76.9
Average length of time to investigate a woman/child trafficking case:		
Less than 5 months	50	15.4
More than 5 months	28.6	0
Formal charges against individuals involved in women and children trafficking	0	7.7
Crimes associated with trafficked women and children:		
Prostitution and pornography	78.6	92.3
Drug trafficking	35.7	0
Illegal immigration	0	61.5
False identification	7.1	53.8

Note: The figures indicate the percentage of total number of nongovernment organizations surveyed.

Source: Authors' calculations based on a survey interview in April 2011.

websites to communicate with customers. These websites are also accessed by young people, including teenagers, through internet cafes and other public places that are difficult for the authorities to regulate. In Cambodia, more than one-third of NGOs cited drug trafficking as the most prevalent crime associated with trafficking in women and children; whereas in Viet Nam, more than two-thirds of NGOs cited illegal immigration and false identification as two major crimes associated with trafficking.

Formal charges against individuals involved in the trafficking of women and/or children are weak and such crimes often go unreported. For example, only one Vietnamese NGO (7.7%) reported formal charges brought against individuals involved in trafficking of women and/or children. A major reason is the difficulty in determining a case of trafficking crime as it has no clear definition. For instance, if a person is approached when he or she is leading others across a country border, that person will not admit to be being involved in trafficking as there is no evidence related to exchange of money, leading to the difficulties in identifying traffickers. Furthermore, one NGO acknowledges that law enforcement activities in Viet Nam remain weak. There is no specific anti-trafficking law in Viet Nam and all trafficking cases are judged according to criminal law.

Major Factors Contributing to the Performance of Anti-Trafficking Programs

Strong commitment and close cooperation from local partners is a major contributing factor to the performance of NGOs' anti-trafficking programs in Viet Nam. All 13 NGOs interviewed acknowledged that they had received strong support from local partners in conducting baseline surveys, facilitating victim access, and evaluating the implementation and sustainability of project activities. Other factors contributing to effective program performance include a well-designed action plan, close coordination with various anti-trafficking agencies, strong

organizational capacity, qualified staff, and valuable technical advisors. The provision of vocational training and establishment of vocational villages, support for production groups, good counseling services, volunteer contributions, and community participation are also significant factors.

NGOs in Cambodia reported that a good legal framework was the most important factor contributing to their performance, followed by strong government commitment, cooperation from local partners, and community contribution. Government agencies, such as the Ministry of Interior, local authorities, and the police, play vital roles in the development of legal framework as well as in law enforcement. Factors such as well-designed action plans, clear procedures for identifying the needs of victims, sufficient funds, strong staff capacity and commitment, and positive experiences in anti-trafficking programs are also crucial to NGO performance.

Major Difficulties in Combating Trafficking

Despite the obvious achievements in combating human trafficking, NGOs in Cambodia and Viet Nam are confronted with many difficulties in implementing their anti-trafficking programs. For NGOs in Viet Nam, the major constraints relate to policy or legal issues and program implementation. Although the Government of Viet Nam has promulgated a national action plan to combat human trafficking, no budget has been provided to carry out the associated activities. Local authorities are neither active nor proactive in combating human trafficking, and they rely mainly on NGOs and other organizations to carry out activities in this area. It is also difficult to determine a case of trafficking crime because it can take different forms, such as sex trafficking, pornography, labor trafficking, and fraudulent adoption (UNICEF 2005). There is no clear definition of the different forms of trafficking. Moreover, law enforcement in Viet Nam remains weak—Viet Nam does not have any specific anti-trafficking law, and all trafficking cases are judged according to criminal law.

Gaining access to victims is also as a critical constraint to the implementation of anti-trafficking programs. This is mainly because trafficking is a sensitive issue and there is a general lack of understanding of the rights of victims. Victims feel ashamed or embarrassed, and may not want people to know of their situation for fear of retribution. Insufficient funding and human resources to organize program activities is another crucial constraint to program implementation. Funding tends to be short-term or allocated annually, leading to breakdowns in implementation when funds are no longer available. The officers are also overworked. Local partners who work part-time on anti-trafficking programs are generally busy with their full-time jobs. Problems involving referral of trafficking victims, discrimination, and management of reintegration cases, as well as the limited understanding of local authorities about the programs' activities are other constraints to program implementation.

In Cambodia, the challenges NGOs face in dealing with human trafficking include difficulty in identifying victims, inadequate and irregular funding, corruption, the dispersed geographical location of the victims, and threats to victims from traffickers. NGOs find it hard to identify trafficking victims due to the limited sources of trafficking data, language barriers, threats from traffickers, and sometimes the lack of understanding by authorities and partners regarding human trafficking. They also find it difficult to transfer trafficking victims to other organizations due to poor cooperation and commitment from these organizations.

The lack of well-established procedures for investigating human trafficking cases is a major problem encountered by the Vietnamese NGOs surveyed. In contrast, more than 50% of

the Cambodian NGOs do not consider this to be a problem. The severity of funding shortages varies across NGOs in Viet Nam.

Many NGOs in Cambodia and Viet Nam reported that the victims' feelings of shame or embarrassment are a major barrier to providing them with help. Some NGOs, on the other hand, reported that there are cases where victims do not see themselves as victims, while other NGOs noted that victims lack knowledge about their rights. NGOs in Viet Nam do not face language and cultural barriers when working with victims, while many NGOs in Cambodia do encounter such problems. NGOs interviewed in both countries reported that they seldom lack support from victim service providers or community-based organizations in assisting trafficking victims.

Problems in Rehabilitating and Reintegrating Trafficking Victims

The survey results show that rehabilitation and reintegration programs are more developed in Viet Nam than they are in Cambodia. Of the 13 NGOs in Viet Nam, 85% have engaged in rehabilitation and reintegration programs (Table 4), while only 43% of the 14 NGOs in Cambodia have done so. This is because repatriation activities are not considered an urgent concern in Cambodia. The Government of Cambodia and other organizations and agencies, including NGOs, place greater emphasis on strengthening prevention, protecting the people from being trafficked, and rescuing victims to reduce the number of people trafficked. In addition, the numbers of victims returned home after being trafficked has not been thoroughly investigated.

Vietnamese NGOs have identified four major issues in their rehabilitation and reintegration programs. First, there is social discrimination against the victims. Due to the lack of information about trafficking and trafficked cases, there is a common misconception that trafficking always relates to crime, regardless of who the traffickers and the victims are. Second, returnees need help in finding jobs and earning an income to enable them to stabilize their lives and avoid becoming a burden to their families, relatives, and society. Most trafficking victims do not have any qualifications or skills, and/or lack the capital to start a new business on their own. Third, many victims return with health problems, including mental health issues resulting from long-distance travel, hard work, and harsh treatment. Fourth, returnees suffer from alienation from their role and status in the community because they have been away for a long period of time. Feelings of shame or embarrassment on the part of the victims can hinder access to them and can prevent them from obtaining legal support, such as the issuance of identity cards, personal documents, or birth certificates for their children.

NGOs' rehabilitation and reintegration programs provide various forms of support to trafficking victims, including the provision of vocational training and psychological support. As the activities of several NGOs were found to overlap, there is scope for individual NGOs to specialize in one activity (e.g., vocational training, shelter, health care, legal assistance, or credit provision). This approach would contribute to providing more effective and comprehensive assistance to the victims. In addition, most victims return home empty-handed. Some have no immediate family members, relatives, or friends to ask for assistance. Thus, shelters are important for such victims when they first return. At present, government agencies are responsible for managing and providing shelters for the victims, while NGOs act as funding agencies or providers of technical assistance for the operation and maintenance of the shelters. Close cooperation between NGOs and government agencies in managing shelters for victims should be fostered to maximize synergies.

Coordination Efforts in Combating Women and Children Trafficking

NGOs in Cambodia and Viet Nam have different areas of emphasis (Table 10). About 70% of NGOs in Viet Nam view anti-trafficking activities as important compared to only 7% of NGOs in Cambodia. Rehabilitation and reintegration, and vocational training are the focal areas of Vietnamese NGOs' anti-trafficking programs (31%); while legal programs and human and children's rights are the focal areas of Cambodian NGOs (7%). Viet Nam's NGOs have engaged more extensively in partnerships to help combat human trafficking compared to Cambodia's NGOs. Activities conducted by Vietnamese NGOs in partnership with other organizations include communication events, while Cambodian NGOs have undertaken joint meetings and workshops on how to combat trafficking of women and children in the country.

All NGOs interviewed in Viet Nam have either collaborated with or received support from government agencies in their anti-trafficking programs. The key government agencies include the Women's Union and the Ministry of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs. These

Table 10: Coordination Efforts between Government and Nongovernment Organizations and among Nongovernment Organizations in Combating Trafficking of Women and Children

Item	Cambodia	Viet Nam
Area of anti-trafficking programs ranked as most important	Prevention = 7.1% Rehabilitation and reintegration = 0% Vocational training = 0% Legal programs = 7.1% Human and children's rights = 7.1%	Prevention = 69.2% Rehabilitation and reintegration = 30.8% Vocational training = 30.8% Legal programs = 0% Human and children's rights = 0%
Engaged in partnership activities to combat trafficking	61.5%	28.6%
Collaborative activities engaged in communication events and joint meetings	Communication events with others = 0% Joint meeting and workshops = 14.3%	Communication events with others = 23.1% Joint meeting and workshops = 0%
Anti-trafficking programs that collaborate with or receive support from government agencies	0%	100%
Government agencies supporting anti-trafficking programs	No response	Police = 7.7% Women's Union = 84.6% Youth union = 7.7% Mass media = 15.4% Ministry of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs = 38.5%
Collaborated with other NGOs to carry out anti-trafficking programs	71.4%	92.3%
Types of NGOs with whom collaboration on with anti-trafficking programs was conducted	Local NGOs = 7.1% Local and international NGOs = 57.1%	Local NGOs = 15.4% Local and international NGOs = 6.9%
Are there other ways you believe your organization could enhance trafficking investigation?	28.6%	23.1%

NGO = nongovernment organization.

Note: The figures indicate the percentage of the total number of NGOs surveyed.

Source: Authors' calculations based on a survey interview in April 2011.

agencies protect the interests of women and laborers who are vulnerable to trafficking, and act as contact points to access trafficking victims or targeted beneficiaries.

The survey results also show that collaboration among NGOs is common both in Cambodia and Viet Nam, with 60%–70% of the NGOs in both countries reporting that they have collaborated with other local and/or international NGOs in implementing their anti-trafficking programs. The NGOs cooperate with other NGOs to organize communication events, exchange materials, or share implementation experiences. They also organize meetings of NGOs that have carried out anti-trafficking programs to update related documents and strategies and/or develop joint action plans. However, only 23.1% Vietnamese NGOs believe there are other ways that their organizations could enhance their trafficking investigation. Similarly, only 28.6% of Cambodian NGOs believe that their organizations could further improve the investigation of trafficking cases.

Conclusions

NGOs in Viet Nam and Cambodia face various challenges in the implementation of their human anti-trafficking programs and projects. Most NGOs in Viet Nam are frequently hampered by the lack of procedures for investigating cases of women and children trafficking, as well as a lack of financial and human resources to implement most of their programs. Most NGOs in Cambodia consider identifying the victims to be the most difficult part of dealing with trafficking. This task is made problematic by limited data availability, a low level of understanding of the trafficked victims, threats from traffickers, and sometimes a lack of understanding on the part of authorities and partners regarding human trafficking. NGOs in both countries face difficulties in accessing the victims due to a general lack of knowledge of the rights of victims, poor legal assistance and support for the victims, and lack of prosecution of traffickers. In addition, the victims experience social discrimination from the community because of insufficient understanding of the consequences of trafficking and a tendency to relate trafficking to crime regardless of whether the individual is a trafficker or a victim.

Compared to Viet Nam, the anti-trafficking programs operated by Cambodian NGOs have enjoyed a much longer history, dating back 30 years. Most Cambodian NGOs interviewed used financial sources other than the Asia Foundation, the International Organization for Migration, Oxfam, and the United Nations. However, training programs provided to NGO staff are generally inadequate.

Most NGOs in Viet Nam cited commitment at the local and national levels, as well as good collaboration with local partners as the major factors contributing to the performance of their anti-trafficking programs. Similarly, most NGOs in Cambodia attributed the performance of their programs to factors such as cooperation among the NGOs and strong commitment from government agencies, including the judicial police force, local authorities, and the Ministry of Interior. NGOs in Viet Nam agree that prevention, rehabilitation, protection, and support programs help reduce the vulnerability of women and children to trafficking. Unlike in Viet Nam, few repatriation programs are run by NGOs in Cambodia because repatriation activities are not considered to be an urgent need there. Thus, most NGOs in Cambodia support trafficking victims with vocational training to enhance their job opportunities so that they can support themselves.

Policy Implications

The trafficking of women and children from Viet Nam to the PRC and Cambodia involves complex social and cultural issues. For instance, the concept of the “border” as a political boundary does not seem to exist among the ethnic minority groups of the PRC and Viet Nam, and the practice of buying a wife in a nearby village is universal in these remote areas. The enforcement of the one-child policy in the PRC and the associated skewed gender balance in favor of males help fuel the demand for Vietnamese women for marriage and Vietnamese children for adoption. Moreover, lax border patrols and harsh topography make it easy for citizens to cross the borders, thus allowing trafficking to occur undetected. Illegal migration for prostitution from Viet Nam to Phnom Penh in Cambodia still occurs, but it appears to be less prevalent than it was in the late 1990s and early 2000s. This is because human traffickers find it more appealing to push migration for prostitution to provinces along the Mekong delta to Ho Chi Minh City and to other Asian destinations such as the Republic of Korea; Singapore; and Taipei, China (Lainez 2010). Therefore, it is important for the governments of neighboring countries to work together to develop joint solutions to solve the trafficking problems and to cooperate with other organizations to support the victims.

At the Seventh Senior Officials Meeting of the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative Against Trafficking, held in Bagan, Myanmar on 20–21 January 2010, the GMS countries made a commitment to increase the momentum to combat human trafficking. The event brought together more than 135 representatives from the six governments in the GMS and observers from other member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the United Nations, international NGOs, and donors. The participants reviewed plans and priorities to counter trafficking, focusing in particular on law enforcement and criminal justice, and the recovery and reintegration of victims (*New Straits Times* 2010). Despite such concerted efforts by all parties to counter human trafficking, there are still many weaknesses in the implementation of their anti-trafficking programs.

The findings of this study indicate deficiencies in the cooperation between government agencies and NGOs in the implementation of anti-trafficking programs. Anti-trafficking programs of NGO networks in Viet Nam are relatively small, and a number of NGOs—both in Cambodia and in Viet Nam—do not join networks or implement programs in partnership with other NGOs. Implementation of anti-trafficking projects is generally constrained by the lack of financial and human resources, difficulty in identifying victims, and weak legal frameworks. Collaboration with government agencies is taking place but needs to be improved, especially between Cambodian NGOs and the Women’s Union, which is mandated to uplift the economic, social, mental, and physical well-being of women and children. An effective cooperation mechanism between NGOs, related government agencies, and other concerned organizations should be fostered to develop comprehensive and intensive anti-trafficking programs.

NGOs play vital roles in fighting human trafficking. However, the survey results indicate that efforts in some areas remain insufficient. For example, most Vietnamese NGOs’ programs focus more on prevention, advocacy, and communication rather than on the development of the legal framework or law enforcement. The Government of Viet Nam should involve NGOs in developing Viet Nam’s human anti-trafficking law. Working more closely with NGOs and involving them in the policy-making process can help develop policies and laws that are better tailored to the situation of the country as well as of the region.

In Cambodia, there is an absence of systematic data about repatriated victims, and only very few NGOs have carried out programs to help victims reintegrate into their communities on their return. Victims of trafficking often escape and return to their home country where they hope to find assistance, comfort, and sympathy. Thus, government and nongovernment sectors should emphasize rehabilitation programs for them.

NGOs have been involved in combating human trafficking for a long time and the staff in charge of anti-trafficking programs have accumulated many years of experience. However, the survey results show that they lack proper training to implement anti-trafficking programs more effectively. Most of the staff in charge of programs cope with their tasks through self-learning and experience. More training on human trafficking issues should therefore be made available to NGO staff.

The study suggests that poverty and poor education are the leading causes of trafficking in Cambodia and Viet Nam. Once individuals are trafficked, their lives become part of a vicious cycle. Those who are able to return home may fall victim to trafficking again or may become involved in trafficking-related crimes if they cannot escape from poverty. Government measures to promote and invest in activities for hunger elimination, poverty reduction, and children's education are important deterrents to human trafficking. At the same time, advocacy to increase people's awareness of trafficking-related issues should be intensified to make the poor less vulnerable to human trafficking.

Education, advocacy, and communication activities to counter human trafficking should be directed at every social stratum, and should extend to rural and mountainous areas where education standards are very low. The survey results indicate that the promise of a good job by individuals posing as employment agents is the main trick that traffickers use to lure women and children. This underlines the need for governments to provide vocational training and create employment opportunities to help rural people obtain work. Creating jobs is important not only for preventing trafficking, but also for reintegrating and rehabilitating trafficking victims.

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² The Asian Development Bank recognizes China by the name People's Republic of China.

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Appendix: Nongovernment Organizations Interviewed

Cambodia

1. Cambodian Center for the Protection of Children's Rights
2. Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association
3. Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights
4. Cambodian Women's Crisis Center
5. Healthcare Center for Children
6. Khmer Women's Voice Center
7. Legal Aid of Cambodia
8. Legal Support for Children and Women
9. Mith Samlanh (Friends)
10. NYEMO Cambodia NGO
11. Protection of Juvenile Justice
12. Saboras Organization
13. Chab Dai Coalition
14. Action Pour Les Enfants
15. Don Bosco Foundation
16. International Labour Organization
17. World Vision Cambodia
18. Youth with a Mission
19. Asia Regional Trafficking in Persons (ARTIP) Project
20. End Child Prostitution, Abuses and Trafficking–Cambodia
21. United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-region
22. Cambodian Defenders Project
23. Equal Access
24. Cambodian Center for Human Rights
25. Women for Prosperity

Viet Nam

1. Save the Children UK
2. ActionAid International Vietnam
3. The Asia Foundation
4. Research Center for Family Health and Community Development
5. Oxfam Quebec
6. Gruppo Trentino Volontariato
7. Vietnam Handicraft Research and Promotion Centre
8. Catholic Relief Services
9. Centre for Reproductive and Family Health
10. SHARE Centre
11. Australian People for Health, Education and Development Abroad
12. Centre for Studies and Applied Sciences in Gender, Family, Women and Adolescents
13. Centre for Education Promotion and Empowerment of Women

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