

Alliance Anti Trafic (AAT)

ANNUAL REPORT

2020



MESSAGE FROM PROJECT DIRECTOR

The success of our actions of 2020 is as a result of a combination of contributions from many persons who can be proud of themselves as they overcame a number of obstacles during the year to save victims and provide them with fair justice. Namely, the AAT team always committed and in the front line; the agents of change who could participate to rescue their peers; volunteers who could contribute to detect victims; our regular network of CSOs and government agencies in Thailand, Laos and Myanmar; and our network of local businesses.

The success of our actions can also be attributed to the new collaboration we could develop throughout the year in Thailand, Laos and Myanmar, but also in other countries such as Belgium, England, and Sweden.

Finally, the support we could provide to women and children would not have been possible without the continual support from our partners namely: Free a Girl, Kindermissionswerk, Manos Unidas, PILnet, and those that contributed anonymously including individual donors.

2021 will be a transit period mostly affected by the restrictions due to COVID-19, and the coup d'état in Myanmar that particularly affected women and children of the region of South East Asia due to lack of employment and online sexual exploitation. As such, we will have to prepare for the massive migration that will occur when borders re-open and international travel will be fully operating. We will strengthen our collaboration from local communities to international organizations in Europe and other countries and intensify our prevention actions against sexual exploitation covering diverse forms such as online sexual exploitation, forced marriage, and forced surrogacy.

Jurgen Thomas
International Project Director
Alliance Anti Trafic

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

AAT's beneficiaries and their family, for their participation in our programmes.

AAT's colleagues, for the detailed information and perspective on the issues of sexual exploitation they provided in 2020.

AAT 's partners, for their collaboration and their support in our works.

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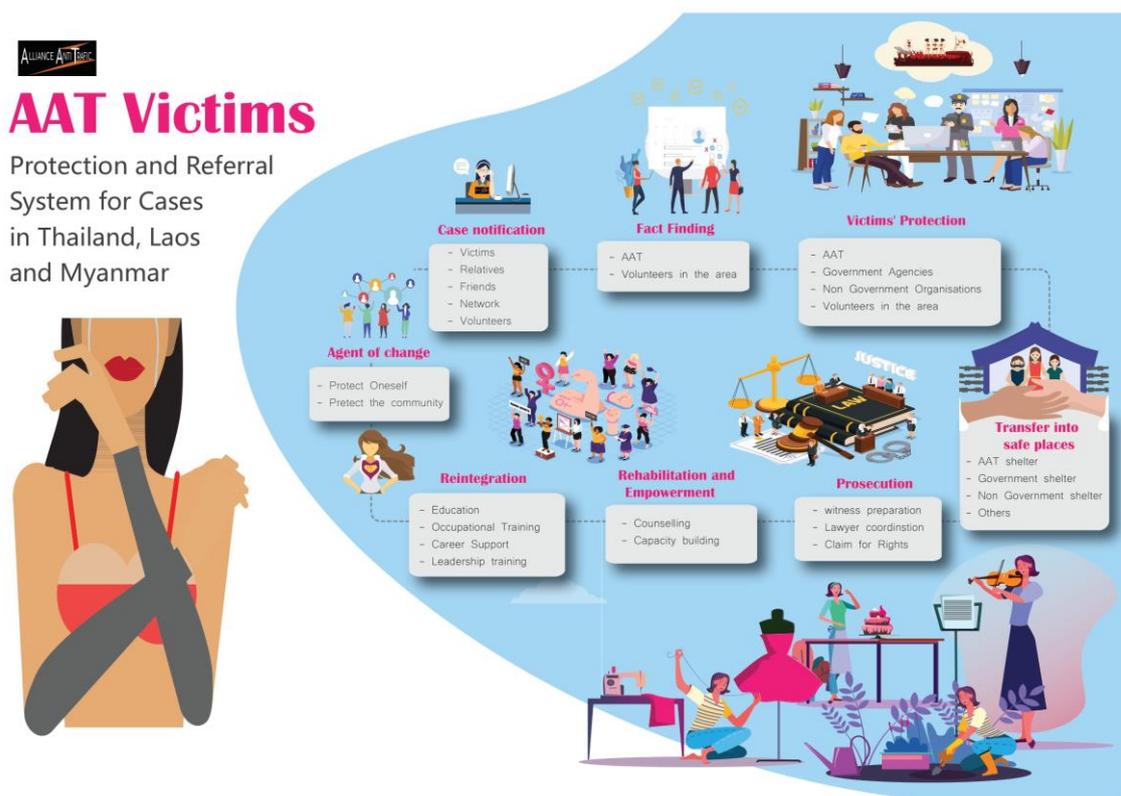
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ALLIANCE ANTI TRAFIC INTRODUCTION

Alliance Anti Traffic (AAT) combats sexual violence in all its forms including sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, forced marriage, forced surrogacy, and online sexual exploitation of women and girls in Thailand, Laos, Shan State of Myanmar, and Vietnam. AAT also helps Thai, Lao, Burmese, and Vietnamese women and girls trafficked for sexual exploitation overseas. AAT intervenes to protect women and girls through direct field actions implemented in a regional approach. AAT also works on the suppression on the demand side. AAT takes care of targeted women and children by supporting them throughout the **full protection process**: AAT prevents groups at risk, identifies and protects victims found in exploited places, provide them with legal assistance, supports and repatriates them back to their communities. AAT also reintegrates them based on their choices by developing their capacity in a way that they can be of economic and social benefit to their communities. AAT finally empowers beneficiaries so that they can participate to protect others.

The current report covers actions during 2020 in Thailand, Laos, and Shan State only, as well as actions to protect Thai, Lao, and Burmese victims trafficked/forced married overseas.



The infographic explaining the full protection and prevention process of AAT.

DEFINITION

Agent of Change – A former victim who received AAT’s empowerment, rehabilitation, and capacity building training to become an Agent of Change. The Agents of Change roles vary according to their interest and the needs. They can:

- act as an active watchdog to notify the cases who need assistance.
- raise the awareness of the population in their community to prevent other to become victims.
- identify and protect victims.
- facilitate in AAT’s rehabilitation activities.
- follow up beneficiaries and support them in their career alternatives.

Beneficiary - A person who beneficiates from our services - so either a victim or a group at risk.

Kredtrakarn shelter - Kredtrakarn Protection and Occupational Development Centre provides protection for children and women who are victim of human trafficking for sexual exploitation and who suffer from all kinds of social problems such as sexual abuse and family problems.

Protection: The action to save a victim from sexual violence (sexual exploitation and sexual abuse) until the victim is in a safe situation and will not be re-victimized

Target groups (of AAT) – The girls and women who are considered at risk of becoming victims (ex: working in massage parlour, entertainment venue and other jobs that will lead to the risk of sexual exploitation). This includes the people who are at-risk of falling victim to other forms of sexual exploitation such as forced marriage, forced surrogacy, and online sexual exploitation as well as those who are or were victims of all these forms of sexual violence.

Victim – Persons who are sexually exploited including forced marriage, forced surrogacy, and sexual abuse.

Watchdog – Local people/CSOs/government agencies who were trained to identify human trafficking and on case notifications. They are the active group that reports the cases.

Women’s group – The Thai, Lao, and Shan women's network, and the beneficiaries of AAT's services. Some of them are former victims who were rescued by AAT, or the at-risk groups that participate in reporting the cases but are not yet trained.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AAT had a challenging year in 2020 due to a shift in working methods or a change in the situation of human trafficking for sexual exploitation. The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on our work, especially in the field. Our target groups are individuals who work in the tourism sector, such as hotels, restaurants, and entertainment venues. They were especially affected and more likely to be victims of sex trafficking because many of them had lost their jobs and were unable to afford even basic needs for themselves and their families. We implemented actions on COVID-19 emergency relief for the most vulnerable target groups and their families to deter at-risk groups from being victimized. Some of the empowerment and rehabilitation activities were shifted to online platforms, namely online followed-up services. We adapted part of our work to respond to the COVID situation, for instance involving agents of change already in target communities to collect information of vulnerable women and girls and provide vulnerable groups with goods support and support for generating income micro projects.

In Thailand, human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation was moved to online platforms, and young people were particularly targeted. When the situation moved to online platforms, we adapted our protection actions to online investigation in order to detect the underreported target groups, and training on preventing online sexual harassment was held in high-risk schools with a large number of students.

In Laos, the actions were adapted in response to changing circumstances. AAT workers could not visit the field and the concealed brothels were closed during the spread of COVID-19. Through our rescue operations in Laos, we found young girls from rural areas who had come to provide sex services in downtown. Their average age is between 16-17 years old and most of them were induced by their relatives, acquaintances, and friends. Because of the COVID-19 restrictions, these girls were left inside brothels without food and basic necessities. Our agents of change and our local watchdog volunteers introduced and organized preventive programs at the community level. COVID-19 emergency crisis relief measures were also implemented for the target groups that were especially affected by the pandemic. Our Agents of Change visited girls inside brothels to provide them with food and basic necessities. We have strengthened our watchdog networks. We expanded the network with a variety of watchdogs, including an ethnic group network.

In Myanmar, we had limited field actions due to the internal armed conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic. The armed conflict in North Shan State (our working site) was not accessible to persons outside these communities. As such, we recruited local staff and developed local community watchdogs to undertake activities such as safe migration training, online campaigns to raise awareness about forced marriage. Lockdown was implemented for most of the year 2020 due to several peaks of COVID throughout the year. We could however distribute goods for the families affected by COVID-19.

We have been developing international networks in Europe in order to reach out to Thai victims in other countries. After collaborating with some organizations in Belgium, France, and Sweden that have Thai workers, we discovered another alarming situation: A huge number of Thai women are either in prostitution or facing abuse from their European husband (some of whom sent their wives to prostitution). A case of a Thai woman who faced domestic violence and sexual abuse in Europe and who returned to Thailand was reported to us. AAT, as the organization in the country of origin, provided prevention services for the repatriated victims, for instance follow-up and counselling services.

Summary information of the beneficiaries received AAT services in 2020

The information covers the beneficiaries in Thailand ,Laos and Myanmar.

82 Persons were protected from the sexual exploitation situation.



135 beneficiaries received empowerment services.



92 beneficiaries received legal assistance.



144 beneficiaries received reintegration services.



52 offenders were prosecuted .



652 beneficiaries recived COVID_19 relief assistance.



CASE STORY



Develop Agents of Change to become role models for others.

In Thailand, there is a 18-year-old beneficiary who received career alternative programme training. We provided her with career orientation and she decided to apply at the nurse assistance school that are part of the CSOs and local businesses network that AAT has developed. She posted her experience on the Facebook group of beneficiaries. Her post inspired others to realise that they can have a better life if they choose the right path. This girl has graduated from nurse school and is now working as a nurse who takes care of the elderly.

She has become a role model for others as now other beneficiaries are interested in applying to nurse assistance school. AAT also told this story to the beneficiaries in Kredtrakarn Shelter. There is one beneficiary who would like to apply for nurse assistance school but is not eligible as the school requires the applicant to have at least grade 9. Now she is studying hard to achieve grade 9 so that she can apply to nurse assistance school.



The beneficiary was supported for studying in nurse assistance school.

PROTECTION PROGRAMME IN THAILAND

Protection of women and children in sex trafficking: Total of 18 victims were protected.



- Victims in Thailand: We rescued and protected a total **7 victims in Thailand** two of whom were under 18 years old, and 5 Lao victims. Of the 5 Lao victims, 4 were under 18 years old. Among them a 16-year-old girl was protected and advised of career alternatives with the participation of an Agent of Change.
- Thai victims outside Thailand: We supported the rescue operation of **2 Thai women** aged over 18 years old who were lured to Dubai and were forced to provide sexual services.
- **9 cases of sexually abused women** were protected and provided with legal support.
- The Agent of Change provided information of 3 suspect entertainments places that allowed minors to provide sexual services.

AAT protection scheme begins when case reporting, or information is notified and validated. In the raid operations, we sometimes coordinate and work with networks including civil organization and government agencies in order to safely and systematically rescue the victims from sex trafficking. For some victims whose genuine ages were unidentified on the document (passport), we supported them to have Bone Age assessments. After the rescue operation, we supported the potential victims during the victim identification process, and facilitated the minor victims to be protected in government shelters as well as escorted them to safely return to their home once the processes were concluded. Adult victims who returned from Dubai were returned home after completing state quarantine.

Prevention of Online Sexual Exploitation



training.

- **566 people** in the northeast region in Thailand were trained in the prevention of online sexual exploitation and how to detect and report cases of victims.
- Among the 566 participants were 186 male students, 49 male teachers, 268 female students and 63 female teachers.
- 2 case notifications concerning a suspicious job advertisement and the leaked sexual footage were reported by the students who joined the

As COVID-19 was spreading in the country, the year of 2020 was challenging for all of us especially the vulnerable groups. The pandemic affected the economy, the daily life of people, the working method and “the pattern of sexual exploitation”, namely the exploitation was moved to online platforms. We noticed the increasing phenomenon of online sexual exploitation among young people.

In order to prevent and to detect the young people who were targets of online sexual exploitation, we conducted training on “**Understanding online exploitation and Case notification**” for 566 participants from 6 schools in the northeast region. We also invited adults to join our training as adults play a crucial role in monitoring and preventing children from exploitation.



(The students were learning about different type of online exploitations)

In the training, we trained participants in social media, the dark web, and online thread and exploitation. We had participants analyze example news and social media, and discussed the pro's and con's of social media. After the training, we created a LINE group (LINE is a mobile phone app commonly used in Thailand) in order to gather active students and teachers. In the LINE group, we exchanged essential news and shared information about risk situations.

Strategy: Case notification and Networking



- We received a total of **19 case notifications from 16 watchdogs** throughout Thailand. Among the 19 case notifications, there were 11 cases concerning human trafficking for sexual exploitation and online sexual exploitation.
- We have established a watchdog network with local women networks in four provinces in Northeast region, Thailand.

Networking is one of the keys that helps us to reach the target groups who are underrepresented as well as to stay updated with the alarming situation in the various provinces. As such, we expanded the watchdog networks with the local groups and built their capacity by training them on human trafficking for sexual exploitation and case notification.

According to our victim database, the majority of child victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation online come from the Konkaen, Udonthani, Nongkhai, and Nakhon Ratchasima provinces. Therefore, we started approaching the women-led groups in these provinces in order to expand local watchdogs networks.

The women-led groups in these provinces were referred from our network named Friends of Women. The women groups are active villagers who are working for women rights and community development. We were able to reach 62 individual watchdogs in the northeast region of Thailand and they helped collect data on Thai women who migrated overseas and have the potential to become victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation.



The participants were trained about human trafficking for sexual exploitation and case notification.

EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME IN THAILAND

Empowerment and Rehabilitation Service: We provided services for 65 beneficiaries in government shelters and counselling services for 98 beneficiaries.



- **65 beneficiaries** joined Empowerment and Rehabilitation activities. The activities were conducted inside two government shelters located in Nonthaburi and Nakhon Ratchasima provinces.
- The nationality of the victims were **44 Thai and 21 Lao**.
- The average age of the beneficiaries is 16 years old and the youngest aged only 12 years old.
- **98 beneficiaries** were provided with counselling.

The empowerment and rehabilitation activities aimed to provide both emotional and practical support for the victims inside government shelters. The activities included recreational activity, art therapy, self-reflection writing, and future planning. Normally, the activities were conducted with large groups of beneficiaries. In case where there were beneficiaries who were particularly traumatized, AAT together with the psychologist team provided deep rehabilitation for them. Apart from the rehabilitation activities, we also provided consultation sessions about education and career opportunities. This session aimed to prevent the beneficiaries from being re-trafficked and we will support those beneficiaries who would like to continue to study or start a new job.



The victims were doing rehabilitation activities.



The victims applying for the career alternative programme.

Reintegration Service: We provided the service for 121 beneficiaries.



- **61 beneficiaries** were provided with follow-up inside their community.
- **32 beneficiaries were supported with educational and career alternatives.** Among this number were 30 beneficiaries who were supported with starting budget (small grant) for careers, and 2 beneficiaries were supported with tuition fees and living allowances during study.
- **2 beneficiaries** were provided with health check.
- **5 Agents of Change** were empowered and become our watchdog.
- **21 beneficiaries** were provided with safe accommodation. They were supported with rooms at ASEAN Women Centre during the training and volunteer works.

In 2020, we followed up 61 beneficiaries who were repatriated to their community. When COVID-19 was widely spreading, we were unable to visit them in person (face-to-face visit) so we contacted them via phone and social media.

When providing follow-up and counselling services, we let them share their current situation, concerns and desires while monitoring the family situation. There were some victims that were

struggling with the family situation such as economic problems. Some of them could not generate income so we advised them and their families about career alternatives and educational opportunities. We also provided necessary kits to the victims and families. After receiving a small grant, most of the victims started their own business for instance selling fried food and selling online products.



The empowerment team visits the beneficiaries in their community in order to follow up and advise about career alternative programme.

“AGENT OF CHANGE” CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME IN THAILAND

In Agent Of Change capacity building programmes the “Peer-To-Peer” approach is adapted to our strategy in order to build the capacity of former victims to become “Agents of Change”. The Agents of Change are able to reach more target groups as the target groups are more able to reach victims and at-risk groups because the Agents of Change are close to them.



Agents of Change were trained about effective communication and case notification.

We have been rehabilitating and empowering our target groups from the time they were staying in the government shelters. Encouraging the target groups to help others helps them to recognize their worth and regain self-esteem. Therefore, we have involved them in our rehabilitation works as they are able to connect and provide support to their at-risk peers as they have common experience and backgrounds. The young people in particular are more likely to open up to their friends before reaching out.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE AND ADVOCACY PROGRAMME IN THAILAND

Legal Assistance in Thailand: We provided legal assistance for 76 beneficiaries.



- **76 beneficiaries from 26 cases** were supported with legal assistance. There were 12 ongoing cases from the years 2016 to 2019, and there were 14 cases in 2020.
- Among the 76 beneficiaries who received legal assistance, there were 34 female beneficiaries and 4 male beneficiaries aged under 18 years old, 36 female beneficiaries and 2 male beneficiaries aged over 18 years old.
- The nationalities of the beneficiaries were 39 Thai beneficiaries, 5 Burmese beneficiaries, 30 Lao beneficiaries, and 2 Cambodian beneficiaries.
- **The compensation sum of 583,600 THB has already been approved by the court** which includes 93,600 THB from Anti Human Trafficking Fund; 240,000 THB from the Ministry of Justice; and 290,000 THB from the offenders. This compensation is for 8 cases with 17 beneficiaries. Among the 8 cases, there were 5 sexual abuse cases and 3 human trafficking cases.
- **52 offenders** included 2 male minors, 29 male adults, 17 female adults and 2 companies. Current status of the offenders: 7 offenders are in the investigation process, 11 are out on bail, 21 are in jail, 1 is in a juvenile detention centre, 8 offenders are fugitive, 2 offenders are awarded a suspension of the proceeding, 1 offender was fined, and the court dismissed the case for 1 offender.

AAT provided legal assistance for the whole process of legal proceedings. In 2020, we provided legal assistance on 172 occasions broken down into the following services: Report the case to the police, conduct meeting with the prosecutor, prepare the victim for court trial, attend the court hearing, interview the beneficiaries and family, be the joint plaintiff and coordinate with the inquiry official and police. During the legal process, we empower and build trust with the beneficiaries to cooperate in the legal process.



Legal officers interviewing the beneficiaries wearing orange shirts, in the government shelter.

We also **advocate and facilitate the government officials in legal processes** for instance assist in victim identification, draft legal documents for claiming compensation, provide evidence concerning the culprit, and interview the victims of sexual trafficking and exploitation.

Advocacy works in Thailand



- AAT brought together anti-human trafficking advocates to petition the Prime Minister urging him to look into a decision made by the Office of Prosecutor and other stakeholders. **Finally, the Investigation Committee of Victoria Case was established in order to oversee the decision of concerning stakeholders.**
- AAT together with DSI and UNHCR advocated for victim assistance and witness protection. **The victim of sex trafficking was safely protected and repatriated to the third country.** In Thailand, this is the first victim of sex trafficking who was able to repatriate to the third country.
- **The State approved the budget for Civil Society Organizations** which advocate for the vulnerable groups during COVID-19. The State agreed to support AAT on the matter of career alternatives for vulnerable groups.

We have been providing full process of legal assistance for the victims of sex trafficking and ensure that the right to justice of the victims is respected. However, to restore fair justice for victims against offenders who are sometimes among the influential political and economical persons, we had to create a taskforce together with other Civil Society Organizations and other governmental organizations in order to take larger steps and push the mission forward.



At the parliament, AAT together with Anti-human trafficking advocates were giving a statement about the Victoria Case.

Strategy: Parallel Justice for the beneficiaries.



- AAT legal assistance and advocacy work is striving for ensure two pathways of justice: seeking comprehensive and ***fair legal procedure*** for the victims, and ***empowering the victim*** to cooperate in the legal procedure.

For the legal procedure, we strived to shrink the gap that delays the legal proceedings. We presented further witnesses and evidence to the police, supported the inquiry official when interviewing the victims of sex trafficking as it is a gender-sensitive issue, participated in the whole process and drafted the necessary documents for relevant stakeholders.

For victim empowerment, we respect the decision of the victim whether to report the case to the police or to proceed to prosecution. Some of the victims may be discouraged to take the legal processes. We empower them to recognize their rights and inform them that they are entitled to remedy and compensation.



The legal officer discussing with victim's family and preparing the victim to testify at the trial.

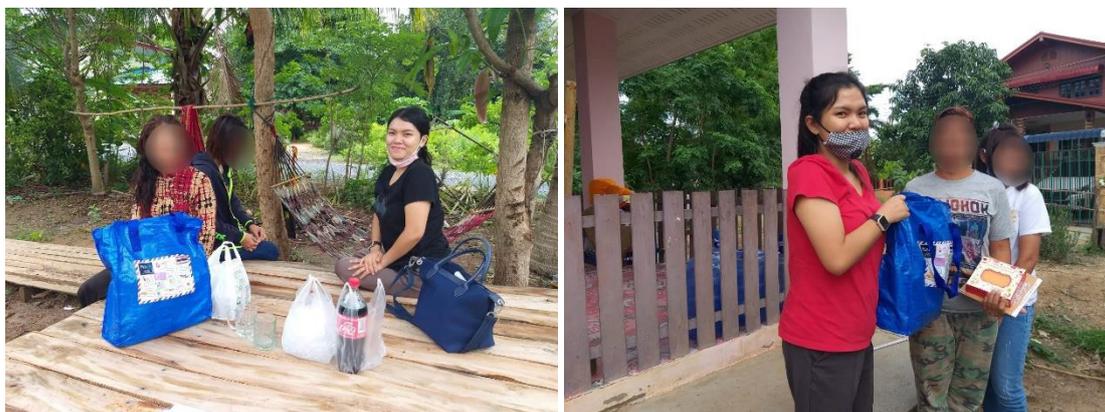
COVID-19 RELIEF ASSISTANCE IN THAILAND.



- **6 Agents of Change** were hired to collect data of at-risk groups. This hiring is part of the COVID-19 special career alternative programme. The Agents of Change collected data of 267 at-risk target groups particularly affected by COVID-19.
- **77 single mothers** affected by COVID-19, were supported with necessary bags.
- **205 beneficiaries** were provided with goods support.

Generally, AAT has career alternative programme for victim and females at risk to be victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation. When the pandemic was spreading throughout Thailand, our Agents of Change helped find families affected by sexual exploitation due to COVID-19. Girls and their families were provided with special career alternative programmes.

In the early to mid 2020, AAT field works were particularly affected by COVID-19, namely the team could not travel to other provinces in order to conduct field activities or provide physical follow-up services for the beneficiaries who were repatriated to their community. Therefore, we trained Agents of Change who were already in the field so that they can provide services in their communities. The Agents of Change first collected data of target groups in prostitution or at risk to be in prostitution due to COVID 19. After having located them, Agents of Change provided visits, distributed necessary supplies to their peers and their families who live nearby. Furthermore, Agents of Change helped finding families who needed to develop income-generating micro-projects and helped to evaluate the market conditions. Finally with the help of the Agents of Change, we provided support and follow-up to these families to realize their micro-projects as preventive measures.



The social worker giving necessity bags to the target groups who particularly affected by COVID-19.

PROTECTION PROGRAMME IN LAOS

Protection of women and children from sex trafficking and forced marriage: We protected 60 Lao victims.



- **24 Lao victims** were protected from hidden brothels and were safely returned home. Among 24 victims were 16 minor victims and 8 adult victims.
- **2 Lao victims of online sexual exploitation** was protected.
- **29 Lao victims of human trafficking for forced marriage** were protected and safely repatriated home. The age of victims ranged from 15 to 30 years old.
- **5 Lao victims** were protected until reaching their final destination. Among the 5 were 3 minors and 2 adults.

The protection of victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation in Laos mainly focuses on young girls who are forced or end up in providing sex services at entertainment places being “undercover brothels”. The majority of the victims came from poor families and were deceived by their relatives or acquaintances, namely the victims were promised jobs and were then forced to provide sex services.

For the victims of forced marriage, Lao victims were normally trafficked by marriage brokers which have networks in China. The marriage brokers are responsible for the paperwork, introduce the husband, induce victims’ families with a dowry and send the victims to the husband’s house in China. In some cases, the marriage brokers took money for her/himself from the dowry and continued selling victims to other husbands to receive more money. The majority of victims that we protected were kept as slaves. They were beaten, kept inside houses, their legal documents were confiscated, they were forced to have sex with sometimes several members of the family, forced to work without pay, forced into pregnancy or to take medicine to encourage pregnancy, and sometimes were not given food to eat.

To protect the victims, we are trying to expand and strengthen the watchdogs who live in hot-spot areas where the at-risk groups live. For victims of sexual exploitation, most of the case notifications are generated by Agents of Change and local watchdogs who conduct field investigations in the undercover brothels. The forced marriage cases were mostly notified by women groups (former victims we already rescued but have not yet trained). With the help and facilitation of the local watchdogs, we were able to rescue the victims of forced marriage from their abusive husband’s house and escorted them to the Lao embassies for their repatriation process.



After leaving the disguised brothel, AAT Lao staffs accompanied the beneficiaries to home

EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME IN LAOS

Empowerment and Reintegration Service: We provided services for 114 beneficiaries.



- **85 Lao beneficiaries** were followed up inside their community. There were 24 minor beneficiaries and 61 adult beneficiaries. Among 85 beneficiaries:
 - 2 beneficiaries received rehabilitation therapy.
 - 39 beneficiaries joined empowerment activities.
 - 1 beneficiary was supported with tuition fees.
 - 5 beneficiaries received career orientation.
 - 5 beneficiaries received financial support for career alternative programme.
 - 10 beneficiaries started a new career with private sectors.
- There were **19 Agents of Change and Lao Women Groups** who participated in case notification and empowerment programme.

Empowerment and Reintegration Programme aimed to monitor, rehabilitate the traumatized, and prevent the potential risks that lead the beneficiaries to be re-victimized. After the rescue operation, we accompanied them to the place of safety and provided them with fundamental services which are counselling, career alternatives, and legal assistance if they required it. To enhance the effectiveness of the programme, we engaged the beneficiaries' family in the programme, providing counselling about future plans, education opportunity, and the potential risks of their daughter.



AAT Lao staff together with Agent of Change provided follow-up service and met with beneficiary's family



The beneficiary (green shirt providing massage) started a new job at a massage shop, a member of AAT local businesses network

“AGENT OF CHANGE” CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME IN LAOS

We had been supporting the local volunteers and Agents of Change to conduct activities inside their own village to detect and combat human trafficking and to educate people on safe migration. In 2020, the volunteers had invited 30 young girls and women to join activities about safe migration and the forced marriage situation. During the activity, we were able to detect 5 victims who were already induced by the marriage broker. AAT reached out to the victims and provided them with preventive measures. Finally, we were able to protect the 5 victims from being trafficked to the destination country.



Group consultation on human trafficking and safe migration

Agents of Change play a crucial role to detect and reach out to the underrepresented target groups. We supported the Agents of Change to conduct focus groups with their peers who are providing sex service. The activity aimed to encourage the target groups to leave prostitution and orient them to career alternatives. There were 6 target groups that joined the activity. Among the 6 target groups, 2 target groups decided to stop providing sex services.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE AND ADVOCACY PROGRAMME IN LAOS

Legal Assistance, Advocacy and Support Lao Lawyer Network: We provided legal assistance for 16 beneficiaries.



- We coordinated with the coordinator of **AAPTIP** (AAPTIP is Australia-Asia Program to Combat Trafficking in Persons supported by the Australian government) in order to seek an advice about Lawyer Networks in Laos.
- **4 Lao Lawyers from LDP Law Firm were built capacity.** LDP is Law and Development Partnership Company which provide legal service and pro bono programme.
- We provided legal assistance with Lao lawyers to take legal actions for **11 Lao victims** who were sexually exploited in Thailand.
- **5 cases of forced marriage and sexual exploitation** received legal consultation service.

AAT and LDP law firm exchanged experiences concerning legal assistance for victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation, how to collect evidence for court trial in Thailand, and how to draft legal documents which align with court trial in Thailand. Also, Lao lawyers joined AAT field work and helped coordinate with Lao stakeholders.

In 2020, AAT rescued 5 Lao girls who were victims of sexual exploitation in Rayong province, Thailand. We provided legal assistance to these victims. The 5 Lao minors were carrying genuine passports with fake age, their ages were shown as over 18 years old. During the court trial, we had to present evidence to the court that the victims were under 18 despite their legal documents otherwise they

may not be considered victims. We worked with LDP in order to find the family of the victims and to collect evidence being the documents of victims' families in order to identify the real age of the victims, and the documents needed to be verified by the victim's family and local officials in the country of origin.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to cumbersome procedures. Normally, we coordinated with victims' families to come to Thailand to verify the documents. However, we were unable to do this process as the border has closed and the victims' families could not come to Thailand. As such, AAT Lao staff together with the lawyers reached out to the victims' families and had them verify the documents including power of attorney. They also conducted the family of the victims to the border in order to bear witness via video conference.

COVID-19 RELIEF ASSISTANCE IN LAOS.



- **115 beneficiaries** who were affected by COVID-19 received goods support.
- Agents of Change and volunteers participated in the actions, they provided field visits, collected data of the potential victims affected by COVID-19 and distributed goods support. Local volunteers were able to detect **13 potential victims** who married Chinese men, and 158 families that had migrated to Thailand for work.

In 2020, AAT supported Agents of Change and volunteers to undertake COVID-19 relief assistance in Vientiane province, Laos. During the activities, Agent of Change and volunteers advised the beneficiaries about protection from human trafficking for sexual exploitation, safe migration, and case notification channels.



The Agent of Change and the volunteers were distributing goods for the beneficiaries who affected by COVID-19.

PROTECTION PROGRAMME IN MYANMAR

Protection of women and children for sex trafficking and forced marriage: We protected 4 victims.



- **3 Burmese victims** were rescued from China. The victims were aged over 18 years old and they were safely returned to their home in Myanmar.
- **1 Burmese victim** of online sexual exploitation was protected.
- **AAT has created a protection channel** to protect and repatriate victims trafficked for forced marriage into China.

AAT's protection programme is mainly operated in Shan State, Myanmar. The Burmese victims of forced marriage are usually deceived and trafficked by recruiters promising jobs in China. After arriving in the destination country, the victims were sold to local men for marriage.

To rescue the Burmese victims, we developed networks with local watchdog networks in both Shan State and China. The networks played a crucial role in reporting cases which led to rescue operations, and to assist victims throughout the repatriation process. We have created one network of local volunteers composed of Shan workers in Yunnan at the Chinese-Burmese border. We have set up another network composed of Shan volunteers on the other side of the border. The 3 victims were protected as follow: we organized a taxi to the border; the network at the border received them and brought them to a temple for the night; they were then helped crossing the border and then helped them to the network at the border who brought them back home.

EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME IN MYANMAR

Empowerment and Rehabilitation Service: We provided services for 12 beneficiaries.



- **10 Burmese beneficiaries** were followed up inside their community.
- **2 Burmese beneficiaries** were supported with career alternatives.
- 1 beneficiary was supported with a small grant to raise pig farm.
- 1 beneficiary is training at sewing school.

The follow-up services were conducted in both online and in the field. In the first stage after rescuing the victims, we provided in-field follow up services to the victims in order to assess their families and community. Most of our beneficiaries are provided with on-the-ground follow-up service. However, during COVID-19, we mainly conducted online follow up the beneficiaries as we cannot visit their community.



The beneficiary wearing a blue shirt training in the sewing school.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE AND ADVOCACY PROGRAMME IN MYANMAR

Legal Assistance: We provided legal assistance for 5 beneficiaries.



- **5 Burmese victims** received legal assistance while they were in Thailand. There was 1 sexual abuse case and 4 human trafficking for sexual exploitation cases.
- The victim of sexual abuse case received compensation from the offender in the amount of 30,000 THB
- No Burmese victims of forced marriage cases decided to take legal actions.

In 2020, AAT had few actions in Myanmar because of the ongoing armed conflict in the communities where we work. Our field visits to communities were extremely limited, and most of the Burmese cases we rescued didn't ask for reintegration support and helped themselves.

STRATEGY: Local Community Watchdogs and Online Campaign



- AAT developed **7 local community watchdogs** in 6 communities in Myanmar which are Kyaukme, Lashio, Hsipaw, Namkham, Muse, and Taunggyi, as well as 1 community in Yunnan, China.
- **689 beneficiaries** received preventive information through online campaigns on human trafficking and safe migration.

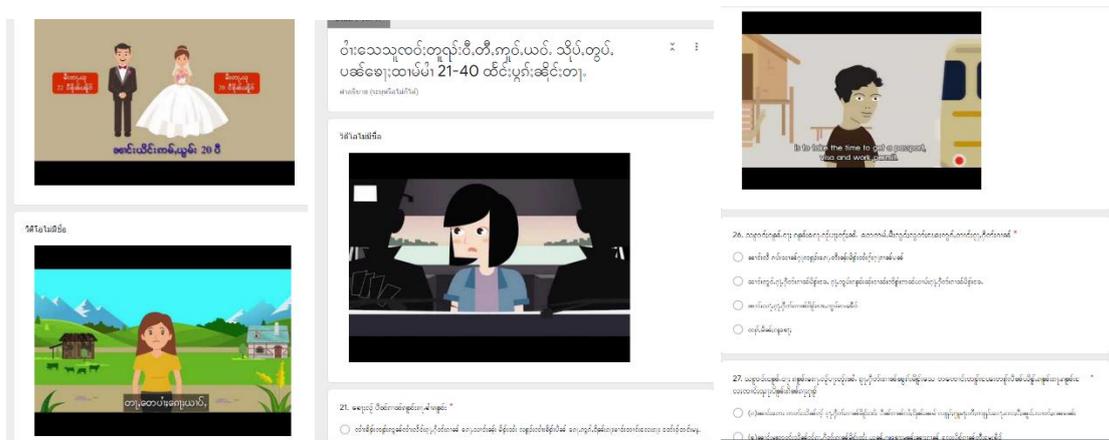
In 2020, AAT developed local community watchdogs in order to raise awareness of vulnerable girls and their families in their community and detect case notifications. We visited the community and promoted AAT work and case notifications to at-risk group. We were able to develop collaboration with 7 local community watchdogs which work for youth and women rights. We supported the network to undertake its own activities such as capacity building activity about protection from human trafficking, safe migration and channels for case notifications. These networks enabled us to enter communities that restricted people who are not local to enter because of the armed conflicts.

These community watchdogs have themselves trained other women and girls to become watchdogs in their communities.

We had difficulties in conducting on-the-ground activities to reach the at-risk population due to armed conflict and COVID-19. As such, we promoted our work and case notification through 2 local radio channels which target the Shan population. We supported Mork Kon local radio, Tai TV online, and Tai Care and Share to distribute information about human trafficking and safe migration.

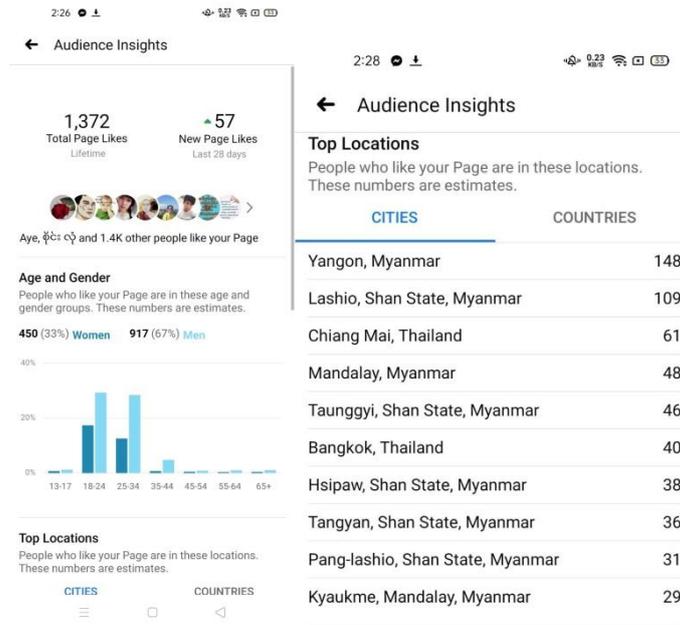
- 20 Shan women were reached by Mork Kon radio and Tai TV online
- 6 people did online questionnaires.
- 663 people were reached through Tai Care and Share Facebook Fan page (we posted 12 contents about safe migration and human trafficking)

A total of 689 beneficiaries received information about human trafficking and safe migration.



The online questionnaires for human trafficking and safe migration

“Tai Care and Share” Facebook page was created in early 2020 by the participants and watchdogs who joined AAT’s training for content creator. This Facebook page aims to educate and share knowledge about human trafficking and safe migration. There are 1,372 Page likes including 57 followers. Of the page likes, 33% are women and 67% are men. The age ranges from 18 to 44 years old. For the education level, 25% are in high school and 75% are in college. **89% of the audiences are from Myanmar** (Lashio and Taunggyi in Shan State and Yangon Myanmar).



Facebook Engagement

COVID-19 RELIEF ASSISTANCE IN MYANMAR



- **255 beneficiaries**, who were affected by COVID-19 were provided with goods support.
- **6 local volunteers** participated in the actions and provided field visits, collected data of potential victims who were affected by COVID-19, and distributed goods supports. Local volunteers were able to detect **175 potential victims** of forced marriage.

In 2020, AAT supported the works of volunteers to distribute goods for the beneficiaries affected by COVID-19. The volunteers interviewed the target groups who returned from China, as well as explaining to them human trafficking for sexual exploitation and safe migration.



The volunteer was explaining safe migration during goods distribution



The volunteer interviewing the beneficiaries about potential victims in their village.

Challenges

In Thailand

- We faced some obstacles with collaboration from the beneficiaries when they were reintegrated into the community. The empowerment team had been providing follow-up service for beneficiaries both inside and outside government shelters, and the team considered that good collaboration from the victims plays a crucial role in the rehabilitation service. When the beneficiaries stayed at the shelter, they paid close attention to the activity. On the other hand, they gave minimum collaboration when they were reintegrated into their community. Sometimes, the team couldn't follow up as they could not contact the beneficiaries. To identify the root cause of this challenge, the team noticed that the beneficiaries are very young in age and have severe and complicated trauma. Moreover, beneficiaries came from broken families where their parents could not be good role models and provide appropriate parental monitoring. With all these factors, beneficiaries were easily distracted and could not properly receive follow-up services.
- Recently in Thailand, **victims are a very young age** due to online sexual exploitation at school, and online sexual exploitation has increased because of COVID-19. Our youngest case is aged only 5 years old (it was a case of sexual abuse). When the cases are a very young age, they have communication problems, namely they could remember the harassment actions but they could not elaborate or explain accurate information when they were asked intensively. If the victims cannot explain the details, it may affect both the lawsuit and themselves as the victims may be considered liars. Therefore, the legal team coordinated with social workers to assess the risk during the investigation process. During the investigation process, as the persons requested by the victims, we assisted them so that they were willing to collaborate and provide information to the inquiry officer.

In Laos

- We had good collaboration with the beneficiaries particularly the Agents of Change. They actively participated in group empowerment activities and were able to undertake their own preventive activity on human trafficking and safe migration inside their community.

Identity documents of victims were falsified, namely the age of the victims was raised to over 18 years old. This leads to difficulty when we provided the rescue and victim identification.

In Myanmar

- We have limited collaboration and engagement from Burmese beneficiaries because of the internal armed conflict in Myanmar and COVID-19. We were able to conduct limited ground activities or provide limited follow-up service for the Burmese victims.
- When we implement actions in communities there are already many groups who work in the communities that have political intentions, therefore the local people don't fully open for AAT's work as they don't know whether we come for political reasons or not.

COVID-19 impact

- In Thailand, the government imposed strict measures in order to control the pandemic. Mass gatherings and shelter visits were not allowed during the restrictions period. The AAT team was unable to conduct activities properly for the victims inside government shelters during that time.
- In Laos, the AAT Lao team could not conduct investigations and provide follow-up service. This leads to a gap between the victims and the team as the team could not regularly and closely build trust with the victims. Moreover, the choices for career alternatives were limited as the private sectors recruited few people.
- In Myanmar, we faced particular challenges because of COVID-19 and the on-going armed conflicts in the community where AAT works. We barely visited and undertook actions inside community.
- Regionally, there were less career alternatives and big economic problems due to COVID-19.

Lessons Learned

- In Thailand, when handling the large cases involving offenders who have high-influence, ***focusing on the best interest of the victim and working with international organizations through national and international legal mechanisms can help the victims to access their rights.*** In one case we and other international network organizations and the press helped pushed forward on witness protection and subsequently successfully repatriated the victim to a third country. This victim couldn't be repatriated home for security reasons.
- ***Intensive rehabilitation and follow-up activities help boost trust and collaboration*** between the team and beneficiaries. We provided monthly follow-up with one beneficiary until she trusted and became comfortable with us. She shared her life situation and concerns, and she gave good collaboration. She recently graduated from nurse assistant school and began her job as elderly caretaker.
- ***Working with beneficiary families can promote a good and safe environment for the beneficiaries who (re)integrate into their community.*** When the team provided field visits, the team observed various potential risks that can lead beneficiaries to be re-victimized. For instance, if the mother is the only person to earn money and support for all family members, the daughter cannot have parental monitoring and thus becomes the prey for sexual exploitation. Therefore, the team has been working with beneficiary families by providing

regular visits, counselling, and conducting activities that can promote understanding among parents and children such as knowledge about the behavior of teenage.

- ***Continuity and frequency are the keys to strengthen the networks which can lead to case notification and victim assistance.*** During the middle to the end of 2020, we established the local community watchdogs in Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar. The objectives of the local watchdog are to raise awareness about human trafficking for sexual exploitation and generate case notifications.
 - o In Thailand, we had at least 2 meetings with the watchdogs inside and outside Thailand (to protect Thai women trafficked overseas). This method helped us to build trust with the new networks as they reported the cases to us even though we had only started the network a couple of months before. With facilitation from the watchdogs, we were able to reach 21 individuals and 3 organizations abroad. 21 Thai volunteers live and work in different countries: South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan, China, India, Dubai, Norway, Australia, and Belgium. The 3 organizations are non-government organizations based in Belgium, Sweden, and England. At the end of 2020, we received 2 case notifications of Thai victims from the NGO in Belgium.
 - o In Laos, we developed local watchdogs with diverse groups such as government officials, civil society organizations, as well as tribe and ethnic groups. Also, we developed and built capacity for individual volunteers in at-risk communities so that they are able to undertake their own activities and detect potential victims inside their communities. The local watchdogs reached 92 case notifications of the victims and potential victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation and forced marriage.
 - o In Myanmar, the majority of local watchdogs are civil society organizations which work for youth and women rights. Because of the internal armed conflict and COVID-19, we had limitations in conducting on-the-ground activity. As such, we supported and built capacity for the local community watchdogs to distribute and raise awareness about safe migration and human trafficking for sexual exploitation.
- ***Agents of Change Development.*** We have been empowering Agents of Change and former victims who were rescued by AAT to become watchdogs and detect victims and potential victims. We received many case notifications from the Agents of Change and former victims. The Agents of Change also play a crucial in protecting their peers before being trafficked as the Agents of Change had conducted activities to educate their peers about safe migration and human trafficking.

Good Practice

1. Develop good collaboration between AAT and Lao lawyer networks. As mentioned in the Legal assistance in Lao's section, AAT had been providing legal assistance for 5 Lao victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation in Rayong province, Eastern Thailand. The challenge was that the victim passports were fabricated, namely their ages in passports were raised to over 18 years old. The age of the victim is one of the factors in victim identification procedure.



Because of COVID-19, we could not go meet victims' families in Laos. Therefore, AAT collaborated with Lao lawyer networks in order to reach out to victims' families in Laos and have them verify the documents including the power of attorney. After victims' families verified the documents, the documents were also verified by the Lao Court, The Embassy of Laos, and The Thai Embassy in Laos. The victims' families were interviewed via video conference as they could not enter Thailand because of COVID-19. The Thai Court and the prosecutor approved the documents.

According to the court verdict, the offender was sentenced to 25 years 6 months imprisonment, and fined 77,000 THB. Because the offender pleaded guilty, the court reduced the imprisonment and fine. The offender was finally sentenced to imprisonment for 12 years 9 months and fined 38,500 THB.

2. Peer-to-Peer Approach



In Laos, we have been involving Agents of Change to participate in our works. We trained them in various topics such as interpretation in ethnic language, safe migration, human trafficking, sexual exploitation, reproductive health. An Agent of Change invited her peers who live in the same village to join the safe migration activity. During the session, 2 participants shared their experiences when they were induced by marriage brokers. The Agent of Change advised them about safe migration, the risks of being trafficked, and laws

related to marriage with a foreigner. The participants rejected the marriage proposal and decided to stay in the community.

Commitment in 2021

1. Enable and strengthen local watchdogs to proactively detect and provide basic assistance for the at-risk groups and the victims in their community.
2. Develop our work concerning online prevention and protection.
3. Promote collaboration with diverse stakeholders which are the government agencies in Thailand and Laos (both on national and local level), international organizations, civil society organizations, and community groups in at-risk provinces. We will also strengthen the victim referral and protection mechanism with national organizations and international organizations.
4. To reach more target groups, we aim to increase the organization's visibility and create more outreach activities and raise more funds.
5. Promote victim safeguarding policies and encourage our stakeholders to impose a victim-friendly and positive approach.
6. Implement human trafficking prevention programs in Shan refugee camps around the Thai border.

Words from AAT Officers and Network.

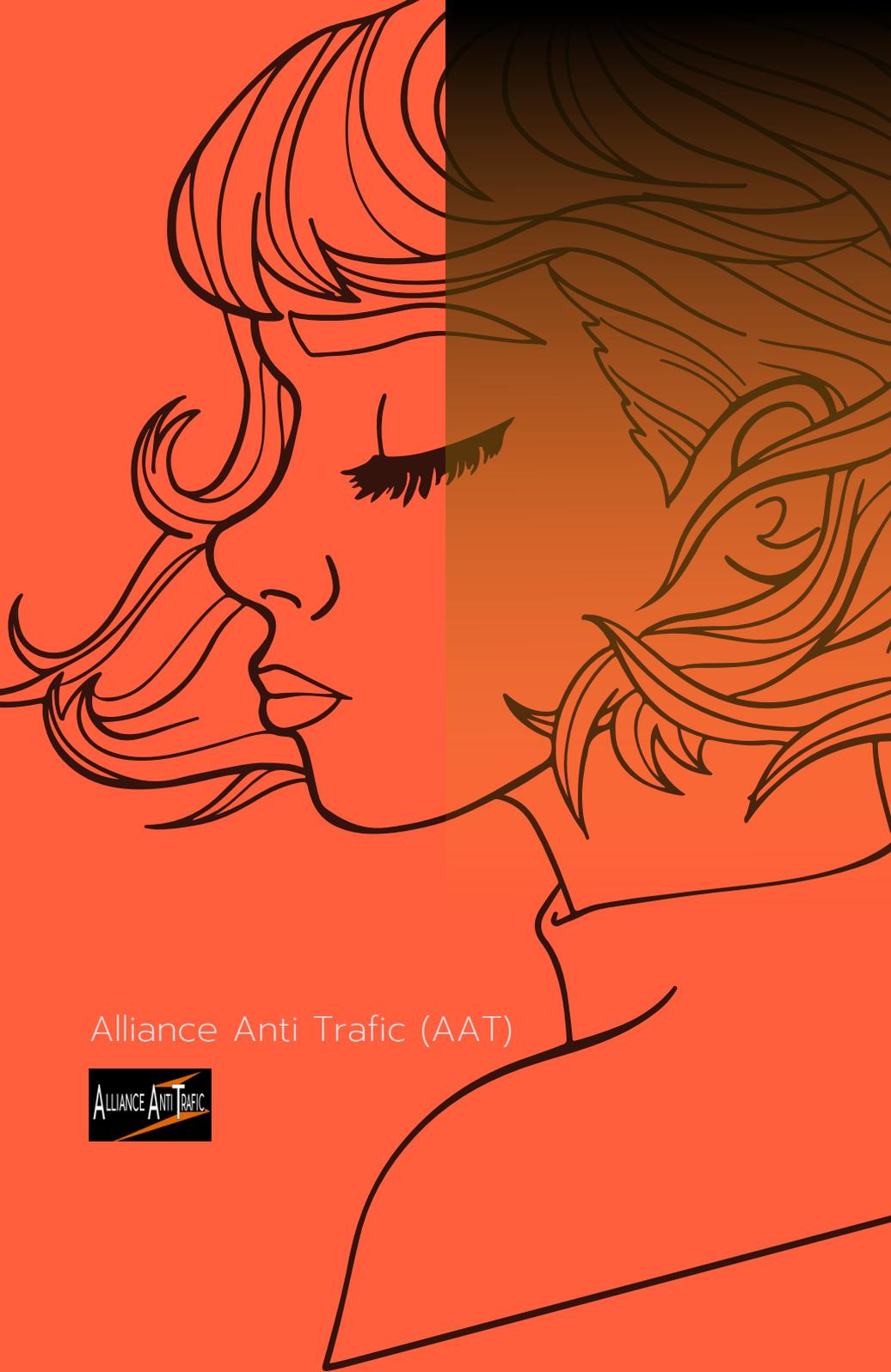
“Every action has a reason behind it and when the persons fall victims to sexual exploitation, they have full entitlement and the right to protection” - AAT's Protection officer who has been working in the frontline and rescue of victims.

“The challenge of empowerment work is to develop a strong mind and a positive mindset for the victim and beneficiaries. We cannot deny the fact that people cannot change the past but ‘they can change the future’. They have the potential to design their pathway and the future awaits”— AAT's Empowerment officer who has been working closely with the victims.

“Some parents believe that marriage is the key to help families to have better living conditions. However, they don't know that their daughters will be exploited. This is due to their limited choices, so we strive to provide them with alternative choices and preventative measures.”— AAT's Forced Marriage Program officer who has been working to rescue and prevent Lao and Burmese victims.

“There are many challenges in legal proceedings. However, the challenges do not stop us from assisting the victims. With their smiles, collaboration, and appreciation, the victims motivate us. That is why we are working to ensure that their legal rights are respected” - AAT's Legal officer who has been working closely with the victims in legal assistance.

“It's great that we can collaborate and share with AAT. We hope to be able to support each other in the future.”- Thai Staff who is working with Oasis Belgium. Oasis Belgium is an organization helping women who immigrated from various countries and experienced gender-based violence and exploitation. AAT has an opportunity to collaborate and receive cases with Thai staff from Oasis Belgium as there are Thai women who fall victim to sexual exploitation in Belgium.



Alliance Anti Trafic (AAT)

