



The Mekong Women's Forum

July 12 - 13, 2007
Hanoi, Viet Nam

What is the Mekong Women's Forum 2007?

The Mekong Women's Forum is the first meeting of women's organizations from across the Greater Mekong Sub-region in relation to action against human trafficking. The Viet Nam Women's Union is hosting the forum in Hanoi, 12-13 July, 2007.

The Forum, with its theme "Women's Solidarity & Empowerment in Action against Human Trafficking and Discrimination" provides an opportunity for women's organizations from across the GMS to showcase the work they are already doing to prevent trafficking of women and children and help those who have already been victimized by the related sexual and labour exploitation that results.

From the establishment of migrant women's homes in China, to village savings-and-loan schemes in Lao PDR, awareness-raising in rural Viet Nam, to name but a few, these Women's Unions and organizations are arming young women with the information they need to avoid discrimination and the trafficking and migration-related exploitation. Some of these projects will be on display and interviews with key participants can be arranged upon request.

The forum also aims to promote greater partnerships and alliances of women's organizations with high level government offices, employers' and workers' organizations. Among those attending the Mekong Women's Forum will be high-level representatives from Government – including senior officials involved in the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking in the GMS (COMMIT) and the Ministries of Labour – as well as delegates from Workers' and Employers' Organizations from five countries: Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam.

Aims

This meeting gives attention to the achievements of women's organizations and tri-partite focal points in their action against human trafficking and gender discrimination.

The forum will:

- Exchange experiences and learning, assess achievements, identify gaps and challenges in taking action against human trafficking and gender discrimination;
- Consider ways to strengthen national partnerships between the women's movements and lead gender focal points in government ministries, workers' and employers' organizations;
- Identify areas of sub-regional cooperation to strengthen the engagement of women and their organizations in national policy planning on human trafficking and gender discrimination

Technical Presentations

The forum's presentations and discussions are centered on 6 general topics, giving primary emphasis on prevention measures, as follows:

Opening: Taking a Gender Perspective in Action Against Human Trafficking

The presentation provides an overview of the situation of human trafficking in the GMS; outlines key reasons why trafficking continues, identifying causes anchored on gender discrimination and marginalization. The keynote presentation will propose ways of how women's organizations can better influence national policies and programs on human trafficking.

Session 1: Information and awareness Raising Campaigns

This session illustrates the substantial awareness-raising efforts of the Vietnamese, Chinese and Lao women's organizations, with topics covering not only the risks and dangers of human trafficking, but also ways in which potential migrants and those seeking work outside of communities can receive information and assistance during their movement.

Session 2: Social Empowerment and Youth Education

This session focuses on measures undertaken by women's organizations on youth education (return to school programs for young girls and boys) and promotion of life-skills training as some of the effective ways to reduce vulnerabilities to human trafficking and unprotected migration. Examples come from China Yunnan, Cambodia, Viet Nam.

Session 3: Sustainable Livelihoods and Economic Empowerment

This session looks at economic activities initiated by women's organizations in selected sending areas with a high density of vulnerable migrants and victims of human trafficking. The presentations will show how economic solutions, when properly targeted and together with awareness-raising messages, can prevent unprotected migration and reduce the risks of human trafficking. Examples are from Lao PDR, Thailand and Cambodia.

Session 4: Protection of Migrants at destination

This session moves into the action taken by different organizations to protect the rights of women migrant workers. Using innovative information services or direct support measures, organizations have been active in promoting migrant outreach, the formation of self-help groups and related savings schemes. Good practice examples include several employers' and workers' organizations (Viet Nam, Malaysia) and from the Yunnan Province of China.

Session 5: Policy Mainstreaming

This session will consider the ways in which women's groups can engage more concretely in influencing policy changes at the national and local provincial levels. The presentations cover efforts of women's organizations to influence policies and programs at the provincial, national and sub-regional levels. Examples are from China Yunnan, Thailand, and the sub-region.

Recommendations

Country delegations have been asked to present their country-specific recommendations on ways to strengthen action by women's organizations and promote partnerships at the national and sub-regional levels.

Exhibits and Displays

The Viet Nam Women's Union has set up a public display for information and advocacy publications and materials from all the countries

For further information, contact:

Mr. Allan Dow
Communications Officer
ILO Mekong Sub-regional Project to Combat
Trafficking in Children and Women
United Nations Building, 10th Floor, Block B
Rajadamnern Nok Avenue,
Bangkok 10200, Thailand

Tel: (66-2) 288 2057
Mob: (66-8) 9891 5003
E-mail: dow@ilo.org

Ms. Duong Thi Xuan
Head of IEC Department,
Viet Nam Women's Union
39 Hang Chuoi Street,
Hanoi, Viet Nam

Tel. (84-4) 9719916
Fax: (84-4) 9722313
E-mail: xuan_iec@yahoo.com