

# GFEMS Anti-Trafficking Programming in Northern Vietnam

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This briefing document presents the consolidated learnings from anti-trafficking programming funded by the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery between 2019 and 2020 in northern Vietnam and led by implementation partners Blue Dragon Children's Foundation and the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance. The intervention model comprised three key components aimed at building community resilience through early identification and support to at-risk households, facilitating comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration support for trafficking survivors, and impeding traffickers through strengthened legal response.

## Key Takeaways

- **Traffickers operate within their own communities:** The majority of traffickers belong to the same vulnerable communities as victims, have relatively low levels of educational attainment, and face a lack of viable livelihood opportunities. Decisions to join trafficking networks are mostly opportunistic, driven by situations of poverty and previously, a lack of accountability.
- **Traffickers use personal and online social networks:** Traffickers are using social media, smart phones, and other forms of technology to identify, groom, lure, and traffic victims. The majority (62%) of victims knew their traffickers prior to being lured into exploitation with 34% of victims trafficked by someone who first befriended them online.
- **Risky migration can be reduced if community-led awareness campaigns are combined with targeted livelihood support:** Compared to residents in control communities, residents of intervention communities within Ha Giang were less likely to migrate without a contract, less likely to have their documents confiscated, and less likely to migrate with debt at project endline. The success of the multifaceted awareness campaign can be attributed to ownership by community stakeholders, including village leaders, Women's Union members, commune police officers, school teachers, and secondary students as well as provision of targeted livelihoods support to those most at-risk.
- **School-based interventions can reduce vulnerability and potentially improve retention:** Targeted and contextualized school-based prevention activities demonstrated effectiveness at equipping students with information to protect against trafficking risks, identifying students who dropped out and providing them with targeted support to return to school. These activities included anti-trafficking in persons training for teachers and students, the establishment of core anti-trafficking student groups in schools, provision of targeted support to students identified as at-risk of dropout, and coordination with commune officials to conduct home visits and provide livelihoods and vocational training support to households with out-of-school children.
- **Cooperation and collaboration between government agencies can lead to significant improvements in victim identification and service delivery:** No trafficking survivors reported receiving reintegration support in Ha Giang province prior to the project. Capacity-building support to local government and law enforcement agencies focused on strengthening mechanisms for information sharing and coordination contributed to the effective implementation of the National Referral Mechanism at the provincial level. The enhanced collaboration between key anti-trafficking stakeholders led to the identification and provision of government reintegration support to 9 trafficking survivors - a considerable improvement.

• **Reintegration services can be effective if they are**

**survivor-centric:** Ninety percent of service providers who participated in training demonstrated improved skills in providing trauma-informed support to survivors. Eighty-eight percent of reintegration support recipients were assessed as having a sustainable livelihood and no longer being at risk of re-trafficking. The ability of survivors to select the nature and type of support required alongside service providers trained in trauma-informed care was instrumental to the success of Blue Dragon's rehabilitation program.

• **Reintegration services for youth are more effective when**

**social support networks can be established:** Among Sustainable Hospitality Alliance participants, graduates benefited from strong social networks. However, the vast majority of those who left the program early were unable to form a similar social support network.

• **Poverty, exclusion, and ethnicity are critical drivers of**

**vulnerability to trafficking:** The majority of trafficking victims in Vietnam are from regions characterized by high rates of poverty and unemployment, and a lack of access to critical services and infrastructure. Trafficking victims also disproportionately belong to ethnic minority communities – 50% of the victims in the database analyzed belong to these communities, which otherwise represent only 15% of the total population. Individuals from the H'mong community are particularly at-risk, with the data indicating that they are over 13 times more likely to be trafficked than majority Kinh community members.

• **Recommendations**

- Prevention messaging should focus on educating communities about real trafficking risks and specific trafficker approaches relevant to their region. Campaigns should also consider messaging that emphasizes the severity of trafficking as a crime and its associated penalties to deter would-be traffickers.
- Community-based prevention efforts should focus on securing the active buy-in and participation of local stakeholders to ensure the sustainability and institutionalization of resilience programming.
- Investments in targeted livelihood opportunities can reduce vulnerability of individuals at-risk of being trafficked, as well as reduce the likelihood of community members taking up trafficking as an income generation strategy.
- Efforts to build structured cooperation and collaboration between responsible government agencies, in particular, police and the Department of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs (DoLISA), can lead to significant improvements in victim identification and delivery of support for trafficking survivors.
- Reintegration programs need to be tailored to survivor needs and contexts, and provide survivors with the agency to select avenues of support that are most relevant for them in both the short and long term.

## Context

This brief highlights learnings from GFEMS-supported anti-trafficking programming in the northern province of Ha Giang, where communities are at high risk of trafficking due to socio-economic vulnerabilities including low-levels of educational attainment, high poverty rates, and a reliance on low-margin agriculture. Members of these communities predominantly live in remote and rural areas and belong to disadvantaged ethnic minority groups. These characteristics, coupled with the proximity of a long and porous land border with China, result in high levels of migration through irregular channels, leaving individuals vulnerable to threats, deception, exploitation, and lack of legal protections.

These circumstances are exacerbated by a widespread lack of awareness and understanding of trafficking and its risks. While the province had previously implemented awareness programs to address this issue, these were primarily one-off sessions that were not sustained, reached limited

numbers in the community, and employed content that was not relevant to the issues faced by community members. Government agencies and service providers in the province were also hindered by a lack of resources and technical knowledge to effectively address trafficking-related issues in the region. Despite the existence of a national referral mechanism regulating the identification and referral of trafficking victims to rehabilitation services, a lack of inter-agency coordination and information-sharing, particularly between law enforcement and provincial officials, presented challenges to its effective implementation. Further, there were no social workers specifically designated to support trafficking victims in the province. Each commune had only one DoLISA-assigned social protection worker who was responsible for supporting all vulnerable individuals eligible for government assistance. However these workers were unfamiliar with trafficking and unequipped to work with vulnerabilities specific to trafficking survivors.

## Intervention Model

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GFEMS funded two local civil-society organizations, Blue Dragon and the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance, to contribute to the reduced prevalence of trafficking in Ha Giang province through the establishment of a comprehensive anti-trafficking program. The intervention model consisted of three key components:

- **Prevention – Building the resilience of communities through the establishment of targeted “early-warning” systems** at the village, community, and school level to

- Equip vulnerable community members with knowledge of trafficking risks, safe migration practices, and safe internet use;
- Involve key local stakeholders and authorities in anti-trafficking efforts, including establishing a reporting mechanism for suspected cases and mobilizing resources to support at-risk individuals and returnees; and
- Enable regular screening and identification of high-risk families or individuals and referral to prevention and support services.

- **Survivor Support – Ensuring sustained freedom for trafficking survivors** through

- Training for regional DoLISA and Women’s Union (WU) personnel on effective victim identification and referral;
- Training local social workers on trauma-informed counseling and case management practices; and

- Enabling access to livelihood support to ensure returning survivors are able to rebuild their lives. As part of this pillar, GFEMS also provided funding to the Sustainable Hospitality Alliance to establish a livelihoods program aimed at preparing survivors and at-risk youth for more sustainable market-based jobs. Working with local civil society organizations, the Alliance identified trafficking survivors and at-risk youth for placement in a six-month jobs training program which provided them with vocational, soft skills, and experiential training focused on the hospitality sector. Upon graduation, the project placed graduates in hotel jobs in Hanoi.

- **Deterrence – Impeding traffickers through improved rule of law** through

- Legal aid training to improve representation for victims to facilitate prosecution and compensation payments, and improve collaboration between police and legal aid for victim support during the investigation process; and
- Demonstration court cases to model effective investigation and victim protection processes at the commune level.

It is important to note that project components were implemented over a relatively short period of 18 months. The COVID-19 pandemic further impeded continuity for several activities in 2020.

## Research and Evaluation

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The findings in this brief are informed by a range of research and learning efforts associated with these interventions including:

- A two time-point knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) survey conducted at project baseline and endline with 1,000 households across two districts in Ha Giang province (Meo Vac, as the intervention district, and Quan Ba, as a comparison district). The survey aimed to assess any changes in community-level
  - Awareness of the risks and drivers associated with trafficking in persons;
  - Knowledge of channels and resources for reporting or referring suspected instances of trafficking in persons; and
  - Propensity for risky migration behaviors
- A set of qualitative interviews with key recipients of project interventions including trafficking survivors, social workers, secondary school teachers, students, and vulnerable community members who received livelihoods support. The

qualitative research component also included provincial and district officials and community leaders (such as representatives from DoLISA, WU, Youth Union (YU), Legal Aid Center, Justice Department, district police and border guards, and the Department of Education and Training).

- An analysis of records and data for 102 successfully prosecuted trafficking cases in Vietnam (representing 199 victims and 236 traffickers across 26 provinces) focused on understanding the profile, characteristics and common tactics of traffickers operating in the region. Case data for the analysis was drawn from Blue Dragon’s own database as well as from published court records from the Supreme People’s Court of Vietnam.
- An analysis of records from 1,674 trafficking victims rescued between 2005 and December 2020. The database included details from 997 victims directly rescued by Blue Dragon as

well as 677 victims who were rescued by other authorities but subsequently repatriated and supported by Blue Dragon.

- A series of qualitative interviews with Alliance project stakeholders including the civil society organizations responsible for outreach and mobilization, project staff in Hanoi, and a sample of graduates from the training program.

The learnings outlined below draw on the input and perspectives of varied stakeholders including government agencies, law enforcement authorities, key community leaders, service providers, at-risk community members, as well as trafficking survivors themselves. Collectively, they aim to provide insight into

- Trafficking patterns and practices in target communities;

- The drivers and characteristics of vulnerability to trafficking in Vietnam; and

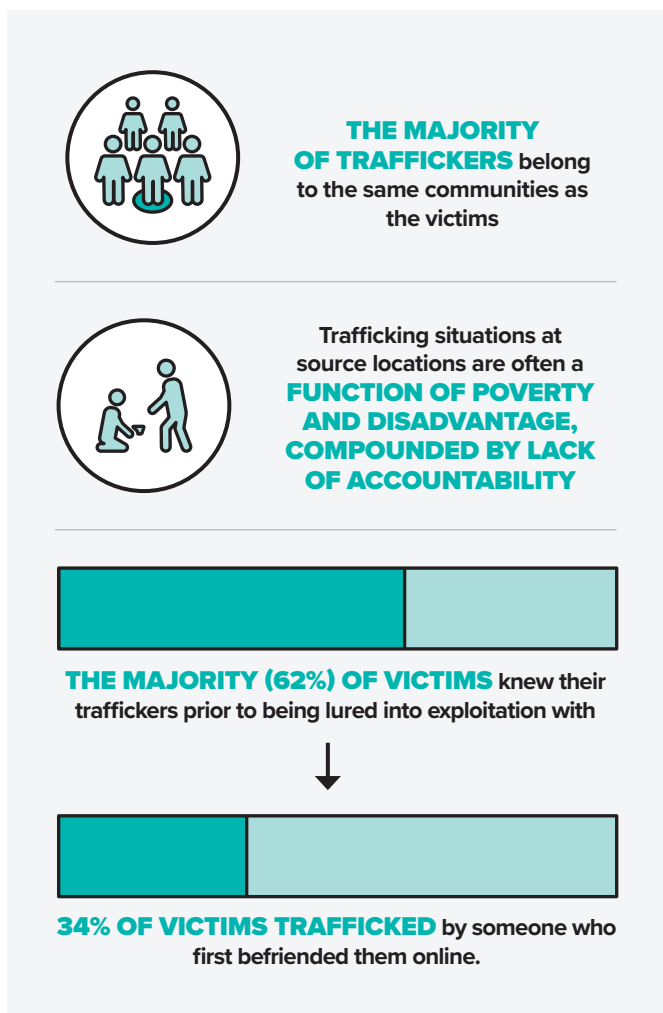
- The degree to which implemented anti-trafficking interventions proved effective at strengthening community knowledge and resilience and supporting sustained rehabilitation and reintegration for survivors.

It is important to note that while findings from these evaluative efforts point to early indications of the effectiveness of certain project activities, the relatively short implementation period and uncertainties associated with effects of the COVID-19 pandemic mean that any observed positive changes cannot necessarily be attributed entirely to project activities.

## Key Learnings

### *Traffickers often operate within their own communities and use personal and online social networks to lure victims*

The analysis of court data revealed interesting insights into the socio-demographic profiles of traffickers as well as the nature of trafficking in Vietnam. The majority of traffickers belong to the same communities as the victims – over 60% of both traffickers and victims belong to Vietnamese ethnic minority groups (among these groups, the H'mong people were the most vulnerable). Most traffickers also have low levels of educational attainment, with 15% being pre-literate and 50% leaving school before 12th grade. A subset of the court records reviewed also provided data on trafficker payments for recruiting victims. Analysis of the payments received by traffickers reveals that while some perpetrators received relatively lucrative payment (the average amount received by those traffickers who were paid was approximately VND 36 million or USD 1,500), in several cases (41 traffickers), prosecuted traffickers did not receive any payment at all as they were either apprehended by law enforcement or deceived by higher-level traffickers. These findings show that the majority of prosecuted cases involve “low-level” traffickers for whom the decision to commit the crime is often opportunistic – trafficking situations at source locations are often a function of poverty and disadvantage, with both recruiters and victims in highly vulnerable circumstances and taking risks as a result. The case research further revealed patterns in trafficker practices, providing useful guidance for future engagement initiatives to enable communities to effectively protect themselves against trafficker deception. The majority (62%) of victims knew their traffickers prior to being lured into exploitation with 34% of victims trafficked by someone who first befriended them online. The most common recruitment tactic employed by traffickers was to recruit victims through false promises – 34% of victims were lured



with fraudulent job offers, 25% through false relationships or friendships, and 25% through fake marriage brokers with offers of marriage to Chinese men. The overwhelming majority of these cases were for either commercial sexual exploitation or forced marriage (97%).

*“The main trick is ‘cheating/luring’ by pretending to build a relationship with victims gradually. Then traffickers trap victims by inviting them to hang-out, go shopping at markets, trips near border areas, etc. Traffickers may connect or have a network of members both in Vietnam and China”*

– In-depth interview, Women’s Union member

The analysis was constrained by the inherent limitations of the data – specifically, that

- the accessible data represented only successfully prosecuted cases of cross-border trafficking to China and excluded any cases of domestic trafficking;
- the dataset only included traffickers who had been successfully arrested and prosecuted, and are therefore more likely to be lower-level recruiters than “higher-up” traffickers; and
- it only included traffickers based in Vietnam, excluding any insights on destination country-based operations.

Nevertheless, the findings above provide relevant and actionable insights on trafficker characteristics and practices, particularly in the Vietnam-China corridor, to inform future anti-trafficking programming in the region.

### **Members of ethnic minority communities are disproportionately vulnerable to trafficking**

Findings from the survivor database analysis emphasize that situations of poverty, exclusion, and disadvantage are critical drivers of vulnerability to trafficking. The majority of trafficking victims in Vietnam (across both labor and sex trafficking cases) are from regions characterized by high rates of poverty and unemployment, a lack of access to healthcare, education, housing, water and sanitation services, and disconnected from information and communication networks.

Trafficking victims also disproportionately belong to ethnic minority communities – 50% of the victims in the database analyzed belong to these communities, which otherwise represent only 15% of the total population of Vietnam. Individuals from the H’mong community are particularly at-risk, with the data indicating that members of this community are over 13 times more likely to be trafficked than majority Kinh community members

(H’mong people comprise 19% of trafficking victims but make up 1.4% of the overall population). Within this most vulnerable group, women and girls face a greater risk of trafficking than male H’mong community members. Gendered disparities in educational attainment, access to services including healthcare and vocational training, limited employment opportunities, and prevalence of norms including child marriage have left H’mong women and girls susceptible to deception through fraudulent job or relationship offers that lead to situations of exploitation and trafficking.

While these findings are useful to enable better targeting of communication material and messaging for prevention campaigns, they also underscore the importance of targeted livelihood and poverty alleviation programs to address the issue of trafficking in Vietnam.

### **Risky migration can be reduced through comprehensive approaches that combine community-led awareness campaigns with targeted livelihood support**

Findings from both quantitative and qualitative evaluative efforts indicate that Blue Dragon’s village, community, and school-based “early warning systems” were effective at

- Improving knowledge of vulnerabilities and trafficking risks associated with unsafe migration;
- Improving awareness of channels for referring and reporting suspected instances of trafficking; and
- Reducing practices associated with risky migration among targeted communities.

Of the models deployed, village and community-based early warning systems (including screening at-risk households,

providing targeted support to at-risk individuals, and including anti-trafficking topics at weekly village meetings) appear to have resonated well in the project intervention areas – in particular, qualitative findings indicated that communication and awareness activities implemented by village anti-trafficking boards were effective owing to these stakeholders’ existing experience working with local households and familiarity with local context, as well as the involvement and support of commune-level government officials.

Large scale awareness events, such as plays or music performances at marketplaces, were less effective at improving participant knowledge of trafficking risks or protective factors. This is underscored by endline KAP survey findings, which revealed that only 7% of respondents in

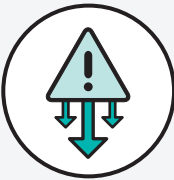
Blue Dragon's village, community, and school-based "early warning systems" were effective at



**IMPROVING KNOWLEDGE** of vulnerabilities and trafficking risks associated with unsafe migration



**IMPROVING AWARENESS OF CHANNELS** for referring and reporting suspected instances of trafficking; and



**REDUCING PRACTICES** associated with risky migration among targeted communities

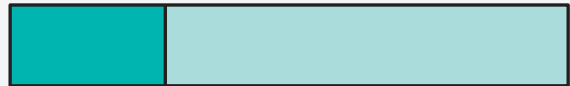
the intervention district perceived awareness-raising plays as an effective channel to communicate trafficking-related information.

#### **Knowledge and awareness of trafficking risks and reporting mechanisms**

At the community-level, households had become more aware of trafficking and other risks associated with irregular migration abroad, including commercial sexual exploitation, fraud, labor deception, and forced marriage. Respondents in the intervention district were significantly less likely to say there were no dangers at all. Findings revealed a positive relationship between exposure to awareness activities and improved knowledge of trafficking risks and vulnerability drivers at project endline. The results also indicate that respondents grew more concerned about a range of trafficker tactics, including those that are not particularly common strategies in the region such as abduction and threats of violence. While the community-based prevention activities have increased overall levels of vigilance towards trafficking in persons and the dangers associated with risky migration, future efforts could be better targeted to improve clarity regarding risks and practices that are more common and realistic.



Findings revealed a **POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP** between exposure to awareness activities and improved knowledge of trafficking risks and vulnerability drivers at project endline



Awareness of the provincial anti-trafficking hotline grew dramatically, **WITH 28% OF RESPONDENTS** listing this as a reporting mechanism



**VERSUS ONLY 0.04%** of respondents at baseline



Households in the intervention district of Meo Vac saw a **SUBSTANTIAL DECREASE** in propensity for risky migration

Additionally, the village-level early-warning system has been successful at informing help-seeking behavior in the target district – respondents at endline were more likely to be aware of whom to contact in case of a suspected instance of trafficking. Awareness of the provincial anti-trafficking hotline also grew dramatically, with 28% of respondents listing this as a reporting mechanism versus only 0.04% of respondents at baseline.

#### **Risky migration**

Findings from the household survey revealed that households in the intervention district of Meo Vac saw a substantial decrease in propensity for risky migration. Prior to the project, community members who migrated across the border in both target and comparison districts did so under relatively precarious conditions. At baseline, only 40% of households with a migrant family member in Meo Vac reported migrating for work with a contract compared with 77% of households in the comparison district, Quan Ba. Further, a large proportion of migrant households reported the confiscation of migrant IDs and documents (43% in Meo Vac and 39% in Quan Ba) and indebtedness prior to migration (17% and 10% of households respectively). By

endline, households in Meo Vac were significantly more likely to migrate with a contract (64% - a 24% increase), while Quan Ba registered a much smaller change over the same period (81% - only a 4% increase). Households with

migrant family members in the project district also registered a decline in reported confiscation of IDs and were less likely to be indebted at endline.

### **School-based interventions can reduce vulnerability and potentially increase retention**

Qualitative research findings indicate that targeted school-based prevention activities proved effective at equipping students with information to protect against trafficking risks, identifying vulnerable students who dropped out and providing them with targeted support to return to school. At baseline, teachers in Ha Giang reported that students had inadequate knowledge on methods used by traffickers and that they felt unequipped to deliver effective prevention strategies. Students were typically taught to be careful of strangers, but given that many traffickers are known to their victims, the awareness around “stranger danger” was unlikely to be protective. Further, there were an increasing number of students who dropped out of school to cross the border for seasonal work opportunities leaving them particularly vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, and trafficking, as confirmed by secondary data on enrollment rates and baseline qualitative interviews with teachers, administrators, and commune officials,

*“Students who cross the border for a seasonal job face many risks of exploitation in China. They are often forced to do all kinds of jobs (including heavy, difficult, or harmful jobs) or are not paid compensation. Female students are at risk of being sold or facing sexual exploitation or forced marriage” (Baseline FGD, Khau Vai commune officials and school administrators discussing community risks)*

Focus group discussions with trained teachers at endline revealed that participants viewed the training as particularly beneficial with regard to

- improving their knowledge of trafficking issues in the region;
- enhancing their ability to effectively communicate and deliver content on safe migration and internet use to students;
- enabling them to effectively screen and identify students at-risk of dropout and refer them to targeted support to remain in school.

*“If we have a student who is a survivor, we will support them to return to school. We will never use them as an example to the other students but only encourage them to join with friends...If we use them as an example, they may feel ashamed and quit classes” – Teacher, school-based EWS program participant*

*“While orphans are eligible to receive support from the government, children whose parents have migrated are not supported by anyone. This project provided them with financial support, and the Women’s Union supported them with clothing, food, and solar lights to help them do their homework in the evening. It was important for them.” – Government partner, village-based EWS participant discussing targeted support to at-risk populations*

### **Cooperation and collaboration between government agencies can lead to significant improvements in victim identification and service delivery**

Prior to Blue Dragon intervention in Ha Giang, weak interagency coordination and a lack of resources for survivor support led to very few victims being identified, and none receiving financial assistance or access to services for reintegration. The project’s support to government stakeholders to

- Develop a provincial-level mechanism for the local implementation of national referral mechanism policies; and
- Strengthen inter-agency information-sharing mechanisms and institutionalize these within existing reporting structures.

These efforts proved extremely effective at building coordination among the actors involved, overcoming a significant barrier to the provision of effective support to survivors. As a consequence of these improved levels of collaboration, 9 trafficking survivors were identified, referred, and received reintegration support from government sources during the project (Blue Dragon provided 52 survivors with reintegration support overall). Qualitative interviews with agencies involved revealed that clarity on process as well as improved cooperation with law enforcement agencies enabled DoLISA and WU representatives to improve their preparedness for survivor referrals and to be more proactive about following up on emergency assistance and reintegration services for survivors.



“*(Survivors of trafficking in persons) are very different from other groups. Financial resources are not the only factor promoting the participation of the stakeholders, they were inspired by learning about the survivors and came together to share information. The remarkable achievements of this project resulted from the collaboration among different stakeholders*”  
 – In-depth interview, Blue Dragon government partner

In addition, the contextualized and sustained nature of the support delivered through the social worker training program were effective at strengthening counseling and case management skills for these critical service providers. Ninety percent of training participants improved their knowledge of human trafficking and demonstrated improved skills in providing trauma-informed support to survivors. Further, qualitative interviews with social workers as well as trained representatives from DoLISA and WU revealed that trained stakeholders felt significantly more confident in working with survivors at project endline, in particular, due to the participatory training methods, on-going mentoring, and hands-on technical advice provided.

### Reintegration services can be more effective if they are survivor-centric and locally accessible

In-depth interviews with survivors who received reintegration support through the Blue Dragon project emphasized that the tailored and survivor-centric nature of the services they received was particularly meaningful and conducive to their reintegration journeys. As the social workers and service providers trained by the project were locally based, they were familiar with the socio-economic context of the communities to which survivors belonged and, in most instances, were also able to communicate with survivors in their respective languages or dialects. Survivors also highlighted the importance of being able to determine for themselves the nature and type of support based on their individual needs and contexts (for example, housing, healthcare, vocational training, a range of options for livelihood support), as this enabled them to select options that were both relevant and sustainable for themselves and their families. Forty-six of the 52 survivors supported by Blue Dragon were assessed as “successfully reintegrated” into their communities – i.e., not re-trafficked, effectively managing their trauma, and building a sustained new lifestyle - at least six months after they received services.

“*The (bio production) corn model requires us to work hard but we harvest a lot in return, our lives are much better*”  
 – Survivor, reintegration program participant

“*We used to live with my parents and siblings, 12 people in a small house. The support helped me with a new house. Since we moved here, we have settled down. I plan to make*



**NINETY PERCENT OF TRAINING PARTICIPANTS improved their knowledge of human trafficking and demonstrated improved skills in providing trauma-informed support to survivors**

“*We used to attend training on the local policies and regulations relating to trafficking in persons, but this is the first time ever we have been trained on how to work with survivors to support them effectively. The communication skills are also helpful to work with other types of survivors, not only survivors of trafficking in persons*” – Blue Dragon-trained social worker



**The provision of sustained and structured support coupled with soft skills and practical training can enable individuals with minimal educational attainment and little experience with formal work to ENTER AND SUSTAIN JOBS IN FORMALIZED WORK ENVIRONMENTS**

*a fence here then we will raise chickens to give us food”*  
 - Survivor, reintegration program participant

The Alliance project also produced evidence relevant for future intervention design. The project identified and enrolled 14 individuals in its vocational training program, including 2 trafficking survivors and 12 youth identified as at-risk of trafficking. Fifty seven percent of survivors and at-risk youth who participated in the livelihoods project successfully graduated from the training program. Sixty-three percent of these graduates secured full-time employment in the hospitality sector, indicating that the provision of sustained and structured support coupled with soft skills and practical training can enable individuals with minimal educational attainment and little experience with formal work to enter and sustain jobs in formalized work environments.



However, not all students benefited equally. Insights from qualitative interviews with Alliance project partners highlighted the importance of peer support networks to participants' likelihood of completing the training program. All trainees who completed the program had formed a peer group that supported each other with learning, mental well-being, and, at later stages, connections with job opportunities. Meanwhile, per project partner observations, over 80% of the students who discontinued the program were unable to form a similar social support network, affecting their overall training experience.

Another key finding relates to the importance of locally-accessible reintegration programs for survivors. Trainees from rural provinces (including Ha Giang) faced significant difficulties adjusting to the environment in Hanoi, so removed from their communities and existing social support networks, adversely shaping training outcomes for this group. Project partners further reported that trainees - all of whom are from poorer areas, belong to ethnic minority communities, and speak regional dialects - found the course material challenging and experienced issues engaging with the training content, indicating a need for improved contextualization to ensure that services are both relevant and accessible for survivors and vulnerable youth.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

### Informing Effective Prevention Strategies

Effective prevention messaging should focus on educating communities about real trafficking risks and specific trafficker approaches, and equipping them with effective counter-strategies to protect themselves from potential exploitation. For example, campaigns should emphasize that most traffickers are known to their victims, and include online safety training with clear and practical guidance on assessing the veracity of marriage, friendship, or job offers received over the internet. Further, awareness and education campaigns should be targeted towards groups most vulnerable to trafficking risks (for example, women and girls from ethnic minority groups in situations of economic difficulty), rather than at a broad or community-wide level.

Since the majority of trafficking recruiters belong to the same at-risk communities as victims, the inclusion of deterrence messaging that emphasizes the severity of human trafficking as a crime and specifies the associated penalties (both in terms of prison sentences and compensation payments) could potentially be worth exploring as a strategy to prevent opportunistic trafficking crimes.

### Community-based prevention efforts should focus on securing the active buy-in and participation of local stakeholders

A key factor contributing to the success of Blue Dragon's early warning systems was the effective involvement and integration of local stakeholders such as the Women's Union, established village-level anti-trafficking boards, teachers, and district officials in the identification of at-risk households, conduct of targeted communication activities, and provision of livelihood support. Future investments in community-level prevention work that aligns with the incentives of local stakeholders and focuses on strengthening their capacity to carry out engagement activities could present a sustainable and replicable approach



**FOCUS ON EDUCATING COMMUNITIES** about real trafficking risks and specific trafficker approaches



**THE INCLUSION OF DETERRENCE MESSAGING** that emphasizes the severity of human trafficking as a crime and specifies the associated penalties could potentially be worth exploring as **A STRATEGY TO PREVENT OPPORTUNISTIC TRAFFICKING CRIMES**



Effective involvement and **INTEGRATION OF LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS** was a key factor contributing to the success of early warning systems

to improving community-level preparedness and reducing vulnerability to trafficking in Vietnam.

### Employment and livelihoods for community resilience to trafficking

Employment and livelihoods should be promoted as priorities for poverty reduction and to prevent risky migration in order to build resilient communities. As poverty is the key factor driving

both opportunistic trafficking as well as vulnerability for trafficking and labor exploitation, investing in targeted livelihood opportunities could reduce vulnerability of individuals at-risk of being trafficked, as well as reduce the likelihood of community members taking up trafficking as an income generation strategy. The government of Vietnam should also consider revisiting and refining procedures for mutual labor agreements and employment between Vietnam and China to make it easier and more accessible for Ha Giang residents to migrate safely for job opportunities.

**Capacity building and coordination among anti-trafficking stakeholders at the provincial level**

The findings emphasize that structured cooperation and collaboration between responsible government agencies, in particular, police and DoLISA, at the local level can lead to significant improvements in victim identification processes and the delivery of support for trafficking survivors. Further investments in

- Training of local stakeholders on definitions, laws, and processes related to human trafficking, as well as
- The establishment of information sharing mechanisms could prove an effective approach to improving assistance for trafficking victims and prosecuting perpetrators.

In order to ensure long-term buy-in from these stakeholders, provincial governments could consider institutionalizing inter-agency cooperation mechanisms in local policy. Scaling the successful local-level implementation of the national referral mechanism across other provinces can ensure that victims receive protection from the risk of re-trafficking and traumatization and support from local resources and government, with the aim of enabling survivors to successfully reintegrate into their communities.

**Reintegration programs need to be tailored to survivor needs and contexts**

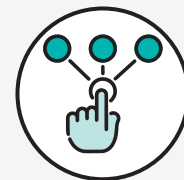
Findings across GFEMS-funded recovery and reintegration services for survivors indicate that these are most effective when survivors are provided with the agency to select avenues of support that are aligned with their specific needs, in both the short and long term. Reintegration programs should not necessarily require survivors to be displaced from their communities, but include locally accessible options. Vocational training programs need to be contextualized to adjust for regional nuances to ensure that the curriculum is relevant and engaging for those individuals who belong to minority communities. Livelihoods-based programs should also ensure that skills training is supplemented with enhanced mentorship support to provide participants with the opportunity to form critical support networks with their peers and trainers.



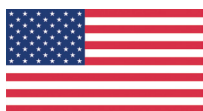
Investing in **TARGETED LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES** could reduce vulnerability of individuals at-risk of being trafficked, as well as reduce the likelihood of community members taking up trafficking as an income generation strategy



**STRUCTURED COOPERATION** and collaboration between responsible government agencies, in particular, police and DoLISA, at the local level can lead to significant improvements in victim identification processes and the delivery of support for trafficking survivors



Most effective when survivors are provided with the agency to **SELECT AVENUES OF SUPPORT** that are aligned with their specific needs, in both the short and long term



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