

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



TEACHING TRAFFICKING

How teachers became involved and created a trafficking-prevention curriculum

THE GOOD PRACTICE: Reducing vulnerabilities to human trafficking by integrating trafficking issues into the school curriculum, promoting children's participation in awareness raising and pre-vocational training that involves local employers taking on students as apprentices to teach them basic skills.

Ban Mae Chan school and its school-based prevention

THE INITIAL CHALLENGE: For many years, most of the students in the Ban Mae Chan secondary school in Chiang Rai province who completed grade 9 left to work as unskilled labourers; some of them ended up in the commercial sex industry or other hazardous and exploitative occupations, some became victims of human trafficking. The school typically has a little over 1,000 students from 12 villages each year, about 10 percent of them from ethnic tribes. Concerned about the numbers of young people ending up in risky work, the Ban Mae Chan teachers became keen to address the trafficking problem on their own.

THE PROCESS: In 2004 and with support from the International Labour Organization and its Mekong project to combat trafficking in children and women (ILO/TICW), the school launched a project aimed at students in grades 7–9 to:

- ◆ Sensitize teachers on trafficking issues
- ◆ Adapt the curriculum to include trafficking
- ◆ Mobilize local resources, including employers, to offer skills training and job alternatives for young people
- ◆ Conduct an awareness-raising campaign among students, their families and communities on the problem of trafficking.

Four key teachers first organized brainstorming sessions with other teachers and officers from ILO and other organizations with relevant experience to determine what they wanted to teach on trafficking. Awareness raising and pre-vocational training, including apprenticeships with local entrepreneurs, were among the planned activities. During these meetings, ILO facilitated training for the teachers on human trafficking to orient them on the current situation, concepts in prevention work, relevant laws, agencies and organizations working on the issue and how to assist victims.

After a six-month period of trial and error, a so-called “trafficking curriculum” was finalized, consisting of:

- ◆ The **core curriculum** (60 hours), which focuses on awareness raising of trafficking and is compulsory for all students.
- ◆ The **elective curriculum** (60 hours), which contains eight options from which each student chooses one. It includes three pre-vocational skills training courses (sewing and basic dressmaking, basic cooking, basic welding) and five communication/ media production choices (radio programmes, dramatic performance, wall newspapers, newsletters and exhibitions), designed to give them confidence and skills and get them to participate in the awareness-raising campaign.

To develop the **core curriculum**, the team analysed the expected learning outcomes and then the content for each outcome. They then checked this against the formal curriculum to look for matches, subject by subject, and prepared ideas how to incorporate the issues and what materials to use. The team then analysed those details, synthesized and regrouped

them into integrated topics, added relevant exercises, materials/media (clippings, ads, news items, case studies, etc.) and eventually developed practical lesson plans that emphasized participatory practices.

The curriculum responded to six critical bits of information, including the definition of human trafficking, a discussion on groups vulnerable to trafficking and who are victims, what are the effects/impacts of trafficking, how trafficking can be prevented and available resources.

Each lesson plan, to be used during regular teaching hours, consists of:

- ◆ Relevant objective of the curriculum
- ◆ Time needed for teaching the unit
- ◆ Main contents
- ◆ Activities
- ◆ Materials/kits to use
- ◆ Additional information related to the lesson.

The teachers obtained news clippings and video documentaries/stories to illustrate to students that trafficking is a serious problem close to them. Some showed bad examples (such as an adolescent using/selling illicit drugs) and some highlighted good examples (adolescents earning a living). They encouraged the students to analyse situations in discussion, prompting them to talk about what they would have done in a similar situation, how they would have solved the problem, what would have been the results of their action, etc.

For the **elective curriculum**, the school devoted three hours of class time for 40 weeks to a subject. The three pre-vocational skills were chosen because the school already had the needed equipment and teachers who could teach the skills and because they were skills useful in the community or beyond. In addition to theoretical and practical aspects, the training touched on relevant values, such as discipline, timeliness, honesty, etc. After completing the course, students apprenticed for a few weeks with a local business to learn to work with others and experience the management of a small enterprise. The employers (known to teachers or respected in the community) also became teachers who graded the students on responsibility, creativity, trust, diligence, patience, problem solving, etc. and evaluated them at the end of the apprenticeship. That grade was factored into the regular school grading.

The five awareness-raising courses also included theoretical and practical training, with students producing regular newsletters and exhibitions for the school and radio programmes that were broadcast both in school and on a local station on special occasions – all talking about trafficking and migration.

PROBLEM SOLVING - HANDLING THE INITIAL CONFUSION: Although they were enthusiastic to bring the issues of trafficking into their subjects, the teachers stumbled in the beginning. They didn't know how to organize the lessons, how to choose the contents or how to teach it. Integrating became confusing, and they resorted to lecturing rather than participatory activities. As well, the teachers didn't know how to use plays/radio

programmes and newspapers, which they had proposed, to teach about human trafficking. Some teachers suggested cancelling the project.

The turning point came when two teachers attended a government training on integrating sex education into secondary education. The training covered developing the curriculum, lesson plans and peer teaching. From this, they realized they could adapt the process for human trafficking and shared what they had learned with the other teachers. They turned to the local education authority office to help supervise them on integrating trafficking issues into the existing curriculum; this led to what they called the “trafficking curriculum”.

After flailing with instruction on the various media formats, the teachers invited professionals, such as someone from a local radio station, to train both them and students. Freelance drama trainers organized training on theatre productions for the teachers and the students, supervising them on theory, drama techniques, performance and costuming.

OUTCOMES:

- ◆ A curriculum that has integrated trafficking issues into regular teaching activities. The trafficking curriculum has been distributed to 48 schools in the area and 161 teachers attended a trafficking curriculum workshop in 2006.
- ◆ Schoolteachers (5 men and 42 women) able to use a varied repertoire of activities and processes for engaging students and making them fully informed about the dangers of trafficking, which they learned to recognize as a serious problem relevant to them.
- ◆ The school established a multidisciplinary network involving policemen, a lawyer and a social worker from the local hospital to talk to students about the trafficking issues in different experiences.
- ◆ Collaboration with 13 local establishments for the apprenticeship programme, including bicycle repair, barber shops, dressmaking, beauty salons and sweet-making shops, with 46 children participating. Most of the employers found that it was a good programme and were satisfied with the children’s performance.
- ◆ Students (90 male, 120 female) produced a radio programme for broadcast on the local station, newsletters and wall newspapers, which also were distributed in the community, and performed a play they wrote for the community. Some students became informal counsellors for friends and younger students who sought them out after hearing them on the radio.
- ◆ The community radio station provided opportunity to students to work at their station as a DJ. After the project ended, two school girls continued working at the station.
- ◆ A CD of the theatrical plays was provided to students so show to their families and neighbours.
- ◆ Students learned to appreciate work and to explore and understand themselves better, thus developing a greater self-confidence. They reported being more cool-headed and learned to understand and appreciate adults better and to analyse and plan action.
- ◆ Documentation of good practices and lessons learned was made available in a CD-ROM.

Prior to this project, some girls who dropped out of school ended up working in a city, recruited by agents or with an unknown destination. In the first year after the project, there

were no such cases reported. The teachers attributed the change to students gaining considerable awareness about the danger of trafficking and learning to protect themselves.

The teachers have learned to work more closely as a team. They say they recognize the capacities of youth and the power of participatory teaching. "Now it is much easier and more fun to talk about these topics," said one teacher. "We don't teach but we conduct exercises and facilitate the students' learning."

Students also have gained life-changing skills. "I was shaking badly when I had to speak into the microphone the first few times," admitted one of the students who participated in the radio programme production. "I'm proud I can do a programme and there are followers who sometimes provide feedback. ... Now I feel I have to behave myself and become a good role model for other kids so they are not disappointed about me."

LESSONS LEARNED:

- ◆ Teachers need good instruction and new skills in relating trafficking to their activities in a way that will interest students. Building teacher capabilities can include visits to another school that has implemented the trafficking curriculum to learn how the teachers managed at the beginning; inviting local resource persons with specific expertise to train teachers; using a process for developing a curriculum that already has integrated trafficking into subjects and offers a variety of learning activities (and discourages teachers from resorting to lectures). This latter point is essential at the beginning of the project and can be done with a workshop to develop integrated curriculum, using external resource persons familiar with both curriculum development and trafficking issues.
- ◆ Teachers have little knowledge about networks of resource persons with expertise in different fields. Helping to connect them to these networks, such as through visits or meetings where they can exchange and listen to ideas, will give them a pool of people to draw upon and increase their confidence.
- ◆ To ensure the sustainability of education initiatives such as changes to curricula and teaching methods, officials from the local education authority – who will be playing the key role in the long term in supporting teachers – should be involved in teacher training sessions, meetings and workshops. Involving officials in this way is important in gaining their understanding and support for promoting similar work in other schools.
- ◆ School administrators can create much pressure on teachers and make unrealistic demands if they do not understand the objectives, concepts and work process of the project. They need also to understand the limitations of their personnel and the need for capacity building and providing continued support to teachers.

As one Ban Mae Chan teacher explained, "Working on this project enabled us to better understand the children and to teach better. But what we've gained most is that we know there is still so much that we don't know. We thought we knew well about new approaches. We thought it would not be difficult, that we could do it. We thought because we had been teaching for 20 years, we could teach anything. But in fact we needed to learn more. And we needed other resource persons to help: how to

teach performing, how to teach students to produce newsletters or to make wall newspapers and how to develop an integrated curriculum.”

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