



Number crunching with baselines

Background and context

It is necessary to know the detailed situation at the beginning of any development project, in order to be able to monitor progress and measure the impact of that project at any given time in the future. It is surprising how many projects go ahead without first assessing the context beyond the impressionistic level. Conducting baseline surveys is expensive, time consuming, and requires some technical skill in terms of organisation and analysis of data and statistics. This may be a constraint to some agencies.

In order to plan and implement the TICW project a lot of fact finding was needed at the start. This was not easy as the knowledge and information concerning trafficking is not easy to collect and quite sensitive. In addition, quantitative information about trafficking is rather unreliable and difficult to verify. In the five concerned countries, the data was first collected by literature study (or situation analysis) by the National Project Coordinator, and resulted in information that helped to identify target provinces. Specialist researchers or statisticians were then usually brought in to design baseline research studies of a critical size in target villages of the selected target provinces, and to help analyze the results, while others (including village people) were trained as enumerators or interviewers. Participatory rural appraisal (PRA) has also been used at the village level as a research method, both to identify and quantify need, and also to decide upon appropriate action following a mapping exercise of opportunities.

Village baseline surveys¹ and other notes about villages, such as descriptive profiles, have thus been produced in order for informed decisions to be made on rural plans to prevent trafficking. Irrespective of the quality of the baselines, it has been noted that the very development of this data in itself has raised awareness on TICW and helped to stimulate activism.

The sequel to the above research will be the monitoring exercises to be conducted against the existing data so as to measure progress made in the project, and to stimulate learning. Guidelines on Participatory Monitoring have been produced, and training in its various methods has taken place at central and local levels. More than 700 stakeholders have been trained so far in using eight participatory monitoring tools. The aim now is to carry out participatory monitoring every six months at village level, and to focus among others on issues such as institutional capacity, migration decision-making and mapping, employment expectations and level of knowledge about work opportunities, income generation activities, community socio-economic environment and leadership of local government.

Implementation

In *Viet Nam*, the project began with a literature study based on relevant material produced over

¹ These baseline surveys usually include a section on 'population', 'income', 'education', and 'migration'.

the past decade. It resulted in a situation analysis (SITAN), the first comprehensive analysis of the issue in the country, which was shared with the participants at the National Stakeholder Ownership Exercise as a basis for discussion about the framework and modalities for implementing a prevention programme to combat trafficking in children and women in selected provinces.

After the Provincial Stakeholder Ownership Meetings in selected provinces, during which districts and communes were identified for implementing the programme, community studies were conducted in ten target locations with participation of key government partners², whose skills in action oriented research were thus enhanced. A comprehensive data set (qualitative and quantitative) on socio-economic conditions in the ten communities was produced by professional researchers in three reports, together with data on local organisations, on law enforcement practices and on victims of trafficking in the three provinces. This information was new and interesting, as such information had never been collected before.

In northern *Thailand*, the North Net foundation, a national NGO partner, together with its own partners have built trust in the target villages, collected the base-line data in a participatory way and in collaboration with the sub-district authorities. It appears that frequent meetings were held with Northnet in the target villages, and agreements with the villagers were always respected, which contributed to the trust building.

In *Cambodia*, village baseline data collection was done using PRA (participatory rural appraisal) and RRA (rapid rural appraisal) methods by the five national NGO partners together with village leaders and villagers. The methods included among others 'poverty ranking' mechanisms where families were ranked in terms of number of months per year that they need to borrow rice. Data was collected in both target and control villages, as well as district and provincial level (Prey Veng province and Sihanoukville). Through data collection, members of the provincial committee, the district working group and village leaders have learned about the root causes of trafficking, and are in the process of identifying solutions.

In China (*Yunnan* province), after training two groups of 34 trainees in data collection and village sampling techniques, baseline data was collected in twelve target villages and twelve control villages with technical support from the provincial Statistics Bureau and from hired consultants. Questionnaires were fielded to farmer households to find out about their economic and life situations. County "profiles" were prepared, describing the environment and context of the lives of target communities, the local agricultural/industrial/ service economy, natural resources and communications. Quantitative information was also collected on the population in the target areas: poverty level, ethnic identity, age, sex, education and literacy level, health, employment and income, consumption patterns (including drugs abuse), delinquency, prostitution, numbers migrated and numbers known to have been trafficked. Separate questionnaires were prepared for those who had already lived/worked outside their community.

Rapid market appraisals were also conducted to learn about the prices of agricultural products, and the level of demand for different products in local markets. This was a new approach. Based on information gathered, economic activities with at-risk women were selected. Questionnaires were also used to assess the learning of target villagers before and after different kinds of training provided by the project, and to analyse and understand their capacities.

In *Lao PDR*, starting from official birth registration and out-migration statistics, Training-of-Trainers was provided on research and data collection techniques for 20 trainers (key provincial

² Ministry of Labour, Invalids & Social Affairs [MoLISA] – Dept of Social Evils Prevention [DSEP]



and district persons), leading into participatory planning (OOPP) to combat TICW. The 20 trainers were then to train 300 village heads in how to collect, analyse and update baseline data.

The project in Lao PDR worked in “piggy-back” with the National Statistics Bureau to cover all 900 villages of Khammouane province as part of the government’s poverty survey. The purpose is to see the whole picture of migration in one province. This work (in 2002) includes a provincial poverty assessment and the data will feed into the next national census in 2005, which will include trafficking and labour migration statistics for the first time. Enumerators trained in data collection for the last census (1995) were redeployed, and additional village heads have been trained in data collection and analysis. The ILO-TICW project in Lao PDR is co-funding this activity, notably the transport costs and the analysis of the raw data. On the basis of the results, the detailed plan of action for Khammouane province will be developed for the next phase of the project (2003-2008). In the other two project target provinces, the same kind of data collection is taking place, but restricted to the target districts only.

In most target sites, participatory monitoring exercises are currently ongoing, and in some cases (China and Lao PDR) a first round of participatory monitoring has already been completed – with a next round scheduled in 6 months time.

During the implementation of the project it was felt that capacity levels to collect and in particular analyse data are limited at grassroots level. The project hence collaborated with the Regional Working Group on Child Labour (RWG-CL)³ on the development of a handbook for research practitioners. The handbook is for action-oriented research on the worst forms of child labour including trafficking, and is aimed to result in accurate data to assist programming. The handbook uses a child-centered approach, and is geared towards follow-up action after research, with an emphasis on inter-agency coordination and collaborative efforts. The handbook is scheduled to be released towards the end of 2002.

Achievements

- Innovative/creative

In Viet Nam, data collection of this kind is relatively new - including surveying market prices at community level in a systematic way. In Thailand, the tradition of NGOs working at grassroots level means that baseline information had been routinely collected, though not always systematically. In Cambodia, data had not been collected in the past with the involvement of villagers. Now the communities are regularly updating and analysing the data themselves. Data is then submitted to the Provincial Trafficking Coordination Unit for provincial level planning and monitoring.

- Effective/impact

In all countries, project activities could start on the basis of sound and factual information. New learning by all concerned has provided motivation and commitment. Involvement by stakeholders in data collection in itself has triggered concern and activism in villages to combat trafficking.

³ The RWG-CL is a joint initiative of SCF-Alliance, World Vision International, Child Workers in Asia, UNICEF and ILO-IPEC.

Full support has been obtained from the Cambodian local authorities on the trafficking in children and women issue, from provincial to village level. Through lessons learned and experiences of data collection, chiefs of each commune and trained village leaders have organised a training workshop for all the village chiefs on the collection of village baseline data. The new skill of data analysis is empowering for them.

The project in Khammouane Province of Lao PDR 'piggy-backed' with the poverty survey of the National Statistics Bureau to cover all 900 villages of the province for data collection on trafficking and migration.

- Sustainability

Now that some of the village people have the capacity to collect and analyse data relevant to their own interests, they can keep doing it in Cambodia and Thailand. In Yunnan province of China, local capacity has been developed in the target areas, and in Viet Nam, MoLISA and DSEP staff have also developed new skills in baseline data collection and analysis.

- Relevance/Responsiveness

Selected communities now have clearer information including the root causes of trafficking in their own villages and districts, and can analyse and prioritise what their communities can do to combat trafficking. With this information, coherent and relevant plans can be developed at provincial and district level, and villagers can monitor changes in their own communities.

- Efficiency

The project in Lao PDR capitalised on the comprehensive birth registration system, which forms an excellent entry-point for village baselines as all village leaders keep track of this data, which facilitates the listing of missing people.

Lessons learned

- Participation by community members in collecting and analyzing data in their own villages is empowering and motivating, though training has to be provided first.
- Baseline research takes time, but much data already exists and can be used (e.g. birth registration in Lao PDR, documents of National Statistics offices about agriculture and health).
- Baseline research is costly, but joint research can cut costs and provide mutual benefit (e.g. Khammouane survey for the Lao PDR national census). It is therefore recommended to always consult government officials on their planned data collection activities so as to identify potentials for 'piggy backing'.
- The capacity to collect, store, and analyze data is at best limited at district and lower levels throughout the sub-region. Help-desks, refresher training, close backstopping by provincial experts, and other support mechanisms are essential in ensuring data are of use.
- There is a tendency to make survey questionnaires very comprehensive and to collect too much information - beyond the handling capacity of those storing and analyzing the data. It is crucial to plan properly prior to data collection and to focus only on key information that is necessary for policy planning purposes. True research costs include proper calculations of time used by all those involved.



- It is crucial to collect data per year covering that year only, rather than an x-number of preceding years. For example, in a number of instances it appeared that migration statistics for a particular year not only included those that migrated in that particular year, but also those for an unknown number of preceding years – hence making the data irrelevant.
- Working with control villages is technically challenging and may raise expectations of villagers who are approached. Where budgets, time-frame, and technical know-how are limited, it is advisable to compare data in one village over time, rather than to also collect data in control villages.
- External support is needed to backstop complex research and voluminous data analysis, usually by experienced statisticians. Village people can analyze smaller amounts of data by themselves (e.g. through PRA in Cambodia).
- For participatory monitoring, it is essential to continue to make the following point to stakeholders: if things don't go well, that does not mean failure. Write about it in order to improve the quality of interventions.
- After completing a participatory monitoring exercise with focus groups, it is useful to take note of village discussions after using the tools – as these often contain rich information.

Conditions for replicability

- Research experts need to be available to propose appropriate research design and data analysis.
- Training in appropriate data collection and analysis (using questionnaires, interview technique, counting, coding and aggregation, etc) needs to be provided at different levels to selected data collectors or enumerators, including villagers.
- Based on experience gained in each country during baseline data collection, methods and management of this essential work should be refined to become more effective and efficient.

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For detailed information on the TICW project see: www.ilo.org/asia/child/trafficking

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