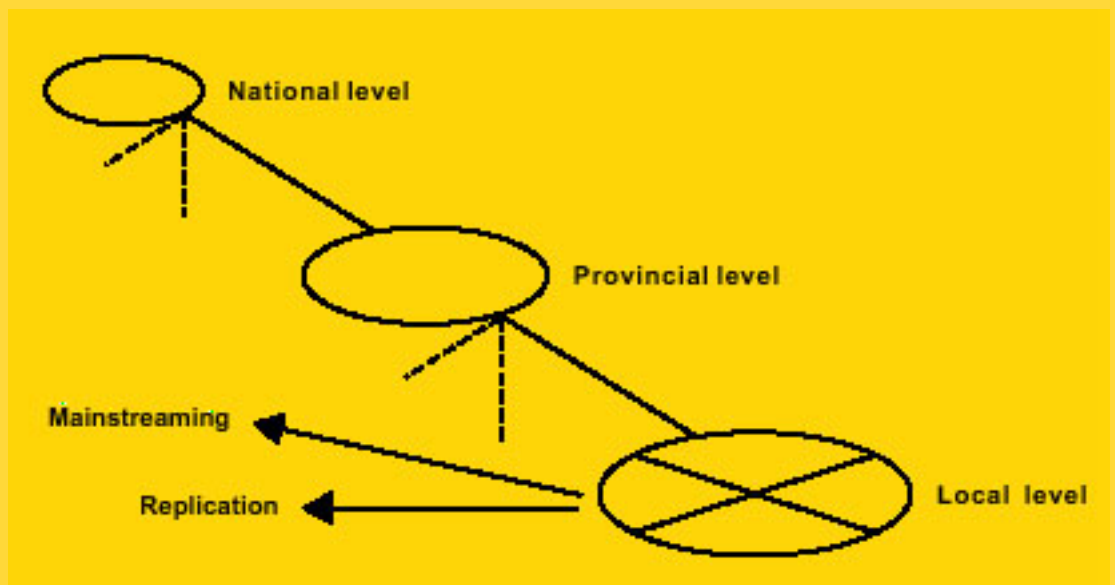




A process-based Approach to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women:

Sharing preliminary Experiences of an ILO-Project in the Mekong Sub-region



**A PROCESS-BASED APPROACH TO COMBAT
TRAFFICKING IN CHILDREN AND WOMEN:
SHARING PRELIMINARY EXPERIENCES FROM AN
ILO-PROJECT IN THE MEKONG SUB-REGION**

*A project by the International Labour Organization
Funded by DFID-SEA*

By Hans van de Glind
(Written in July 2001)

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ILO-IPEC

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Foreword

It is encouraging to see unprecedented international interest in the fight against the worst forms of child labour and trafficking. The ILO has been at the forefront of international efforts to combat trafficking, within the framework of ILO's Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No.182).

In South-east Asia, ILO runs a Mekong sub-regional project to combat trafficking in children and women – funded by the Department for International Development (DFID-SEA) of the United Kingdom. The project had a preparatory phase in 1998-1999, and a three-year pilot phase started in early 2000.

Project interventions to date have resulted in valuable preliminary experiences that have been documented in the following pages. These experiences were shared in documented form during the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Yokohama, Japan (in 2001).

It is worthwhile to note that in preparation of the meeting in Yokohama, a panel of Bangkok based United Nations agencies and international organizations collaborated to produce a collection of 'good practices' to combating commercial exploitation of children in East Asia and the Pacific. The panel selected the TICW-project as one of the 'good practices' for presentation at the Yokohama Congress.

I take this opportunity to convey my thanks to Hans van de Glind, who documented the good practice that was selected by the aforementioned panel of Bangkok-based organizations. I also thank those that provided valuable inputs including Inthasone Phetsiriseng, Khleang Rim, Mar Sophea, Herve Berger, Eriko Kiuchi, and Pin Boonpala - and John Bryant, who provided editorial support. Finally, I thank ESCAP-HRD who co-ordinated a prior release of the following 'good practice' as one of the chapters in a publication entitled *'Asia-Pacific answers: Good practices in combating commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth'*.

I hope that this paper will prove a meaningful contribution to understanding the ILO effort to combat trafficking in children and women in the Mekong sub-region, as well as serve as a model of a good practice to be replicated elsewhere.

Yasuyuki Nodera
ILO Regional Director
Asia Pacific Region

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	
1. Organizational Information	7
1.1 Organizational profile	7
1.2 Goals	8
1.3 Overall achievements to date (July 2001)	8
2. General Information about the Process Based Approach	9
2.1 Profile of the process based approach	9
2.2 Problem addressed	11
2.3 Project objectives and interventions	11
3. Evaluation of Experiences and Achievements to Date	12
3.1 Responsiveness/Relevance	12
3.2 Efficiency	13
3.3 Innovativeness	14
3.4 Sustainability	14
3.5 Impact	16
4. Conclusions & Lessons Learnt	17

1 ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION

1.1 Organizational profile

<i>Name of the project:</i>	ILO Mekong Sub-Regional Project to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women (TICW Project)
<i>Countries:</i>	Mekong Sub-Region (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Viet Nam, and Yunnan Province of China)
<i>Time-frame:</i>	Preparatory phase: 1998-1999 Pilot implementation phase: 2000 – April 2003 (2 nd Phase: likely 2003 – 2008)
<i>Donor</i>	Department for International Development (DFID) - SEA
<i>Project Address:</i>	International Labour Organization, 2nd floor, UN Service Building, Rajdamnern Nok Avenue, Bangkok
<i>Telephone:</i>	+66 2 288 2218
<i>Fax:</i>	+66 2 280 3063
<i>Web site:</i>	Www.ilo.org/asia/child/trafficking
<i>Area of Work:</i>	Prevention of trafficking in children and women for labour and sexual exploitation

The first phase of the Trafficking in Children and Women Project (TICW Project) by the International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) of the International Labour Organization (ILO) started in 1997. It comprised of research, analysis of lessons learnt in other IPEC-projects, and consultations with a wide range of stakeholders.

The second phase of the project runs from February 2000 to 30 April 2003 and is carried out in collaboration with the ILO Gender Equality Promotion Programme (GENPROM). Both phases cover Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Viet Nam, and Yunnan Province of China, and are funded by DFID-SEA/ United Kingdom.

The sub-regional office for the project in Bangkok has four staff. The country offices are located as follows:

Country office	Location	Staff
Cambodia	Phnom Penh	2
Lao PDR	Vientiane	2
Thailand	Chiang Rai	2
Vietnam	Hanoi	3
Yunnan Province of China	Kunming	2

All staff in the country offices are nationals of those countries. The combined staff from the sub-regional office and country offices has a total of six men

and nine women. The staff have a wide range of work experience and were trained (under the project) in research techniques, project design and management, monitoring & evaluation, financial matters, participatory approaches, networking & co-ordination, and gender issues. The country offices implement project interventions through local organizations such as government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), workers' organizations, employers' organizations, academic institutions, and the media. Country offices (through national steering committees) try to ensure that the various projects fit into the larger policy framework, that the implementing agencies share information, and that the knowledge base available to stakeholders grows continuously.

1.2 Goals

The TWIC Project aims to reduce trafficking in women and children within the Greater Mekong Sub-Region, through capacity building, awareness raising, advocacy, and direct assistance.

1.3 Overall achievements to date (until July 2001)

The TICW Project involves work in education, skills training, employment creation, alternative livelihoods, and legal literacy. The TICW Project has mobilized a broad alliance of stakeholders at different hierarchical levels — which is a novel approach in some countries.

The advantages of the broad alliance include improved understanding of the issues, better selection of source areas of trafficking (generally in three or four provinces per country), and the creation of feelings of ownership. Use of a broad alliance has also led to greater activism, including volunteer participation, and to a series of integrated and holistic projects that draw on existing services, and that are linked to provincial and national mechanisms.

The TICW Project has been successful at involving member governments at various levels. Governments have expressed their commitment by issuing Decrees, participating in interventions, and providing funding. Steering committees have been established at the national level, the provincial level, and, in some places, the district level. This has strengthened links between

national policies and grassroots realities and interventions by local implementing agencies.

Another encouraging development has been the expressed willingness of the Chinese government to replicate the model used in Yunnan Province in other provinces of China.

In addition to working through local implementing agencies, project staff collaborate with other agencies in the development of tools: They are collaborating with the Human Resources Development Section at ESCAP on psycho-social counseling methods for sexually exploited children, and on networking and co-ordination. They have collaborated with the United Nations Inter-Agency Project on trafficking (UN-IAP) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to explore ways of improving labour migration mechanisms in sectors of the economy that employ high numbers of illegal migrants. Staff from the TICW Project have co-operated with the IPEC Fishing and Footwear Project to design guidelines on income generation, vocational training, and education for people at risk of trafficking. Finally, they have collaborated with the IPEC South-east Asia programme to explore ways of working with workers' organizations and employers' organizations to combat trafficking. The TICW Project has observed the principle that context is crucial and that there is no single best solution. It has used rapid assessment techniques to obtain a better understanding of the issues, has worked with and through local stakeholders, has documented its experiences on methods that work and those that do not, and it has shared its experiences with others. Through its work, the TICW project has assisted thousands of families in which children and women are at risk of being trafficked.

2 GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROCESS BASED APPROACH

2.1 Profile of the process based approach

The target population of the TICW Project is children and women who are at risk of trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region.

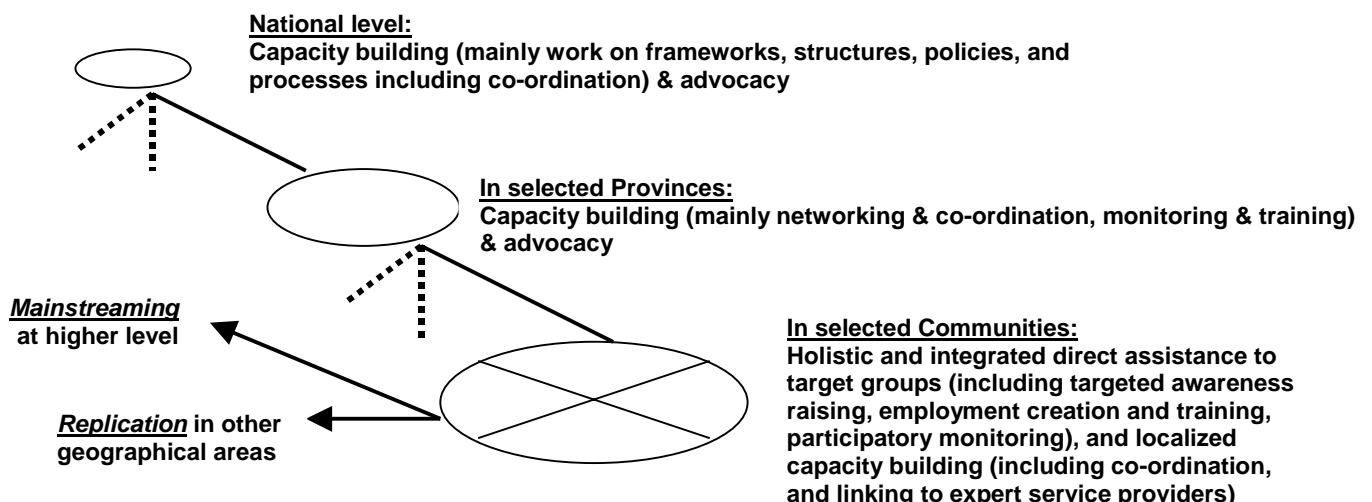
The TICW Project consists of a variety of activities, chosen on the basis of experience from previous IPEC activities. The TICW Project encourages stakeholder ownership through participatory planning at the national and sub-

national levels, and operates where possible through existing structures such as national steering committees.

The community development projects in selected geographical areas promote improved access to existing services, development of alternative livelihood strategies, skills training, income generation, basic education, and links to other initiatives in the same areas. The projects capitalize wherever possible on existing services and try to complement rather than duplicate ongoing interventions.

Intervention sites and types of interventions are selected through a participatory process involving key stakeholders at different levels, such as policy makers, activists, and village representatives: National level data are reviewed, and provinces selected. Specific provincial level data are then examined, and districts and villages are selected for interventions. Data collection at the local level includes focus group discussion with children, women, and other groups, and covers both problems and solutions. Implementing agencies update and expand on these data during the course of the project, for monitoring, learning, and evaluation.

As such it has created an enabling (policy) environment at national and provincial level within which focused direct assistance interventions are offered in selected target sites. These focused interventions enable good practices and lessons learnt to be documented so that they can be replicated in other areas, and mainstreaming into national government policy.



Staff from the TICW Project provide technical resources adapted from models which have been developed by units in the ILO and elsewhere, including ILO's 'Start and Improve Your Business', the Small Enterprise Development Programme, and the Social Finance Unit. All activities under the project include an integrated gender component based on collaboration with ILO's Gender Equality Promotion Programme (GENPROM).

In addition to the provision of direct assistance in selected geographical areas, the TICW Project collects together the lessons learnt & good practices so that these can be replicated in other areas, and mainstreamed into provincial and national government policy. Project staff endeavour to link together localized initiatives carried out by provincial authorities in neighbouring countries.

2.2 Problem addressed

Trafficking in children and women is a complex phenomenon, which varies by place, gender, and ethnic group across the Greater Mekong Sub-Region. Trafficking should be regarded as a continuum. At one end of the continuum are cases involving coercion, outright force, or debt bondage. At the other end are cases in which employers exploit voluntary migrants who are inexperienced and vulnerable. The reasons for trafficking are diverse, and include poverty, lack of education, natural disasters, cultural beliefs, village boredom, drug abuse, consumerism, and demand for cheap labour. Responses need to be holistic, and to address both economic and non-economic factors. Responses must also be designed for local conditions, and must address the specific factors drawing people into trafficking.

2.3 Project objectives and interventions

The overall objective of the TICW project is to reduce trafficking in children and women for labour exploitation in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region through effective, integrated sub-regional, national, and sub-national programmes.

A major focus of the project is capacity building. Project staff have, for instance, assisted the development of combined NGO-government anti-trafficking programmes. Staff have worked towards the formation of sub-regional working groups to produce good practice guidelines. They have held

stakeholder workshops at national, provincial, and local levels. Together with stakeholders, they have produced manuals on market-oriented vocational training, alternative livelihood strategies, income generation, and networking & co-ordination.

The TICW Project also deals with awareness raising and advocacy, to promote changes in attitudes and behaviour. Project staff have co-operated with national and provincial authorities to develop and implement advocacy programmes, and to include trafficking issues in provincial planning.

The TICW Project also supplies direct assistance and conducts community projects. Every stage of the community projects, from the design to the evaluation, is conducted in partnership with community members and other stakeholders. Community projects are linked to activities at the district, provincial, and national level.

The details of each specific programme vary between sites, depending on local conditions.

3 EVALUATION OF EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

3.1 Responsiveness/Relevance

The TICW Project fits within the Agenda for Action of the first World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (Stockholm, 1996), and is a response to two of the ILO's core conventions: the 1973 Minimum Age for Employment Convention (No.138), and the 1999 Worst Forms of Child labour Convention (No.182). The project also serves the objectives of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. All countries in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region have ratified at least one of these conventions, and have, to varying degrees, translated them into national legislation.

The project has a number of safeguards to ensure that its activities are appropriate to local socio-economic and cultural conditions. Interventions are designed by local implementing agencies in consultation with target families and are carried out by local people. Income generation schemes are based on local market analyses, and non-formal educational materials are based on local conditions and needs.

Most projects have been designed using participatory approaches, including the Objective-Oriented Project Planning technique that aims to identify - with stakeholders - problems (in clusters), solutions, and cause and effect relationships. A well-balanced cross-section of stakeholders - including villagers - participate in project design, along with experts on specific interventions. Use of the Objective-Oriented Project Planning with community members in Lao PDR and Thailand revealed how trafficking was encouraged, among others by consumerism, interest in western rather than local products, and greed. Similar exercises in Cambodia identified the need for a more diversified local economy and increased educational opportunities.

All interventions follow strict ethical standards. Interventions are designed in consultation with the participants. Data files use identification numbers rather than names. Photographic materials are always screened for appropriateness. Regular updates on the project are made and distributed to maintain stakeholder ownership, and in the interest of information sharing, networking, and co-ordination.

3.2 Efficiency

The TICW Project employs a wide range of measures to ensure that resources are used efficiently. Structures and resources from the International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), such as national steering committees and vocational training methods, have been used wherever possible. Financial and technical resources are pooled with other agencies such as UN-IAP, ESCAP, and the IPEC Footwear and Fishing project. Standard communications and procedures have been put in electronic formats to save time for project staff and for implementing agencies. Where possible, project staff and partner agencies have been trained simultaneously. Training in Objective Oriented Project Planning was, for instance, carried out in this way. Staff at the sub-regional office try to time country missions to coincide with important meetings where technical & policy advice can be given. Country offices cross-share information: Management tools developed at the Cambodian office are, for instance, being used in surrounding countries, and project designs developed in Lao PDR are being used in Yunnan Province of China.

All interventions have monitoring components. Implementers must, for instance, send progress reports to national project staff every four months outlining progress and bottlenecks, giving self-evaluations, and suggesting changes to planned activities.

3.3 Innovativeness

The project has avoided top-down approaches to the extent that member countries' political systems allow. Once permission to conduct projects had been obtained at the national level, the details of the projects were worked out at the local level, with the participation of the villagers, to the extent possible taking into consideration the views of children. In Lao PDR and Yunnan Province of China, agricultural extension workers were instrumental in identifying realistic income-generating opportunities: in Lao PDR the workers suggested suggested training in the vaccination of chickens, while in Yunnan they suggested sweet bamboo, tea, and a special type of paddy rice. In Lao PDR, children played an important role in the development of awareness raising materials.

Project interventions are run by nationals of the countries concerned. The sub-regional project team provides support where necessary, but country nationals initiate context-based interventions.

3.4 Sustainability

The project has paid attention to staff skill development and continuity of employment. Most training interventions feature on-the-job training, creation of a mutual support network among trainees, and sharing of lessons learnt. Where appropriate, refresher courses have been included. Staff trained under other projects helped implement the TICW Project. For instance non-formal education teachers who were trained under another IPEC programme in Cambodia were mobilized to participate in the TICW project.

To ensure their commitment, local implementing agencies have been asked to contribute at least 10 percent of the overall intervention budget. These contributions normally cover salaries, office rent, meeting facilities, or equipment. In some cases local commitments have matched those made by the TICW Project. For instance, the Phayao Provincial Public Welfare

Department in Thailand committed over 50 percent of a provincial project budget that was larger than USD 100,000, and the Finance Bureau of Yunnan Province of China has provided another substantial financial contribution to project interventions in China.

Some project initiatives have been incorporated into government policy. For instance, in China and Lao PDR, committees concerned with trafficking of women and children have been set up through Government Decrees. In Cambodia, under the overall IPEC programme, a non-formal education programme for out-of-school and working children has been officially recognized by the government, which will allow students participating in the TICW project to move from the informal education system into the formal system.

Various measures have been taken to make sure that the project remains effective and relevant in the medium and long term. Implementers are documenting their experiences for later interventions to learn from. Broad alliances of stakeholders, including volunteer networks, have been mobilized. Feedback mechanisms have been established so that national policy makers continue to receive information from the grass roots level.

The TICW Project has succeeded in adapting to changing environments. All country frameworks have, for instance, been revised at various times. The project originally contained a component dealing with rehabilitation and law enforcement, but emphasis on these issues was reduced after the International Organization for Migration obtained funding for a sub-regional project to return and reintegrate victims of trafficking. Due to political considerations, an initial plan to open an additional office for Southern Viet Nam in Ho Chi Minh City was abandoned in favour of a single country office in Hanoi. The system of four-monthly reports by implementing agencies described above allows continuous monitoring and adaptation to circumstances.

Links between the ILO and national governments are maintained through a Memorandum of Understanding which sets up national frameworks for a five-year period. The Memorandum allows for the establishment of a National Steering Committee on Child Labour, and lower-level equivalents, in each country, and it enables ILO staff to work with local partner agencies. Non-governmental organizations have been given observer status in the national

steering committees, for purposes such as information sharing and co-ordination. Interventions often involve partnerships between non-governmental and governmental agencies. A good example is the project in Phayao, Thailand, which involves the Provincial Public Welfare office and two NGOs, the Rak Thai Foundation and the Planned Parenthood Association of Thailand.

3.5 Impact

In the provinces where TICW interventions have been run, hundreds of families with children at risk of being trafficked have benefited from targeted income generation schemes, educational and skills training, micro-credit, and awareness-raising interventions. To take one example, in Cambodia these services have been shown to allow families to earn sufficient income to save money and to send children to school. Trainees have gained self-confidence, have a more pro-active attitude, and have improved their earnings and health. An ILO publication entitled *Thematic evaluation of ILO-IPEC programmes in trafficking and sexual exploitation of children: Thailand, Philippines, Colombia, Costa Rica and Nicaragua* found that community level mobilization is effective for reaching out to those at risk of exploitation.

National capacity for fighting trafficking in women and children has been enhanced through the development of networks and alliances. In Lao PDR and Yunnan Province of China, no such organizations existed before the project. Discussion of research findings and involvement in project planning and monitoring has led to a more thorough understanding of issues among stakeholders. This has been demonstrated by improvements in the quality of debate in steering committee meetings and improvements in the quality of project proposals, which are far more realistic than in earlier years.

The TICW has strong potential to be scaled up: The careful documentation of lessons learnt will make it easier for interventions to be replicated elsewhere. Standard manuals and guidelines are being translated in local languages to make them more accessible. People who have been trained under the project will be able to transmit their skills to others.

4 CONCLUSIONS & LESSONS LEARNT

The Trafficking in Women and Children Project consists of interventions involving awareness raising, advocacy, capacity-building national and local levels, and direct assistance to communities in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region. It supports comprehensive community development projects in selected areas that focus on improving access to existing services and developing alternative livelihood strategies. Networks linking community-level interventions to district, provincial, and national policy makers have been constructed in Yunnan Province of China, and Lao PDR, while they are under development in Cambodia, Thailand, and Viet Nam. Mechanisms have also been constructed for sharing lessons on good practices between countries of the sub-region.

For the model to be replicated elsewhere, political commitment is needed, including provincial authorities that allow and support lower-level interventions in new sites. There must be a clear policy framework, and a well-motivated team of staff. Participating agencies must be willing to work together, and there must be continued donor interest.

The TICW project has produced a diverse range of lessons. Some of the highlights are listed below:

- Co-ordination processes at all levels should be facilitated through a focal point that brings agencies together, supplies information, and follows up on decisions.
- Competition among international agencies and donor agencies with different mandates and budgeting periods can create problems.
- Staff should remain in their positions for a considerable length of time so they can establish effective working relationships. Training for staff should be long-term rather than one-off interventions.
- If child labour and anti-trafficking concerns are to be incorporated into national policy and planning processes, it is crucial that the country's Ministry of Planning or Prime-Minister's Office is represented in National Steering Committees on Child Labour.
- Meaningful child participation in national planning is difficult.
- Local participation and ownership are crucial to the success of projects, but take time and require experienced and well-trained staff. Local staff may initially require extensive assistance.

- Selection of well-qualified implementing agencies can yield quick results, but these agencies are not always willing to work in remote areas.
- Income generating activities should be based on proper analysis of customer preference rather than preference of local producers.
- Preventive interventions through awareness raising, education, and the creation of economic opportunities should be complemented by initiatives that attempt to simultaneously deal with the demand side of the equation.
- It should be recognized that labour migration will continue in situations of economic disparity. Attention must be directed towards creating acceptable working environments in sectors that host high numbers of illegal labor migrants.
- More efforts should be made to assess adverse effects of interventions in other policy fields, such as campaigns to promote tourism. Relevant agencies must be lobbied to mitigate possible adverse effects.
- Policy makers and local partner agencies should be trained in using the media to mobilize support for changes in policies and attitudes.

Trafficking in children and women for various forms of labour exploitation has assumed massive proportions, not the least in Asia.

Momentum is building however to address the issue. Some agencies already built up some experience in addressing the plight of victims of trafficking and those at risk, while others intend to join in. In order to document lessons learnt to date several Bangkok based United Nations agencies and International Organizations joined hands in the lead-up to the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Yokohama, Japan (in December 2001). These agencies collaborated to select a series of 'good practices' to combat commercial exploitation of children in East Asia and the Pacific and published these in a joint publication entitled 'Asia Pacific Answers: Good practices in combating commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth'.

One of the chapters in the aforementioned publication covers the ILO Mekong sub-regional project to combat trafficking in children and women (ILO TICW-project) and was presented during the Yokohama meeting. Due to popular demand and in order to share the preliminary project experiences further, the chapter has now been released in a separate paper.

It is hoped that this paper will prove a meaningful contribution to understanding the ILO effort to combat trafficking in children and women in the Mekong sub-region, offer some lessons learnt, and possibly serve as an example to be replicated elsewhere.

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