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## INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME ON THE ELIMINATION OF CHILD LABOUR

### **Mekong Sub-Regional Project to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women**

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### *Technical Intervention Area Summary Notes: TIA-6*

## **Gender equality promotion to combat trafficking in children and women**

### **1 Basic concepts**

- Gender refers to the social differences and (power)relations between girls and boys, women and men that are learned and vary widely within and between cultures and change over time. These differences are apparent in the different roles, responsibilities, needs, constraints, and opportunities of the sexes;
- Sex refers to the biological differences between men and women that are universal and do not change.
- Gender values and norms in society refer to ideas that people have on what men and women of all generations should be like. For example; in many societies girls should be obedient and cute and are allowed to cry. Boys, on the other hand, are expected to be brave and should not cry. These values and norms may change over time.
- Gender stereotypes are the ideas that people have on what boys and men, girls and women are capable of doing and what their roles should be. For example, women are better housekeepers and men are better leaders, boys are better in mathematics than girls.
- Gender roles refer to do the activities that each sex actually does. For example, boys help their fathers working outside the house on the land and girls help their mothers taking care of the household work.
- Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of men and women, girls and boys.

### **2 Rationale**

- Promoting the equality between the sexes and the elimination of child labour and trafficking is not only the right but also the smart thing to do.

### **3 Key gender differentials in child labour and trafficking**

- Many girls develop a sense of low self-esteem that they have fully internalized when they become adult women.
- Worldwide, girls and women from poor families have less access to education, training and other opportunities to advance in life compared to boys and men: Girls are expected to start working from an early age while boys have more opportunities to go to school.

- Girls and women are often involved in invisible work, i.e. unpaid activities such as cooking, cleaning and caring for family members in their own household. They also often carry out unpaid work in and around the household such as working in family enterprise.
- Girls are, more likely than boys, excluded from education or suffer the triple burden of housework, schoolwork and economic work.
- Women and girls have increasingly started to earn income because of economic need and for survival purposes.
- The work of women and girls is often of low quality and precarious.
- Girl and women workers predominate in hidden and unregulated sectors, such as domestic service and in commercial sex work, making them more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Girls and women also form the large majority of victims from trafficking for labour exploitation.
- Many girls and women are paid less than boys and men for the same type of work and they have less control over the income they earn. If girls and women spend their own earnings, most if not all is spent on their families.
- Girls and women are often preferred as workers because they are socialized to work hard and be obedient.
- Many girls and women experience an enhanced sense of self-esteem and an expansion of life choices if they earn income with their work.
- Single female-headed households are particularly vulnerable to resorting to trafficking.
- Working mothers, who have no access to childcare and schools, will take their children to work. These children will start working from an early age onwards.
- If mothers go out to work, the older daughters are often kept at home to look after the household duties and family care.
- Children can be sold or “given away” by parents with promises of a better life for them. These children, often girls, end up in the worst forms of child labour.
- If girls get pregnant outside marriage, they are taken out of school. Some get married but the majority become outcasts, need to earn their own income and look after their children without family or community support. Thus, their children become child workers as well.
- Family responsibilities between men and women are unequally divided: men usually make major decisions on investments even if women hold the household purse and girls and women do most if not all of the household work.
- Women are under-represented in formal and informal decision-making structures and processes.

#### **4 Key principles for the promotion of gender equality**

- Achieving gender equality is not a ‘women’s concern’ but the responsibility of all in society.
- In case of pronounced imbalances, gender-specific measures are needed to address inequalities and advance the status of women in society.
- Promoting gender equality will benefit all in society.

- Gender equality needs to be addressed in all development programmes and at all stages of the programming cycle.
- Address practical and strategic gender needs. Practical needs relate to inadequacies in living and working conditions of the target groups. Strategic needs relate to the inequalities between men and women.

## 5 Gender mainstreaming: Main tools

Gender mainstreaming is an institutional strategy aimed at giving equal opportunities and rights to men and women as beneficiaries, participants and decision-makers by addressing gender inequalities systematically in legislation, policies, programmes and budgets at all stages of the programming cycle.

A four-pronged approach is needed to bring gender issues into the mainstream in all policies, programmes and activities:

- carrying out a gender *analysis*;
- carrying out gender-specific strategies or interventions;
- starting a process of *institutional change* in procedures and in institutional processes;
- giving girls and women a *voice* and having them involved in all the above.

Gender analysis includes:

- collecting data which are *broken down* by sex and age;
- identifying the *division of labour*, and access to and control over resources and benefits;
- understanding girls' boys', women's and men's *needs, constraints and opportunities*;
- identifying constraints and opportunities in the *larger* environment;
- reviewing the *capacities* of organizations to promote gender equality.

Gender-specific interventions, measures or activities are needed whenever girls or women are in a particularly disadvantageous position. Pay specific attention to:

- sectors, industries and occupations where *many* girls and women are found;
- sectors where girls and women are virtually *absent*;
- issues which especially *concern* girl and women workers.

Gender-specific action can include one or a combination of the following:

- Positive or affirmative action;
- Women-specific activities;
- Men-specific activities.

Tools for mainstreaming gender within organizations include:

- adopting *explicit* policy, programming, budget and accountability procedures for the promotion of equality;
- training staff and making them *accountable*;
- setting of *targets* for staff recruitment and promotion.

Giving girls and women a voice:

- increasing the *participation* of girls and women in programmes;
- increasing the representation of women in decision-making;
- generally, the male/female ratio of representation should range between 40 and 60 per cent;
- the ground rule: a representation rate of around 30 per cent of each sex as a *minimum*;
- otherwise it becomes difficult for those in the minority to effectively have a voice.

## 6 Main strategies

Main strategies to bring gender issues into the mainstream of all (country) programmes and smaller scale projects and action programmes (hereafter referred to as programmes) against child labour are:

## **6.1 Technical aspects**

- Incorporate an explicit gender dimension in all policies and programmes against child labour.
- Take gender equality concerns into account at the earliest stages of the programming cycle and at the highest levels of policy, programme and budget formulation.
- Ensure the equal representation and active participation of women and men at all levels and especially in decision-making positions and mechanisms throughout the programming cycle.
- Carry out a gender analysis and disaggregate all crucial data related to child labour by sex before starting any interventions.
- Target sectors where many girls are found working.
- Target the poorest and most disadvantaged households.
- Redress inequalities in access of girls and women to quality education and training.
- Provide alternative livelihood strategies to families prone to or already resorting to child labour through the economic and social empowerment of parents and children.
- Target invisible child labourers, many of whom are girls by using a family or area-specific approach.
- Involve both fathers and mothers in any programme or project against child labour and pay attention to the sharing of family responsibilities and other workload as well as decision-making processes within the family.
- Address both practical and strategic gender needs.

## **6.2 Organisational aspects**

- Increase gender awareness among all programme stakeholders.
- Assess and strengthen the capacity of the intermediary organizations to address the needs of men and women workers and to promote gender equality.
- Mobilize women's groups and organizations.
- Avoid linguistic and visual biases and gender stereotyping
- Assign responsibility for the promotion of equality to all those involved in the programme.
- If imbalances between men's and women's position exist, plan, budget and utilize specific gender expertise throughout the programming cycle.
- Analyze the different impact of programmes on girls, women, boys and men at the monitoring and evaluation stages and develop appropriate follow-up action.

For more on gender, please see *ILO TICW-project management guidelines manual (MAMA)*, part 4.4 (*AP project design - integrating gender issues*).