

## Models from northern Thailand on trafficking prevention through economic and social empowerment



### **CALCULATING THE RISKS**

**How a database helps protect children and women**

**THE GOOD PRACTICE:** Creating a standardized database that is fed and used by many collaborating organizations and agencies and that spotlights communities, individuals and workplaces vulnerable to human trafficking, provides information on trafficking cases, stores good practices and maps partners and their programmes.

## **The Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and Phayao coordination centres for protecting children's and women's rights and their knowledge-management project**

**THE INITIAL CHALLENGE:** Developing a good knowledge base was among the several aims of the unique 2003 memorandum of understanding to deal with the trafficking in women and children that nine northern provincial governments adopted. As their mutual agreement linked them in a commitment to work together, the need to use standardized systems became an imperative.

But as the difficult problem of human trafficking constantly changes dynamics, there is also an urgent need for more sophisticated management of information.

**THE RESPONSE:** With support from the International Labour Organization and its Mekong project to combat trafficking in children and women (ILO/TICW), the Chiang Mai Coordination Centre for the Protection of Children's and Women's Rights (under the Social Development and Human Security Office) commissioned a consultant team from nearby Chiang Mai University to design a computer program to create a human trafficking database. In the process, they created a "risk index" that points to persons highly vulnerable to human trafficking. That same program also pinpoints destination sites where people have ended up in exploitative establishments.

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

The database consists of four subdatabases:

- 1) Risk index. 28 indicators of vulnerability have been identified, and these are scored from 1 to 3 (most risky). Based on these indicators, the database will show communities and even individuals who are most vulnerable to trafficking by using secondary information (health, education, basic minimum needs, social welfare details, etc.).

Reports on the situation of risky individuals is then displayed under various classifications: age, sex, home town, subdistrict and districts across a province. Numbers of individuals at risk also can be displayed in maps, with red representing high risk, yellow for medium and green for low risk.

- 2) Sin space. This data integrates primary and secondary information on workplaces vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation. The information is produced into high-resolution satellite imaging maps displaying "risky" places. It can be used for surveillance and interception purposes.

- 3) Network. This set consists of the multidisciplinary team members who respond to suspected cases of human trafficking and 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, address and description of expertise. It includes a breakdown of groups, areas, mandates, specializations and limitations.
- 4) Lessons learned. The multidisciplinary team members have talked with rescued and other victims of human trafficking for details on where they were trafficked from and to and how they were tricked and exploited. These cases offer considerable insight on the trafficking process, such as characteristics of victims, trafficking processes, traffickers and defenders and the rehabilitation details of victims. The program then analyses this information, which can be useful for reports to better inform strategies and actions to combat the trafficking problem, intercept and help victims and support cases to move more efficiently through the legal system.

**THE PROCESS:** A professor from Chiang Mai University specializing in children's rights and human trafficking as well as database systems, worked with three provincial management teams (Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and Phayao) to identify the content: data standards and criteria. Each management team consists of 30 data specialists from many sectors around the province involved in anti-trafficking efforts. It was during this part of the process that the professor then conceived the idea of the risk index that pinpoints vulnerable people.

Meanwhile, each province sent 100 data collectors (i.e. volunteers and local government officers) with surveys to acquire primary data. Although the data collectors received a one-day training, their efforts fell short (producing only 5,000 samples), with much of the information unusable.

When the professor recognized that secondary data would be sufficient, he then contracted with programmers from a private company to create the database system. In Chiang Mai, for example, they accessed some 1.8 million health department files, 215,000 education department files, 22,000 human security department files and 242,000 family welfare files to establish what might be the first-ever human trafficking database.

The secondary data has been integrated, analysed, evaluated and reported via Intranet and Internet to network organizations. The database is a tool to help organizations (government and non-government and project partners) realize better planning and thus more efficient responses. The system also stores and manages data on the demand side of the trafficking issue to provide insight on the needs of establishment owners, customers and clients; this data is acquired through survey research as well as multidisciplinary team interviews with rescued victims. The provincial management team also gathers information from the supply side to identify groups and individuals at risk by looking at their socio-economic and family situation, schooling status and any social problems.

The Chiang Mai University professor worked one-on-one with each provincial management team to provide technical support on how to verify data then compile, classify, analyse the information into the standardized system and then transform it into IS, DSS and GISS presentations.

A government staff person (within the Coordination Centre or Operation Centre, depending on what the anti-trafficking unit is called in each province) updates the database on a yearly basis.

**OUTCOMES:**

- ◆ A standardized human trafficking database in the three provinces of Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and Phayao that can be used as a “starter” by any organization or agency and can be adapted to individual needs.
- ◆ Operating manual for using and managing the database.

Information within the database can be used by the provincial management team and collaborating agencies/organizations to identify and analyse problems and to guide them in planning both short-term and long-term prevention activities. It can be used for policy adaptation, strategy improvement and integration of activities among partners. For example, in Chiang Mai, adjustments in programming for the upcoming fiscal year were made once the database indicated that the concentration of prevention efforts needed to shift from the north of the province to the south. It can also be used to raise public awareness about the human trafficking problem and stimulate public participation in efforts to protect victims or potential victims. This involves reaching the public with a campaign to change attitudes and values regarding the direct or indirect support of exploitative labour that especially benefits from the trafficking of women and children. The database also serves as a handy resource for media use.

The database gives each government’s coordination centre (and thus other government departments) a clear indication of where to work. Explains Manusaporn Bhamorbutr, Social Development Officer in Chiang Mai, “The big outcome that we’re very proud of is that we now have specific data showing us which village to work in and which person to invite to a discussion or a training. Before, we worked using some statistics or experiences to estimate risk areas. Now we can be more precise.”

The database also facilitates the monitoring of programmes and activities, providing clear evidence of progress, or not.

Ultimately, once all provinces in the country set up the database, a strong central database can evolve that will give a national picture and situation analysis.

**ONGOING CHALLENGES:**

- ◆ More information from both primary and secondary sources is needed in the starter database to strengthen it.
- ◆ While there was training on how to import secondary information to the database and how to use the program, the staff need more technical skill in verifying and updating the database.

**LESSONS LEARNED:**

- ◆ Building a database from the provinces (down-up) creates a more sustainable and solid system. Primarily, it stimulates local ownership because the people who need to provide the information were included in setting up the system. Participation of key data collectors in the beginning promotes long-term commitment to making the system work and to its serving a useful and local purpose. A centrally designed system is prone to constant change as governments turn over and policies change.
- ◆ Secondary data provides a lot of information and covers targeted people sufficiently. In the absence of a good process for obtaining primary data, secondary data generates a wealth of insights and a good knowledge base.
- ◆ Before inputting data, check that the information sought after is obtainable and from where and how. Be aware that different sectors most likely have different coding systems, which requires extra effort to reduce the information to the standardized specifications.

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