



Thailand's Country Report on Anti-Human Trafficking Response

(1 January - 31 December 2017)

Executive Summary

Combating human trafficking remains one of Thailand's top national agendas. Throughout 2017, the Royal Thai Government redoubled its efforts with a firm determination to tackle problems in all areas. While pursuing a proactive course of action in prosecuting wrong-doers and carrying out comprehensive measures to prevent vulnerable populations from falling prey to human traffickers, concerned officers, both frontline and operational, have continually been sensitized about the need to better detect signs of trafficking in persons and to better care for and protect victims and witnesses. Key concrete achievements in 2017 include:

1. Prompt and harsher punishments of public officials involved in human trafficking. Complicit public officials were criminally prosecuted. Depending on the nature and degree of their involvement, administrative and disciplinary actions were taken against them. Apart from prosecuting officials directly involved in human trafficking as well as those receiving bribes and kickbacks, the Government took action against those who neglected their duties or hindered efforts to solve the problem of human trafficking.

- High-ranking public officials involved in human trafficking were convicted with harsh penalties for the first time. In the notorious Padang Besar Case, the Court of Justice sentenced 11 public officials, one of whom was a lieutenant general, for having conspired to traffic human beings, detained several Rohingyas and held them for ransom. A 27-year prison term and a seizure of assets worth 15 million THB (approximately 476,948 USD) were handed down. Another official convicted was a former mayor. He was sentenced to a 78-year imprisonment and had his assets worth 23 million THB (approximately 731,320 USD) confiscated.

- A total of 11 public officials involved in human trafficking were criminally prosecuted. Four of them were charged with committing human trafficking and all are under the consideration of the Courts now. The remaining seven were charged with soliciting bribes from human trafficking activities. Following interrogation and evidence gathering carried out by the Office of Public Sector Anti-Corruption Commission (PACC), three public officials were charged. Evidence is being collected in one case. The other three public officials were found to have assisted those prosecuted for human trafficking. The Department of Special Investigation (DSI) has concluded its investigation and transferred the cases to the Office of National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) for further action.

- Prior to 2017, a total of 44 public officials were found to have been involved in human trafficking, 16 of whom were subsequently expelled from government service. Given the 11 cases of complicit officials uncovered in 2017, the number of complicit officials has risen to 55. The Government has not only expedited hearings but also imposed harsher disciplinary punishments. Ten more officials were expelled from government service, bringing the number of expulsion to 26 officials. For the other 29 officers, 21 were suspended from government service or removed from their positions. Among the remaining eight officials, disciplinary actions are being taken against three while the other four officials are

under scrutiny by the NACC. One former police officer could not be subject to disciplinary punishment, as his wrongdoing was disclosed after his retirement.

- With regard to government officials who neglected or failed to carry out their duties in 2017, the Command Centre for Combating Illegal Fishing (CCCIF) looked into three cases, as follows:

(1) In response to complaints that some officials' actions may have prejudiced a human trafficking case in Pattani Province, 16 officials were interrogated and one police officer was found to be remiss. The last case is being wrapped up and forwarded to the Royal Thai Police for further action.

(2) One Ranong immigration officer was apprehended as well as two employees on the charge of soliciting bribes for registration of migrant workers. Also, 11 persons were summoned for interrogation when there were doubts that the criminal prosecution, the disciplinary actions and the exertion of administrative power were delayed. The concerned superintendent was dismissed from his position and a sub-inspector was temporarily suspended during the NACC's operation.

(3) Investigation was conducted following complaints that ten police officers solicited bribes from fishery business owners. There were grounds for two accusations, in which the Royal Thai Police, as their agency of affiliation, ordered them to leave their positions and a disciplinary investigation has also been launched.

2. In 2017, the Court of Justice issued a verdict in a historic case concerning Rohingyas. The case was brought before the Court on 14 July 2015 and was ruled upon on 19 July 2017. Therefore, the case was completed in just two years and five days, which is considered very fast given the complexity of the case. There were a total of 155 suspects (only nine suspects were arrested at the initial stage), 504 witnesses and 80 victims. Out of the 155 suspects, 22 were government officials, including a lieutenant general and executives of Provincial and Sub-district Administrative Organisations. The swift prosecution of officials involved in human trafficking in this complex case reflects the Government's seriousness in setting an example and the close collaboration among different agencies in Thailand's justice system. This case was handled by the Department of Anti-Human Trafficking under the Office of the Attorney General and by the Anti-Human Trafficking Section under the Criminal Court (in lieu of the Natawi Provincial Court initially), both bodies being established in 2015 specifically to handle human trafficking cases. Nonetheless, this case has not been closed, as 45 suspects are still on the run.

3. Concrete progress has also been made in cases that were originally thought to be difficult to bring offenders to justice.

- There was a case reported by the New York Times in 2015 where one of the victims was a fishing crew member who was subjected to physical trauma resulting in partial amnesia (<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/27/world/outlaw-ocean-thailand-fishing-sea-slaves-pets.html>). After lengthy rehabilitation, the victim was able to provide testimony. The Criminal Court on 23 August 2017 convicted the person responsible to a 4-year prison term

and a payment of 450,000 THB (approximately 14,308 USD) as compensation for the victim. In addition, the Labour Court ordered the employer to pay wages owed to the victim worth 400,000 THB (about 12,719 USD). Meanwhile, the victim was placed in a shelter of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS) for physical, mental and social rehabilitation for two years and six months, and received financial support of 87,360 THB (about 2,778 USD) from the Anti-Human Trafficking Fund. The victim has now returned to live with his family as per his wish.

- In 2017, the Royal Thai Police and the CCCIF were able to detain some stateless vessels disguised under the Bolivian flag. Thai authorities also conducted extensive investigations which led to the arrest of an Indonesian broker and crew supervisor on human trafficking charges. Assistance was provided to 15 Indonesian and Filipino crew members to return to their home countries. Moreover, Thai authorities inspected and subsequently detained some fishing vessels owned by the family of a former President of the Thai Overseas Fisheries Association and a former Senator. This led to extensive investigations and the rescue of 35 Thai and Cambodian crew members from fishing vessels operating in Somali waters. The case is being prosecuted at the moment.

4. Thailand is the first country in ASEAN to have completed, two years ago, the setting up of human trafficking-specialized agencies under the Royal Thai Police, the Department of Special Investigation, the Office of the Attorney General and the Office of the Judiciary. The establishment of special human trafficking units across the three major pillars of prosecution has helped to speed up the judicial process. Investigations have also been expedited. In 2017, the police can now complete a case on average in 69 days (compared to 72 days in 2016). The public prosecutors spent 28 days on average per case in 2017 to consider whether or not to indict a case (compared to 38 days in 2016). The Courts of Justice have also reached verdicts in a shorter time frame since 2016 where they completed 91.79 percent of cases within one year and 63.25 percent (339 cases) within six months, compared to 2016 in which 310 cases (62.37 percent) were completed within six months.

5. Since 2016, the Courts of Justice have adjudicated human trafficking cases with greater efficiency. Out of the 732 human trafficking cases brought before the Courts in 2017, 536 cases were completed. The duration needed to reach a verdict varied according to the complexity of the case.

- within 6 months: 339 cases (representing 63.25 percent of completed cases)
- between 6 to 12 months: 153 cases (28.54 percent)
- between 12 and 24 months: 43 cases (8.02 percent)
- more than 24 months: 1 case (0.19 percent).

The statistics above shows that almost all cases (92 percent) were completed within one year.

6. More often than not, the Courts of Justice meted out harsher sentences. In 2017, 131 offenders were sentenced to a prison term longer than 10 years, accounting for 33.59 percent of those 390 convicted. In comparison with 2016, 67 perpetrators were sentenced to a prison term longer than 10 years, representing only 21.34 percent of those 314 convicted.

7. In 2017, anti-human trafficking laws and related laws continued to be strictly enforced.

- There were a total of 302 human trafficking cases in 2017, grouped as follows:
 - Sex trafficking: 255 cases (representing 84.4 percent)
 - Labour trafficking: 21 cases (7.0 percent)
 - Forced begging: 26 cases (8.6 percent).
- There were 427 suspects, of which 145 suspects were male (33.96 percent) and 282 were female (66.04 percent). Suspects were classified according to their nationality, as follows:
 - Thai: 361 suspects (84.54 percent)
 - Cambodian: 25 suspects (5.85 percent)
 - Myanmar: 9 suspects (2.11 percent)
 - Laotian: 3 suspects (0.70 percent)
 - Others: 29 suspects (6.80 percent).
- There were altogether 455 trafficking victims, 88 of whom were male (19.34 percent) and 367 of whom were female (80.66 percent). Victims were classified by nationality, as follows:
 - Thai: 327 victims (71.87 percent)
 - Myanmar: 53 victims (11.65 percent)
 - Laotian: 30 victims (6.60 percent)
 - Cambodian: 26 victims (5.71 percent)
 - Others: 19 victims (4.17 percent)

It is worth noting that the number of Myanmar victims steadily declined from 409 in 2015 and 238 in 2016 to 53 in 2017.

8. The situation of human trafficking in 2017 continued to evolve in response to the proactive measures undertaken by the Government in 2015-2016. Although the number of sex trafficking cases rose from 247 cases in 2016 to 255 cases in 2017, the number of arrested suspects decreased in the corresponding period from 385 to 371 suspects. The number of sex trafficking victims also went down from 370 to 336 victims. This was due to the fact that sex trafficking cases uncovered in 2017 were relatively small and uncomplicated. Firstly, 17 online cases were uncovered in 2017. Secondly, eight cases were uncovered as a result of extensive investigations into online pornography. Finally, five cases occurred abroad, such as in South Korea, Japan and some Middle Eastern countries.

In addition, the Government has tackled sex trafficking on the demand side by arresting more child prostitute clients. A total of 36 cases were prosecuted in 2015-2017, with prison terms of between 2 to 25 years handed down. In four cases, prison sentences were handed down without possibility of suspension. In 14 cases, prison sentences ranged from two to five years, while the prison terms ranged from five to ten years in eight cases and from ten to 25 years in ten cases. Four cases are still under the consideration of the Courts, 19 cases

under the consideration of the public prosecutors and 28 cases under the consideration of the police.

9. Even though statistics on labour trafficking appeared to be on the decline, more labour inspections and law enforcement on labour violations were actually carried out. In 2017, inspections conducted on industries susceptible to human trafficking and on fishing vessels uncovered 9,480 work establishments that violated the law, a rise of 25.99 percent (or an increase of 1,956 establishments) compared to 7,524 work establishments that violated the law in 2016. Compared to the previous year, the number of cases in 2017 rose by 19 (or 31.7 percent) to a total of 79 cases. Between 14 and 29 December 2017, labour violation cases filed to investigative officers were reviewed by the Royal Thai Police in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour. The two agencies found 50 cases in violation of labour laws, including cases concerning child labour and wage disputes that may involve human trafficking elements. These cases were thus referred to victim identification specialists from the Royal Thai Police, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security for further examination. From the team's extensive review, one case of trafficking in persons with elements of forced labour was uncovered and prosecuted; the rest of the reviewed cases were not deemed offences relating to human trafficking. Details of the case related to child labour can be found in paragraph 14.

10. Cases of labour trafficking decreased in 2017 because of (1) harsher sentences, asset forfeitures during litigation, and punishments handed down to offenders. A case in point is the Kantang Case where a huge fishing business owner was prosecuted and the Court convicted each offender to a 14-year imprisonment. This has had a psychological impact on would-be wrongdoers in the businesses. (2) With regard to the fishery sector, a large number of illicit businesses were taken out of the system. Since 2015, there have been 25,789 fishing vessels and cargo ships whose registration licenses have been revoked, 208 of which were transferred to foreign ownership. In 2017, the number of fishing vessels that were granted fishing licenses decreased by 947 compared to 2016. A total of 1,080 vessels have been locked up and not authorized to fish. The fishing vessels and cargo ships operating outside Thailand's territorial waters are considered as posing high risk of labour trafficking. They were all called back to port and were put under stricter control, monitoring and surveillance during January 2016 and February 2017. From 3 March 2017 up until now, these fishing vessels and cargo ships have not yet been authorized to fish by the Department of Fisheries. Furthermore, the number of cases of labour trafficking in the fishery sector was unusually high prior to 2017. In 2015, Thailand prosecuted 27 cases related to the Ambon-Benjina, Indonesia Case and in 2016, Thailand prosecuted 28 cases related to Vietnamese vessels committing illegal activities in Thailand. The cases related to Ambon-Benjina and Vietnamese vessels are considered uncommon occurrences and had the effect of distorting normal statistics.

11. The Government worked diligently in 2017 to eliminate vulnerabilities in migrant labour through the following measures:

- Accelerating nationality verification through collaboration with countries of origin, with the objective of granting legal status to all migrant workers by 2018, in order that

full protection be provided according to the laws. In 2017, the Ministry of Labour encouraged countries of origin to set up 14 One Stop Service Centres. So far, a total of 1,153,537 migrant workers have passed the nationality verification process, accounting for 57.7 percent of the total number of 1,999,240 migrant workers who have been permitted to work in Thailand temporarily. It is envisaged that the nationality verification process will be completed by June 2018. Nonetheless, this depends on cooperation from countries of origin.

- Technologies to collect biometric data of the entire migrant workforce were introduced in the format of a single harmonized database across the country, which renders benefits in the provision of thorough and efficient protection for migrant workers. Since workers in the fishing industry are vulnerable to trafficking threats, the authorities started with the collection of biometric data of 93,089 migrant workers in this industry. Meanwhile, biometric data of the remaining 10,943 migrant workers in the fisheries sector are being collected and will be completed by 31 March 2018.

- The Government has strengthened its efforts in conducting victim identification in the labour sector in order to identify whether employees are victims of trafficking, whose rights in accordance with the Labour Protection Act, B.E. 2541 (1998), have been violated by their employers. Additional assistance measures have also been extended to workers who have been exploited, but do not qualify as victims of trafficking. In accordance with the Minister of Labour's Order, labour inspectors coordinate with a multidisciplinary team in conducting victim identification of all workers whose rights in accordance with the Labour Protection Act have been violated. Cases of labour violations entail (1) an offence related to the exploitation of child labour in dangerous jobs or in workplaces where children are prohibited by law from working; or related to working children who may have been subject to child labour or indentured labour; and (2) the deduction of some percentage of wages to settle debts owed by employees for an extended period of several months. This includes the extraction of wages as fees for, among other things, arranging travel documents, applying for a work permit, and monthly expenses, despite an employer's promise to return the deducted money to employees once their employment contract expires or is terminated. Even if the multidisciplinary team conducted an interview of exploited workers and found that they were not victims of trafficking, these cases would nevertheless be immediately reported to investigative officers (according to the Instruction of the Department of Labour Protection and Welfare in January 2018). In 2017, prosecution under criminal laws reported to investigative officers totalled 79 cases.

- The Department of Labour Protection and Welfare is processing a request for a budget to be earmarked from the Management of Foreign Workers' Employment Fund, with the objective of assisting workers who are not victims of trafficking in a systematic manner. Assistance could take the form of, among other things, referral for protection by certified NGOs, food and accommodation, arrangement for change of employers or provision of a new job within 15 days.

- In 2017 and 2018, the Department of Employment allocated a budget for the provision of assistance at Migrant Worker Assistance Centres for migrant workers who encountered problems while working in Thailand. While awaiting assistance, these workers

were referred to temporary shelters and provided with food and transport assistance for travelling to other agencies, or border checkpoints, in order to return to their countries of origin in accordance with international standards.

12. The Government launched additional measures for the prevention of trafficking in the fisheries industry, by means of lifting the standards of the provision of assistance for workers in order to meet international standards. Examples are as follows:

- The Department of Labour Protection and Welfare issued a Notification on the Format of Employment Contracts in Sea Fishing Jobs. The Instruction stipulated that wages must be paid monthly to employees via a bank account and that all fees be paid by employers. Since 1 November 2017, a total of 39,072 fishing labourers, whose employment contracts have been reviewed by employers, have received wages via bank account payment. The Ministry of Labour, moreover, collaborated with the ILO in producing public relations leaflets and videos for fishing crews in three languages: Thai, Myanmarese and Cambodian, with the aim of raising awareness among fishing crews on the benefits of wage payment via a bank account.

- A total of 96 pigeonholes have been set up for receiving complaints from fishing crews. A total of 80 ATM machines have been installed at 31 Port In – Port Out Controlling Centres (PIPO). Installation work is underway at one remaining PIPO Centre and will be completed by March 2018. Additionally, a total of 80 ATM machines have been installed at sea ports in response to requests by fishing crews.

- Legislation and measures under the Department of Fisheries, the Marine Department and the Ministry of Labour have been amended and improved upon, with the aim of stepping up monitoring and control measures of labour in the fishing industry. The amendments also aim at enhancing punishments in both administrative and criminal terms, as well as accelerating the prosecution process. Examples of these measures are as follows: (1) Vessels in Thai territorial waters are obliged to return to the port every 30 days; (2) Vessels outside Thai territorial waters must be staffed with an observer, while fishing is being conducted, for at least five percent of the total period of fishing activities. An observer must also be present during the entire process of transferring sea fish. These vessels must, additionally, return to the port within 365 days since the date of departure. Furthermore, vessels must be installed with the Electronic Reporting System (ERS) – a two-way communication system that allows real-time approval and reporting of fishing activities and transferring of sea fish – along with the Electronic Monitoring (EM), which enables the distance monitoring and supervision of fishing activities of each vessel through a CCTV on board; and (3) Stringent regulations have been imposed and enforced for all VMS machines to be turned on, so that signals are emitted continuously for examination at all times. Moreover, Thailand has fully implemented the Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (RFMO)’s regulations and has become a member of the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) since 21 April 2017. The Department of Fisheries will no longer permit Thai fishing vessels to operate outside the Thai territorial waters until they have met all the requirements with regard to safeguarding fishermen’s rights set by competent Thai authorities.

- Thailand ratified the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, on 7 June 2016, leading to the provision of assistance and compensation, totalling 2,788,420 THB (88,662 USD), paid in 2017 to all 11 maritime workers who filed complaints.

13. Thailand attaches importance to improving its work quality in accordance with international standards. The Government is in the process of preparing for ratification of at least three important ILO Conventions as follows:

- Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (C188): the Ministry of Labour is amending relevant rules and regulations of all government agencies in accordance with the Convention. In this process of legal amendments, consultations with employers and employees in the fishing industry will be held. The amendments will be proposed to the Cabinet for endorsement by March 2018, with the aim of entering the ratification process in Geneva by June 2018.

- Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (P029): the Ministry of Labour is in the process of drafting a law on the prevention and suppression of forced labour, in order to fulfil the requirements for the ratification of the Protocol. The draft law will delineate offences relating to forced labour, coupled with appropriate punishments, along with the process of assistance, protection and rehabilitation for victims of labour exploitation who do not qualify as victims of trafficking. The draft law will be proposed to the Cabinet for endorsement by March 2018, with the aim of entering the ratification process in Geneva by June 2018.

- Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (C098): The Ministry of Labour has drafted the amendment of the Labour Relations Act, B.E. 2518 (1975) and the State Enterprise Labour Relations Act, B.E. 2543 (2000). Public consultations will be held with all stakeholders, NGOs and the civil society across the country in order to collect inputs for improving the law. It is expected that these amendments should be completed by August 2018 in order to proceed with the ratification process by September 2018.

14. For cases related to exploitation of working children in seafood processing establishments, inspections conducted in 2017 uncovered exploitation of three working children under 18 years of age in seafood processing factories in the provinces of Rayong and Samut Songkhram. Consequently, three cases were prosecuted under criminal laws. Moreover, the three factories that were found guilty were suspended from operation for 30 days in accordance with relevant administrative procedural measures. Currently, two of these cases are under the consideration of public attorneys and have been returned to the police for further investigation, while one remaining case, which occurred at the end of 2017, is under the consideration of investigative officers for evidence gathering.

15. The Ministry of Labour has improved the mechanism for examining and supervising labour recruitment agencies. In 2017, the Ministry of Labour planned to inspect all 101 migrant worker recruitment agencies. Inspections of 97 migrant worker recruitment agencies were completed. One of them was found to have violated the Emergency Decree on Recruitment of Foreigners to Work with Employers in Thailand, B.E. 2559 (2016). The

offence involved failure to present a receipt to employers for their settlement of service fees and other expenses in recruiting migrant workers into Thailand. This recruitment agency had its license suspended for 30 days. It was also prosecuted in accordance with the criminal law and was imposed a fine of 20,000 THB (636 USD). The recruitment agency paid the fine on 18 November 2017, and thereby the criminal case was settled. Additionally, the Ministry of Labour's inspection uncovered one migrant worker recruitment agency that operated without a license and, thereby, violated the Emergency Decree on Foreigners' Working Management, B.E. 2560 (2017). As a result, the unlicensed agency was prosecuted in November 2017. The case remains under the consideration of investigative officers.

16. In 2017, the Government assisted a total of 360 victims of trafficking who chose to receive protection under MSDHS's shelters (compared to 561 victims of trafficking in 2016). Of the 360 trafficking victims under the MSDHS shelters, 169 were male victims and 191 were female victims (compared to 290 male victims and 271 female victims in 2016). These consist of 132 Thais, 119 Myanmareses, 21 Laotians, 22 Cambodians, 9 Indonesians, 51 Vietnamese, 3 Malaysians and 3 Ugandans (compared to 207 Thais, 175 Myanmareses, 55 Laotians, 24 Cambodians, 9 Rohingyas, 86 Vietnamese, 4 Filipinos and 1 Sri Lankan in 2016).

17. The Government has taken a more victim-centric approach while also enhancing protection services for both victims and witnesses in trafficking cases by:

- Improving its work procedure to expedite the process of filing for compensation and execution of judgment. The MSDHS instructed all shelters, MDTs and prosecutors to expedite their consideration of the amount of compensation to be provided within one month from the time the victim receives protection inside MSDHS shelters. Furthermore, the MSDHS is working to establish a set of standards for filing claims for compensation.

- Enhancing benefits from the Anti-Human Trafficking Fund such as through the measure to promote employment for victims of trafficking by granting a daily financial support of 300 THB/day (9.5 USD/day). Since the inception of the reimbursement of funds on 28 March 2017, a total of 24 victims (12 Rohingyas, 11 Thais and 1 Cambodian) were compensated 583,800 THB (18,563 USD).

- Expanding the scope of protection service choices for both Thai and foreign victims through the issuance of the Regulation Permitting NGOs to Establish Shelters to Assist Victims of Trafficking, B.E. 2560 (2017). Victims of trafficking in both MSDHS and NGO-run shelters will receive the same protection services. At present, two NGOs have expressed interest in registering with the MSDSH.

- Improving employment and earning opportunities for victims of trafficking. At present, the Ministry of Labour, together with the MSDHS, have continued to implement the policy to find employment opportunities both inside and outside MSDHS shelters for victims of trafficking within 15 days. In cases where victims want to change employers, the Ministry of Labour will find a new employer within 15 days. In 2017, no victims requested a change of employer. All paper work will be processed within three days, compared to previous years when it took a minimum of 10-14 days. In 2017, a total of 63 victims (33 Vietnamese, 22 Rohingyas, 5 Cambodians and 3 Myanmareses) have been assisted under this fast track process.

- Amending the Witness Protection Act, B.E. 2546 (2003) to increase the living allowance for witnesses from 200 THB/day (6.36 USD/day) to 300 THB/day (9.5 USD/day), as well as enhancing the overall quality of witness protection services. In 2017, a total of 4,259,466 THB (135,436 USD) was allocated to provide witness protection services for 52 witnesses (41 Thais, 9 Myanmareses, 1 Laotian and 1 Pakistani). When compared to 2016, the budget for witness protection per witness has increased by 616 percent. The increase in budget is due to the change in model of witness protection services. In 2016, the majority of witnesses who were Rohingya trafficking victims were accommodated in MSDHS shelters; therefore, no additional expenses were incurred. However, this year the Government has increased the budget to enable witnesses to gain access to better protection services, including witness safe-house provided by the Rights and Liberties Protection Department, a 24-hour security service, physical and psychological rehabilitation, vocational training, and recreational activities. This has enabled witnesses to relax and spend their free time more productively, which has made the case more effective and efficient.

- Enhanced collaboration with NGOs while adhering to a victim-centric approach. Stella Maris, Caritas Cambodia, HUG Project, ZOE International, Save the Children, NightLight, Friend International, UNHCR, RSC and the IOM were some of the Government's partners in providing protection services, rehabilitation, repatriation, and resettlement services to victims of trafficking.

18. This year, the Government increased its effort to proactively and effectively identify victims of trafficking, especially persons in vulnerable situations such as migrant labourers, migrant workers and labourers in the fisheries sector (for more details please refer to paragraphs 7, 8 and 12), stateless people, minorities, children, and refugees as follows:

- Thailand is fully committed to reducing and preventing statelessness as a means to protect all persons from becoming vulnerable to being trafficked. Since 1992, the Ministry of Interior (MOI) has granted Thai citizenship to 259,590 formerly stateless people. In 2017, the MOI granted Thai citizenship to 8,519 formerly stateless people, compared to 8,145 in 2016, representing a 4.6 percent increase. In addition, the Ministry of Labour has permitted a total of 59,439 formerly stateless people to work in Thailand. Most are working in construction and vegetable and fruit farming.

- Thailand has always extended protection to all victims of trafficking regardless of their status based on a human rights, health, and safety approach. Persons in vulnerable situations such as irregular migrants, illegal immigrants, children who become victims of trafficking or women and children who are not victims of trafficking are provided protection by the MSDHS. This year, the MSDHS assisted a total of 95 irregular migrants (Rohingyas), comprising 74 victims of trafficking and 21 illegal immigrants who are women and children. Victims of trafficking are placed in MSDHS shelters and are provided with shelter, food, clothing, health services, rehabilitation, physical therapy, psychological assistance, occupational therapy including vocational training and earning opportunities (in construction, handicraft making and agriculture). Additional assistance includes an educational nursery centre. Moreover, education for child trafficking victims remains one of the top priorities for

the MSDHS. Primary education is provided to children inside MSDHS shelters. For secondary and higher education, victims of trafficking are put in local schools near the shelter. The MSDHS has cooperated with the Ministry of Interior to extend the stay of these children. On the other hand, illegal immigrants who are women and children are placed in the Shelter for Children and Families or the Reception Home of Boys and receive the same care as victims of trafficking.

- Interviewing and identifying all groups of vulnerable people are currently conducted using the revised user-friendly preliminary victim interview form and in accordance with the Standard Operation Procedure (SOP) of the Guideline to Enhance Efficiency of Human Trafficking Victim Identification, which was adopted in early 2017. To enhance the efficacy of the victim identification process, the procedure also included several new steps, such as working to understand the modus operandi on joint cases with the MDTs, cooperation in providing protection to victims after the victim identification process, background information briefing to MDTs prior to interviews. Evidence is also verified through the computer forensic system prior to interviewing victims. These new steps have helped improve the effectiveness of victim identification interviews as evidenced in the Uganda case which led to the issuance of 16 arrest warrants.

In addition, due to a recent raid for sex trafficking in a massage parlour during mid-January 2018, which resulted in the rescue of 113 women (of which 15 were victims of trafficking), the MSDHS conducted a lesson learned exercise with relevant government agencies and NGOs on the operational procedures in handling big cases. Currently, the MSDHS is in the process of amending and updating the SOP of the Guideline to Enhance Efficiency of Human Trafficking Victim Identification to make it more appropriate, especially operational guidelines on how to handle multiple cases at the same time. The MSDHS plans to inform police officials and MDTs of the revised SOP and have it implemented in March 2018.

- On amending important laws to address the problem of forced labour, the Ministry of Labour is currently drafting a new legislation to clearly define offences related to forced labour that are susceptible to being regarded as human trafficking. The new legislation will also include appropriate penalties, protection services, as well as compensation for victims of forced labour. The said legislation is expected to be finalized in June 2018.

19. The Thai authorities have increasingly sought to work with local and international NGOs. Various NGOs (see attached list) have taken part in the prevention and suppression of human trafficking by providing tip-off's to law enforcement agencies, protecting victims and participating in the questioning of victims. This has led to greater efficacy in apprehending offenders. NGOs are thus regarded as important partners of the Government in the fight against human trafficking. Moreover, the Royal Thai Government has also enhanced collaboration with foreign governments. Intelligence sharing and close coordination between the Royal Thai Police and Myanmar law enforcement agency have helped curb transnational human trafficking, leading to the arrests of several offenders and the dismantling of trafficking syndicates.

20. The Government has continuously increased the budget for the fight against human trafficking. The total budget increased by 13.5 percent from 3,208.91 million THB (approximately 102 million USD) for the fiscal year 2017 to 3,641.98 million THB (approximately 116 million USD) for the fiscal year 2018.

21. The number of frontline officers, who play a crucial role in combating human trafficking, has been steadily expanded, and training for these officers has also been strengthened. These frontline officers range from labour inspectors, interpreters or language coordinators, the general multidisciplinary team, and the multidisciplinary team in the fisheries sector (both onshore and offshore duty), as well as labour inspectors on board fishing vessels. Examples are as follows:

- The number of labour inspectors has increased from 1,245 officers in 2016 to 1,506 officers in 2017, representing a rise of 21 percent. The number of language coordinators (in Myanmar and Cambodian) increased by 76.2 percent, from 42 people in 2016 to 74 people in 2017. A total of 60 language coordinators were hired by the Port In – Port Out Controlling Centres (PIPO) in 2017, doubling the number over the previous year when 30 language coordinators were hired.

- Training on the inspection of fishing labour under the mechanism of Ship to Shore Right Programme attracted 178 participants. The programme was organised with the collaboration of the European Union, the International Labour Organization, and the Ministry of Labour.

- The Department of Labour Protection and Welfare organised a training programme for 335 law enforcement officers, aimed at raising awareness on forced labour that is not related to physical coercion.

- The MSDHS regularly organises training programmes for interpreters, who provide protection services to victims of trafficking, in three languages. In 2017, training was provided for 97 interpreters. Currently, a total of 251 interpreters passed the assessment and have been recruited to work under the registration of the MSDHS.

- The MSDHS organised training on the amendments to the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons Act, aimed at imparting knowledge and creating a better understanding on the law, particularly among professionals and relevant people in the industry susceptible to human trafficking; entrepreneurs/owners of businesses in the service sector, factories and fishing vessels. Training programmes were also held in the central and regional areas of Thailand for a total of 693 participants.

22. Public relations in innovative outlets and other kinds of activities are continually organised in order to raise awareness among stakeholders in tackling issues relating to human trafficking. A case in point is an inflight video released for the first time in 2018 on inbound flights operated by Thai airlines. This is aimed at raising international tourists' awareness about the problem of human trafficking and to dissuade them from participating in activities that encourage trafficking in persons, so as to reduce the demand for sexual exploitation. Moreover, the video has been shown on board trains and at stations of the BTS sky train and

MRT underground since 8 December 2017. For airplanes, the video will be shown on selected flights beginning in February 2018. Meanwhile, the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security have collaborated with the A21 – a non-profit organisation – in producing posters to raise awareness about the problem of human trafficking as well as on assistance provided through the Social Assistance Centre, operated under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, at Hotline No. 1300.
