



CASE STUDY

District Level Anti-Trafficking in Person Committees in Border Provinces on the USAID Thailand CTIP Project

Chiang Rai PSDHS, Mae Sai Immigration and World Vision explain the role of the Operations Committee during the inaugural Mae Sai District ATIP Committee Operations Sub-committee capacity building training in Mae Sai, Chiang Rai.

Introduction

Local actors are important both for trafficking in persons (TIP) prevention and protection of survivors as they have deep connections with local communities and a better understanding of vulnerabilities to TIP and labor exploitation. In the past several years, Thailand has made significant progress with laws and policies at the national level, to punish perpetrators, protect survivors, and prevent human trafficking. Additionally, the provincial Anti-trafficking in Persons (ATIP) Committee, under the leadership of the Provincial Social Development and Human Security office (PSDHS), plays a crucial role in implementing national policy and laws. However, gaps remain in implementation and enforcement at the district, sub-district, and village levels. Strengthening the capacity of frontline practitioners to identify and refer TIP survivors helps to strengthen protection efforts at the local level, ensuring that more victims are identified and referred to protection and (re)integration services.

USAID Thailand CTIP has two primary purposes: to reduce trafficking in persons in Thailand and to better protect the rights of trafficked persons. To fulfill these purposes, the project incorporates critical crosscutting factors into all activities. These include a gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) approach that mainstreams gender and social inclusion in all components, and the use of innovative, data-driven solutions — both technical and programmatic — to address emerging issues, research and service delivery. USAID Thailand CTIP prioritizes geographic areas with increased risk of human trafficking, including known trafficking routes such as border areas and communities with large migrant

populations working in high-risk industries, such as construction, fisheries and agriculture.

Under the USAID Thailand CTIP Project, World Vision (WV) worked in partnership with PSDHS, FOCUS and District Chiefs to facilitate the establishment of four new district-level ATIP (DL-ATIP) Committees in Chiang Saen, Chiang Khong, Mae Sai and Wiang Khaen districts in Chiang Rai Province. The DL-ATIP Committees, like the provincial ATIP Committee (PL-ATIP), are responsible for developing annual action plans and submitting them to the PSDHS, who holds them accountable for implementing them. In FY21, an additional district level ATIP Committee was established in Phanom District, in Surat Thani, drawing from lessons learned from the successful establishment of district committees in Chiang Rai. DL-ATIP Committees in Chiang Rai play a key coordination role on counter-trafficking with counterparts in Laos. This contributes to cross border TIP prevention and strengthens protection systems on both sides of the border.

Chiang Rai is the northernmost province of Thailand and is bordered by Laos and Myanmar. It is divided into 18 districts, six of which share borders with Laos or Myanmar. Mae Sai and Mae Fah Luang Districts border Shan State in Myanmar, Chiang Saen District borders Ton Pheung Town in Bokeo Province of Laos, Chiang Khong District borders Houayxay Town in Bokeo Province of Laos, Wiang Kaen District borders Pak Tha Town in Bokeo Province of Laos and Thoeng District also shares a small border with Bo Kaeo province in Laos. All six districts are 70-150 kilometers, or about a two-hour drive, from Chiang Rai City, where most provincial level government agencies are located.

Mae Sai District has two legal border crossing points: the Mae Sai-Tachileik Bridge, also known as Bridge 1, for general traffic and Bridge 2 for cargo trucks only. There are over 50 natural border crossings along the Sai River which forms the border between Mae Sai and Tachileik, where many migrant workers migrate across the border irregularly. There are three legal border crossing points along the Mekong River which forms the Laos border: the Thai-Laos Friendship Bridge in Chiang Khong District of Thailand, Buck Pier in Chiang Khong District, and a boat crossing at the Golden Triangle in Chiang Saen District of Thailand. There are over 20 natural border crossing points over the Mekong River, through which migrants can migrate irregularly across the Thai-Laos border.

Because the border districts have many irregular crossings, some of which are used to transport (potential) victims of trafficking in persons and are located far from Mueang (city) District where the PL-ATIP Committee is located, it is difficult for the PL-ATIP to respond to trafficking cases in a timely manner. Moreover, there were no established coordination points at the district level to facilitate coordination between the district-



Trafficking in persons, migrant workers, and migration are related. As Chiang Rai is the northernmost province of Thailand and bordered by Laos and Myanmar, these problems are inevitable. The Provincial ATIP Committee is located far away from border districts and cannot provide timely assistance when trafficking in persons or migration of migrant workers occur. It is difficult to coordinate in border areas. We should have a coordination point in border areas to monitor and report to the provincial level. Thus, border districts are the most appropriate place to establish this committee.

DL-ATIP COMMITTEE MEMBER

provincial level on TIP cases. In order to address these challenges and to improve responses to TIP in border districts, a DL-ATIP Committee was first established in Chiang Khong District in 2019, chaired by the District-Chief. In 2020, DL-ATIP Committees was established in Wiang Kaen, Mae Sai, and Chiang Saen Districts, respectively.

This case study highlights the methodology and process of establishing DL-ATIP Committees in four of Chiang Rai's border districts, discusses the activities implemented, results achieved, and challenges and recommendations for strengthening DL-ATIP Committees in Thailand. The case study has drawn on data from District Level Orders, meeting minutes, pre-post testing, quarterly and annual project reports, and five key informant interviews conducted in April 2022.

Methodology

The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act (2008, 2015, 2017), established the Anti-Human Trafficking in Persons Division within the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, which requires every province to establish a PL-ATIP Committee, appointed by the PSDHS in the role of secretariat and chaired by the Provincial Governor. In 2013 The Ministry of Interior issued an order - No. 768/2556 on Establishment of the District Center for Integration and Coordination of Anti-Trafficking in Persons Operations. In 2015 the Royal Thai Government (RTG) declared TIP a priority on the national agenda, mandating all ministries to work together to solve the problem of TIP under the leadership of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. These policy developments highlight the importance the RTG places on both intra-agency coordination, and coordination between village – district – provincial and national levels in the fight against TIP.

In 2018, WV under the USAID Thailand CTIP Project, consulted with provincial partners, including the PSDHS and FOCUS about establishing and institutionalizing DL-ATIP committees. Referencing order No. 768/2556 from the Ministry of Interior, WV, PSDHS and FOCUS initiated discussions with District-Chiefs in each district who operate within the Ministry of Interior (MOI), to propose the establishment of a DL-ATIP Committee, modelled on the PL-ATIP Committee and in-line with the MOI order. The process of establishing the committees included:

Advocating with the District Chiefs to Establish a DL-ATIP Committee

PSDHS, WV, and FOCUS met with the District Chief of each of the four border districts. They referenced the MOI order and discussed the model of the provincial ATIP committee, capacity building, and coordinating support with PSDHS, WV, and FOCUS. Upon approval



Figure 1: Initial meeting with the Chiang Saen District Chief



Figure 2: Meeting with the Deputy District Chief of Mae Sai to review the DL-Committee appointment letter

of the establishment of the committee, the District Chief delegated the Deputy District Chief as the primary focal point for further progress.

A working team was established, made up of PSDHS, WV, FOCUS, Chiang Rai Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC), Immigration Office, and Center for Girls. The working team drafted a committee appointment letter, which was presented to the District Chief to review, provide feedback, and sign.

The appointment letter outlines individual agencies who are committee members, the objectives of the committee, and separates the committee into two subcommittees: the Executive and Operations Committees. The Executive Committee consists of the District Chief, who serves as the Chairperson, police superintendent, who serves as the Vice Chairperson, and representatives of local government agencies, including the Immigration Superintendent, Head of Public Health District Office, Hospital Director, Administrative Secretary, President of the Local Administrative Organization, Sub-District Headperson, PSDHS, Shelter



Figure 3: The District Chief of Wiang Kean explains the objectives of the Wiang Kean District ATIP Committee during the inaugural Wiang Kean ATIP Committee Inception Meeting

for Children and Families, and other CSOs, who serve as committee members.

The Operations Committee is divided into three groups: 1) Prevention and Monitoring Committee, which consists of the Immigration Superintendent, Provincial Police Superintendent, Subdistrict Headperson, Village Headperson, Village Leader, Women’s Group Leader, and CSOs working in the area; 2) Suppression and Information Committee which consists of the Police, Military, Investigation Inspector, and Deputy District Chief; and 3) Rehabilitation Committee consisting of the District Public Health, Hospital, President of the Local Administrative Organization, representative of the Welfare Protection Center for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, and representative of the Shelter for Children and Families. Some organizations are members of both committees and more than one group, depending on their professional responsibilities and organizational mandates.

DL-ATIP inception meeting to explain the rationale, objectives, roles and duties of the committee

After the District-Chief signed the appointment order, the Deputy District Chief invited committee members

to attend a meeting to acknowledge the Committee’s rationale, objectives, roles, and duties. The meeting was chaired by the District-Chief Officer, and the working team, including PSDHS, WV and FOCUS.

Hosting capacity building trainings for the Operations Committee

After the inception meeting, the Deputy District Chief, PSDHS, WV and FOCUS developed a capacity building plan to strengthen the committee and prepare it for its roles as identified in the appointment letter. A “Basic Anti-Human Trafficking Manual” developed by WV and “Operations Manual for Assisting Victims at the Community Level” developed by FOCUS were used to facilitate capacity building of the Operations Committee. The training content included practical activities and case-study based activities on: defining trafficking in persons; victim identification and referral; victim protection and assistance processes; prevention, community monitoring, case reporting, and relevant legislation, for example the ATIP Act and 2019 Forced Labor Amendment. Capacity building trainings were organized for Operations Committee members on an annual basis between 2019-2021. Committee members also engaged regularly in joint activities, such as participating in an annual campaign to end violence against women and children and end TIP and holding



Figure 4: Training for women's leaders and community leaders, Chiang Khong

community level meetings to report the state of TIP in their communities and developing community level TIP prevention plans.

Institutionalizing annual planning and monitoring processes at the community level

From 2019-2021, 16 meetings and trainings were organized to provide knowledge to committee members and build member capacity in CTIP. In 2021, for example, committee members were trained to identify problems in their own communities, find solutions to those problems, and develop a step-by-step, systematic prevention and monitoring plan for

their own communities. Plans included, but were not limited to, providing vocational and life-skills training for survivors who are reintegrating into communities, establishing community 'watch-dog' groups to monitor and file potential cases to relevant authorities, and hosting village level trainings for community members on human trafficking, identification and case reporting. Plans developed by committee members in most cases are within the existing mandate/remit of member organizations and do not require additional budget allocations. In the case where financial support is needed, committees can submit a budget proposal to the Municipality Office or Local Administrative Organization.



Figure 5-6: Training on human trafficking prevention and monitoring planning for communities

Objectives

The main objective of the DL-ATIP Committees is to serve as coordination point for anti-trafficking operations in border areas and to strengthen coordination between district and provincial levels. The appointment letter from the District Chief defined the duties and roles of the D-ATIP Committees as follows:

Executive Committee has the following duties:

- Administer, direct, supervise, and monitor operations of the DL-ATIP to ensure alignment with PL-ATIP.
- Operate as a multidisciplinary team under the PL-ATIP guidance in case of emergency.
- Appoint a working group to consider or take any action as assigned by the DL-ATIP Committee.
- Perform any other tasks as appropriate to prevent and combat trafficking in persons in the district.

Prevention and Monitoring Committee (part of the Operations Committee) has the following duties:

- Inspect, prevent, and monitor human trafficking-related offenses in the responsible area and coordinate with other areas involved in trafficking in persons.
- Coordinate with other committees and perform any other tasks as assigned by the DL-ATIP Committee.

Suppression and Information Committee (part of the Operations Committee) has the following duties:

- Receive incident reports, assist victims of trafficking in persons in the area, and report to the DL-ATIP Committee.
- Investigate and collect information about trafficking in persons and coordinate assistance as a multidisciplinary team.
- Coordinate with other committees and perform any other tasks as assigned by the DL-ATIP Committee.

Rehabilitation Committee (part of Operations Committee) has the following duties:

- Provide physical and mental healthcare assistance to victims and their families to allow them to safely reintegrate into society.
- Coordinate with other committees and perform any other tasks as assigned by the DL-ATIP Committee.

Results

Between 2019-2021, four new DL-ATIP Committees were established, institutionalized through an order from the District Chief under a MOI order, and received capacity building through 16 meetings and trainings in Chiang Sean, Chiang Khong, Wiang Kean and Mae Sai Districts, Chiang Rai Province. Pre-post testing results indicated increased capacity among members, with a weighted average of 14% knowledge increase over the capacity building training series. In terms of institutionalization, the sub-district municipality, which is a member of the D-ATIP Committees, has set aside funds in their annual budget plan to organize annual community trainings on trafficking in persons and protection of children and vulnerable people. This has ensured sustainability for the committees, with the municipal level securing funds to support the committee moving forward.

One of the primary objectives of the committees was to improve coordination and communication between district – provincial levels, which was highlighted in the final quarter of 2021. While capacity building activities with DL-ATIP committees had focused on responding

to TIP cases with exploited migrants, the Chiang Saen DL-ATIP Committee played a key coordination role in the repatriation of Thai victims of labor exploitation and trafficking from the Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone in Laos between September 2021 to the time of writing this case study in April 2022. The DL-ATIP Committees received several case reports between September-December 2021 directly from victims and



4

new district level ATIP committees established



311

(239 women/72 men) committee members participated in capacity building trainings with a weighted average of 14% knowledge increase across trainings



70

Thai nationals assisted with repatriation

victims' families. They initiated coordination with the PL-ATIP committee to coordinate a response to rescue and repatriate the victims. As of April 2022, at least 70 people have received assistance from this strengthened district – provincial – national – international coordination. Assistance includes repatriation support, safe accommodation, supporting on the process of seeking compensation, and coordinating a subsistence and occupational allowance from the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security and Provincial Justice Office.

The coordination between district, provincial, national, and international actors to secure repatriation, identification, and referral of victims demonstrates the value of engaging stakeholders across all levels to improve the victim protection system. Local actors are important for both prevention and protection of TIP, as they have deeper connections in local communities, they better understand the local context of migration and vulnerabilities, and are closer to sites of exploitation than provincial and national actors. This is especially the case in border districts, where irregular migration practices increase vulnerability to trafficking. Strengthening the capacity of frontline practitioners to prevent and protect victims of TIP is what “moves the needle” in TIP, ensuring more victims are identified and referred to support services. The capacity building and annual action planning processes with DL-ATIP committees has led to the integration of local actors into a formalized anti-trafficking framework. This has been proven through recent case-based cooperation whereby DL-ATIP and PL-ATIP have successfully coordinated with Laotian officials to organize the repatriation of VoT, strengthening the protection system on both sides of the border.

Challenges

Key stakeholders interviewed in April 2022 identified several challenges in the ongoing success of the DL-ATIP Committees. As has been cited elsewhere, including in the 2021 US DOS TIP Report, frequent staff turnover is a critical concern for the DL-ATIP Committees' ongoing functioning and sustainability. Although the committees have been established under an MOI order and through the appointment of the District Chief, District Chiefs rotate every two years. Key informants (KIs) identified the challenges associated with frequent changes in leadership, with new District Chiefs, some of whom were previously stationed in an area where TIP was not a priority or critical issue, may lack buy-in or prioritize the DL-ATIP Committees. KIs noted that results-based management and data collection of TIP indicators at the district level are critical to ensuring that the Committees remain functional under new leadership and that can be used as evidence to advocate for the ongoing support of the Committees. An additional challenge highlighted by KIs is that, while committee members have been assigned by their respective agencies, their

day-to-day workload has not been reduced, meaning that they have limited capacity to focus on DL-ATIP Committee initiatives. Ongoing coordination and joint activities are critical, alongside joint action plans with clear responsibilities and tasks delegated to committee members and endorsed by their supervisors in their respective agencies.

Recommendations

Key informants gave several recommendations to improve the DL-ATIP Committees coordination and response role in the ATIP eco-system moving forward. These included:

- To provide ongoing capacity building to the operations committee, especially when changes in national policy and guidance are implemented, for example, Thailand's new National Referral Mechanism guidelines.
- The committee should ensure that the Local Administrative Organization plays a key role in the Committees, as they have a direct mandate on community development.
- Annual DL-ATIP plans should be developed in Quarter 4 of each financial year, with The Local Administrative Organization and other member agencies allocating budget to support the implementation of annual DL-ATIP action plans.
- Coordination between member agencies should be strengthened, with scheduled quarterly meetings and an annual action plan monitored through quarterly meetings.
- A culture of learning and improvement should be integrated into the DL-ATIP Committees, with regular lessons learned and reflection meetings hosted to highlight ongoing challenges and recommendations for improving CTIP practice.



The PL-ATIP Committee should encourage and support the DL-ATIP Committee to enable it to be self-driven, conduct fieldwork, and connect villages, sub-districts, districts, and province. Every DL-ATIP should clearly understand its roles and duties.

CHIANG KHONG ATIP COMMITTEE MEMBER

