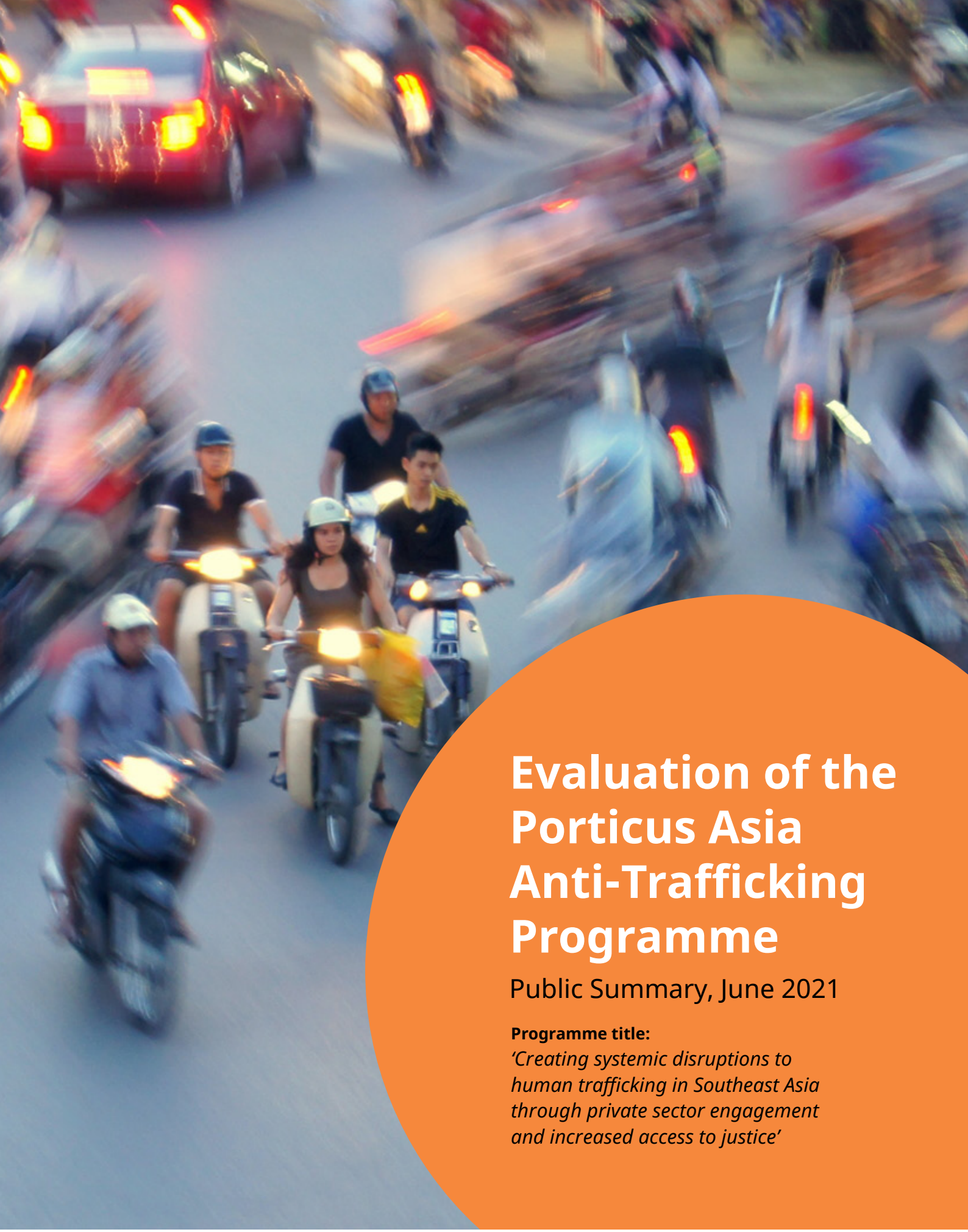


Evaluation of the Porticus Asia Anti-Trafficking Programme

Public Summary, June 2021

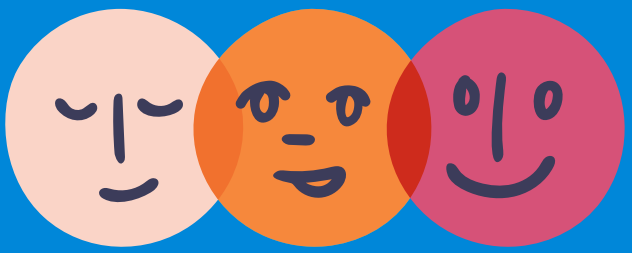
Programme title:
'Creating systemic disruptions to human trafficking in Southeast Asia through private sector engagement and increased access to justice'

LIGHTHOUSE PARTNERSHIPS

PORTICUS

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners
As an Australian-based organisation, we acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands on which we work, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge that this land, which we benefit from occupying, was and always will be Aboriginal land.

Acknowledgement of evaluation participants
We are deeply grateful to all stakeholders who participated in this evaluation for sharing their time, perspectives and expertise. In particular, we would like to thank Porticus, partner organisations, and external stakeholders, including people at risk of or affected by trafficking and exploitation.



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About this report

Porticus Asia commissioned this evaluation of a three-year anti-trafficking programme that funded 16 implementing partners across the region between 2017-2021. This Public Summary provides a short overview of the evaluation's purpose, process, key findings and recommendations.

Written by

LIGHTHOUSE PARTNERSHIPS

Lighthouse Partnerships is a not-for-profit organisation that supports for-purpose organisations to increase their effectiveness through participatory approaches to evaluation, strategy and program design. We have specialist expertise in migration and displacement in the Asia-Pacific region, including labour migration, human trafficking, refugees and people seeking asylum.

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PORTICUS

Porticus is an international organisation that manages the philanthropic endeavours of the Brenninkmeijer family. Porticus collaborates with partners around the globe to build stronger systems and secure just and sustainable futures for all.

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Definitions of key terms

Access to justice
The ability to understand the law and how it applies to you, to get help when you have a legal problem, and to have your legal problems dealt with in a way that is fair and reasonable in process and result.[1]

Human trafficking and exploitation
All forms of trafficking and exploitative practices, including trafficking for any purpose, forced labour, forced marriage, violations of labour and migration rights, and practices commonly referred to as 'modern slavery'.

Outcomes
'Results'; changes resulting from an initiative's activities or outputs. Outcomes can be short or long term, direct or indirect, intermediate or ultimate.[2]

Participatory approach
An approach that involves key stakeholders in design, implementation and/or review of programs or strategies. Different approaches provide participants with different degrees of power and influence, e.g. informing participants, consulting and listening to participants, or shared decision-making.[3]

People affected
People at risk of, or affected by, an issue (in this case, the issue is 'trafficking and exploitation').

People with lived experience
People who have personal experience of an issue, including as family or community members.

Systems change
'System' refers to something with interrelated and interdependent parts, both tangible and intangible, e.g. people, institutions, actions, patterns, relationships, power dynamics, resources, services, rules, values, and perceptions.[4] 'Systems change' refers to changes to any part of a system and across a system.

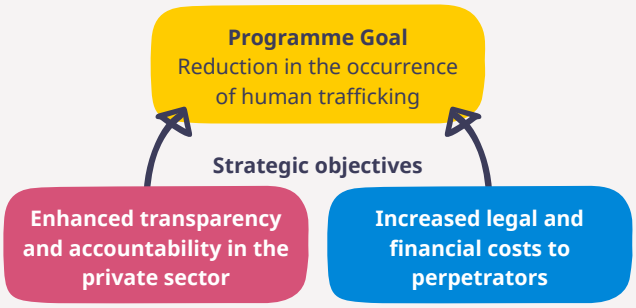
Executive Summary

About the Programme

Porticus Asia's anti-trafficking Programme aimed to create systemic disruptions to human trafficking in Southeast Asia through private sector engagement and access to justice.

The Programme funded 16 organisations between 2017-2021 that conducted a diverse range of activities aimed at reducing the occurrence of human trafficking in Asia. The partner organisations worked in five main countries: Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar and Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) China. The Programme was one of Porticus' first multi-project programmes, and its first programme in the area of human trafficking.

About the evaluation



Porticus commissioned this evaluation to understand how well the Programme had been designed and managed, what the Programme had achieved, and what lessons had been learned to guide future strategy development. The evaluation was conducted over 12 months during the Programme's final year and assessed three key issues:

1. Outcomes and effectiveness: What were the most significant outcomes of funded projects? To what extent did the Programme contribute towards its goal and objectives?

2. Programme strategy: To what extent was the Programme strategy relevant, clear and logical, evidence-informed, and feasible?

3. Programme management: To what extent did Programme management practices align with recommended practices for philanthropy and systems change?

Key findings

1. Outcomes and effectiveness

Reflecting the diversity of funded projects, the Programme contributed to a wide variety of outcomes relating to different stakeholders and sectors.

In the private sector, projects contributed to increased availability, accuracy and actionability of information about trafficking for businesses. Projects also contributed to instances where businesses took steps to address risks of trafficking or exploitation in their operations, for example, adopting new policies, changing practices (e.g. recruitment), or remediating specific worker problems. However, in some cases, there was limited evidence of the substantive impact of these actions for workers. Several projects also contributed to migrant worker networks and leaders having increased power to support and advocate for the rights of their communities.

> *"We are no longer scared to speak to the Thai authorities."*
> Migrant worker community leader in Thailand

In the legal sector, the Programme contributed to increased numbers of migrant workers seeking help from partners, positive legal case outcomes in certain cases, and more effective case handling by lawyers, frontline workers and law enforcement. However, there was limited data on the degree of improvements and how widespread they were among target groups. In both areas, the Programme was just one of several factors that contributed to these outcomes.

2. Programme strategy

The strategy's 'systems change' approach to addressing human trafficking, and the two strategic arms, access to justice and private sector

engagement, were generally aligned with what many stakeholders regard as critical global needs and priorities.

However, the Programme strategy did not explicitly consider the needs of and risks to people affected by trafficking and exploitation, and their role in creating change.

Although the strategy noted that trafficking is a complex issue, there was limited analysis of this complexity, such as the systemic nature of causes and the significant barriers to change, and limited recognition that change might happen in diverse and unanticipated ways.

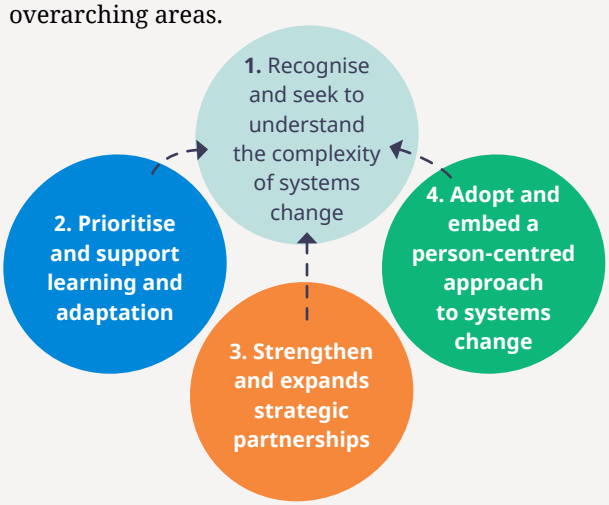
3. Programme management

Although Porticus did not have a deliberate strategy for how it would manage the Programme, several aspects of its management approach were aligned with recommended practices for philanthropy and systems change. One strength of Porticus' management was that it built strong relationships with many partners and increased networks and collaboration among partners and other stakeholders. Porticus also managed the Programme in a flexible manner, responding to emerging needs and supporting adaptation by partners.

However, formal management processes provided minimal support for Porticus and partners to reflect, learn and adapt their activities. For example, monitoring processes mostly involved collecting and reporting quantitative data on a narrow set of intended outputs and outcomes, which provided limited insight on the complexity and diversity of partners' work.

Key learnings & recommendations

The evaluation made recommendations in four overarching areas.



1. Recognise and seek to understand the complexity of systems change

The experiences of partners and other stakeholders highlight that human trafficking and exploitation are highly complex problems, influenced by a wide range of economic, social and political factors with deep structural and systemic roots. All efforts to address these issues need to be based upon recognition and understanding of this complexity. According to systems change experts, it is also important for change actors, including funders, to consider their own role in the 'system' they seek to influence and how their own practices can facilitate or inhibit systems change.

We recommend that:

- **Porticus and partners** conduct more in-depth analysis of the complexity of target problems and change processes in strategy development, including analysing systemic barriers and limitations, available evidence and gaps in evidence, and assumptions about how change happens.
- **Porticus** analyses and includes its own role in programme strategies.

Executive Summary

2. Prioritise and support learning and adaptation

All areas of the evaluation highlighted a need for stronger systems and processes in the sector for developing evidence and supporting learning about effective approaches for addressing human trafficking and exploitation, and the complex nature of change. Solutions to complex problems, like trafficking and exploitation, cannot be known in advance and must be developed through learning from experience and bottom-up evidence generation.

We recommend that:

- **Porticus** maintains an internal culture that promotes critical reflection and learning, and designs formal management processes to support this.
- **Porticus** continues to invest in research and robust project-level evaluation, and supports the use of evidence in programming.
- **Porticus and partners** design strategies to be 'living', with processes for review and adaptation.
- **Porticus and partners** design monitoring, evaluation and learning systems that support real-time learning and adaptation, understanding of complex and long-term change, and learning and development for 'pilot' initiatives.

3. Strengthen and expand strategic partnerships

Strong relationships and connections between partners and other relevant stakeholders were a key enabling factor of positive outcomes in many areas of the Programme. Systems change experts recognise that improving relationships and connections among diverse stakeholders is an essential part of addressing complex social problems. This includes including increasing trust between funders and grantees, which this evaluation found was highly valued and of mutual benefit.

We recommend that:

- **Porticus** continues to invest in and build strong relationships with partners, and strengthens these relationships through greater communication about strategic priorities and greater capacity building support.
- **Porticus** continues to invest in projects that build relationships and facilitate collaboration, as an enabler of other longer-term outcomes.
- **Porticus and partners** continue or increase the use of participatory practices by involving key stakeholders when designing, implementing and reviewing projects and programmes.

4. Adopt and embed a person-centred approach to systems change

Several parts of the evaluation highlighted that people affected by trafficking and exploitation should be central to efforts to address these issues. In several projects, people and communities affected by trafficking and exploitation played key roles in contributing to positive outcomes and in providing information about the impacts of partners' work, yet these roles were not recognised in the Programme strategy. The Programme also highlighted that unintended harm is a real risk for all organisations that work with or impact vulnerable persons.

We recommend that:

- **Porticus** maintains 'participation' as an organisational strategic priority and increases funding for projects that enhance rights, power and participation of people with lived experience, including survivor-led programs and organisations.
- **Porticus and partners** consider how to enhance participation, including involving people with lived experience in meaningful ways and using lived experience evidence when designing, implementing and reviewing interventions.
- **Porticus and partners** ensure that strategic objectives reflect the rights and interests of people affected, and that there are processes for accountability for positive and negative outcomes.
- **Porticus and partners** improve assessment and management of risk to vulnerable persons.

1

About the Programme

Porticus Asia's anti-trafficking Programme aimed to reduce human trafficking in Asia, where more than 21 million people are estimated to be affected by trafficking. The Programme aimed to create systemic disruptions to human trafficking in Southeast Asia through private sector engagement and access to justice.

The Programme funded 16 implementing partners over a 3 year period from 2017 to 2021. These organisations conducted activities in five priority countries — Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar and Hong Kong, SAR China — and migration routes to and from those countries. The total funding distributed to partners was approximately EUR 5.6 million.

The partner organisations conducted a wide variety of activities, addressing different forms of trafficking and exploitation, and involving different stakeholder groups. These activities included providing training and technical support to lawyers, NGOs, law enforcement, and the private sector; providing legal and other support services to people affected by trafficking and exploitation; building relationships and networks in the legal sector, private sector and local communities; and advocating for law and policy reform (see further details on page 10).

The Programme was one of Porticus' first multi-project programmes, and the first programme in the area of human trafficking.

Implementing partners

Cambodia

Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)

Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL)

Legal Support for Children and Women (LSCW)

Vietnam

Blue Dragon Children's Foundation

Hong Kong, SAR China

Branches of Hope

Thailand

DISAC Surat Thani Catholic Foundation

LIFT International

Save the Children (Thailand)

Regional and global

Global Fund to End Modern Slavery (GFEMS)

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Issara Institute

Justice Without Borders

Liberty Shared

PILnet

The Mekong Club

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (Thailand)

1 About the Programme

Simplified Programme logic model

The problem

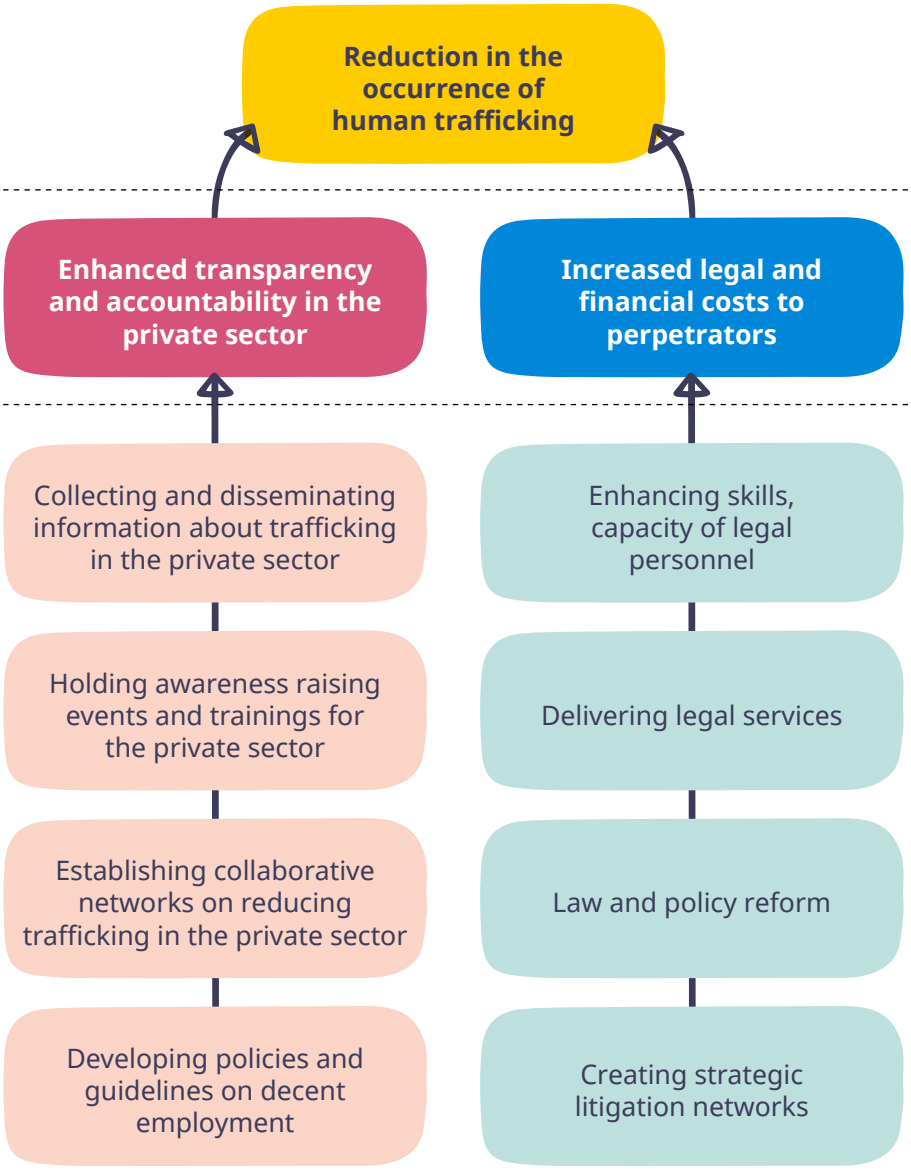
There are an estimated **21 million** TIP victims in Asia, with:

- Poor victim identification, prosecution and conviction
- Inadequate penalties for perpetrators
- Inadequate resources to disrupt the super-profitable trafficking networks
- Untapped resources and expertise in the private sector
- Super-low operational costs of traffickers due to the lack of access to justice.

Priority countries

Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar, Hong Kong SAR, China

Also China, Indonesia and Philippines as countries related to migration routes to/from priority countries



2

About the evaluation

Porticus commissioned this end-of-term evaluation to understand the Programme's results, lessons learned, and how well the Programme had been designed and managed, to inform future strategic development and investment priorities.

The evaluation was conducted over a period of approximately 12 months in the final year of the Programme. The evaluation was based on key evaluation questions related to the outcomes and effectiveness of the Programme, the relevance and coherence of the strategy, and the efficiency of Programme management. The evaluation responded to these questions by undertaking three areas of assessment (at right).

The evaluation approach applied principles of utilisation and participation, with evaluators involving Porticus and partners in designing the evaluation approach and in reviewing evaluation findings. The evaluation also used complexity and systems theory in several areas of assessment.

Data and findings were validated through triangulation of data sources and through consultation with Porticus and partners in online reflection meetings and workshops, and written feedback processes. In total, evaluators conducted 266 interviews and focus group discussions with 158 evaluation respondents, and held 5 online reflection workshops with partner organisations.

There were several limitations on the evaluation methodology. One limitation was that the evaluation's capacity to assess Programme outcomes was limited due to the large number of diverse projects, the extent of relevant data from monitoring activities, and the confidential nature of some partners' activities. The availability of data varied between projects and was sometimes low. These risks were managed through the validation methods described.[8] Subsequent to this evaluation, several project-level evaluations will be taking place and the findings of this evaluation should be considered in light of findings from those evaluations.

Assessment areas

Strategy assessment

Assessment of the extent to which the Programme strategy was relevant, clear and logical, evidence-informed, and feasible[5]. Data collection methods: review of Programme documents, interviews with Porticus staff, interviews with partners and external stakeholders, and literature review.

Programme management assessment

Assessment of the extent to which Programme management practices were aligned with recommended practice for philanthropy and systems change[6]. Data collection methods: process review of grant-making and management, review of Programme documents, interviews with Porticus staff, interviews with partners, and a partner questionnaire.

Effectiveness assessment

Assessment of the most significant outcomes of projects funded by the Programme, including intended and unintended outcomes, contributions to outcomes by partners and others, and barriers to and enablers of change. Data was aggregated and analysed using a systems change framework ('The Water of Systems Change')[7]. Data collection methods: review of grant documents and other documentary sources, interviews with partners, interviews with key informants including people with lived experience of trafficking or exploitation.

3

Key findings

The evaluation made findings in three areas:

3.1 Programme outcomes and effectiveness

3.2 Programme strategy

3.3 Programme management

Key regions of activity and migration routes

Activities snapshot

Knowledge development

Research on trafficking-related issues and trends and awareness raising reaching more than **200,000** people in different sectors, communities and countries.

Capacity and skills development—private sector

Training, tools and technical support for businesses to address trafficking and exploitation risks in their operations.

Capacity and skills development—legal sector

Training, mentoring and coaching for NGOs, lawyers, law enforcement and community leaders, including training for more than **10,000** people in legal case handling, and training for more than **20,000** people in how to address private sector trafficking.

Enabling systems by building relationships

Building networks of NGOs, lawyers, businesses, and migrant workers, nationally, regionally and internationally.

Enabling systems by sharing information

Building systems and tools for collecting, analysing and sharing data and intelligence on trafficking trends, incidents and risks.

Service delivery

Providing legal assistance to more than **7,500** people affected by trafficking or exploitation, plus multidisciplinary support for social and emotional wellbeing.

Policy development

Working with governments to reform laws and policies to prevent and respond to trafficking-related issues.

3.1

Key findings
Programme outcomes and effectiveness

The Programme contributed to a wide variety of outcomes relating to different stakeholders and sectors.

Private sector

In the private sector, projects contributed to increased availability, accuracy and actionability of information about trafficking for businesses. Projects also contributed to instances where businesses took steps to address risks of trafficking or exploitation in their operations, for example, adopting new policies, changing practices (e.g. recruitment), or remediating specific worker problems. However, in some cases, there was limited evidence of the substantive impact of these actions for workers. Several projects also contributed to migrant worker networks and leaders having increased power to support and advocate for the rights of their communities.

Legal sector

In the legal sector, the Programme contributed to increased numbers of migrant workers seeking help from partners, positive legal case outcomes in certain cases, and more effective case handling by lawyers, frontline workers and law enforcement. However, there was limited data on the degree of improvements and how widespread they were among target groups.

3.1

Key findings
Programme outcomes and effectiveness

The Programme contributed to increased availability, accuracy and actionability of information for businesses about risks of trafficking and exploitation in their industry and operations.9

This included information about general risks in recruitment and procurement in global supply chains, and information about specific risks in the operations of individual companies, including information from workers. In the financial sector, financial institutions gained increased information about the general relevance of trafficking and forced labour in the industry, and information about specific indicators or 'red flags' to use in due diligence activities.

Several private sector stakeholders reported that specific information about risks to their business was highly valuable because it is very difficult to obtain and it enabled them to address those risks.[10]

However, although information products and activities by partners had wide reach among private sector stakeholders, the extent to which information contributed to private sector actors taking action or changing practices was often unclear.

> *"The assumption that greater transparency and availability of information about companies will translate into improvements in practice and increased corporate accountability remains largely untested."*
> Nolan & Boersma, 2019 [13]

Programme objective:
To enhance transparency and accountability in the private sector

Definitions[64]

Transparency: Visibility or accessibility of information

Accountability: An obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions

The Programme contributed to instances of businesses taking steps to address specific problems or general risks related to their operations and supply chains.[11] This included global brands, retailers, local employers, and recruiters adopting new policies and practices on recruitment, conducting investigations and audits, and remediating worker grievances.[12]

In some cases, there was evidence that action by private sector actors resulted in direct benefits to workers.For example, workers receiving greater information about their legal rights, repayment of wages or recruitment fees, or return of documents.

However, in many cases, there was limited evidence of the substantive impact of private sector action for workers. For example, there was limited evidence of the implementation and impact of new business policies; investigations and audits did not always mean companies were able to resolve workers' problems; and remediation for individual workers did not always result in systemic improvements to future business practices.

3.1

Key findings
Programme outcomes and effectiveness

"We are no longer scared to speak to the Thai authorities."
Interview with migrant worker leader

The Programme also contributed to migrant worker community networks and leaders in destination countries having increased capacity and opportunity to support and advocate for the rights of their community.[14]

According to migrant worker leaders, they gained increased knowledge, skills and confidence to deal with minor problems with authorities and employers, increased ability to organise community support for disadvantaged community members, and increased connections and opportunities to advocate for their communities' priorities with government.

"We can help directly with the language problem, cultural community problems and help the community with Thai authorities and how to get help from lawyers."
Interview with migrant worker community leader

Stronger migrant worker networks were regarded as highly significant from a systems change perspective because power imbalances between migrant workers, the private sector, and authorities are widely regarded as key drivers of vulnerability to trafficking and exploitation. Stronger networks were also reported to help ensure that NGOs are more responsive to their needs.

3.1

Key findings
Programme outcomes and effectiveness

Reflections and learnings

Strong relationships and understanding between NGOs and businesses were important for enabling businesses to improve their practices and remediate worker grievances.

However, partners also recognised that there are inherent risks for NGOs in when partnering with the private sector and it is important for NGOs to manage risks, for example, by being clear about each party's role and independence, and including workers as key stakeholders in activities.[15]

The experiences of partners highlighted that different approaches are required for engaging private sector stakeholders in different industries.

There are significant differences in private sector stakeholders' priorities and motivations, including sensitivity to reputation risk and international pressure.[17] Globally, there is a recognised need for greater research, evidence and learning about what is effective in influencing private sector practices.[18]

> **"There is no one solution that fits all, and there is no one right answer that would fit all industries all the time."**
> Ioannou, 2020 [16]

More widespread and sustainable outcomes in the private sector will require systems change.

In the current economic and political environment, positive outcomes are reported to be highly dependent on the willingness and commitment of global brands and retailers, and several partners and other experts reported that this willingness is highly variable and often inadequate.[19] Many stakeholders argued that meaningful change will require fundamental changes to economic and political systems and structures, such as changes to corporate governance and culture, stronger government regulation, and greater legal rights and structural power for workers.[20]

A key factor that facilitated positive outcomes for workers in the private sector was long-term, mutually beneficial relationships and trust between worker communities and NGOs.

Several companies reported that their ability to remediate worker grievances was (or would have been) facilitated by partners having support staff on-the-ground in source or destination countries, who speak the language of workers, and who are trusted by both workers and the businesses. However, this was reported to be difficult to implement for companies with geographically diverse supply chains.[21]

There has been a rapid increase in the availability of technology-based tools to support businesses identify and respond to trafficking and labour exploitation.[22]

One area where this has occurred is technology to facilitate 'worker voice'. Research has found that while some worker voice technology platforms have enabled more workers to share feedback about their experiences and have facilitated worker organising, many platforms do not provide adequate protections for workers and fail to deliver positive outcomes for workers due to lack of trust by workers and lack of genuine commitment by businesses to address problems identified.[23] Partners and experts warn that technology should not displace systems to support genuine worker voice and collective action.[24]

Private sector initiatives intended to benefit workers can create risks to workers' safety and privacy.[25]

To manage the risk of unintended negative consequences and to monitor the effectiveness of private sector engagement programs, workers should be involved in implementing and reviewing private sector initiatives.[26]

> **"There's an overreliance on technology. Tech can be a tool. But this is a human-to-human and an economic problem."**
> Interview with funder

3.1

Key findings
Programme outcomes and effectiveness

The Programme contributed to increased numbers of migrant workers seeking information and assistance about migration and employment matters.[27]

This was regarded as significant because, in the context of poor law enforcement, justice systems rely on individuals making complaints. However, partners and other stakeholders reported that most migrant workers still face significant barriers in seeking help, including fear of harm or stigma, lack of confidence in the legal system, or perceiving legal complaints as too much trouble.[28] Accessibility of services by marginalised groups was also noted to be a problem in some countries.

The Programme contributed to improved legal case handling practices by lawyers, frontline workers, and law enforcement.[29]

These improvements were reported to include improved use of victim-sensitive practices, investigations and legal analysis by law enforcement; more effective legal strategies and collaboration by lawyers conducting cross-border cases; and improved identification and referral of people with legal issues by frontline workers. However, there was limited evidence of the extent and sustainability of these improved practices.

The Programme contributed to positive outcomes in specific legal cases including criminal and civil penalties against perpetrators, remedies for victim-survivors, and improved legal precedent.[30]

Some penalties or remedies were reported to be highly significant in the circumstances of the case, for example, where penalties were applied to particularly high profile or powerful offenders, where case outcomes were achieved despite significant practical or legal barriers, or where cases created beneficial precedent in an emerging area of law. However, there was generally limited data about the significance of legal case outcomes, such as whether the penalties or remedies were proportionate to the offending or harm, how they compared to past averages, what the impact was for victim-survivors or offenders, or whether they aligned with survivor perceptions of justice.

Programme objective:
To increase legal and financial costs and risks to perpetrators

Definition[1]

Access to justice: The ability to:
- understand the law and how it applies to you
- to get help when you have a legal problem
- to have your legal problems dealt with through a process that is fair and reasonable
- to obtain a fair and reasonable result.

Furthermore, there was a lack of evidence about whether penalties stopped or deterred trafficking, as intended by the Programme strategy.

Although there is general support in literature that legal penalties may deter offending, some stakeholders and literature raise doubts about the extent to which this occurs in practice in the area of human trafficking.[31] For example, one victim-survivor reported that imprisonment did not stop an offender in their case from taking part in offending and not all relevant offenders were penalised. In relation to the private sector, although some partners and external stakeholders believed that major legal cases against private sector actors would deter offending within an industry, others argued that legal cases generally do not have such impact because the outcomes are limited to specific jurisdictional or factual circumstances. Some commentators also argue that legal penalties are insufficient for creating meaningful reductions in trafficking because they do not address key systemic drivers of trafficking, such as precarious and insecure work and wage disparities.[32]

3.1

Key findings
Programme outcomes and effectiveness

Reflections and learnings

Strong relationships among legal sector stakeholders are critical for facilitating access to justice.

Strong networks within migrant worker communities, and trusting relationships between NGOs and migrant worker communities, were reported to be two key factors that enabled greater numbers of migrant workers to seek help on employment and migration related problems.[33] Relationships among lawyers and other legal personnel were also reported to have been critical for facilitating effective cross-border case handling because they enabled the sharing of knowledge and expertise about different jurisdictions and connected legal personnel with local partners to help conduct cases.[34]

Sustainability of capacity building outcomes was recognised by many partners as a key challenge.

Barriers to the sustainability of improved case handling practices were reported to include turnover among law enforcement, frontline workers and pro bono lawyers; limited resources for law enforcement and NGOs; and competing priorities of target stakeholders.[35] During the Programme, partners used a range of different strategies and approaches to try to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of capacity building. These approaches included using training as an opportunity to build longer-term relationships with and among participants, increasing the ownership of target groups through participatory design and experiential learning, and creating systemic changes to institutional training curricula.

Legal systems in many countries fail to provide effective and meaningful 'justice' for people who have experienced harms like trafficking and exploitation.

Sometimes legal processes can cause additional harm and disempowerment.[36] Financial insecurity, safety concerns and trauma are key reasons why people who have experienced trafficking or exploitation do not initiate or drop out of legal proceedings. Partners and external stakeholders reported that multidisciplinary support for victim-survivors can help to address these problems and enable victim-survivors participate in legal processes more effectively.

People affected by trafficking and exploitation do not always receive 'justice' through the legal system.

To help ensure that legal processes and services better support survivor-defined notions of justice, partners believed the following approaches were important:

- supporting people to make free and informed decisions about their participation in legal processes
- not making assumptions about the interests and priorities of people and communities receiving assistance
- advocating for victims to be provided with a reflection period before deciding whether to engage in legal cases
- involving affected communities in policy advocacy.[38]

> **"Justice is not only about the lawyers."**
> Partner organisation

Although person-centred and rights-based approaches are widely regarded as important by direct services, there are different views about what these approaches should look like in practice.

For some organisations, rights-based approaches mean supporting the psychosocial needs of people affected. For others, they also mean providing choice and control, accountability to service users, or supporting service users to self-advocate.[39] Further, the experience of one NGO showed that harm to vulnerable persons is a risk even where human rights-based approaches are part of organisational strategy. Greater clarity about these approaches would enable more effective planning, implementation and review of these approaches.

3.1

Research summary

Perceptions of 'justice' according to people at risk of or affected by trafficking and exploitation

3.2

Key findings
Programme strategy

The Programme strategy's 'systems change' approach for addressing human trafficking, and its two strategic arms, access to justice and private sector engagement, were generally aligned with what many stakeholders regard as critical global needs and priorities.

However, there was limited analysis of the complexity of trafficking and exploitation, which potentially contributed to unrealistic expectations of how change would occur and what could be achieved. There was also limited consideration of the perspectives and roles of people affected by trafficking and exploitation in creating change, and of how to assess and manage risks to vulnerable persons.

The Programme's target problem, 'human trafficking in Asia', was and remains highly relevant in that it is widely regarded as a critical global problem.[49]

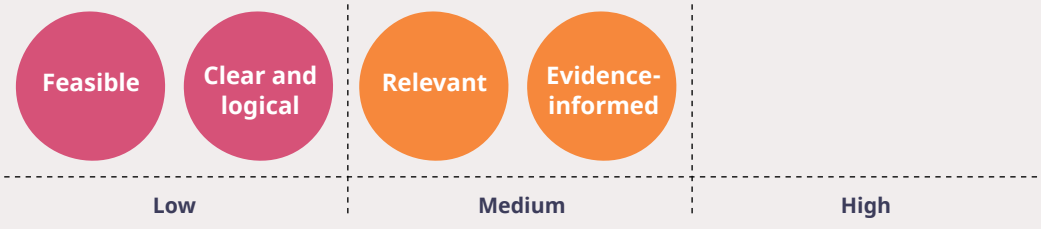
However, some experts argue that the concept of 'human trafficking' is not necessarily useful as a target problem for strategy development. According to several partners and external experts, effectively addressing 'human trafficking' requires recognising that trafficking it is just one part of a wider spectrum of harms that occur in the context of mobility, migration and employment, and that addressing human trafficking effectively requires understanding real-life patterns of vulnerability and targeting the full spectrum of harms.[50] In relation to addressing trafficking for labour exploitation, some argue it would be more effective to focus on 'everyday' labour abuses rather than 'trafficking' because these abuses are far more prevalent and at the heart of systems that enable trafficking to occur.[51]

> *"It is not always possible to sharply separate human trafficking from everyday abuses, and problems arise when the former is singled out while the latter is pushed to the margins."*
> Quirk et al, 2020

The Programme's intention to address trafficking by creating 'systems change' and its two strategic arms, access to justice and private sector engagement, were generally relevant to expressed needs and priorities of key stakeholders.

Engaging private sector stakeholders is widely regarded as imperative to addressing trafficking and exploitation in a systemic way because labour exploitation is estimated to be the most prevalent form of trafficking and private sector actors have significant power to address key drivers of these harms.[52] Enhancing access to justice is also regarded as a critical priority by many stakeholders in the sector due to systemic limitations in law enforcement, lack

Assessment of Programme strategy: To what extent was the Programme strategy...?[48]
(see endnotes for criteria and standards definitions)



3.2 Key findings
Programme strategy

of coordination among NGOs, lawyers and law enforcement within countries and across borders, and lack of legal information and services.[53]

However, within these broad priorities, there are differences of opinion and doubts about the effectiveness of specific approaches intended by the Programme strategy, for example, what approaches are effective at influencing private sector practices, and the extent to which legal penalties against perpetrators can stop or deter trafficking.[54]

One partial gap in the relevance of the Programme strategy was lack of responsiveness to the needs and priorities of people at risk of and affected by trafficking and exploitation.

Although the Programme strategy ultimately aimed to reduce human trafficking, both the strategic objectives focused on outcomes for perpetrators and not outcomes for people affected. This meant intended outcomes did not reflect the rights and interests of people affected. There was also limited consideration of what risks of harm existed in legal sector or private sector interventions, such as breaches of privacy and other rights, psychological harm, or disempowerment.[55] This created a risk that the Programme could support interventions that undermined the rights of people affected in pursuit of the Programme's objectives, which did occur in one instance. Despite this gap in the Programme strategy, in reality, many projects funded by the Programme did respond to these needs and included people affected as key stakeholders in implementing their activities.

Although the Programme strategy's intention to use a 'systems change' approach was consistent with priorities in the sector, there were several limitations in the way the strategy implemented this approach.

The strategy recognised that trafficking is a multidimentional issue, however, there was limited analysis of the complexity of trafficking. For example, there was limited analysis of: the interconnections between trafficking, migration and labour exploitation; differences between different types of trafficking, different industries and geographies; the systemic and structural nature of causes, and the relevance of power dynamics including those related to gender and intersectional disadvantage.

The strategy did not clearly identify the evidence and assumptions on which it was based, and limitations and barriers likely to be faced. This potentially contributed to the fact that the Programme's goal (of achieving a measurable reduction in the occurrence of human trafficking in Southeast Asia) was not realistic.

Furthermore, the strategy contained relatively prescriptive, narrow and linear intended pathways of change, which was inconsistent with the complexity of the issues being addressed.

An additional limitation of the Programme strategy was that it did not clearly recognise Porticus' own role in contributing to the strategic goals. The Programme strategy largely addressed the activities and outcomes of partners, rather than of Porticus.

> *"To fully embrace systems change, funders must be prepared to see how their own ways of thinking and acting must change as well."*
> Kania et al, 2018

3.3

Key findings
Programme management

Although Porticus did not have a deliberate strategy for how it would manage the Programme in a way that supported its strategic objectives, several aspects of its management approach were aligned with recommended practices for philanthropy and systems change. Key strengths included Porticus' building of strong relationships with partners, its contribution to increased networks and collaboration, and its flexible implementation of the Programme strategy. However, some formal management processes provided minimal support for learning and adaptation.

Porticus fostered long-term and trusting relationships with many partners, which were highly valued and regarded as being of strategic benefit by both parties.

One initiative that contributed to these relationships were 'partners' meetings' where Porticus brought partners together to provide feedback on the Programme strategy and monitoring and evaluation framework, and to discuss mutual strategic priorities and challenges. For Porticus, the partners' meetings were valuable for strengthening relationships with partners and providing information about emerging needs and priorities in the sector. For partners, partners' meetings were consistently cited as a valuable opportunity to build relationships with others doing similar work.

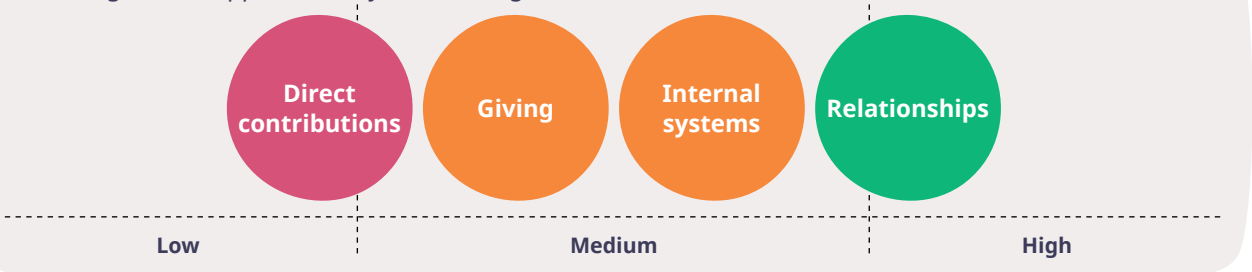
However, some partners believed that communication from Porticus was inadequate in some areas, for example, about Porticus' strategic priorities and expectations, which potentially limited the strength of relationships and trust.

> *"When we have these annual workshops, I've really valued being able to sit down with our colleagues in completely different jurisdictions and talk about shared problems ... about the challenges of fighting human trafficking as NGOs."*
> Interview with a partner organisation

The Programme made a significant contribution to building partners' networks and a small contribution to increased collaboration among partners.[58] Porticus was active in making referrals and introductions among partners and it also funded partners to conduct relationship building and collaborative activities. Several partners reported that relationships built through the Programme were of significant strategic or operational benefit.

In particular, several international NGOs that found the Programme helpful for connecting them with grassroots NGOs. Porticus' funding for local and community-based NGOs was also

Assessment of Programme management: To what extent were the following aspects of Programme management supportive of systems change?[57]



Key findings
Programme management

regarded as serving an important and unmet need in the sector.

> *"You must have grassroots organisations and proximity to affected persons, because without that you won't know what the problem is you're dealing with or what change is happening."*
> Interview with an external funder

In relation to collaboration, in 15-25% of relationships among partners, one or both partners reported that collaboration increased because of the Programme. However, the nature of collaboration between partners was mostly reported to be informal or occasional, and most projects were designed and implemented independently.

> *"When I picked up the case of a fishing boat in Thailand, we already knew some partners from Porticus and we connected with them to help the victims of trafficking on the boat."*
> Interview with a partner organisation

Porticus provided a small degree of capacity building support to partners, such as assistance with grant applications and workshops on safeguarding and evaluation.

However, few partners noted capacity building as a key benefit of the Programme and most reported that they would appreciate greater non-monetary support.

Although the intended strategy was relatively narrow, Porticus implemented it in a flexible way and funded projects that responded to emerging needs. Porticus also supported partners to adapt their projects in line with learnings and contextual changes, including COVID-19.

Porticus demonstrated a strong internal culture of reflection and learning. The Programme team actively reflected on their strategy and management practices and facilitated reflective discussions with partners.

> *"... it wasn't like with other funders ... Porticus staff would start to interrogate some of the higher level strategic goals and also ask questions like, well how are we measuring success, and sharing their own challenges ... I felt in those interactions like I was also getting a strategic partner at a time when I was trying to see the longer term strategic horizon."*
> Interview with a partner organisation

In addition, Porticus used experiences and learnings from the Programme to improve their practices in other regions and programmes.

However, the Programme's monitoring and evaluation system provided limited support to Porticus and partners to collect useful information and critically reflect on their short- and long-term progress. Significant time and effort was invested in reporting quantitative data about activities and outcomes, which was of limited use for understanding complex, diverse and emergent outcomes. There was also little support for partners to share challenges faced and lessons learned.

The Programme made a deliberate effort to fund 'innovations', new or early stage initiatives that were different to traditional approaches to addressing trafficking. This is strongly aligned with recommended approaches for addressing complex problems.[59]

However, the Programme did not have robust systems for generating evidence and learning from these initiatives to support their future development. The importance of this was highlighted in a review of anti-trafficking programs by the UK Independent Commission for Aid Impact:

> *"There is limited value in small-scale pilots unless they are set up to support learning, with real-time monitoring and evaluation to test whether the interventions show promising results."*
> ICAI, 2020

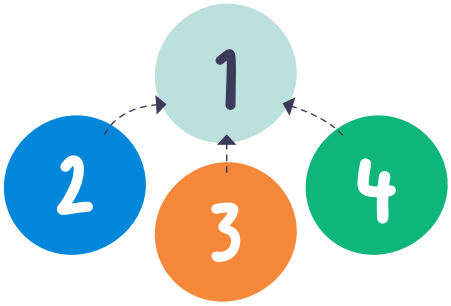
4

Learnings and recommendations

The evaluation made recommendations in four overarching areas, drawing on key learnings from each area of assessment within the evaluation. The recommendations are designed to assist Porticus and partners to continue and strengthen their efforts and contributions towards long-term, systems change related to human trafficking and exploitation. Recommendations for partners would require adequate support and funding from donors, including Porticus.

Figure 4.1. Evaluation recommendations areas

Learnings and recommendations
Evaluation recommendation areas



1. Recognise and seek to understand the complexity of systems change

The experiences of partners and other stakeholders highlight that human trafficking and exploitation are highly complex problems, influenced by a wide range of economic, social and political factors with deep structural and systemic roots. All efforts to address these issues need to be based upon recognition and understanding of this complexity.[60] According to systems change experts, it is also important for change actors, including funders, to consider their own role in the 'system' they seek to influence and how their own practices can facilitate or inhibit systems change.[61]

We recommend that:

- **Porticus and partners** conduct more in-depth analysis of the complexity of target problems and change processes in strategy development, including analysing systemic barriers and limitations, available evidence and gaps in evidence, and assumptions about how change happens.
- **Porticus** analyses and includes its own role in programme strategies.

2. Prioritise and support learning and adaptation

All areas of the evaluation highlighted a need for stronger systems and processes in the sector for developing evidence and supporting learning about effective approaches for addressing human trafficking and exploitation, and the complex nature of change. Solutions to complex problems, like trafficking and exploitation, cannot be known in advance and must be developed through learning from experience and bottom-up evidence generation.[62]

We recommend that:

- **Porticus** maintains an internal culture that promotes critical reflection and learning, and designs formal management processes to support this.
- **Porticus** continues to invest in research and robust project-level evaluation, and supports the use of evidence in programming.
- **Porticus and partners** design strategies to be 'living', with processes for review and adaptation.
- **Porticus and partners** design monitoring, evaluation and learning systems that support real-time learning and adaptation, understanding of complex and long-term change, and learning and development for 'pilot' initiatives.

Learnings and recommendations
Evaluation recommendation areas

3. Strengthen and expand strategic partnerships

Strong relationships and connections between partners and other relevant stakeholders were a key enabling factor of positive outcomes in many areas of the Programme. Systems change experts recognise that improving relationships and connections among diverse stakeholders is an essential part of addressing complex social problems.[63] This includes including increasing trust between funders and grantees, which this evaluation found was highly valued and of mutual benefit.

We recommend that:

- **Porticus** continues to invest in and build strong relationships with partners, and strengthens these relationships through greater communication about strategic priorities and greater capacity building support.
- **Porticus** continues to invest in projects that build relationships and facilitate collaboration, as an enabler of other longer-term outcomes.
- **Porticus and partners** continue or increase the use of participatory practices by involving key stakeholders when designing, implementing and reviewing projects and programmes.

"You need to have people with lived experience designing, implementing and reviewing the efficacy of interventions, and they need to be continuously engaged, not just at one point. You also need to create systems that support and protect them."
Interview with a funder

4. Adopt and embed a person-centred approach to systems change

Several parts of the evaluation highlighted that people affected by trafficking and exploitation should be central to efforts to address these issues. In several projects, people and communities affected by trafficking and exploitation played key roles in contributing to positive outcomes and in providing information about the impacts of partners' work, yet these roles were not recognised in the Programme strategy. The Programme also highlighted that unintended harm is a real risk for all organisations that work with or impact vulnerable persons.

One aspect of adopting person-centred approaches is facilitating meaningful participation of people with lived experience in organisational strategy and management, for example, through participatory strategy design and evaluation, inclusive governance and leadership, survivor/peer-led programs and services, and rights-based approaches and accountability in service delivery. However, meaningful participation is widely recognised as challenging and, if poorly managed, people can feel unheard, marginalised and exploited.

We recommend that:

- **Porticus** maintains 'participation' as an organisational strategic priority and increases funding for projects that enhance rights, power and participation of people with lived experience, including survivor-led programs and organisations.
- **Porticus and partners** consider how to enhance participation, including involving people with lived experience in meaningful ways and using lived experience evidence when designing, implementing and reviewing interventions.
- **Porticus and partners** ensure that strategic objectives reflect the rights and interests of people affected, and that there are processes for accountability for positive and negative outcomes.
- **Porticus and partners** improve assessment and management of risk to vulnerable persons.

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9. Strength of evidence: low to high (2-4 independent sources of evidence per project).
10. Also noted in Berg, L, Farbenblum, B, and Kintominas, A, 2020, 'Addressing Exploitation in Supply Chains: Is technology a game changer for worker voice?', Anti-Trafficking Review, issue 14, pp. 47-66.
11. Strength of evidence: low to high (2-4 independent sources of evidence per project).
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45. Interviews with partners; Interviews with external stakeholders (NGO sector); Yu et al, 2018.

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48. Criteria adapted from ITAD, 2020, Porticus Migration and Human Trafficking Portfolio Review. Criteria definitions: *Relevant:* The strategy responds to needs and priorities of key stakeholders, including people affected, other target stakeholders, partner organisations, and key external stakeholders. *Evidence informed:* The strategy is informed by evidence of needs and priorities and effective approaches; identifies gaps in evidence; recognises different perspectives, including perspectives of people with lived experience. *Clear and logical:* The strategy is based on analysis of the problem's causes and groups affected, including gender and geography; defines causal links; and identifies limitations and assumptions. *Feasible:* The strategy has realistic goals, objectives and outcomes given the timeframe, resources, and expertise. *Ratings standards:* High: To a significant extent; Medium: To a moderate extent; Low: To a limited extent or not at all.

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