

SIREN human trafficking data sheet

STRATEGIC INFORMATION RESPONSE NETWORK

United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP): Phase III

MYANMAR

MARCH 2009 (v. 1.0)

Country information



MYANMAR

Population: 57.5 million (2007; 70% live in rural areas)

National Races: Myanmar is an ethnically diverse nation with 135 officially recognized, distinct ethnic groups grouped into eight "major national ethnic races": Kachin/Jingpo, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Mon, Bamar, Rakhine and Shan.¹ Bamar 68%, Shan 9%, Karen 7%, Rakhine 4%, Chinese 3%, Indian 2%, Mon 2%, other 5%.²

Education: Enrolment: 4,948,198 (primary); 2,589,312 (secondary); 555,000 (tertiary); 8,092,510 (total)³.

Fertility rate: 2.23 Children born/women. Birth rate: 2.02% (2006)⁴.

Labour force: 28.2 million (2007)⁵. **GDP (per capita- PPP):** 298,220 Myanmar Kyats (2009 est). GDP Composition by sector: *agriculture:* 42.4% *industry:* 18.9%, *services:* 38.7% (2007 est.).

Neighbouring countries: Bangladesh, China, India, Thailand.

What is human trafficking and why is it a problem?

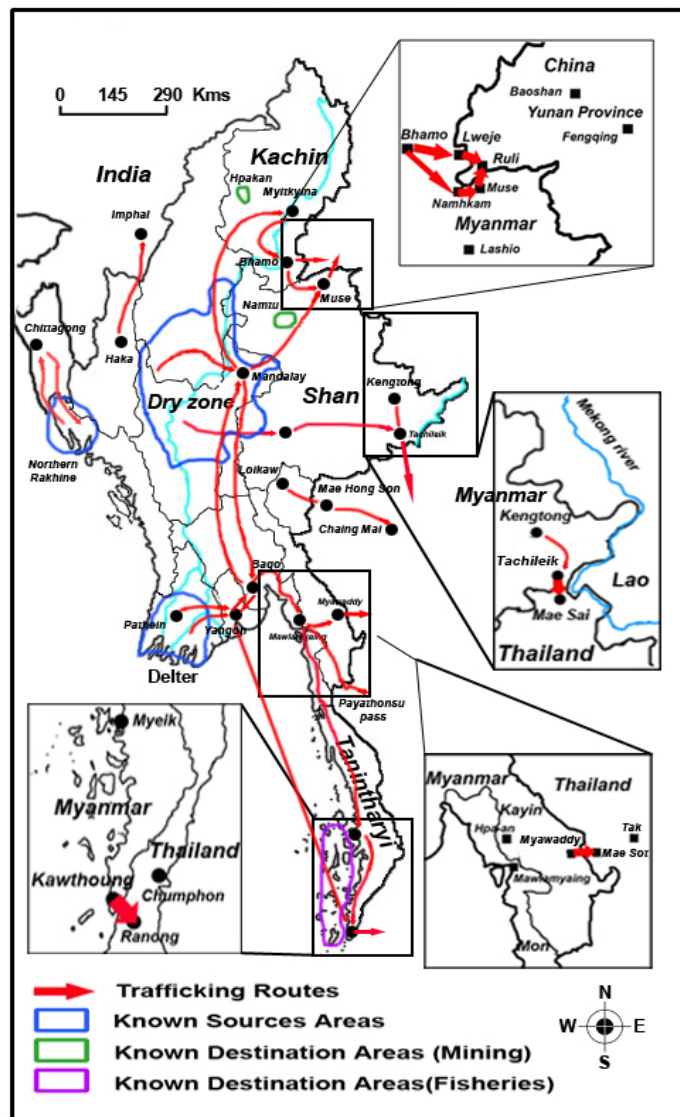
Myanmar law's definition of human trafficking derives from the UN Trafficking Protocol of the Transnational Convention on Organized Crime (known as the "Palermo Protocol"), which defines human trafficking as:

- "The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons" (the movement);
- "By means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person" (the means);
- "For the purpose of exploitation" (the purpose). The Protocol notes that "exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs."

What is the human trafficking situation in Myanmar?

- Myanmar is a source country for women, children, and men trafficked for the purposes of forced labour and commercial sexual exploitation. Myanmar people are trafficked to Thailand, China, Malaysia, South Korea, and Macau for sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, and forced labour; some Myanmar migrants end up in situations of forced or bonded labour or forced prostitution. Myanmar children are particularly vulnerable to unlawfully working internally, as well as being trafficked into Thailand as forced street hawkers and beggars, or to work in shops, agriculture, and small-scale industries. Myanmar is also a transit country for trafficking of Bangladeshis to Malaysia and Chinese to Thailand⁶.
- In Myanmar, trafficking takes place within the context of large-scale migration, both internal and cross-border migration. Some research suggests that as many as one-third of Myanmar's population have migrated between urban and rural areas within their lifetime,⁷ with Thailand being the main destination country. Though the migration figures differ, one mid-point estimate suggests that out of one million illegal immigrants in Thailand, 75% are from Myanmar⁸. Little is known

Trafficking Routes in Myanmar



about cross-border migration to China, however, in 2001 Save the Children estimated that 140,000 persons from Myanmar have relocated to live along or across the Chinese border⁹.

Where do trafficked persons come from and how are they exploited?

Cross-border human trafficking into Thailand, China and Malaysia

- **Border crossings:** From Kengtung and Tachileik to Mae Sai, Thailand; from Myawaddy to Mae Sot, Thailand; and from Kawthaung to Ranong, Thailand, and sometimes from these points through to Malaysia. Women from Kachin State and Northern Shan States are trafficked to Yunnan Province, China, via Ruili.
- **Internal routes to border crossings:** The central dry zone areas (Mandalay, Sagaing and Magway) are source areas for people trafficked to Mae Sot in Thailand, via Kawkreik and Myawaddy. Another route is from Yangon and the surrounding areas to Mae Sot via Hpa-an and then Myawaddy.
- **Exploitation:** For Malaysia and Thailand, women and men are trafficked for labor exploitation; women are trafficked also for sexual exploitation and domestic work. Children are trafficked into forced labour as street hawkers and beggars. The main exploitative sites in Thailand are Bangkok, Samut Sakhon, Mae Sai, and Mae Sot. For China, women as young as fourteen are taken to border towns in Yunnan Province and as far as Eastern China, where they are forced to marry Chinese men or work in the sex industry.
- **Repatriations:** 73 % of officially indentified victims repatriated from Thailand and Malaysia are from the Shan States (2005-2006); 36% of victims repatriated from China are from the the central dry zone areas and 36% are from the Yangon Division (2005-2006)¹⁰.

Internal human trafficking within Myanmar

- **Routes:** Internal trafficking of women and girls occurs primarily from villages in the central dry zone areas and Delta (Ayeyarwaddy Division) to urban centres. Other transportation and economic hubs, such as truck stops, fishing villages, border towns, and mining areas also destination sites.
- **Destinations:** The main destinations for internal trafficking are Yangon and Mandalay, which are also transit points for cross-border trafficking.
- **Exploitation:** Women are trafficked into sexual and labour exploitation; children are trafficked into forced labour in shops, agriculture, and small-scale industries.

Who is being trafficked and what are some of the vulnerability factors?

Approximately 600,000 Myanmar migrants are registered to work in Thailand, but many more migrants are unregistered workers¹¹. One of the main drivers of out-migration is escaping economic hardships and limited job opportunities in Myanmar. Most Myanmar migrants working illegally in Thailand have limited awareness of their rights, as well as limited knowledge of how to demand their rights. This increases their vulnerability to trafficking and exploitation. The profile of those most at risk are those who are migrating for the first time with no network at the destination, and young women from poor backgrounds. However, the picture of victim profiles are mixed, and entire families in some circumstances are even at risk.

Reports indicate a trend of trafficking of women from Shan State to China for forced marriage with Chinese citizens. Many girls and young women from areas surrounding Yangon like Dala, Thanlyin and Dagon townships have been trafficked to China. Factory closures in Hlaing Tharyar, Htaukkyant, Hlawgar and Shwepyithar Industrial Zones, in part due to the Foreign Direct Investment sanction, left many female workers unemployed and a possibly targets for traffickers. Girls and young women with low incomes from towns along Yangon and Mandalay highway are also trafficked into China. Girls and young women from small towns in Mon State who migrate to Thailand to seek job opportunities have also become victims of trafficking through various forms of exploitation, both labour and sexual.¹²

What is the scale of human trafficking in and from Myanmar?

There are no reliable estimates on the number of persons trafficked annually, although a total of 134 trafficking cases were investigated in 2008 involving 303 victims (153 female and 50 male), and 342 traffickers prosecuted¹³. 15 cases were of internal trafficking, and there are likely to be further cases in remote areas. Identified cases can only represent a small fraction of the scale of the problem. UNICEF for example, proposed in 2003 that 10,000 girls being trafficked every year from Myanmar into Thai brothels alone¹⁴.

Who are the perpetrators of human trafficking in Myanmar?

While limited data exists, there are indications that it is generally small, or family-based groups engaged in brokering and trafficking, with linkages in the destination sites (both Myanmar and non-Myanmar criminals). Sometimes family members or other relatives of the victim have even been known to lure their relatives with the promise of well-paying jobs. In Kayin State, the traffickers or brokers operate at the transit point of Kawkareik, however, there are also such brokers at the village level. Once across the Myanmar border, more organized human smuggling networks and services can be found.

What is being done in Myanmar, and who is doing it?

Counter-Trafficking Actors in Myanmar

Interventions to combat human trafficking are currently being carried out by:

- **Government of Myanmar:** Central Body for Suppression of Trafficking in Persons (CBTIP), three Working Groups, and Anti-Trafficking in Persons Sections with assigned desk officers in each of the 17 states/divisions; COMMIT Task Force; Ministry of Home Affairs (national focal ministry), Department of Social Welfare; and relevant departments.
- **UN and inter-governmental agencies and projects:** UNIAP, UNICEF, IOM, UNODC, UNDP, UNFPA,
- **INGOs:** Save the Children Myanmar, World Vision Myanmar and AFXB
- **Regional projects:** Asia Regional Trafficking in Persons Project (ARTIP)
- **Local NGOs:** Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation, Myanmar Council of Churches, Myanmar Baptist Convention, Kayin Baptist Convention, Kachin Baptist Convention, YMCA, YWCA and community-based groups

Policy and cooperation: The Myanmar Government cooperates with UN agencies and INGOs active in the counter-trafficking sector, including through its National Plan of Action on human trafficking, which is in line with its commitment under the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking MoU (COMMIT MoU), which brings together the six Mekong countries in the fight against human trafficking. Cross-border enforcement cooperation with China is enhanced through Border Liaison Offices (BLOs), which are supported by ARTIP, UNIAP, UNICEF, and UNODC.

Prevention: As a source country, interventions focus primarily on prevention, including awareness raising and vulnerability reduction. There have been recent strengthened efforts to prevent human trafficking both within and abroad, with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Hotel and Tourism, Ministry of Labour, Myanmar Police Force, Department of Social Welfare, Department of Immigration and National Registration, and township anti-trafficking in persons committees conducting awareness raising on human trafficking around the country. INGOs such as World Vision, Save the Children and AFXB are conducting awareness training at the community level and many local NGOs with the support of UN agencies and Intergovernmental organisation like UNICEF, UNIAP and IOM have been doing the same thing throughout Myanmar especially in trafficking hot spot/vulnerable areas.

Protection: Department of Social Welfare (DSW) provides a two-week program of "rehabilitation" for most victims of trafficking returning from abroad. Temporary shelter to repatriated trafficking victims is provided at eight vocational training centers. Trafficking victims are encouraged to assist in the investigation process, and victims have the right to file civil suits and seek legal action against traffickers.

Prosecution: The 2005 Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law prohibits trafficking into sexual and labour trafficking exploitation, with trafficking definitions in line with the Palermo Protocol. The law prescribes penalties for trafficking that are stringent¹⁵. For example, of 33 members of a trafficking gang who trafficked girls/young women into China, two offenders who forced the victims into prostitution and two traffickers who sold them into China were sentenced to life imprisonment in 2006¹⁶.

What is happening to the traffickers in Myanmar?

| Year | 2002* | 2003* | 2004* | 2005* | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 |
|------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|------|
| Cases* | 99 | 195 | 180 | 203 | 52 | 127 | 134 |
| Number of convictions | 163 | 377 | 399 | 425 | 179 | 301 | 342 |
| Male | 75 | 229 | 235 | 202 | 82 | 125 | 119 |
| Female | 88 | 148 | 164 | 223 | 97 | 176 | 223 |
| Number of victims ** | 540 | 932 | 1157 | 824 | 200 | 271 | 303 |
| Male | 272 | 523 | 611 | 397 | 3 | 40 | 50 |
| Female | 268 | 409 | 546 | 427 | 197 | 231 | 153 |

* The figures for 2002-2005 show the total number of cases and the total number of arrests. Figures from 2006 onward show the number of offenders convicted according to the Trafficking in Persons Law issued by Central Body for Suppression of Trafficking in Persons (CBTIP)¹⁷. Prior to the enactment of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law in September 2005, trafficking cases were prosecuted as either prostitution and/or migration violations.

*** Prior to 2006, the Myanmar text translated as persons "rescued or stopped" and not numbers of victims per se. Prior to the 2005 Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law, persons "rescued or stopped" included victims who were repatriated from abroad, but also illegal migrants prevented from leaving the country at the border.*

What is being done for persons who have been trafficked in Myanmar?

As of 31 December 2008, a total of 686 victims have been repatriated back to Myanmar within government-to-government repatriation schemes. Victims were repatriated from Thailand (344 victims); China (272 victims); Malaysia (45 victims); Japan (11 victims); China/Macau (8 victims); China/Taiwan (3 victims), and 1 victim each from Bangladesh, Jamaica, and Singapore.¹⁸ The Department of Social Welfare (DSW) operates two rehabilitation centres where victims undergo a two-week vocational training upon their return to Myanmar. As of December 2006, 11 women were in the Yangon DSW center¹⁹. A reception center was established in Myawaddy in 2002. The center, from the time of its establishment through 31 December 2006, has received 18,874 returnees who were eventually reintegrated to their families²⁰.

What else needs to be done to combat human trafficking in Myanmar, and why is it so important?

- **Communication and research** on the patterns and causes of trafficking in Myanmar need to be scaled up for more effective programming in at-risk communities.
- **Young people** are particularly at risk. Existing networks for youth, including schools, universities and clubs, can be used to share vital counter-trafficking messages.
- **Authorities on both sides of the borders** need a better understanding of what constitutes trafficking and how to cooperate to investigate and combat trafficking. Authorities would also benefit from understanding that, without the right paperwork, illegal immigrants can become extremely vulnerable to labour exploitation and trafficking.
- **Cross-border collaboration** by governments on repatriation means that victims of trafficking can return home safely without fear of future harassment. NGOs can play a "watchdog" role in this process, advising and facilitating at individual level.

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¹ List of ethnic groups in Burma/Myanmar. Source: Wikipedia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic_groups_in_Burma. Accessed 15 December, 2008.

² CIA The World Fact Book. Burma Country Report. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html> Accessed 15 December 2008.

³ http://www.seameo.org/images/stories/SEAMEO_General/SEAMEO_Statistics/Education_Histogram/ED_Histogram.htm.

⁴ CIA The World Fact Book. Burma Country Report. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html> Accessed 15 December 2008.

⁵ http://www.intute.ac.uk/sciences/worldguide/html/842_economic.htm.

⁶ Trafficking in Persons Report 2007 p. 71.

⁷ FRHS, 2001. Quoted in "Situation of Children in Myanmar" by Save the Children, June 2005: p. 25.

⁸ Archavanitkul, Kritaya. "Trafficking in Children for Labor Exploitation including Child Prostitution in the Mekong Sub-region." Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, 1998, p. 16.

⁹ "Small Dreams Beyond Reach by Therese M. Caouette, Save the Children, 2001: p. 2.

¹⁰ UNIAP (Myanmar) repatriation records.

¹¹ Traffic report, World Vision at <http://www.donttradelives.com.au/dtl/resources/publications/files/pdf/MyanmarFactsheet2008.pdf>

¹² Annual report of the Anti-Trafficking Unit, MoHA, 2006, p. 45.

¹³ The 2008 Myanmar Five-Year National Plan of Action to Combat Human Trafficking 2008 Progress Report

¹⁴ UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office, Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in South-East Asia, 2003. Quoted in "Strategic Framework for the UN Agencies in Myanmar." UN Country Team, 22 April 2005. p. 29. http://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/Myanmar_UNDAF.pdf.

¹⁵ Trafficking in Persons Report 2007 p. 71.

¹⁶ Annual report of the Anti-Trafficking Unit, MoHA, 2006, p. 41.

¹⁷ Law enforcement statistics provided by the Central Body for Suppression of Trafficking in Persons. Personal interview on 16 March 2009.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Information on repatriation provided by Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement. Personal interview in March 2009, UNIAP.

²⁰ Information provided by the Central Body for Suppression of Trafficking in Persons.