

GLOBAL FUND TO **END MODERN SLAVERY**

LESSONS LEARNED:

# REFLECTIONS ON OUR INAUGURAL PORTFOLIO



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## Dear Reader,

Four years ago the Global Fund launched our very first projects. Today, we are proud and excited to share this report reflecting on our inaugural portfolio and sharing what we have learned over four years of research, programming, adaptation, and partnership. The lessons are many, and some more easily embraced than others. Looking back on these 11 projects across four countries – taking the time to examine our learnings, both anticipated and unanticipated – will allow us to build on what worked and improve on what did not. It is with tremendous gratitude to our implementing and research partners, as well as the U.S. State Department’s Office to Combat Trafficking in Persons, that we step back from these projects, knowing they will continue. We hope you find value in this report, just as we have found value in writing it.

We welcome open and frequent engagement, and look forward to building on these lessons together.

Sincerely,

The Global Fund Team

# INTRODUCTION

In 2017, the U.S. State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons launched its Program to End Modern Slavery (PEMS), granting its first PEMS award of \$25 million to the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery (GFEMS). With this award, we worked with expert researchers and local implementing teams to develop a portfolio addressing sex trafficking in India, the Philippines, and Vietnam, forced labor in India's construction industry, and exploitation and abuse of overseas migrant workers in the Philippines and Vietnam. (For a full portfolio overview, see page 16)

As a young organization operating under a new award, we navigated many challenges that come with implementing an inaugural program and testing a new method of grantmaking. And of course, the outbreak of a global pandemic was a challenge that none could foresee. We and our partners confronted many obstacles along the way: from abbreviated timelines to budgetary constraints, from shifting local operating contexts to program targets rendered irrelevant or impossible due to COVID-19, to adaptations and then more adaptations. Despite the odds, we managed to overcome each challenge by working hand-in-hand with our partners and the local communities they represent. In the end, these programs have positively impacted thousands of individuals, saving lives and providing justice for survivors. They have also taught us valuable lessons that we will continue to build on to make a difference for thousands more.



# Acknowledgements

The Global Fund would like to extend its gratitude to the following organizations for their tremendous work throughout the duration of these projects. Their knowledge, dedication, and commitment to their communities is what made this impact possible.

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Blue Dragon Children's Foundation  
Business in the Community  
Dalberg  
Fair Employment Foundation  
Haqdarshak  
International Justice Mission  
International Labor Organization  
International Organization for Migration  
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Sustainable Hospitality Alliance

TwoSix Technologies  
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Lastly, we would like to thank the U.S. Department of State, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons for their teamwork and for their trust in us to carry out an inaugural program of this magnitude.



01

# LESSON 01:

## Fill Gaps in Existing Government Systems for Sustainable Change

Oftentimes, trafficked persons are not “officially” identified and therefore not provided the assistance they need and deserve. Even where protecting and supporting trafficking survivors is a government priority, practical challenges can overwhelm even the best intentions. Identifying these gaps and working to bridge them is often the best starting point for sustainable interventions.

### Manila, Philippines

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In the Philippines, we found incredible political will to build better protections for overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), but there were still barriers preventing an effective response. Though there are a number of welfare and law enforcement agencies tasked with addressing labor exploitation faced by migrant workers, there was no coordinated mechanism to manage and streamline their efforts. In other words, there was a will, but not yet a way.

Recognizing this gap influenced our anti-trafficking programming in the Philippines but, more importantly, the success of this project. With Blas F. Ople Policy Center, we leveraged this receptive environment to expedite the formation of an interagency labor trafficking task force and supported the development of the first digital case management system. The Integrated Case Management System (ICMS) tracks cases from an initial report to the filing of the case to judgment and appeal, digitally linking government agencies including the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Labor and Employment, the Department of Social Welfare and Development, Commission on Filipinos Overseas, as well as law enforcement agencies, and other Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT) member-agencies. As each of these stakeholders input into the ICMS, users can then monitor cases in real time, identifying where a case has stalled and which agency is responsible for next steps. This enhances accountability for designated agencies, but also offers reassurance to OFWs who have cases pending in the system, allowing them to easily track the status of their cases.

This project significantly enhanced the government’s response to labor trafficking cases because it aligned with broader government priorities and coordinated multiple agencies committed to combating trafficking. Between January and June 2021, following the launch of the ICMS, the average response time from OFW complaint to repatri-

ation improved from an average of 27.5 days to 14.3 days. Both the task force and ICMS have been adopted and budgeted for by the government.

### Ha Giang, Vietnam

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Vietnam’s National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a tool to coordinate various agencies to better identify trafficking victims and ensure they can access the support and assistance they need. While a national framework, it is officials at the provincial and district level that are responsible for implementing the NRM. Despite a willingness and interest in supporting survivors of trafficking, more practical challenges have hindered successful implementation of the NRM at the local level, including a lack of knowledge of government services and complicated procedures and guidance.

Using the NRM as a starting point, Blue Dragon Children’s Foundation worked with provincial leaders and the Department of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs (DoLISA) in Ha Giang province to strengthen processes for information-sharing, simplify procedures, and provide clear guidance for local officials and agencies charged with implementing the NRM. Together with DoLISA, Blue Dragon also compiled data on programs and services supported by the Ha Giang government, and shared guidelines on how to access these benefits with social workers through their training program. As a result of these efforts, nine trafficking survivors were identified, referred, and received *government* reintegration support during the life of the project. Before the project, there were none.

In Ha Giang, we learned it’s not always reinventing the wheel. Sometimes, addressing challenges in an existing system is the best path forward. In this case, making a national system work at a local level resulted in survivors receiving government support for the first time. More importantly, it will ensure many future survivors receive the resources and support they need.





# LESSON 02:

## Be Willing to Adjust Assumptions

Before implementing any program, there is the design. We pore over research studies or conduct our own, and we co-create with partners to devise the strategy that will make the biggest impact. In the design process, we formulate assumptions about what will work, but even the best research may not hold up during implementation. At times, the desire to “prove” an assumption may become an unhelpful driving force. Alternatively, being open to adjusting assumptions – while recognizing that adaptation often involves additional work and upheaval – can lead to pivotal outcomes.

India’s construction sector is one of the fastest-growing in the world and the second-largest employer in India. Millions of migrant workers – the majority low-skilled and from rural areas – travel to urban centers each year with hopes of making money in construction jobs. They are particularly vulnerable to exploitation as they commonly depend on daily wages for their livelihoods, lack local community support, and have limited forms of redress.

Our initial program design to address risks of forced labor in India’s construction sector was informed heavily by secondary research. However, after four months spent conducting interviews with migrant worker organizations through partners; talking with subcontractors, workers, and construction industry representatives; and having discussions with local CSOs working on issues of forced labor in the same region, we recognized some deficiencies in our original Theory of Change.

Though we had initially envisioned working with licensed recruiters, what we learned from all of these conversations was that there was a better intervention point. Micro-contractors – employers who engage between 5-25 unskilled and semi-skilled workers at a time – are actually the ones most directly connected to migrant workers. They often arrived in that position after working for years as daily wage laborers themselves, and they often belonged to the same communities as the migrants they employed. Micro-contractors are responsible for migrant workers’ recruitment, scope of work, working conditions, working hours, and wages.

By taking the time to go through the consultative mapping process, we identified micro-contractors as a key protective factor in reducing exploitation. They may in fact be the key. At the time, we were still dealing with theories and did not know how important they would be. It would have been easy to continue with our original assumption to try to use licensed recruiters, or

simply drop this aspect from the project entirely. However, the input from migrant workers was compelling so—in consultation with our partners—we made the necessary adjustments to our project budgets, activities, logframes, and research.

*By taking the time to go through the consultative mapping process, we identified micro-contractors as a key protective factor in reducing exploitation. They may in fact be the key*

After deciding to focus on this group, we piloted efforts to train micro-contractors on ethical labor practices and business skills development. These interventions empowered micro-contractors as agents of positive change instead of viewing them as perpetrators through a punitive lens. Implementing ethical labor practices helped improve worker productivity and retention, while business skills provided the tools to formalize work orders, negotiate better salaries with employers on behalf of the group, as well as plan for business expenses and salaries more effectively. During this period, over 3,000 migrant workers were employed with the 570 micro-contractors trained through the project. Our accompanying research, a large-scale migrant study, found that workers employed with these trained micro-contractors faced lower forced labor risks than their counterparts. By adjusting our original assumptions, we identified a powerful and sustainable way to reduce labor exploitation within unregulated aspects of the construction sector.

A teal-tinted background image showing a close-up of two hands clasped together. The hands are positioned in the lower right quadrant of the frame. The fingers are interlaced, and the skin texture is visible. The overall tone is a deep teal or cyan color.

03

## LESSON 03:

# You Can't Buy Trust: Funding Local Organizations is Essential

Time and again, we are reminded that any program, if it is to be sustainable, must be local- it must pay attention to local contexts and conditions and be guided by local organizations and practitioners. Though nearly universally accepted in theory, funding does not always follow this guidance. Indeed, local organizations are often overlooked by donors who determine them too high risk for significant investment. But, as we learned through our own investments in local organizations, it is such a risk that can reap the greatest reward.

The Blas F. Ople Center is a small nonprofit in the Philippines whose size was one of their greatest advantages. As a local organization with strong government connections and a reputation of trust with overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), we recognized their unique influence and tremendous impact they could achieve with the right support. Our initial grant to the Ople Center was the largest grant that the organization had received to that point. That funding helped the Ople Center put together a comprehensive project that would have been impossible as a series of smaller interventions.

The project, in partnership with the Philippines Department of Justice- Inter Agency Council Against Trafficking (DOJ-IACAT), established the Labor Trafficking Task Force for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) that assisted nearly 2,500 women domestic workers during the project period and supported the development of the Integrated Case Management System to track and monitor trafficking cases.

While impressive accomplishments individually – both which demonstrate the importance of interagency collaboration- the Ople Center was able to achieve and exceed program goals because of the relationships they established with the women they supported. OFWs are welcomed at the Ople Center by a small staff, led by “Ma’am Toots” as Susan Ople is endearingly known. They are often met by a case worker who speaks their same dialect. When a home visit is preferred, Ople staff try to accommodate. It is from this foundation of trust that OFWs are empowered to tell their stories and pursue justice against their traffickers. These trusted relationships are an integral and irreplaceable aspect of the success Ople Center accomplished through this project.

In India, trafficking in persons is under-prosecuted and conviction rates under the specific offense of trafficking remain low. Vipla Foundation – formerly Save the Children India – is a grassroots organization founded over three decades ago to support and protect India’s most vulnerable children, including victims of child sex trafficking. As part of this mission, Vipla is committed to increasing conviction rates for trafficking offenses and achieving justice for survivors. Noting apathy towards victims and “victim blaming” as common practice in courtrooms, Vipla worked to sensitize judges, prosecutors, and other judicial actors in trauma-informed and survivor-centric approaches. Training lawyers and transforming judicial systems to be supportive of survivors, rather than hostile, encouraged more victims to pursue justice. Across project districts, fewer victims withdrew from cases.

Beyond building trust in the larger judicial system, Vipla also built trust with victims and survivors. They provided supportive counseling and prepared victims for court, orienting them to courtroom procedures, outlining their role in the trial process, and explaining their rights. They served as Support Persons, appointed to guide child victims through all steps of their case and trial. They conducted home visits and follow-ups, aided with victim compensation applications, and otherwise just showed up for victims and survivors. As an established local organization, Vipla was able to build greater trust and confidence in judicial processes to encourage more victims to take action. Without this foundation, the same outcomes would not likely have been achieved, especially in such an abbreviated period of time. Nor is it likely that they would be sustained.

A photograph of a rural mountain road, overlaid with a teal tint. The road is paved and curves through a landscape of dense green vegetation and trees. In the distance, a small white house is visible. A group of people, including a woman in a dark skirt and a hat, and several children, are walking along the road. A white cow is also visible on the right side of the road. The background shows a hazy mountain range under a clear sky. A utility pole with power lines is visible on the left side of the road. Large white text '04' is overlaid on the bottom left of the image.

04

# LESSON 04:

## Broad Inclusion of Stakeholders Maximizes Effectiveness

An important starting point for Blue Dragon’s Early Warning System Model, as it is for all interventions, was an assessment of why earlier programs weren’t working. Though Ha Giang province in Vietnam had previously implemented a number of programs and communications activities to raise awareness of trafficking risks, most included only part of the community, were conducted infrequently, and lacked any follow-up activities. Blue Dragon’s early warning system model was an effort to address these gaps.

At the community level, Blue Dragon had worked hard to cultivate a relationship with the Commune People’s Committee to establish an anti-trafficking board (ATB), even before our partnership with Blue Dragon began. The ATB brought together members of the community including village leaders, police, and local CSOs. Trained on trafficking risks and safe migration, members of the ATB then conducted home visits to monitor for risks of trafficking and reported high risk cases to the Commune People’s Committee to provide resources and support.

In schools, the model was much the same. Blue Dragon trained teachers and set up student groups to help identify and support students at risk of dropping out who could be vulnerable to exploitation. A group of teachers (three teachers/school) received extra support as trainers and organized intensive training courses on human trafficking, internet safety, and facilitation skills.

An evaluation of the Early Warning System found that 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 involved in migration. Overall, findings revealed a positive relationship between exposure to engagement activities and improved knowledge of trafficking risks and vulnerability drivers at project endline. Crucially, the community engagement work helped reduce risky migration behavior in the intervention district, where community members were more likely to migrate with a contract and less likely to migrate if their identification documents were confiscated by the end of the project. Additionally, the village-level early-warning system was successful at informing help-seeking behavior in the target district – respondents were more likely to be aware

*More community engaged and more stakeholders invested — that is what makes a program sustainable.*

Blue Dragon also established core student groups at each of four schools, consisting of ten typical students and ten students at high risk of dropping out of school due to pre-identified vulnerability factors. Setting up systems to identify risk and having mechanisms in place for appropriate response, kept many children in school, and mobilized many more to return after COVID pushed them out of the classroom. In both instances – at the community-level and in schools – the early warning model worked because it was embedded in existing structures; it engaged local partners who held positions of trust and who understood the local context.

of whom to contact in case of a suspected instance of trafficking. Awareness of the provincial anti-trafficking hotline grew dramatically, with 28% of respondents listing this as a reporting mechanism at endline versus only 0.04% of respondents at baseline.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the system gained the buy-in of local authorities, such as the Commune People’s Committee, who committed to maintaining the model after the project concluded. More community engaged and more stakeholders invested- that is what makes a program sustainable.



05

# LESSON 05:

## A Program is Only as Good as its Feedback Mechanisms

If anti-trafficking interventions are to make a difference in the communities we serve, they must include members of those communities. Not just at the beginning, not just at the end, and not just for token sign-off. Those impacted by programs must be included — and in meaningful ways — throughout the project’s duration (and beyond). This is especially true when our focus is on building survivor-informed programming. In truth, this is an area where we continue to evolve and should never feel quite “finished” learning.

In India, Child Welfare Centers or CWCs are quasi-judicial bodies charged with the care of children classified as Children in Need of Care and Protection, including survivors of sexual exploitation. In our inaugural portfolio, we partnered with a consortium of implementing organizations — each with vast experience supporting trafficking victims in Maharashtra — to build the capacity of CWCs and other government institutions to deliver victim-friendly care to CSEC survivors at an unprecedented scale. Drawing from partner knowledge and experience, as well as our own research, we co-created a project to leverage existing work and address remaining gaps. It was comprehensive and robust, focused on training social workers and shelter home personnel on effective

the number of people trained, how many stakeholders engaged, the amount of new cases filed. But what impact were project activities having (or not having) on the individuals behind these metrics?

Recognizing that we had not set up official mechanisms to gather feedback from communities and survivors in our inaugural projects, we committed to addressing this shortfall. We worked with our partners and invested heavily in developing guidance and best practices, not only for collecting critical feedback, but for acting on it. In fall 2020, after months of delay caused by COVID, our implementing partner conducted the projects’ first community feedback session at shelter homes in Mumbai to understand what

*Understanding what matters to those whom a project targets is critical to building an effective intervention. The best way to come to this understanding? Ask.*

victim care and protection; providing legal services and psycho-social counseling to survivors while supporting them in education or livelihoods training; engaging a range of stakeholders and duty bearers and building a model for collaboration; even physically transforming CWCs into more child-friendly spaces. Effective as we thought this intervention would be — and we did achieve measurable successes implementing each of these activities — it didn’t initially include formalized avenues for feedback, at least not as a GFEMS expectation. And how effective can any program really be without input from those it is intended to serve?

As our portfolio increased in the following years, and in response to the pandemic, we recognized a need to adjust programming closer to real-time to better meet the needs of communities. Through our own research and experience, and from discussions with our partners, we realized that tracking “key” metrics was not the only, nor the best, way to measure impact. For example, we were monitoring

children — the persons the project was supporting — perceived as an ideal CWC. Through their drawings, children most frequently requested furniture and more greenery and trees around the CWC buildings. As it continues to upgrade CWCs, the implementor is taking this feedback into account and sharing it with other CWCs to ensure children’s voices reach the decision-makers.

In another example, survivors receiving legal services delivered feedback via telephone. Learning that many survivors preferred female lawyers, the implementing partner now ensures that at least one legal staff member in every district is a female. Understanding what matters to those whom a project targets is critical to building an effective intervention. The best way to come to this understanding? Ask. Create and install feedback mechanisms to gauge community and survivor response, and then use that feedback to do better. We may have come late to this lesson, but it is one that now grounds every intervention.

# PROJECT PORTFOLIO

**Partner: Blas F. Ople Policy Center and Training Institute**

*Project: Anti-Slavery for Overseas Filipino Workers*

The Blas F. Ople Policy Center and its partners provided key support, recovery, and reintegration support for overseas Filipino workers and survivors of trafficking and assisted key government actors creating more responsive and effective prosecution and complaints mechanisms.

**Partner: Blue Dragon Children's Foundation**

*Project: Safe and Sound: Ha Giang*

Blue Dragon led the testing of a comprehensive model for anti-trafficking that can be successfully replicated in new geographies. Working closely with government partners, Blue Dragon supported the provincial government agencies to implement the National Referral Mechanism in Ha Giang province, Vietnam, making critical recovery services available to survivors. Also under this project, they developed community early warning systems to quickly identify human trafficking cases, trained a cohort of local social workers to assist trafficking survivors, and provided key legal support for survivors pursuing cases against their traffickers.

**Partner: Fair Employment Foundation**

*Project: The Fair Recruitment Model: An End-to-End Market Solution*

GFEMS funded FEF to develop, test, and lead market solutions to end forced labor of migrant workers across Asia. The project built an end-to-end ethical recruitment solution for workers migrating from the Philippines. Designed towards self-sustainability and rapid scalability, the project has enormous potential for impact among millions of Filipinos.

**Partner: International Justice Mission**

*Project: Advancing Rule of Law: Supporting the Implementation of a Comprehensive Sex Trafficking Response*

Prerana, Vipla Foundation and International Justice Mission liaised and collaborated with local government units to strengthen statewide capability, infrastructure, and responses to combat commercial sexual exploitation of children through trauma-informed services.

**Partner: International Organization for Migration**

*Project: Aligning Lenses Towards Ethical Recruitment (ALTER)*

The ALTER project led a consortium of partners to improve labor recruitment industry practices by supporting and incentivizing the effective, sustainable adoption of ethical recruitment in the Philippines. With a particular emphasis

on domestic workers and hospitality workers, the project aimed to reduce the prevalence of trafficking among overseas Filipino workers in the COVID-19 context.

*Project: Improving Migrant and Community Preparation and Awareness to CounterTrafficking (IMPACT)*

IOM Philippines, in partnership with local government, worked to raise awareness of trafficking among the most at-risk communities in the Philippines and build capacity for pre-migration training providers. This included direct outreach to vulnerable communities and enabling providers to train labor migrants on migration risks, access to quality support and resources, and resiliency in the face of trafficking risks in the COVID-19 context.

*Project: Victim Case Management System*

Through this project, IOM aimed at building sustainable human trafficking data management capacity and standards by providing tools and capacity building support to frontline counter-trafficking agencies. The project involved developing and disseminating the first international, standardized information management toolkit and guidance on the collection and management of human trafficking data. By engaging with global frontline organizations, the project also worked to foster a community of best practice and sharing around data management.

**Partners: International Labor Organization, International Organization for Migration, Responsible Business Alliance**

*Project: Fair International Recruitment against Slavery and Trafficking (FIRST)*

The consortium developed a suite of research products, pilot activities and mapping and feasibility to inform a future investment in improving recruitment agency practices and providing more transparent labor supply chain mapping to ethical employers in Vietnam.

**Partners: Jan Sahas Social Development Society, Pratham Education Foundation, Sambhav Foundation**

*Project: Neev Consortium for Skilling and Safe Migration*

Through creating a safe migration system for migrant construction workers, this project aimed to sustainably reduce prevalence on a large scale in India's construction sector, a sector estimated to have millions of forced labor victims. Partners worked to build a public-private partnership that combines skilling, access to entitlements, migrant tracking, finance, and the creation of alternative recruitment pathways to reduce prevalence of forced labor among internal migrants in the construction sector.



**Partner: Sustainable Hospitality Alliance**

*Project: Empowering Survivors and Building Youth Resilience Against Trafficking through Hospitality Skills Sector Development*

The youth employment program works to provide livelihood and career opportunities for vulnerable young people via skills training and practical experience — in partnership with the world’s leading hotel companies. This project focused on interventions with survivors and individuals at risk of commercial sexual exploitation in India and Vietnam, with the aim of delivering a scalable and replicable model to prevent trafficking or re-trafficking. The Alliance works with local NGO partners and leverages the power of the private sector to provide opportunities to enable survivors and vulnerable young people to build a better future.

**Partner: Vipla Foundation**

*Project: Enabling Responsive Justice for Victims of Trafficking in Five Districts in Maharashtra*

Vipla Foundation works to strengthen the judicial system by building government capacity to prosecute cases of trafficking, convict traffickers, and ensure victims’ legal support. Through the project, Vipla Foundation worked to build an effective and coordinated prosecution system through training and mentorship, and providing legal counseling and assistance to survivors. The project also worked to impart greater sensitivity among judicial actors toward victims, ensuring that victims are an integral part of the justice delivery system by making the process more conducive to their participation.



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