



# **Meeting the Challenge**

## **Proven Practices for Human Trafficking Prevention in the Greater Mekong Subregion**

Mekong Subregional Project to Combat Trafficking  
in Children and Women

International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour  
International Labour Organization

## [FOREWORD AND SUMMARY]

In Western literatures, there are children's stories that tell of young men setting out to find their fortune, and the 'life journey' is central to so many literary traditions. In the Greater Mekong Subregion, there are many stories too, about people who leave country, family and country behind them to seek a better life elsewhere, or just enough work to be able to send some money home and maybe save a little.

These are not fairy stories, though. This is not fiction. It is the reality of labour migration in the GMS, and it is too often a reality that ends up in exploitation, misery and – if the movement itself involves force or deception, or if the migrant is a child – human trafficking.

Over eight years, between 2000 and 2008, the ILO project to combat trafficking in children and women in the GMS – known as TICW – developed new and innovative ways of addressing trafficking within the context of labour migration and exploitation. Recognizing that people want to move to find work, and indeed have a right to do so, TICW developed programming that focused on making sure that this movement is safe and legal, and that the work into which people move is free of exploitation.

This is a fresh and important angle to the fight to eliminate human trafficking. It focuses on working with governments and policy makers to ensure that migration channels are open and accessible, and with communities and grassroots organizations to make sure that people know this, follow procedures set down for legal migration, and understand what 'safe migration' is and how it is in their interest.

It also means that prevention can not only be programmed before people move (at 'source') but once they arrive at their destination. By focusing research and prevention programmes on the sectors in which exploitation is known to occur – including tourism, the commercial sex sector, and where possible informal workplaces – TICW aimed to eliminate the exploitation component that turns labour migration into trafficking.

This new paradigm for trafficking allowed TICW to mobilize the strengths of the ILO and the unique insights and outreach of workers' and employers' organizations, as well as traditional partners in government and the non-government sector.

It also brought clarity and depth to an understanding of what 'demand' really means when people talk about 'supply and demand' as fundamental concepts in trafficking and exploitation. TICW has been able to illustrate quite clearly that 'demand' is a labour market phenomenon, linked to

unscrupulous labour practices, labour market inequalities and the hopes and sometimes desperation of migrant workers (the ‘supply’) who sometimes suffer inhuman treatment just to earn a living.

TICW’s work has proved without any doubt that the key to eliminating human trafficking lies in understanding – in all its detail and shifting intensity – what ‘vulnerability’ means, and moving to make sure that this vulnerability is not taken advantage of at any point in the labour migration process. What is clear is that vulnerability is not a fixed state; it varies over time and according to circumstances and can increase, for example, when people become more educated or have more disposable income.

The key to this is understanding also the motivations behind the decision to migrate for work – temporarily or permanently. Although ‘poverty’ is often quoted as the root cause of trafficking and exploitation, it is in fact rarely the poorest who attempt to move to seek work. Rather it is the family that has just enough income or capital to be able to finance travel. Or the young person who has enough schooling to know that there are opportunities for work in a neighbouring country.

In many cases in the GMS, also, migration for work is a tradition. Many border dwellers cross into another country every day, or for longer periods, to workplaces that their communities have worked in for years. This unregulated movement puts people at risk both of exploitation and of falling prey to traffickers who make promises of better work deeper into the host country or in another sector.

In this publication, TICW’s experiences in combating trafficking of children and women in the GMS within the framework of labour migration, and the contribution the project has made to new understanding and innovative programming is outlined. These are just ‘highlights’ – samples of what has been achieved and what has been learned.

## **An overview:**

### **TRAFFICKING IN CHILDREN AND WOMEN IN THE GREATER MEKONG SUBREGION**

Since the early 1990s, a number of factors have conspired to increase human trafficking all over the world and to put efforts to respond to it high on the international political and humanitarian agenda.

Some borders have opened up and others have closed. Production, consumer demand and markets for goods and services have become globalized. Economic gaps have widened between countries but also between one part of a country and another, leaving some people struggling to make a living while others prosper. And of course the globalization of news media has brought all this to the attention of increasing numbers of people.

Governments have become more and more concerned about the increasingly cross-border nature of organized crime. More people have been on the move, also, as a result of internal conflict, natural and man-made disasters, uneven population growth and the strains on education and employment opportunities that this brings.

All this has resulted in an increase in both legal and irregular migration as vulnerable populations in almost all regions of the world have moved to find work or just in the hope of a better life 'elsewhere'. Sometimes that migration is internal within a country (domestic) and sometimes it involves crossing a border. Sometimes the move is temporary – for example for seasonal work -- or it can be permanent or semi-permanent.

These same factors have also increased opportunities for those who exploit people's needs and dreams for profit at many different points in the migration chain: when people are looking to leave the place they are in, while they are en route and when they arrive at their destination. Where migration involves exploitation, then it is in fact trafficking.

In the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), trafficking in children and women is a problem of significant proportions<sup>i</sup>. It has been on the agenda of governments, international agencies and non-government organizations (NGOs) for almost two decades but, for many years, trafficking in this region was considered largely in terms of commercial sexual exploitation of women and, more recently, of children.

The picture that still comes to most people's minds when they hear the term 'human trafficking' is of women being herded into substandard transport to be carried off to brothels, or of children moved across borders to satisfy the predatory demands of paedophiles and sex tourists. To a large extent popular media, including cinema, perpetuate this image of trafficking.

These dramatic images do represent a part of the reality, but a small part. They mask the much bigger picture of trafficking in the GMS, the fact that large numbers of boys and men are also trafficked into exploitative situations in the subregion, and the many different sectors in which trafficked people of both sexes and many different age groups are exploited. In addition to the commercial sex sector, trafficked people are also exploited in activities as diverse as manufacturing and begging on the streets, agriculture and domestic service, fishing and work in tourist resorts.

Understanding of trafficking in this region has also long been clouded by the manifold ‘*common wisdoms*’ that have grown over the years based on perceptions and half-truths. Even as new research little by little casts light on the realities of trafficking, those common wisdoms tend to re-emerge and are reinforced through repetition.

The reality is that human trafficking is not just an issue of sexual exploitation but a social development problem closely related to the economies and labour markets of the subregion and the exploitation of vulnerable people

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confronted with these realities. It is in many cases linked to deeply rooted habits relating to work and people movement. Any analysis of trafficking consequently has to include an understanding of the social and economic realities of the places from which people are trafficked and where they end up.

## **THE TRAFFICKING AND MIGRATION SITUATION IN 2000 – COUNTRY BY COUNTRY – WHEN TICW BEGAN**

### ***Cambodia***

At the beginning of this decade, almost four in 10 people in Cambodia were living below the poverty line. Literacy rates were low: less than 68 per cent adult literacy in 2000 and a relatively low 78.9 per cent rate among 15-24 year-olds. Extreme poverty, the continued aftermath of conflict (and in particular landmines which make land unusable for agriculture) and limited opportunities pushed large numbers of people to migrate. Three quarters of the population of the capital, Phnom Penh, were not born there.<sup>ii</sup>

A well-developed sex industry had also grown during periods of foreign military and peacekeeping presence and has since been sustained by a substantial local market for prostitution. This is a

catchment sector for many young women, including minors, whose opportunities to earn a living are limited and who are vulnerable to coercion and persuasion.

Research by the ILO's project to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women in the Greater Mekong Subregion (TICW) in 2004<sup>1</sup> looked at the situation of women in 30 of the 41 brothels operating in Sihanouk Ville. The brothel district in this port city draws sailors and dockworkers, fishermen and tourists, as well as locals, and many of the women have come from other parts of Cambodia to earn a living.

The high incidence of HIV/AIDS in Cambodia has lowered the age of women and girls in prostitution and myths about the curative powers of youth and, in particular, virgin sex, has increased the demand for younger and younger girls. Many girls therefore end up

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in the sex industry in Phnom Penh and Sihanouk Ville, some of them pushed by economic necessity, some of them by traffickers. Children are also trafficked within Cambodia for marriage, and both internally and cross-border into domestic service.

Additionally, while by far the majority of trafficking in Cambodia occurs internally, trafficking victims from other countries in the region also end up in prostitution there, while women and girls from Cambodia (as well as from Myanmar and Lao PDR) are also trafficked into commercial sex in Thailand. A study of cross-border migration for work between Cambodia's Banteay Meanchey province and Thailand in 2005<sup>2</sup> indicated that at least half the families in every village of four studied districts had members who had migrated for work. Almost one quarter of those moving to Thailand to seek work were between the ages of 10 and 14.

Cambodian children continue to be trafficked both internally and into Thailand for begging or soliciting. Most of these are below the age of six years. These very young children are to be found on the streets and walkways of the capital, accompanied by a woman who is most often not their mother but someone who has paid their family to 'borrow' the child to bring to Bangkok to earn money, or who is herself being exploited by a syndicate that 'rents' the children and oversees the begging.. Cambodia is therefore a receiving, sending and transit country for trafficking of children and women as well as a country with significant problems of domestic trafficking.

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<sup>1</sup> *41 brothels: Prostitution, trafficking and human rights in Sihanouk Ville, Cambodia*, ILO-IPEC/TICW, Bangkok 2004.

<sup>2</sup> *Destination Thailand: A cross-border labour migration survey in Banteay Meanchey Province*, Cambodia, ILO-IPEC/TICW, Bangkok 2005.

### *Lao PDR<sup>iii</sup>*

In mid-2000, Lao PDR's population was roughly 5.2 million. Children under the age of 15 accounted for almost half the population. The vast majority of people live in rural and mountainous areas, with only 15 per cent residing in relatively small towns. Forty-seven different ethnic sub-groups are officially recognized in the country.

Literacy rates in Lao PDR are low, with a marked difference between men and women and just 70 per cent literacy in the 15-24 year age group. Poverty levels remain high: 46 per cent overall in 2000, with a higher rate in rural areas. On the UNDP Human Development Index, Lao PDR ranks among the poorest countries in Asia.

Most Lao children receive some schooling but attendance is sporadic and achievement rates are low. Nearly half of those entering the primary cycle do not complete it. Large families mean that parents often make choices about which of their children will attend school and girls often miss out, so that their future opportunities for both education and work are severely limited. Employment figures understate the true picture because up to 90 per cent of those listed as 'employed' are in fact self-employed or household workers. Agriculture makes up around 85 per cent of all work, with most people in the agricultural labour force self-employed or unpaid family workers. There is a serious lack of work opportunities for those who graduate from school as well as those who drop out.

Lao PDR's border with Thailand is 1,730 km long. The Mekong River flows through the country and forms the boundary between seven provinces of Lao PDR and Thailand. Travel across the border from both sides of the river has featured strongly in the history of the people living along the river. Some families have relatives living on the other side and they cross to visit each other. The same ethnic groups are found on both sides of the river. Migration for work also has a long history and Lao workers are relatively well-off as workers in Thailand. The similarity between Lao and Thai languages gives them an advantage over workers from Cambodia, China and Myanmar. Some communities and districts have established links with employers or industries in Thailand, so their migration is well organized. Recruitment networks often supply mobile phones to communities so that they can contact them easily.<sup>iv</sup>

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In addition to the movement of people from Lao PDR into Thailand, the country's geographical coincidence as a 'corridor' between Thailand and other countries of the GMS means that it is also a transit country for people migrating or being trafficked from Viet Nam and China into Thailand.

The Thai authorities report that more than 70 per cent of illegal workers they return to Lao PDR have been returned eight times already. In August 2000, Thai authorities estimated that at least 50,000 workers from Lao PDR were working illegally in Bangkok, with another 45,000 working in agriculture and construction sites along the Thai-Lao border.

All this irregular movement for work opens the door to trafficking and practices that support it: illegal recruitment, facilitated transport and the debt bondage that often accompanies them. Workers arriving in Thailand without papers (especially women and children) are at risk of exploitation and so become trafficking victims.

### ***Thailand***

With an adult literacy rate over 95 per cent, a youth literacy rate of almost 99 per cent, and only 13 per cent of people below the national poverty line in 2000, Thailand is considered by the United Nations system as a country the UN works ‘with’, and not ‘for’, that is to say that it is not a direct receiver of aid.<sup>v</sup>

Thailand is by far the biggest destination of legal and illegal labour migrants in the GMS, to a large extent because of its relative affluence, developed labour markets and well-known opportunities for work in the informal sector. Thailand has strong demand for cheap labour in sectors such as prawn farming, fruit growing, fisheries, entertainment and manufacturing.

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Research by TICW in 2006<sup>3</sup> looked at the situation of migrant workers, including children, in the garment sector in Mae Sot, Thailand. Although most of the garment workers had arrived under their own steam – some two-thirds from Myanmar – they were working in dangerous and often inhuman conditions. Many had their documents taken from them and were in forced labour, threatened with violence and reprisals if they attempted to leave.

The flourishing tourism industry in Thailand also offers wide possibilities for earning income in activities as diverse as prostitution and begging. Thailand is also a country of transit for people en route to a number of third countries in Australasia, Europe, North America, the Middle East and South Africa.<sup>vi</sup>

There are no official statistics on the number of people trafficked into and out of Thailand each year, but what is known about the recruitment and exploitation of those who enter Thailand for work suggests that significant numbers of ‘illegal migrant workers’ can in fact be considered victims of

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<sup>3</sup> *Working day and night: The plight of migrant child workers in Mae Sot, Thailand*, ILO-IPEC/TICW, Bangkok 2006.



trafficking. The exploitative labour situation of the children working in the garment factories of Mae Sot, for example, conforms to international definitions of trafficking. The Royal Thai Government officially recognized 917,689 illegal migrants from Myanmar, Cambodia and Lao PDR in 1996. They were employed in seven authorized sectors in 43 provinces in Thailand, but this does not (and cannot) take into account illegal migrants working as beggars, behind closed doors as domestic servants, and more generally in clandestine occupations. Between January and July 2000, the Immigration Police of Thailand returned 150,000 illegal migrant workers to their countries of origin, mostly Cambodia and Myanmar.

Internal trafficking is also a problem in Thailand, mainly from the northern provinces to urban and tourist areas including Bangkok. By the early 2000s, there were reports of a decrease in the number of Thai children and young people moving for work as the Thai economy improved, but of the numbers being 'topped up' with children trafficked from the border areas of Lao PDR and Myanmar. Despite economic growth, though, poverty in rural areas of Thailand remains acute and ethnic communities in the north are particularly vulnerable, with the northeast having the highest incidence of poverty and the highest concentration of poor people. In 2001, almost a quarter of a million children between 13 and 17 years of age were working.

Many trafficking victims end up in prostitution, although people are also trafficked into domestic service, construction work, agricultural and factory sweatshop work, fishing and street begging and hawking. Children relocated from the border areas between Thailand and Lao PDR/Myanmar are to be found working in factories, on building sites and on fishing boats in Thailand as well as in the country's tourist resorts. Because the work is illegal and often clandestine, it is impossible to know how many illegal migrants/trafficking victims there are

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The hill-tribe people have been unable to maintain their traditionally self-reliant agrarian lifestyle because of restrictions on the use of land and as a result many of the hill-tribe women and girls have been recruited to work in massage parlours, nightclubs and brothels in Bangkok and tourist areas. Children of ethnic minorities and tribal groups, and those who cross the border into Thailand for work, are at high risk of labour exploitation because they have no access to support structures and services.

There are several well-established routes for labour migration in the GMS and most movement takes place over land, with well-known gateways into Thailand. The highest numbers of women and children trafficked into prostitution in Thailand are from Myanmar, followed by Yunnan Province in China and Lao PDR. Cambodian children are also trafficked into Thailand mostly for begging and

soliciting, although a small but growing number of Vietnamese children also find their way into Thailand. The majority are young boys.

### ***Viet Nam***

The situation in Viet Nam is very similar to that in Cambodia and Lao PDR. Most of the people live in rural areas and are concentrated in the two main rice-growing deltas: the Red River in the north and the Mekong in the south. The delta populations are almost entirely ethnic Vietnamese, but one-sixth of the population belongs to one of 53 ethnic minorities, including the Khmer in the south of the country. The urban population continues to grow rapidly.

Population growth slowed down in the late 1990s, partly as a result of the effects of war and emigration: between 1.5 and 2 million people, mostly men, had died as a result of conflict between 1960 and 1980 and up to three-quarters of a million people had left the country after the fall of Saigon and during conflict with China in the late 1970s.

Enrolment rates in education are high although school attendance drops significantly after lower secondary. Despite this, youth literacy rates are high: 97 per cent in 2000. The relatively high education levels among children and young adolescents, though, means that many young people take on the economic burden of the family. The sex sector in Ho Chi Minh City is among the biggest in the subregion and, since the city is a major destination of minors seeking work, many end up working in prostitution.

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There are three major trafficking routes out of Viet Nam: from the north into China; from the south into Cambodia; and to third countries (including Thailand, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao and Singapore) directly or through Cambodia. There is also migration into other countries in the region for the purposes of arranged marriages as well as for labour, although it is not clear how much of this involves trafficking.

### ***Yunnan Province of China***

Yunnan is the eighth largest province in China, located in the southwest of the country. It shares a 1,997km border with Myanmar, a 710 km border with Lao PDR and a 1,353 km border with Viet Nam. The long mountainous borders and the distribution of ethnic groups sharing similar customs and cultures along these borders mean there is significant movement across the borders. The risk of trafficking is high, although trafficking within the province is also a major problem.

A distinctive feature of human trafficking in China is that most women and children are trafficked for forced marriage or adoption.<sup>vii</sup> Rural men are willing to pay substantial sums for a bride who can bear children and extend the family line. Two important factors driving this are the high costs of traditional weddings, which even the poorest are expected to pay, and the large number of young rural women who leave their villages in search of a better life. Families will similarly pay large sums for children, almost always boys, whom they will adopt as their own.

While trafficking for forced marriage and adoption still accounts for most internal trafficking of children and women in China, though, the numbers trafficked for sexual exploitation is also increasing rapidly. This is particularly true in the border areas that provide easy access to other relatively wealthy South East Asian neighbours and reflects the growing number of young women from poor farming communities migrating to find work and different life experiences in the cities.<sup>viii</sup>

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Women from remote rural areas are particularly vulnerable to trafficking, and many have not had the chance to go to school. Many adults in these areas have never been to school or learned to read, and can therefore not pass on skills to their children. School attendance is higher among the current generation, but many drop out after primary school and a significant proportion drop out even before they complete primary education.

Traffickers are reported increasingly to be targeting young women and girls, including adolescents. Women are also becoming involved in trafficking, especially in identifying and recruiting other women and girls. Women also facilitate adoption of kidnapped babies by pretending to be their mothers during the legal process. Earnings from trafficking can be several times what the average farmer can earn in a year.

## **THE NEW MILLENNIUM – THE ILO IN THE GMS**

The ILO's Project to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women in the Greater Mekong Subregion – known as TICW – was the first major initiative to recognize the complexity of trafficking in the GMS, its fundamental links to labour migration and exploitation, and the need to develop programming to take account of this.

After preparatory work to bring together what was then known about trafficking in the GMS, and consultations with governments and organizations across the region, TICW was launched in 2000,

initially for three years – under the auspices of the Organization’s International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour, IPEC.

From its beginnings, TICW developed, tested and evaluated new processes and programming to tackle trafficking at its roots. The project commissioned research to fill in some important gaps in knowledge, including issues surrounding labour migration and work patterns in the GMS. These helped to fill the gaps in reliable data on the number and categories of people moving to seek work or better life opportunities, as well as the mechanisms that facilitate and support this movement, particularly in the case of illegal/irregular migration and undocumented labour, in the informal sector and in clandestine or illegal employment.

Much of the work undertaken was planned as ‘demonstration’ actions, at first focusing on actions in ‘sending’ communities to understand better the motivations of those who sought to move and how recruiters use their knowledge of this to draw people into the trafficking trap. At the same time, TICW worked with people in the communities to close the doors to recruiters, building communities’ resilience through awareness raising, surveillance and reporting, and other community-strengthening actions. The learning from this work at grassroots level was used as a platform on which to develop better government responses informed by timely community-level experience.

As the labour exploitation/migration context in which trafficking in the GMS takes place became clearer. TICW commissioned new studies to throw more light on trafficking within the framework of labour migration, developed research and programmes focusing on the motivations and mechanisms that underlie the movement of people in search of work, the workplaces they move to and what happens at every stage of the process: when they initiate the move, while they are relocating and when they arrive at their destination. The aim was not only to enhance understanding of trafficking as an issue of labour migration and exploitation but also to seek responses to it within this framework, particularly with regard to the little studied ‘destination side’ of labour migration.

This important shift to look at prevention at the place of destination, not only at source, also, of course, gave TICW the opportunity to use the ILO’s considerable and unparalleled expertise in the world of work. It allowed the project to explore further the potential role of workers’ and employers’ groupings in combating trafficking in the GMS and to seek ways to mobilize them and work with them to identify and address exploitative workplaces and unscrupulous employment practices.

## THE HIGHLIGHTS

### SHIFTING THE PARADIGM

The truth is that ‘trafficking’ – despite the fact that there is now a well established and broadly accepted definition of it in the Palermo Protocol -- remains a generally cloudy concept because it is just so multi-faceted and diverse. The word is a convenient label for conventions and treaties and for those working in this area to use, but it is so imprecise that it has led to a situation where different people still understand it to mean different things.

Throughout Phase I, TICW sought to find a way to promote better understanding of the nature of human trafficking in the GMS, because the research on the ground – especially relating to children – showed that the phenomenon was much more diverse than was generally believed. On the basis of studies, field observation and analysis, by the end of Phase I, TICW had moved to shift the paradigm of trafficking to focus on the fact that it is essentially:

*Labour exploitation into which people have (been) moved.*

This opened the door for much more detailed understanding of the motivations and mechanisms at play in human trafficking and allowed a much clearer and potentially more effective set of responses to be tried out that took full advantage of ILO’s knowledge and experience in relation to labour, and bringing in employers and workers as central players.

This labour-centred approach is an important contribution of TICW. Of course it does not in any way suggest that trafficking is not a human rights violation,

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but it does allow for that violation to be analysed and responded to in the harsh light of labour market realities and people’s overwhelming need to work and support themselves and their families.

Repositioning the discourse on human trafficking to look at it as a function of labour migration and exploitation is not only a question of definition. It is central to making the right decisions about how to respond, both in terms of policy and programmes. It was this that prompted TICW to introduce a focus on promoting and reinforcing legal migration channels, on ‘destination’-side prevention actions and on research on specific labour sectors in which exploitation takes place. It also opened up programming options to include actions that focus on safer migration, ensuring that this essential labour right is protected. These, too, are important contributions of TICW.

Shifting the paradigm to consider trafficking as a function of labour migration and exploitation also allows consideration of policy not only related to trafficking but also to migration and employment, ensuring that rights are more broadly protected and that victims of trafficking, irregular migration and exploitative labour practices do not fall between the cracks in definitions. It brings in more stakeholders/actors, too, within government and in the labour sector. The labour exploitation approach also allows for anti-trafficking work to sit comfortably alongside countries' Decent Work Action Plans and this opens doors for anti-trafficking work to become mainstreamed and sustainable at national level. Whereas trafficking in children and women might in many cases be allocated to the social welfare portfolio, or the family and youth ministry, this new paradigm means that ministries of labour, finance, trade and employment are also brought to the 'anti-trafficking table'.

### ***Examples***

It is difficult to illustrate a shift in paradigm with specific examples, because it is not an action in itself but rather provides a context in which actions and debate take place. The success of the approach, though, is clear from the shift in approaches by many other agencies and governments, most notably the UN Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking in the GMS, UNIAP, which has built its recent work on this new paradigm. It is also manifest in the nature of the programmes that TICW itself developed over time, focusing on safe labour migration as a risk-reduction strategy and destination-side projects to prevent exploitation.

One concrete output from TICW's work in this context is the *Mekong Challenge* series. For the first time, these publications focus anti-trafficking attention on specific sectors where labour exploitation is rife. They represent an important addition to the knowledge base but also promote advocacy, policy and programming emphasis that can lead both to a reduction in the exploitation of workers who have not been trafficked and also to a reduction in trafficking, since they aim to contribute to eliminating the exploitative outcomes of trafficking. The studies have, importantly, in some cases shown long-held presumptions to be unfounded, or have pointed to the way to solutions that are not trafficking-related. A 2006 study on young women working as 'beer promotion girls' in Cambodia,<sup>4</sup> for example, found that,

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<sup>4</sup> *Cambodia's 'beer promotion girls' – their recruitment, working conditions and vulnerabilities*, ILO-IPEC/TICW, Bangkok 2006.

contrary to popular belief, the women generally are well treated by their employers, with fair conditions of work that allow them to save or send money home. They had been legally recruited and employed, although both the women and the employers expressed concerns that client who drink too much might become abusive. Despite this generally positive report, however, most of the women interviewed said they would prefer other work, and would like skills training. This points to other options for development programming to help women in this area.

The series to date covers: the realities of young migrant workers in Thailand (*Underpaid, overworked and overlooked*); the plight of migrant child workers in Mae Sot, Thailand (*Working day and night*); and the recruitment, working conditions and vulnerabilities of Cambodia's 'beer promotion girls' and Cambodia's *hotel and guesthouse workers*. Additionally, the series has titles looking at the legal protection of migrant workers in Thailand (*Employment and protection of migrant workers in Thailand: National laws/practices versus international labour standards?*); a cross-border labour migration survey in Banteay Meanchey Province, Cambodia (*Destination Thailand*); the 'pull' side of human trafficking (*Redefining demand*); an analysis of a baseline survey in Yunnan Province; and a publication called *Winding Roads*, a narrated version of a 2003 migration survey of 6,000 households in Lao PDR.

## **FOCUSING ON PREVENTION AT THE POINT OF ORIGIN**

Developing anti-trafficking efforts in the context of labour migration and exploitation provides a useful framework for interventions, because the 'problem' very clearly can be seen to have a beginning, a middle and an end – that is the areas in which children and women are likely to originate (the 'source' side), the motivation and means of their leaving, their routes and means of movement, through the cross-border/internal journey undertaken, to their reception or arrival, and the place of exploitative work (the 'destination' side). Of course trafficked people may find themselves being re-trafficked, and to this extent it is often said that trafficking is a 'loop' rather than a 'line', however each individual trafficking incident does have a beginning and an end, and TICW was one of the first projects to reflect this clarity in differentiated, dedicated 'source' and 'destination'-side programming.

As the project progressed, TICW acted on the important lesson that came out of field experience and ongoing monitoring and evaluation that source-side programmes will only have an impact on trafficking to the extent that they are aimed at those who are most at risk, vulnerable either to seeking to move themselves or to being recruited by others.

It is important to recognize that vulnerability relates both to people's risk of falling prey to trafficking but also to their likelihood to migrate, because the desire to migrate can itself be a risk factor when, for example, legal migration channels are closed, or not known to the person seeking to move, or are otherwise difficult to access. In such cases, would-be migrants are more likely to seek out irregular channels and find themselves in a situation where they are at risk of becoming the victims of recruiters, illegal transporters, unscrupulous employers or other intermediaries/traffickers.

***Vulnerability relates both to people's risk of falling prey to trafficking but also to their likelihood to migrate, because the desire to migrate can itself be a risk factor when, for example, legal migration channels are closed.***

It is extremely important to remember that TICW is about stopping trafficking and not migration. TICW has taken the approach that being able to move to find decent work is a fundamental right and that the approach to be taken to it is to make migration safer, including by protecting migrant workers when they arrive at their destination, reducing the risk that they will find themselves in exploitation and therefore trafficking.

This must be understood when policies and programmes at 'source' are planned. There is a fine line between stopping trafficking and putting up obstacles to migration – this is an area where there need to be continued efforts to help people (and governments) to understand the difference and to promote the right messages.

It is also important in this regard to fully reflect what has been learned about 'vulnerability' through TICW's experience: that vulnerability is not a simple question of poverty, sex, age or education. Vulnerability is the result of a complex and varied set of factors, some of which are quasi established (sex, family economic status, family size, age), some of which are almost coincidental and unpredictable (trigger factors such as family illness or death, conflict, natural and man-made disasters, economic crisis) and, importantly, some of which come into play only in certain circumstances and may or may not result in vulnerability (education, for example, which is a protective factor for some children but a vulnerability factor for others who may be prompted to migrate because they have learned more about options and feel empowered to seek them out; and improved financial status – including as a result of micro-finance/village bank-type interventions – that can similarly prompt people to think about using their greater resources to migrate). In many ways, there is a 'continuum of vulnerability'; it is not a static state.

Through its work, TICW has also shed light on recruitment and in particular the fact that it is diverse and that simplistic views on it should be avoided. Ongoing research on formal and informal



recruitment in the subregion seems to suggest that informal recruitment sometimes works better. The secret is to make sure there is understanding of how it works, in detail, and how it can be kept functioning and ‘clean’. The bottom line is that people move – and they should be free to do so. The key is absolutely making sure they move safely into work that is not exploitative.

### *Examples*

#### **Vulnerability database in Chiang Mai, Thailand**

If vulnerability changes over time and with shifting circumstances, then it is vital to be able to take this into account in profiling vulnerable groups or individuals in a community, so that early warning signals are recognized, and surveillance and protection can respond to changing needs.

***If vulnerability changes over time and with shifting circumstances, then it is vital to be able to take this into account in records of vulnerable groups or individuals in a community, so that early warning signals are recognized, and surveillance and protection can respond to changing needs.***

TICW therefore contributed to the development and piloting of a vulnerability database that allows for varied and changing data to be collated. This ‘vulnerability mapping’ is essential to targeting those who are most at risk of being trafficked and additionally allows for ‘early warning’ alerts in the case of changed circumstances that increase vulnerability. It also allows for regular updating, reflecting the continuum of vulnerability and avoiding the error of permanently labelling certain groups, communities or individuals as ‘vulnerable’.

The database is an important outcome of TICW’s work in Thailand. Additionally, it responds to calls made in a number of international agreements for more mapping of vulnerability, for documentation and for sharing of information. There has been considerable debate about this over the past decade but governments in general have struggled with the complexity of the task of mapping vulnerability and creating usable databases from this. One of the interesting aspects of the Chiang Mai exercise is that it began with a relatively modest geographical scope, whereas most other attempts have often focused immediately on mapping at a national level and have failed. Clearly there is scope for the database exercise to be replicated in other parts of the country, and eventually for the exercise to go national.

Before this happens, there are some elements of the database that need refining (relating to the sources of the information collected and protocols for access to it), but it is an important initiative that has great potential. This has been demonstrated by continued interest from the Thai Government and the possibility of the model being tested in the Philippines.

TICW worked on this project in cooperation with the Chiang Mai Coordination Centre for the Protection of Children's and Women's Rights. The first stage was to commission a team from nearby Chiang Mai University to design a computer programme to create a human trafficking database. In the process, they created a 'risk index' used to identify families and individuals vulnerable to trafficking and a sub-database with information on destination sites where people have ended up in exploitation.

The database was designed to be standardized so that it could take information of relevance from many different sources and be used by partner agencies and organizations throughout the province and eventually nationally.

The database consists of four sub-databases:

- The **risk index**, built on 28 indicators of vulnerability scored from 1 to 3 (highest risk) and resulting in a profile of communities and individuals who are potentially vulnerable to trafficking. The indicators cover areas such as health, education, basic minimum needs and social welfare details. Reports on the situation of at-risk individuals are then displayed under various classifications: age, sex, home town, sub-district and districts across a province. Numbers of individuals at risk also can be displayed on maps, with different colours representing high, medium and low risk. For those planning interventions, these can be used to prioritize areas for programming.
- The '**sin space**', containing primary and secondary information on workplaces in sectors known to be linked to exploitation. The information is produced into high-resolution satellite imaging maps displaying 'risky' places. It can be used for surveillance and interception.
- The **network**, which includes data on the multidisciplinary team members who respond to suspected cases of human trafficking, and on other people (such as community or watchdog volunteers) as well as public and private organizations involved in anti-trafficking efforts. It provides their contact details and information on their area of expertise.
- **Lessons learned**, which includes the results of discussions the multidisciplinary team members have held with rescued and other victims of human trafficking. It includes information on where they were trafficked from and to and how they were tricked and exploited. These cases offer considerable insight into the trafficking process. The programme analyses this information, which can be produced as reports to better inform strategies and actions to combat trafficking, intercept and help victims and support cases to move more efficiently through the legal system.

## **Promoting the use of surveys and census data to focus on those at risk and support policy**

One way of identifying family and individual vulnerabilities is through careful analysis of general labour or household surveys. In 2003, TICW supported a labour migration survey in Khammuane, Savannkhet and Champassak provinces of Lao PDR. This collected and analysed general and migration-specific data and information on household characteristics, perceptions and aspirations of children aged 10 – 17 and young people aged 18-25, as well as the experiences of returned workers.

This was the first instrument in Lao PDR to investigate and test ideas about the causes, nature, rates and outcomes of migration using a large-scale macro approach. It is particularly important that this used the expertise of other programmes of the ILO to feed into anti-trafficking work. The ILO's Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC) has pioneered statistically relevant surveys of several kinds, including household surveys, and TICW has promoted this in relation to anti-trafficking targeting. Surveys and data collection – although perhaps not 'sexy' in programming terms – are vital components of anti-trafficking efforts and not carried out nearly enough.

***Surveys and data collection – although perhaps not 'sexy' in programming terms – are vital components of anti-trafficking efforts and not done nearly enough.***

It is important to remember that there is a fine line between helping people to better understand the risk involved in moving and seeking work in areas where traffickers and exploiters operate, and actively deterring people from exercising their right to move and/or seek work. TICW learned that this was especially true in its work in Yunnan Province, China. The planning of actions had to take account of local policies in these areas and the likelihood of this line being crossed.

This required careful consultative planning, ongoing monitoring, pre-implementation and follow-up capacity building and the possibility of immediate intervention if problems were to arise. It also involved ensuring that everyone active in developing and implementing programming was very clear about the importance of advocating for and working towards improved access to legal migration channels. ILO's advocacy work with the central government was therefore vital, but advocacy could not be effective without reliable data to support various positions. For this, TICW was able to rely on a baseline survey it had commissioned in Yunnan Province.

The lesson to be learned from all this is that dispassionate, statistical data is a vital tool in programme planning and advocacy and that statistical surveys, if properly constructed and analysed, are extremely valuable in this regard.

## **Promoting safe migration**

Promoting safe migration is key to reducing the likelihood that those seeking to move for work will seek out irregular channels and be deceived or persuaded by recruiters or others linked to the trafficking chain.

Workshops with the government and workers' and employers' organizations in Cambodia were designed to help them have a better understanding of labour migration and its links to trafficking, and subsequent reports indicated that this resulted in better sharing of information among the various actors, more brainstorming sessions on new approaches and interventions, and reinforced mechanisms to detect and stop trafficking. Also in Cambodia, TICW ran programmes promoting safer migration among workers from known sending areas in Prey Veng, Svay Reng, Kampong Cham and Banteay Meanchey to urban destinations in Cambodia and Thailand.

### ***Examples***

#### **Travel smart -- Work smart**

'Travel smart – Work smart' is a 'destination guide' designed to give potential labour migrants and those who have already migrated for work the information and resources they need to migrate safely and work without exploitation (see box). It was trialled in Thailand, the principal destination of migrant workers in the GMS. In late 2007, following a round of follow-up consultations with government and NGO partners, TICW began drafting a second, simplified edition that focuses on how to remain safe during migration and where to go for help at destination.

A similar guide was also published in Viet Nam for Vietnamese workers migrating within their country and beyond. With support from TICW, the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs is preparing a second edition and several thousand copies are to be distributed in both migrant sending and receiving areas within the country through 2008. The Vietnamese guide is being disseminated by the government, the Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL), and in consultation with the Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI).

Lao PDR and Cambodia are also in the process of producing or planning similar guides, and in China, a guide developed by TICW's sister project, CP-TING (Beijing), is being distributed in five provinces, with another being adapted in Yunnan Province.

This is a major output of TICW and its relevance and usefulness are demonstrated by indications that the Thai and Vietnamese Governments continue to promote and use it after the original project to develop and launch it ended, and similar tools have been produced in Lao PDR and China.

It is a very practical initiative, focusing not just on raising awareness about trafficking but tuning in to people's desire or need to move and work. It is also a good example of an initiative that can be taken over by local authorities and national governments, becoming a staple element of migrant labour services in receiving countries as well as sending countries.

A travel guide with a difference: Travel smart – Work smart

Arming young migrant workers and other vulnerable groups with information on how to protect themselves from trafficking-related abuses lies at the forefront of any trafficking prevention strategy.

TICW worked with governments, workers' and employers' organizations and NGOs in the GMS to publish safe-migration materials for migrant workers under the title 'Travel smart – Work smart'.

The audience for the information is not homogenous. Telling an adolescent girl trying to escape an abusive family that she should not leave home may well fall on deaf ears. Persuading a mother who cannot feed her children that work across the border will not necessarily bring in the resources she needs and may put her or her working child at risk is a difficult message to get across. The emphasis needs to be on realistic assessment of different people's needs, practicality and reducing vulnerability.

In Thailand, the target audience was young foreign migrants of working age from three neighbouring countries who were already in Thailand or in transit. Adolescent girls and young women were the main targets as research had shown them to be most at risk of exploitation.

*Travel smart – Work smart: A 'smart' guide for migrant workers in Thailand*, was published in three languages: Burmese, Khmer and Laotian. The guides were distributed by 11 international and national NGOs and networks in various migrant 'hot spots' within Thailand. A version was subsequently published in Po Karen language.

The first edition in Thailand was published following consultation with the Thai Government and was divided into three parts, illustrated with cartoons of a young migrant worker en route to her destination. The guide explains the dangers and pitfalls of unprepared migration, with an emphasis on transit and destination. It also reinforces the Thai Government's policy to encourage migrants to register for work in Thailand before they leave home by applying for registration through their own government to be part of the official Thai quotas for migrant workers in various sectors.

The Thailand destination guide stresses ways for migrants -- whether registered or unregistered, documented or otherwise -- to stay safe while in Thailand, how to avoid abuse by unreliable employers, and where to turn if they need help. It tells them about the minimum wage and working conditions they are entitled to under Thai law, and these sections are translated into Thai language so the migrant worker can more easily communicate the point with the employer or, if required, when making a complaint to the Job-seekers Protection Division of the Department of Employment. The Department's hotline number (1506) is prominently displayed in case migrants need counselling or redress.

### **District Operating Centres in Phayao province, Thailand**

The 'community watchdog' concept was a mainstay of the source-side prevention elements of TICW. It encompasses practical action (community alerts allowing intervention in cases of immediate risk) and longer-term capacity building, empowerment and sustainability. In Phayao province in Thailand, TICW contributed to the development and support of District Operating Centres, by identifying and training 306 'watchdog' volunteers in all 124 villages in the district, and training 188 community leaders (128 women and 60 men) in 68 sub-districts in trafficking issues. An effective multi-disciplinary team in Phayao was developed and strengthened.

The fact that the centres in Phayao were subsequently sustained through government support is a sign of their usefulness and relevance. A number of Thai provincial authorities made study trips to observe the Phayao model and the Thai Government sought international support to expand the model nationally.

### **Harnessing the power of the media to promote strong information messages**

In Lao PDR, and in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and Information and UNIAP, TICW supported the development of a radio programme targeted at adolescents. The radio programme was very popular with young people and the messages were broadcast several times a day. Teenagers asked about the messages remembered that they warned of the dangers of undocumented migration. What is particularly interesting about this campaign is that it took a different approach from many other anti-trafficking information initiatives because it did not just attempt to 'raise awareness about trafficking' but focused on practical information relating to safe migration, an approach that is much more likely to be listened to and heard and that directly addressed the many questions adolescents might have about migration for work.

In Cambodia, TICW worked with the BBC Trust to develop a trafficking story line in the *Taste of life* telenovella and a full-length feature film, *A dangerous taste of life*. In Cambodia, where 52 per cent of the rural population own a television set and 85 per cent of the population have access to media, using television is an extremely effective way to disseminate messages. The telenovella was part of an integrated multi-platform project, which included TV and radio spots (both of which covered trafficking), as well as 200 radio phone-in programmes on FM 103 (the market leader).

***In Cambodia, where 52 per cent of the rural population own a television set and 85 per cent of the population have access to media, using television is an extremely effective way to disseminate messages.***

To increase exposure further, the BBC developed a comic book to accompany the telenovella, and ‘add-ons’ such as interactive rolling messages at the bottom of the TV screen during the telecast of *Taste of life*. The messages put questions to the television audience, such as “Should he leave his girlfriend?” Audience members could then send text messages with their answers. The BBC did thorough testing of every episode in relevant areas. For example, for the episodes featuring the trafficking story line, the BBC tested the episodes with young people between the ages of 14 and 18 and their parents in rural areas. In addition, they tested the episodes with sex workers to assess whether or not the stories and characters were realistic.

## **FOCUSING ON EXPLOITATION – DESTINATION-SIDE PROGRAMMING**

Avoiding exploitation in the place of destination is a hitherto ignored opportunity to counter trafficking since, by definition, it is the element of exploitation that turns what would otherwise be just migration into trafficking. The exploitation takes different forms at different points in the journey. At the beginning, for example, it is people’s vulnerability, trust or relative weakness that is exploited, through sham recruitment, promises and deception or sometimes threats and coercion. During the journey, it is often people’s desperation to find work or life opportunities that is exploited, through exorbitant transport costs, purloining of documents or maltreatment. At the place of destination, it is people’s labour that is exploited, in a variety of sectors and in different ways. In fact, in the case of child trafficking, exploitation at the place of destination is all that is required in international law for movement/migration to become trafficking.

***TICW has approached destination-side programmes as a prevention and protection opportunity, stopping migration from turning into trafficking.***

Tackling exploitation at destination is therefore an important and innovative contribution of TICW to anti-trafficking efforts. In taking the bold move to pilot prevention programming at destination, TICW both acknowledges the reality of trafficking and also links this to the ILO push for Decent Work. TICW's destination-side programming, though, goes beyond the Decent Work agenda – providing labour protection, social services, implementing and enforcing labour standards – and focuses on sectors where exploitation is rife: tourism, the sex sector, domestic labour.

It is particularly important to recognize TICW's achievement in showing how destination-side programming is not only about rescuing those who have already been trafficked, and offering various forms of victim support. TICW has approached destination-side programmes as a prevention and protection opportunity, stopping migration from turning into trafficking.

Destination-side programming has also given TICW the opportunity to engage employers and workers' organizations in new ways in anti-trafficking actions. This is particularly important when it is considered that, for more than a decade, there has been confusion and many wasted opportunities caught up in the 'demand' debate. The word is used frequently, rarely defined and generally misunderstood. Demand is in fact not a single concept but a whole range of processes and actors, and it occurs at different stages of the trafficking/exploitation chain, generated by different actors in different ways. TICW recognized the need to understand the 'demand/destination' issue better. TICW has piloted important initiatives specifically dealing with this part of the trafficking process.

***Demand is in fact not a single concept but a whole range of processes and actors, and it occurs at different stages of the trafficking/exploitation chain, generated by different actors in different ways.***

It has to be noted that this area of TICW's work is still in the early stages and lessons are still being learned. One is that it is important to target destination-side prevention actions to make sure that they really do reach those labour migrants who are most at risk of exploitation (or indeed already in an exploitative situation). Although the tourism and sex sectors have been the focus of some work, it could be argued that these are the 'easiest' high-risk sectors to reach because they are generally visible; less visible sectors are more challenging, for example clandestine sweatshop work, street-based activities like hawking, and agriculture. Lessons have been learned, too, about sectors which are often quoted as exploitative but that may in fact not be. Research carried out for the Mekong



Challenge series, for example, showed that the hotel guesthouse sector in Siam Reap, Cambodia, provides generally safe and regulated work for the young Cambodian women who work there.<sup>5</sup>

There is some question also about the extent of employer and worker commitment to destination-side programming. It is one thing to engage them in discussion and the drafting of codes of conduct and quite another to mobilize them to forcefully implement these codes and seek out ways to contribute to eliminating exploitation. Ultimately workers and employers are very aware that eliminating exploitative workplaces and putting unscrupulous employers out of business is crucial to a healthy work regime, but it is not easy to do and it is not surprising that it is taking time for workers and employers to find the best ways to contribute in this area. The other challenge, of course, is reaching exploitative employers who lurk in the informal labour market and who are not unionized or organized.

It has been suggested that destination-side interventions have considerable ‘potential for harm’. In particular, there are concerns that employers may punish workers who they think might expose poor working conditions, or that ‘rewarding’ potentially rogue employers by involving them in training or beneficial schemes somehow reinforces their actions. It is important to address these concerns by noting that any action, whether at source, destination or en route, should always be regularly monitored and checked, and that actions should be programmed as part of a more comprehensive strategy, not as stand-alone interventions.

## ***Examples***

### **Child-safe tourism in Cambodia**

This programme was run in collaboration with the Ministries of Tourism, Labour, Interior, and Women’s Affairs of the Government of Cambodia, the private sector, unions, employers’ organizations and NGOs. It included a nation-wide campaign designed to encourage those involved in or working around the tourism sector to understand the risks facing young workers (and sometimes child labourers) in the sector and to promote ‘Child-safe tourism’.

It also included other elements, for example capacity building including the training of trainers, so that the programme would be sustainable and mainstreamed into the tourism sector. Practical tools in the form of a training manual, operational guidelines and strategy manuals were produced and

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<sup>5</sup> *Cambodia’s hotel and guesthouse workers – their recruitment, working conditions and vulnerabilities*, ILO-IPEC/TICW, Bangkok 2006.

mechanisms were put in place to translate the messages into practical action, for example the reporting of suspicious behaviour via a hotline run by the Ministry of Interior.

The outreach of the campaign and other actions was targeted through hotels and brothels, identified as workplaces where the risks of exploitation for children are highest. When the initial programme was over, TICW supported sharing of the results and materials with individual districts, so that the national effort could be reinforced and replicated at district level.

Indications are that the programme had considerable impact. For example, the hospitality sector is reported to be taking responsibility for this issue; there is improved coordination among the ministries involved; law enforcement has been enhanced and additionally more attention is paid to victim protection. It is a good example of how focusing on one potentially exploitative sector can bring clear results.

There were other elements of the Child-safe tourism initiative, including a successful component targeting children selling items on the beaches of Cambodia (see box).

### **Empowering children working as vendors on the beaches**

This was a component of the Child-safe tourism programme in Cambodia. Children working at the beach were trained on Child-safe tourism, how to access support and assistance, the risks of trafficking and other harms, and ways to protect themselves from coercion and exploitation.

Families and teachers were also involved, as a 'back-up' to the children. They learned about the risks confronting children, children's rights including the right to education, and interventions available to help with (re)integration into school.

Child vendors on the beach were reached through one-on-one advocacy and group awareness raising, and encouraged to share what they learned with other children. The awareness raising with this target group appeared to have a significant impact: the children said that they felt they had a better understanding of the potential risks and threats and, as a result of the training, many of them were seen to change their behaviour to better protect themselves. Children said, for example, that they alerted a friend when they were going to a remote part of the beach, and refused to accompany strangers to their hotel.

Focus groups with the child vendors elicited very specific responses on how they learned to protect themselves from the awareness raising they received, including statements that the children move

around the beach in groups rather than alone; don't trust people 'hastily'; and know that, if a customer says they have to fetch money from their hotel room, they should not accompany them.

The programme was also cost-effective: training materials from the centrally-based Child-Safe Tourism Commission were used as a basis for the awareness raising message, and initial funds went towards outreach and training of children who in turn 'spread the word' to other children who were not able to participate in the training. As with the Child-safe tourism programme overall, this intervention illustrates the importance of tight targeting of at-risk groups or situations and of tailoring interventions to reduce this risk.

### **Working with sex workers in brothels, beer promotion and karaoke workers in Sihanouk Ville**

Brothel-based sex workers and potential sex workers in the karaokes in Sihanouk Ville, Cambodia, were targeted through an innovative networking system of trained, brothel-/karaoke-based peer educators with close links to TICW's NGO partner and the local police.

This programme created a network on trafficking prevention in the entertainment sector: karaoke girls, sex workers and beer promotion girls. It included identifying 25 sex workers to train as peer educators who would spread the outreach with others in the workplace, awareness raising, advice, watchdog functions and other direct assistance from their work environment to 185 women and girls over a span of one year.

When a peer educator encountered a potential case of exploitation, such as establishments using very young sex workers or abusive practices, they would call the NGO partner, who in turn had a direct line to the Police Chief or Deputy Chief of the Sihanouk Ville Municipal Anti-Trafficking Unit. Peer educators met monthly with NGO staff and the Anti-Trafficking Unit to share information about trafficking cases, details on particular establishments, and trends such as debt bondage practices and the transfer of sex workers from one brothel to another. In addition to raising the awareness of young women and girls at risk of exploitation, the network also contributed to improving the law enforcement response to trafficking in the city.

This is a good example of how people working within potentially exploitative sectors can participate and be empowered to make a difference and contribute to preventing trafficking. The women who were themselves beneficiaries of the prevention programme were included in the design of the

programme, for example developing the workplan. They had input into procedures such as the selection criteria for the peer educators. The peer educators developed their own guidelines for networking and the transfer of knowledge through this programme was impressive because women were so closely engaged in it and empowered by it.

And the awareness-raising messages seem to have been accepted and acted on. The sex workers said that they had noted both behaviour and attitude changes, and attributed these to the TICW-led intervention. They reported that, if a client abuses them, they now call the police hotline or NGO, and all know the number; that they now know how to negotiate with the brothel owners about working conditions and terms of employment; that they now know how to negotiate with customers to protect themselves and have negotiated with the brothel owner to support them. In all these ways, the risk of exploitation in the place of work has been reduced.

### **Young women working in hotels and restaurants in Sihanouk Ville**

This was also part of the Child-safe tourism project. Young women working in hotels, guesthouses, and restaurants, as well as employers and business owners, were targeted in efforts to improve safety in the tourism sector in Sihanouk Ville. The sector was well targeted, with many reports of substandard working conditions. Many of the bigger hotels already had workplace regulations resulting from standards imposed by foreign investors before TICW's intervention, nevertheless TICW was able to reinforce the solidarity built among 'better' employers in the tourism sector, and this can be leveraged in the future to apply pressure to more exploitative establishments.

### **Women's homes in Yunnan Province, China**

TICW's first involvement with women's homes in Yunnan Province, China, dates to 2001, when 53 homes were established as venues for sharing information in 12 villages in Jiangcheng and Menghai Counties in Simao and Xishangbanna Prefectures. The villages had all been identified as being points of origin of women trafficked mostly internally in China. The concept was extended to Kunming City, a major destination point of women moving for work and 23 more women's homes were set.

***One interesting aspect of this programme is that it targeted women considered to be at risk of exploitation (not necessarily trafficking) because of their migrant status and lack of understanding of their rights. This is a new approach because most actions of this nature have traditionally been directed only at trafficking victims.***

The homes essentially provided a focal point where women could be targeted with a range of actions designed to reduce the likelihood of their being trafficked (source-side) or exploited (destination-side). These include capacity building for the women on trafficking, legal literacy and self-protection.

It also opened up avenues for safe employment information from the Yunnan Provincial Labour Department. The homes also offered a safe venue for meetings, especially for ethnic minority women. In many villages, the homes became an important hub for other activities, including skills development, cultural activities and entertainment.

The buildings used for the homes were made available by the Village Committees. The Agriculture and Justice Bureaux provided materials for the library and the local All China Women's Federation provided additional materials and ran the homes. TICW provided audio-visual equipment and developed videos and DVDs with information on safe migration and work.

Twenty-one of the homes continued to function after TICW funding ended, illustrating their perceived value and their sustainability. One interesting aspect of this programme is that it targeted women considered to be at risk of exploitation (not necessarily trafficking) because of their migrant status and lack of understanding of their rights. This is a new approach because most actions of this nature have traditionally been directed only at trafficking victims. TICW's emphasis on destination-side prevention, rather than rehabilitation, is an important step forward – in general agencies implementing programmes at the 'end' of the trafficking chain have tended to focus on 'victims' and their needs. The reality is that there is still prevention work that can be undertaken at destination.

### **Working with employers' organizations to tackle exploitation**

Employers are a vital partner in destination-side anti-trafficking work. In Viet Nam, TICW worked with the Viet Nam Chamber for Commerce and Industry (VCCI) to first organize a panel discussion with employers, focusing on internal labour migration and young people.

The participants came from key sectors in Ho Chi Minh City -- the garment, footwear, handicraft and food processing industries -- that attract the majority of young migrant workers. The panel discussion was a first attempt to involve the VCCI in anti-trafficking work and it demonstrated that there is a high level of readiness within the VCCI and its members to cooperate.

As a result of the meeting, a follow-up action programme was designed that included training for a core group of eight VCCI staff and 12 participants from business associations and businesswomen's clubs in Quang Ninh, Thanh Hoa and Ho Chi Minh City on recruitment and hiring practices for women migrants. The programme also involved building the capacity of some 120 representatives from VCCI, members of business associations, selected enterprises and labour recruitment centres in Ho Chi Minh City to help them to address and respond to likely cases of trafficking and exploitation. At community level, these 120 representatives were expected to become secondary trainers, first among their own enterprises and then others, to promote awareness on preventing trafficking (using

the Travel Smart – Work Smart framework) and good practices in recruitment and hiring practices for women migrants.

This is a good example of how employers' organizations can be directly involved in anti-trafficking efforts at destination side.

### **'PACKAGED PROGRAMMING' – HOLISTIC APPROACHES AT BOTH SOURCE AND DESTINATION**

TICW has experimented with new approaches, particularly emphasizing prevention of trafficking/exploitation at destination, so it is imperative to bear in mind the need to minimize risk for those the project is trying to help. For example, helping to increase people's income through micro-finance interventions can fuel their desire to seek a better life elsewhere and so increase their vulnerability to unscrupulous recruitment or unsafe migration, but this kind of intervention is frequently programmed without any attention being paid to the possibility of increased risk.

The key to minimizing risk is to 'package' interventions like micro-finance in a combination of actions that counter-balance any negative outcomes, for example, a package that includes beneficiary targeting through vulnerability mapping with micro-credit actions for that group of beneficiaries accompanied by awareness raising to help them understand both risks and safe alternatives, plus community watch/alert schemes.

***The key to minimizing risk is to 'package' interventions like micro-finance in a combination of actions that counter-balance any negative outcomes.***

Most packages would include as a minimum capacity building, awareness raising and vocational training, with micro-finance or income generation actions being used as a channel for reaching out to people, drawing them in and keeping them interested. No TICW projects used income generation as a stand-alone intervention. It is important to note, in any case, that income generation and micro-finance programmes are not anti-trafficking actions (although they are often presented that way) but are more correctly poverty-reduction initiatives.

TICW has also promoted holistic approaches to anti-trafficking efforts by programming at each step of the trafficking chain: source, movement and destination. TICW cannot be everywhere, of course, so the project has emphasized strategic partnerships with government, labour partners, NGOs and others, including beneficiaries themselves. Additionally, TICW has contributed where relevant to the development of multi-sectoral collaborative frameworks, such as National Plans of Action, which

provide a 'blueprint' for different anti-trafficking actors, and encourage better coordination and cooperation.

'Packages', then, can mean three separate things:

- Combinations of programmes that work together to minimize the risk to beneficiaries that might arise as their circumstances change;
- Holistic approaches that consider the trafficking phenomenon as a series of linked events, all of which require different but simultaneous response;
- Comprehensive planning, processes and partnerships that reflect the multi-faceted nature of the anti-trafficking response and the multi-disciplinary approach to effective action.

TICW worked only in selected geographical areas, chosen because research indicated that they were areas where people were particularly at risk. Clearly TICW could not be everywhere. This is recognized and it is noted that, where coverage is not comprehensive, there is always a possibility of 'displacement and replacement' (also called 'push down/pop up') – so that protecting one group of at-risk people may mean that the problem moves on and another group's risk level is raised. This is why TICW has stressed the importance of identifying initiatives that work and moving to mainstream them and spread them beyond the area where they were tried out.

### ***Examples***

#### **Integrated planning at provincial level**

from the beginning, TICW paid particular attention to establishing and strengthening networks and committees from central to village levels, for example in four provinces of Cambodia, aimed at coordinated actions against trafficking and creating provincial plans. The Child Protection Committees set up in the first years of the project were later expanded into seven provinces.

At provincial level, the Child Protection Committee includes government representatives and NGOs. It was instrumental in developing the implementation plan for the Child-safe tourism actions and is credited with having strengthened coordination and cooperation at all levels: provincial, municipal and commune. The network is active in referring individual trafficking cases to the police, and so also has a direct anti-trafficking output.

TICW also supported integrated planning processes at provincial and local levels in Viet Nam, holistic plans in Lao PDR and provincial plans in Prey Veng and Sihanouk Ville in Cambodia.

## **Keeping the balance and focus in packaged programming**

An important lesson on implementing the ‘package’ approach came from TICW’s project experience in Lao PDR. It became obvious as the multi-component package was implemented there that it is easy for the balance to tip towards the micro-finance element and for the awareness raising and other elements to become one-off events rather than integrated components of the package.

The Lao PDR package included Village Development Funds (VDFs), awareness raising, vocational training and job creation. An external impact assessment exercise noted that TICW was “leading the way in promoting VDFs as a community-building tool that paves the way for an improved economic situation for many communities”. The model was picked up by the government, however it began to lose its ‘anti-trafficking’ focus and become a simple poverty-reduction/community-building exercise; this is always a risk and it is difficult to counter this once government has stepped in. It is consequently vital to share lessons on the importance of the ‘package’ approach and to plan the various elements of the package so that one element – usually the one that is easiest to ‘sell’ and implement – does not predominate.

This lesson arose again when the holistic planning initiative was undertaken in Yunnan Province, China. Here, the comprehensive package of micro-finance, education, agriculture, labour migration, gender equality and safe migration interventions continued after TICW support had ended, but the package tended to lose its ‘anti-trafficking’ focus.

## **Taking a multi-disciplinary approach to local initiatives**

In Phayao, Thailand, TICW helped to establish province-level mechanisms to analyze and address human trafficking in a comprehensive way and to mainstream anti-trafficking objectives into the Phayao local government agenda. The Ministry of Labour reported that TICW’s contribution also provided conceptual understanding and skills, and that the government was also encouraged to work more systematically with NGOs.

In Lao PDR, TICW worked with the Child Labour and Child Trafficking Office (CLCTO) of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, to improve the capacity of local bodies in project management, monitoring and reporting skills and coordination mechanisms. The Ministerial Steering Committee (MSC) provided advice and guidance to the CLCTO and endorsed completed research on child domestic labour, child labour in brick-making factories and the service sector.



Subsequently, the CLCTO became the centre for coordination and information sharing on child labour and human trafficking, and an active member of the COMMIT Taskforce and of the drafting committee for the National Plan of Action on Human Trafficking (see box).

### ***Phayao multidisciplinary teams***

The landmark Memorandum of Understanding that the nine northern provinces of Thailand adopted in 2003 required concerted action to help trafficking victims. It also required each province to set up a coordination mechanism for developing and implementing policies, plans and prevention activities.

With the provincial governor leading the way and with support from TICW, Phayao province, which is a major source and transit place for girls and women into prostitution domestically and cross-border, developed a six-part action plan to implement the MoU: prevention, suppression and law enforcement, victim rescue and protection, rehabilitation, system management, and policy development. Teams, or subcommittees, were set up to oversee the rescue of children and women, legal issues, rehabilitation, coordination, policy making and the collecting, analysing and distribution of information/data. An operation centre to help victims of trafficking was established.

The governor chairs the centre and the provincial Social Development and Welfare Office acts as its secretariat. All key provincial government offices, including the provincial education office, health office, labour office, and statistics office are also involved. Members of the police and the provincial attorney's office as well as local NGOs also cooperate with the centre.

Government officials in the province decided to go beyond what their neighbours who signed the MoU were doing. They set up counterpart centres in nine districts. These District Operating Centres (DOCs) are the focal points for cooperation between different government departments and others from the provincial to the district level. The DOCs receive and act on calls for assistance; they conduct investigations, provide physical, emotional and social rehabilitation services for trafficked children and women, their family and community, and return them, if safe, to their home. The DOCs also coordinate multi-sector collaboration with all relevant parties, report outcomes of action to the provincial operating centre, and establish and appoint working groups or individuals to focus on protecting children's and women's rights.

The involvement of different levels of government has improved communication, coordination, referral and other actions to protect victims of trafficking. The various organizations, agencies and departments involved in overseeing the DOCs have improved anti-trafficking efforts, with each representative bringing individual strengths and contacts to the group. Three hundred and six community watchdog volunteers in 124 villages have been trained. The volunteers have surveyed

their district and compiled a list of all children with notes on their economic and social welfare situation. Efforts have been made to address citizenship issues for young people who have foreign fathers and Thai mothers. It is crucial support because those without citizenship are highly likely to migrate and to be vulnerable to trafficking.

## **FOCUS ON PROCESS AND PARTNERSHIPS TO REINFORCE ACTIONS**

From the outset, TICW emphasized the importance of process and partnerships, aiming to achieve these just as much as concrete results/output. Developing and reinforcing usable, acceptable processes and building the partnerships necessary to carry them on is crucial to ensuring mainstreaming, increased coverage and sustainability. The experience has not always been positive – some processes have proved not to be user-friendly (sometimes perhaps because of translation problems) and need to be revisited (for example the Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation process, which is reported as being too complicated for all user groups), but the theory has shown to be right.

Building partnerships around joint processes is also important for reinforcing other non-TICW ILO initiatives in a given place, for example processes relating to the development and implementation of Time-Bound Programmes, Decent Work initiatives and Child Labour work in general. The same actors will be involved, and it is worth noting that the most important and influential of these actors – Ministries of Labour, employers and workers' organizations – are not always engaged in initiatives for children, or with NGOs or others who focus solely on children's rights and welfare rather than labour.

TICW has worked closely with provincial and local-level government departments, as well as contributing to implementation of the Memorandum of Understandings on cross-border employment and trafficking between Thailand and Lao PDR, and between Thailand and Cambodia, and to COMMIT.

In relation to this TICW experience, the specific actions that have been undertaken are not as important as the overall approach. What TICW has contributed is improved capacity, ways of doing things and working systems. Often these may not seem important, but here again TICW seems to have set a path that others are now travelling down – testament to the effectiveness of the approach.

## ***Examples***

### **Building partnerships through technical support**

TICW worked to support provincial authorities in Yunnan, China, to make trafficking prevention mechanisms, systems and approaches a mainstream element of the government's work. This resulted in more help and greater cooperation in preventing trafficking in and among several branches of provincial government.

The project also gave much needed support to the Child Labour and Child Trafficking Office in Lao PDR and the Ministry of Labour and was an important partner in developing new legislation, including on trafficking. TICW also worked with the Lao PDR National Committee for Human Trafficking and contributed to the National Plan of Action on Human Trafficking.

In Cambodia, TICW supported the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, and in China the Department of Labour, where it helped develop legal labour migration guidelines and Provincial Project Steering Committee policy papers on human trafficking and combating it at local level. These were later adopted by the Chinese Government and issued formally by party leaders across Yunnan Province.

### ***The Chiang Mai Coordination Centre for the Protection of Children's and Women's Rights and its alliance-building project***

When the Chiang Mai Coordination Centre for the Protection of Children's and Women's Rights opened in 2004, it included among its activities plans to identify business owners and entrepreneurs who violate labour laws through their involvement in trafficking. They also recognized that they could bring in reputable employers and business owners as allies in efforts to combat the problem.

With support from TICW, the Centre first approached the Office of Welfare and Labour Protection to identify 'good' business owners and employers. These were people who were known to abide by the labour laws, were properly registered and regularly provided training to their employees on labour laws and labour welfare.

They then sought out business owners and employers to help develop appropriate media for campaigning and to raise awareness among employers on trafficking and exploitation. They aimed to create materials that were relevant and responsive, that used the same language as the targeted business owners, employers and their customers.

Having established a working relationship, the Centre staff then asked the employer partners to help collect data on the demand for labour, conditions of work and living conditions (where they existed) within the workplace as well as information on ethnicity and the social/economic and health situation of employees. This information was fed into the trafficking database.

To further groom employers (both those considered ‘good’ and ‘shady’), Centre staff ran a one-day seminar for 63 business owners and employers to help them learn more about trafficking and exploitation, labour laws, human rights and children’s rights.

The ultimate aim was to encourage them to work with the Centre in identifying and preventing cases of trafficking. This included changing customers’ (and employees’) attitudes and behaviours regarding the sexual exploitation of children and forced labour.

At the end of the seminar, participants were asked to sign a commitment that reads, “We will cooperate in human trafficking prevention and surveillance in our business and will participate in the network and we will release and reveal all the media and publications related to anti-trafficking issue to our personnel and customers.” Forty-seven of them signed and, since the seminar, there has been a notable increase in notifications to the Centre of possible cases of trafficking.

The Coordination Centre awards (with accompanying media attention) business owners who have taken the anti-trafficking issue seriously. Three had been recognized by mid-2008: Novotel Hotel, Central Daungtawan Hotel and Princess Food Company, Ltd.

### **Engaging the media as partners**

In Lao PDR, TICW worked with UNIAP and Save the Children to engage the media as partners in efforts to combat human trafficking. The important element of these efforts was looking upon the media as partners, rather than just an outlet for information, as is so often the case.

This approach recognizes the way the media works, the importance to professionals of editorial independence and non-partisan reporting, and the reluctance of most media organizations to see themselves as ‘outlets’ for other organization’s information or campaigns. Engaging the media as partners builds a partnership of trust based on the sharing of reliable information and skills. It often begins with capacity building on an issue that the media report on but may not have detailed understanding of, and often results additionally in an ongoing relationship that gives

***Engaging the media as partners builds a partnership of trust based on the sharing of reliable information and skills.***

the anti-trafficking organization ‘trusted source’ status and so the ability to get messages out more readily through media partners.

The TICW/UNIAP/Save actions resulted in better media understanding of the issues and increased media coverage of anti-trafficking messages. Media training by TICW and partners in Thailand had similarly positive results.

## **BEYOND PARTICIPATION TO MOBILIZATION AND EMPOWERMENT**

Participation is often described as ‘giving women and children a voice’, but in fact this undersells the results of good participation actions. TICW’s work in this area has gone beyond simple participation and is a good example of mobilization, engagement and empowerment. This is because of the processes involved, which in many cases have included capacity building and training, shifting the leadership of the action from TICW to the partner organizations involved and empowering the women’s organizations to become stronger anti-trafficking

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In the case of the Mekong Youth Forum, TICW and its partner, Save the Children UK, took the process beyond child participation to real empowerment of the young people involved. The mobilization and empowerment of these young people is an important achievement in moving towards sustainable action.

This is an important outcome of TICW. Too often ‘participation’ means just inviting people to join in for a short time and then abandoning them. TICW has tried hard to build processes with and around people, so that they are integral to what is happening.

### ***Examples:***

#### **The Mekong Youth Forum**

In partnership with Save the Children UK, TICW brought together a group of 400 young people in preparation for the initial ministerial meeting that established the COMMIT (Coordinated Mekong

Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking) process. The children and young people met in five national provincial children's forums – in Cambodia, Yunnan and Guangxi Provinces of China, Lao PDR, the far northern provinces of Thailand and Viet Nam. Even more children were involved in the preparations for these national meetings.

Most of the children came from communities affected by trafficking. They included stateless children, children from minorities and some children who had themselves experienced trafficking or labour exploitation. In each national event, the children met with senior representatives of their governments and presented an anti-trafficking agenda for action.

Then, in October 2004, delegates elected by the children travelled to Bangkok for a subregional meeting and there drafted a set of Mekong Children's Recommendations on Human Trafficking. These were transmitted to the Yangon, Myanmar, meeting of ministers from the subregion later that month, as they came together to sign the Memorandum of Understanding on trafficking known as COMMIT. Officials of all six governments signing the Memorandum took time out to listen to the recommendations the Youth Forum had drafted

The youth delegates left the subregional meeting hopeful and enthusiastic, committed to following up their work in their home countries. In concrete terms, though, the success of the Forum could only be measured by the extent to which the COMMIT process itself integrated the Forum recommendations and representation. To date, signs are good, although more tangible at national rather than regional level. The Forum is reported to be likely to be sustainable after the end of TICW/Save support, with continued consultation with children at provincial and national levels, because there is support from government and NGOs.

A number of the young people mobilized for the Forum continue to be very active in national Save the Children and ILO programmes. This is an important step in preparing young people to work for their own rights and those of their peers and in influencing policy in the long term. And in a second stage in the subregional process, UNIAP and World Vision International joined TICW and Save the Children UK to support a second Mekong Youth Forum in September 2007. This was intended to provide a venue for children to make their views on trafficking known, to demonstrate the value of participatory approaches in finding sustainable solutions to trafficking, and also to review recent policies and programmes against trafficking at the subregional level. Again, there were preparatory meetings in the six COMMIT countries, and this time the National COMMIT Task Force in each country participated. Again also, the government officials meeting to review the COMMIT process

joined the young people to discuss their approaches and recommendations before taking these to the fifth COMMIT senior officials' meeting in Beijing in December 2007.

In terms of government response, there are indications that the Mekong Youth Forum is having an effect and that the children are being heard. For example: the Royal Thai Government expressed interest in incorporating the children's recommendations into their national agenda; at the COMMIT Senior Officials Meeting, the Lao Government acknowledged the Children's Forum, children's participation and their desire to participate; in the national forum in Cambodia in 2004, the Royal Cambodian Government pledged that the children's recommendations would be included in their National Plan of Action against trafficking; China committed to holding a nationwide children's forum on trafficking, whereas in the past they have only agreed to provincial forums; and at the COMMIT Senior Officials Meeting in December 2007, the Forum was granted 30 minutes on the agenda.

It is also reported that the very act of 'priming' adult interlocutors to know how to interact with children was a positive step forward in mainstreaming children's views in national policy. It is important to be clear that at this stage the main impact is on the people involved – children and adults, at different levels – rather than on policy itself.

### **Mobilization of women's groups in the region**

TICW's aim to go beyond participation and move to mobilization, engagement and empowerment is well illustrated through the participation initiatives it has developed with women's organizations in the subregion. These include the All China Women's Federation, the Lao Women's Federation and the Viet Nam Women's Union. Through their partnerships with TICW, these groups have been more involved at local levels, and this in turn has increased their influence at the national level on human trafficking.

### **BUILDING THE KNOWLEDGE BASE TO TARGET INTERVENTIONS MORE EFFECTIVELY**

Perhaps because research is done by researchers and programmes are implemented by implementing agencies, there is often a gap between the knowledge that becomes available and the impact it has on action. Lessons from TICW showed clearly that it is important not only to

***It is important not only to build a solid knowledge base but to design research projects in such a way that they can be used to develop plans for action.***

build a solid knowledge base but to design research projects in such a way that they can be used to develop plans for action. TICW therefore had built into its research activities that would help to underpin the development of action programmes linked to the labour migration paradigm and focusing on prevention and on destination-side interventions.

Examples of such research are the Mekong Challenge series outlined earlier in this document and research undertaken by Mahidol University, Thailand, on the exploitation of migrant workers in selected sectors in Thailand and FTUB research on child labour and trafficking in Mae Sot. In both of these studies, the research focused on the child or migrant worker at destination and pointed to actions that could be undertaken at destination not to ‘rehabilitate’ or ‘return’ the children/workers but to prevent exploitation and protect the migrant – child or adult – from falling victim to exploitation.

At a programming level, a number of knowledge-based actions were also undertaken: the Chiang Mai database and baseline surveys at local level already described are examples of these practical information outputs. The important thing to note is that TICW did not attempt to generate knowledge for the sake of knowledge but to use research and information-centred actions either to further understanding that would feed directly into programme development, or provide tools for those implementing action programmes.

This is an important message, since too often research and publications are produced as stand-alone outputs with no obvious ‘life’ beyond dissemination. It is this ‘information as a basis for action’ approach that differentiates TICW’s knowledge products from so many other such outputs.



## CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF MAJOR LESSONS

Over eight years of project experience, TICW has learned many lessons about what to do to combat trafficking, how to do it, and why. Many of these have been documented over the years and can be accessed through the TICW website: [www.childtrafficking.net](http://www.childtrafficking.net) or [www.ilo.org/asia/child/trafficking](http://www.ilo.org/asia/child/trafficking)).

What follows is a lessons-focused summary of the highlights described in this publication, presented as Questions and Answers:

*Related to the articulation of human trafficking within the labour exploitation/migration framework:*

### **1. What is human trafficking and what has it got to do with labour?**

Labour exploitation that includes movement within a country or across borders is considered to be human trafficking when it involves a person below the age of 18 or, in the case of an adult, when it has involved coercion or deception. Human trafficking is therefore fundamentally ‘labour exploitation into which people have (been) moved’.

### **2. Isn’t the easiest thing just to stop people moving to find work?**

No. That may sound easy but movement for work – called ‘labour migration’ -- is a fundamental right, and it has to be protected. The key to combating human trafficking lies in making sure that, when people seek to move for work, they can do so safely and within the law. This means eliminating ‘unsafe movement’ and ‘labour exploitation’. This is true regardless of where the exploitation takes place, and it encompasses sexual exploitation as well as formal and informal work sectors.

It is vital to keep a balance between eliminating unsafe migration and upholding the right to regular migration. In fact, promoting responsible approaches to regular migration – including regulating legal migration channels so that they are open and accessible to those seeking legitimately to move – is an important contribution to eliminating human trafficking. Promoting ‘safe migration’ among those who are extremely likely to seek to move for work is in itself a (trafficking) risk-reduction strategy.

### **3. Is that why TICW has developed programming ‘within a migration framework’?**

Yes. TICW was the first project to do that and remains one of the few initiatives that makes a clear programming link between migration and trafficking. Not only does it make good programming sense, articulating human trafficking as a function of labour migration/exploitation

equips governments and other anti-trafficking actors with a much wider battery of instruments and mechanisms they can use in efforts to eliminate trafficking. These include international, regional and national labour laws and mechanisms such as labour inspections, Decent Work agendas, child labour frameworks such as Time-Bound Programmes and National Plans of Action, laws and processes focusing on social development such as the Millennium Development Goals, as well as more general tools such as human rights instruments, police and migration procedures, national plans for children and gender-specific anti-violence measures.

The labour migration/exploitation approach to anti-trafficking efforts also facilitates the engagement of workers' and employers' organizations in actions that are labour-specific. This uses the specific strengths of labour-sector actors and promotes actions that are complementary to (rather than repetitive of) the efforts of other anti-trafficking actors, including NGOs, international agencies and governments, as well as communities, families, children and young people.

*Relating to the impact of this articulation of trafficking on anti-trafficking programming:*

#### **4. What does the 'migration framework' mean in terms of programming?**

Understanding human trafficking as the 'flip side' of safe labour migration leads to an increased focus on destination-side prevention efforts, since it is the exploitation outcomes of movement that transform labour migration into trafficking. This is a fundamentally new element of anti-trafficking programming, which has hitherto largely considered prevention as a source-side action only, and destination-side actions as being 'after the fact' and focused on reintegration and rehabilitation of victims.

Breaking the mould by looking at the 'end' of movement as a legitimate place for prevention activities means that we must review our understanding of the factors at play in human trafficking and, in particular, at the destination-side factors that contribute to it. After years of vague and undefined notions of 'demand', this is a break-through in understanding exploitation and the people and mechanisms that cause it to happen.

#### **5. What does 'destination-side prevention' mean for governments and national actors?**

The focus on destination-side programming mobilizes governments in so-called 'receiving' countries or areas in a tangible, positive way. Instead of focusing on 'destination' as 'too late' to act, it emphasizes the important role that governments and others, like national NGOs, employers and workers' organizations, can play in combating human trafficking that occurs in their countries, rather than simply to their citizens 'elsewhere'. This is particularly important

when we consider that much human trafficking occurs within national borders (domestic trafficking, as opposed to cross-border).

**6. So should we concentrate on programmes in destination countries, rather than in places from which people migrate or are trafficked?**

No. It is important to have programmes at every possible point on the migration or trafficking chain: in source countries, along migration routes and in places of destination. The focus should be on prevention, so that would-be migrants, people who are in the process of migrating and those who have arrived all are protected from falling victim to trafficking. What TICW has shown quite clearly is that destination-side programming is not just ‘rehabilitation and reintegration’ – the most common destination-side programme choice – but prevention and protection, focusing on ensuring that people do not become trafficking victims, rather than just helping them when it is already too late.

**7. So are all programmes run in destination countries anti-trafficking actions?**

No. Whether prevention is undertaken at source or destination, it is vital to understand that some actions may be good poverty-reduction measures or contribute to social development goals in general but that they may not necessarily have an impact on trafficking. To have an impact on trafficking, prevention measures must target, at both source and destination, those who are most likely to become trafficking victims. This can only be done by identifying people who are particularly at risk – vulnerable – to falling into the hands of traffickers or finding themselves in exploitative work. Contrary to what people commonly think, this does not usually include the poorest people, since they do not have the means to seek to move. It often involves young people, especially those who have had some education, or people of all ages who have aspirations for a better life.

*Relating to TICW field experience/programming:*

**8. How can we know who these people at risk are?**

TICW’s experience has included developing databases with confidential information on people who, for one reason or another, are vulnerable to exploitation and/or trafficking. Vulnerability depends on a number of things – age, sex, family circumstances, level of education, a sudden problem in the family, for example – and it is important to keep track of these vulnerability factors over time. For maximum impact, it is important to target prevention programming at those who are most likely to fall into the hands of traffickers (including those who exploit the labour at destination). Often the best people to do this are members of the community who have been trained to see the warning signs, and TICW has run programmes to set up

community watch schemes and to mobilize local authorities and groups to organize this kind of action in the community.

**9. What about prevention programming in countries of destination?**

Programmes are also most likely to have an immediate impact on trafficking if they target the labour sectors where exploitation is known or is most likely to occur. This includes hidden or informal sectors outside the regular labour market, like street trades, domestic work and in many countries the sex sector. Within the regular labour market, particularly in sectors like tourism and hospitality, entertainment sectors, manufacturing and agriculture, workers' organizations, employers and labour inspectors are ideally placed to help identify potentially exploitative workplaces and to support those workplaces that are working to ensure labour rights for national and migrant workers.

**10. Do people often fall victim to trafficking because they have financial problems? Are micro-finance and income-generation projects the best way to reduce their vulnerability?**

Not necessarily, at least not as stand-alone projects. People whose financial situation improves may be prompted to use that new income to move to find better work or living conditions, and this can increase the risk that they will fall prey to recruiters or traffickers. It is important that, alongside the income-raising project, they also have access to better information, safe migration initiatives, legal recruitment information and schemes and other elements of programming that ensure that, if they do decide to migrate, they do so safely, into safe work. One of TICW's most important lessons is that it is vital to recognize the complexity and continuum of vulnerability and trafficking by packaging responses for any individual or target group. For example, packaging income generation programmes with awareness raising about safe migration reduces the risk that someone whose income has improved will enter unsafe migration and fall victim to traffickers.

**11. So which is more important: running projects in the countries and areas that people migrate from, or the countries or areas that they migrate to?**

What is important is at all times to take account of all the components of the migration or trafficking chain, including source, recruitment, movement and destination. Migration and trafficking are both series of linked events, all of which require different but simultaneous responses. This means that coordinated plans of action that use the specific strengths of different anti-trafficking actors in each of these areas are most likely to have a positive outcome. It also means that, where a government in a source country is working to prevent trafficking at source, and a government in a destination country is working to prevent trafficking and

exploitation at destination, people will be able to migrate safely and work without being exploited.

**12. Are governments mainly responsible for acting against trafficking?**

Of course governments have the prime responsibility to prevent trafficking and to protect people. They have signed international and in many cases regional commitments saying they will do that. They also have a responsibility to help people to migrate freely and to enjoy their rights as workers. They've signed agreements on that, too. Local and national processes are a key to success and sustainability, and investing time and resources in this area is a key component of impact, even if it is not directly measurable. But many other actors have a role to play in preventing trafficking and protecting those who may be at risk: workers' organizations, employers, non-governmental organizations, local communities, law enforcement officials and others have all been mobilized in TICW activities at local and national levels. Comprehensive partnerships reflect the multi-faceted nature of the anti-trafficking response and the multi-disciplinary approach to effective action.

**13. What do we mean when we talk about helping people to 'participate' in anti-trafficking work?**

TICW has, from the beginning, worked very closely with local communities and supported them to improve their own capacity for monitoring risks, identifying problems and acting quickly to intervene. TICW has also run some special actions to involve children in its work, since they often are overlooked when communities have a chance to participate. 'Participation' has to go beyond just 'giving a voice' and result in tangible mobilization and empowerment, since this is the best way to ensure mainstreaming and sustainability of ground-level actions.

**14. Some anti-trafficking actions include information and awareness raising. What has TICW learned about these?**

Awareness-raising projects are rarely measurable and only likely to have an impact to the extent that they are appropriately targeted, based on accurate and meaningful messages, and respectful of the best interests of beneficiaries. Otherwise they are no more than clever words or pretty posters.

As for research and data gathering: knowledge is not an end in itself but should be gathered as a basis for action. No anti-trafficking initiatives should be embarked on without a sound understanding of the nature of the problem being addressed and the impact of any action on the intended beneficiaries.

**15. TICW cannot be everywhere and has to choose which areas it will work in. What does that mean for people in other areas?**

It is important to recognize that geographical targeting and even targeting vulnerability opens up the potential of ‘displacement and replacement’ or ‘push down/pop up’, that is, that preventing trafficking in one place or protecting one group of vulnerable people may displace the risk to another area or another group. It is vital to remain alert to this at all times. The best interests of the child as well as the human rights of all beneficiaries and others who may be affected by programming must remain not only a principle of all actions but an active benchmark of ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

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<sup>i</sup> Although efforts continue to find ways to model reliable estimates of the numbers of people who are trafficked (notably the competitive process to develop measurement methodologies launched under the UNIAP SIREN project: [www.no-trafficking.org](http://www.no-trafficking.org)), it is still impossible to give reliable figures at this time. The ILO estimates that there are 6.6 million children in unconditional worst forms of child labour in the Asia-Pacific region, a category that includes children in exploitative labour as a result of being trafficked, but this of course takes no account of women trafficked from, around and through the region.

<sup>ii</sup> *Labour migration and trafficking within the GMS (TIA-1)*, ILO-IPEC/TICW, Bangkok 2002.

<sup>iii</sup> *Preliminary assessment on trafficking of children and women for labour exploitation in Lao PDR*, ILO-IPEC/TICW, Bangkok 2001.

<sup>iv</sup> *Preliminary assessment of illegal labour migration and trafficking in children and women for labour exploitation*, ILO-IPEC/TICW and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Bangkok 2003.

<sup>v</sup> M. Stewart: *National situation analysis on trafficking of children and women in Thailand*, ILO-IPEC, Bangkok October 2000.

<sup>vi</sup> T. Caouette: *Needs assessment on cross-border trafficking in women and children in the Mekong Subregion*, UN Working Group on Trafficking, Bangkok 1998.

<sup>vii</sup> *Situation of trafficking in children and women in Yunnan Province, China: A rapid assessment*, ILO-IPEC, Bangkok, August 2002.

<sup>viii</sup> Julia O’Connell Davidson: *Commercial sexual exploitation of children in China*, Save the Children, London 2001.