



Report of the ILO Japan Asian Meeting On the Trafficking of Children For Labour and Sexual Exploitation Manila – 10-12 October 2001

The ILO-Japan Asian Meeting on Labour and Sexual Exploitation was successfully held in Manila from October 10-12, 2001. The Meeting completed a Conference Report consisting of Proceedings, Presentations, and Minutes of the Working Group Discussions, Technical Reports and Country papers. The Report, finished in CD-ROM format, was made available to participants and organizers within a week of the meeting.¹

This summary report highlights the background and achievements of the meeting.

1. Introduction

With support from the ILO-Japan Multi-Bilateral Programme, the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) and the ILO-IPEC organized the ILO Japan Asian Meeting on the Trafficking of Children for Labour and Sexual Exploitation from October 10-12, 2001 in Manila, Philippines. This Meeting was the fourth in the series of Asian Meetings on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. These meetings have formed part of the Asia Pacific's response to the global adoption of ILO Convention on the Prohibition and Immediate Action on the Worst forms of Child Labour (No. 182).

The trafficking of children for labour and sexual exploitation is one of the worst forms of child labour. A form of contemporary slavery, trafficking reduces its victims to commodities that are bought, sold, transported, resold for sexual and labour exploitation. Separated from families, often illegal in status, young victims can rarely access child protection institutions or services even where they exist.

Since 1993, the ILO-IPEC has been actively involved in action to combat child trafficking in this region through its country programmes in Thailand, the Philippines, Cambodia and Nepal. Key interventions include advocacy and awareness raising, capacity building of government and non-governmental partners, the provision of vocational training and education to the victims and the provision of economic alternatives to the families of those at risk. IPEC has also launched two sub-regional projects to combat trafficking of children and women for labour and sexual exploitation, one in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region, and one in South Asia with the financial support of the UK and US Governments, respectively.

2. Objectives

Considering the extensive ground level experiences and activities of ILO-IPEC in the different countries of Asia, the Asian Meeting sought, through expert presentations and interactive working group discussions, to establish emerging trends and patterns in situation of and responses to the trafficking of children for labour and sexual exploitation. Given that employers' and workers' organizations still played a limited role in the work against the trafficking of children, the Meeting gave special emphasis to interventions, advice and practical tools that would strengthen their contributions and lead to stronger alliances among ILO constituents and civil society.

¹ The CD Roms are available with the ILO-IPEC Office in Bangkok, Thailand.

3. Participants

Eighty participants attended the meeting, consisting of thirteen (13) government representatives, twelve (12) representatives of employers' organizations, ten (10) representatives of workers' organizations, twelve (12) resource persons and eleven (11) ILO officials. Country representatives came from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Nepal, Japan, and Sri Lanka. Mongolia, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam.²

4. Outcomes

- A Memorandum of Common Understanding for Tri-Partite Action On the Trafficking of Children for Labour and Sexual Exploitation

For the first time in the ILO-Japan Asian Meetings, the participants, through their representatives, formulated a Memorandum of Common Understanding on Tri-Partite Action on the Trafficking of Children for Labour and Sexual Exploitation. The Memorandum of Understanding is expected to serve as an input to the Second Congress on Commercial Sexual Exploitation to be held in Yokohama this December 2001.

- Eleven Resource Presentations on the Trafficking of Children in Asia

The following technical papers and presentations were prepared for the meeting:

1. An Overview of the Trafficking of Children for Labour and Sexual Exploitation , presentation by Thetis Mangahas, Regional Adviser IPEC;
2. The Development of National Plans of Action: the Sri Lankan Case Study, by Dr/ Harendra de Silva, National Child Protection Authority, Sri Lanka;
3. Bilateral and Regional Cooperation Against the Trafficking of Children for Labour and Sexual Exploitation, the Bangladesh Perspective by Mr. Murari Datta, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, Bangladesh;
4. Thailand's Experience in Regional mechanisms on Trafficking by Ms. Srisak Thiarry, National Council of Youth Development;
5. Prevention of the Trafficking of Children: The ILO-IPEC Sub-Regional Programme on the Trafficking of Women and Children in the Greater Mekong by Mr. Herve Berger, Chief Technical Adviser;
6. The Recovery, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Child Victims of Trafficking: Insights from the Trafficking in Children Sub-Regional Programme in South Asia by Ms. Tine Staermose, Chief Technical Adviser;
7. Action Against the Trafficking of Children for Labour Exploitation: The Pilot Programme in the Port of Manila;
8. Action Against the Trafficking of Children for Sexual Exploitation: The Perspective from Sri Lanka by Mr. Bhogendra Sharma, Center for Victims of Torture;
9. The Role of Employers' and Workers' Organizations Against the Trafficking of Children for Labour and Sexual Exploitation by Mr. Stirling Smith, Consultant;
10. Trade Union Action in Combating Child Labour Action in the Tourism Industry of the Philippines by Mr. Daniel Edralin, National Union of Workers in the Hotels, Restaurants and Allied Industries
11. Trade Union Action against Child Labour: the Vietnam Case Study by Ms. Pham Thi Thanh of the Vietnamese General Confederation of Labour.

In addition, the representatives of the Bangladesh Employers' Federation and the Nepalese Chamber of Commerce spoke on the participation of employers' organizations in the work against the trafficking of children.

- Thirteen Country papers:

Each participating government prepared in consultation with the Employers' and Workers' organizations and other relevant national institutions a country paper documenting the

² The final list of participants is part of the CD-ROM conference report.

country situation and its efforts against the trafficking of children for labour and sexual exploitation. The country papers looked into the ways that individual countries intend to initiate action against trafficking, and where such a process was already underway, the means by which the process could be strengthened.

- Reports on Working Group Discussions on the Situation of Trafficking of Children in Asia, and Tripartite Action on Prevention, Restoration of Rights and Rehabilitation

The Meeting took a participatory process with five Working Group discussions on (a) the extent of the trafficking situation in South and Southeast Asia and (b) Tripartite Action on the Prevention, Recovery, and Rehabilitation of Child Victims. The discussions resulted in five working group reports that served as the basis for the Memorandum of Common Understanding.

- Demonstration of Tripartite in Action

The project site visit to the Halfway House at the Port of Manila demonstrated tri-partite collaboration with other civil society groups. The participants saw the effective joint action of various government agencies, the shipping company, the company workers and an NGO, Visayan Forum, in interrupting the movement of young people, mainly girls, for exploitative jobs in Manila.

- UN and International Agency Forum on Cooperation

The Area Office in cooperation with the UN agencies organized, as a side event, a forum on UN and international agency cooperation in the field of trafficking of children for labour and sexual exploitation. Panel members consisted of the United Nations Development Programme, the International Organization of Migration, the United Nations Children's Fund, and the Regional Working Group on Child Labour. The ILO's InFocus Programme on the Declaration provided information on its new special action programme on forced labour.

- Information Dissemination Activities

- Press Conference and Media Coverage

The Meeting has a well-attended press conference immediately after the inaugural session of the Meeting. Print, radio and television covered the site visit at the port. In this media coverage, the ILO-IPEC and the Government of Japan's support was extensively mentioned.

- Launching of the ILO-IPEC Asia Working Papers Series

The meeting acknowledged the ILO-Japan Multi-Bilateral Programme's financial support to the publication of ILO-IPEC technical papers related to the ILO-Japan Asian meetings and other research efforts on the worst forms of child labour. The ILO-IPEC Working Papers' Volume 1 printed the technical papers of the Asian Meeting in Phuket. Volume 2 covered the technical papers of the Asian Meetings in Jakarta and Dhaka.

5. Special Difficulties

The irritant in this year's Meeting was the problem of the payment of participants' and resource persons' DSA in local currency. Because of ILO financial rules, the payment of the DSA was made in Philippine pesos, which is not easily convertible to US dollars. Because of miscommunication with the hotel, the registration counter accepted US dollars as room deposits and returned the funds to participants in Philippine pesos.

A similar problem occurred at the ILO Asian Meeting in Bangladesh last year. There is a strong need to reconsider ILO financial rules regarding the payment of DSAs in local

currency especially where foreign exchange currency rules are inflexible. It would only seem fair that if these rules were applied to participants, then the same should have been applied to ILO officials, who while participating in these meetings, received their DSAs in foreign currency.

6. Follow-Up Action

The success of any regional meeting will be measured from how the employers' and workers' organizations from the participating countries are able to successfully initiate action against the trafficking of children in their own countries. One of the more important ways to make sure that this happens is to disseminate the results of the ILO-Japan Meeting. In this respect, the ILO-Japan Multi-Bilateral programme has agreed to support further information dissemination activities through:

- (a) reproduction of the final version of the Conference Report;
- (b) publication of the Meeting's proceedings in print version;
- (c) dissemination of case studies from participating countries.

These reports should be given to the ILO Area Offices and to the IPEC National Programme managers for widest possible dissemination.