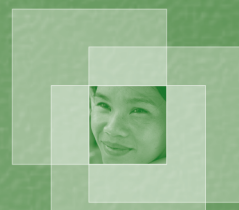




Meeting the Challenge

Proven Practices for Human Trafficking Prevention in the Greater Mekong Sub-region



International Labour Organization

CAMBODIA

DESTINATION INTERVENTION

How protecting women in prostitution can lead them out of it and deter others from entering it

THE PROVEN PRACTICE:

Creating an innovative and supporting mechanism within the greater community of influential authorities and then a self-help group within the brothel/karaoke community. Working side by side, the two groups help find and rescue trafficking victims, make workers aware of their rights and give them access to alternatives.

Promoting rights and life skills among young women at risk in Sihanouk Ville, Cambodia

THE INITIAL CHALLENGE:

Located on the southern coast, Sihanouk Ville is economically progressive as the country's major port, attracting sailors, fishermen, dockworkers and related factory workers. Its sandy beaches have also made it a major tourist destination (especially with Cambodians). Both aspects have encouraged a thriving entertainment industry of hotels, guesthouses, massage parlours, nightclubs, bars, brothels and karaoke establishments. Significant levels of poverty, poor infrastructure and frequent natural disasters found outside the resort areas and the port make the city a magnet for a population ready to migrate for economic reasons. Young women tend to find jobs in the entertainment sector and in a number of cases are eventually forced or coerced into prostitution. Most children and women trafficked within Cambodia end up in sexual exploitation (though many are also found toiling in garment factories, begging in the streets and labouring on construction sites or in domestic work).



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Previous research identified some 50 brothels in Sihanouk Ville, with 331 female prostitutes. The researchers also estimated that there were about 500 young (aged 18–25) prostitutes working in karaoke, massage and hotel establishments.¹

In a national stakeholder ownership exercise meeting in 2004, Sihanouk Ville was selected as a targeted destination area for intervention to prevent trafficking, as part of the International Labour Organization's Mekong Sub-regional Project to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women (ILO-TICW).

THE RESPONSE:

The Khmer Women's Cooperation for Development (KWCD), an organization with experience in programmes for females in prostitution, stepped in to create a network of young women in the entertainment industry for trafficking prevention and protection. The ultimate objective was to change young women's attitudes toward prostitution work by first empowering them to negotiate with their employers for fair working conditions and then by giving them skills and encouraging them to save money that would help them seek alternative options.

¹ Provincial Department of Health, Working Group on HIV/AIDS in 2003

THE PROCESS:

Initially, three KWCD provincial staff members were trained in project design, monitoring and evaluation skills. That team worked with ILO-TICW staff and experts to develop an activity plan. The proposal was based on the belief that women in prostitution require special protection to ensure that their human rights are protected, regardless of the illegality of the work. Another round of training on project monitoring and reporting involved both the KWCD team and municipal officers from the Municipal Department of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MDOSVY).

The KWCD, in collaboration with a research company, Crossroads to Development, conducted a survey of one district where most brothels are located. They identified 210 women workers, estimated to represent some 73 per cent of workers in all brothels, with an average age of 23. Of them, 4 per cent had started working when they were younger than 18 (at age 11, 14, 16 and 17), and 13 said they were tricked into prostitution. The reasons they gave for working in brothels included poverty and debts within the family caused by various factors such as inability of parents to earn, no access to land and natural disasters (drought). Death or separation of parents was also mentioned as a push factor.

The KWCD team worked with the municipal officers from the Department of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MDOSVY) and the Coalition to Address Sexual Exploitation of Children in Cambodia (COSECAM) to develop the curriculum and methodology for the training of trainers for awareness raising among all network members. The Municipal Department of Women's Affairs, the LICADHO human rights NGO and ILO specialists provided technical assistance, with materials from COSECAM and the International Organization for Migration.



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The KWCD team then approached various authorities among NGOs, government departments (including members of the Municipality Committee on Child Rights Protection, the district working group on Child Rights Protection, the HIV/AIDS working group and the police as well as employers and village leaders in five districts to be

part of a network of “gatekeepers” (frontline protectors) to prevent and protect trafficking victims.

Those members were sensitized on trafficking and gender issues, relevant laws and policies and how they could be productive toward helping young women involved in the illegal activity of prostitution move into better employment situations. The aim was to shift policing or crack-down attitudes to more “assisting-oriented” attitudes. In response, the Sihanouk Ville police, for example, set up a telephone hotline for receiving tips on forced labour, abuse and trafficking cases from entertainment workers.

At the same time, the KWCD team expanded its existing network for HIV prevention among entertainment workers (including women in prostitution) to ask young women to participate in a network for educating them on their labour and human rights. Once a large number of women agreed (185), 25 of them were invited to volunteer for training as a peer educator in what would be a self-help group to reach other women in the industry and those at risk of being trafficked into it. The self-help groups are to provide social support (peer counselling) on issues such as defence from violence and harassment, access to health and legal service and economic support in the form of savings groups, training in accessing credit and alternative employment opportunities and livelihood skills. The peer educators were given tutoring and materials on trafficking prevention, relevant laws and international conventions, women’s rights and negotiation skills. They were sensitized on why they should report under-aged workers or adult victims of forced labour or abuse to police or the KWCD and instructed on how to monitor workplaces. They also were coached in running a savings programme for network members, which the KWCD manages, including how to encourage members to save money that could help them change jobs in the future.

The peer educators then started sharing their newly learned information and skills with others in the industry, specifically women in prostitution and those employed in karaoke bars, and assisting those who needed to seek out specific health or legal services. In the long term, the self-help groups could be sufficiently strengthened to advocate for better protection of workers in this sector and enter into alliances with different workers' groups, including community-based organizations of entertainment workers.

The KWCD set up training programmes on rights awareness and life skills, such as women's rights and labour laws, and negotiating and problem-solving skills, health issues and where to find health services, and vocational skills. The work skills included hair dressing and cosmetology and included an apprenticeship with one of four local beauty parlours. To enable the target groups to attend training programmes, the KWCD team and the peer educators assisted, when necessary, karaoke workers and women in prostitution in negotiating with their "employers".

The KWCD team collected existing and relevant (trafficking awareness, child rights, sexual exploitation and gender issues) leaflets, booklets, posters, training curriculum manuals from NGOs and government departments to distribute to peer educators and the network members. The team met monthly (during the one-year project duration) with the peer educators. They had three monthly meetings with the gatekeepers and selected network members to share information and discuss issues and progress, such as how to assist at-risk and victims of trafficking. The peer educators received refresher training periodically to help strengthen their skills and the process.

OUTCOMES:

- 185 network members, with 25 trained peer educators among them, whose awareness raising included trafficking prevention strategies, how to assist at-risk and victims of trafficking and roles and responsibilities as a network member. 215 women in prostitution participated in 17 awareness-raising courses; and 404 women working in karaoke bars participated in 40 similar courses. 59 women in prostitution were helped in accessing needed health services.



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- A network of 30 gatekeepers was created, and each member was sensitized on human trafficking complexities, forced labour, the worst forms of child labour and ways to identify victims as well as those at high risk.
- 13 HIV-positive women working in karaoke bars were assisted in returning home to live and work in a small family-run business, such as a grocery shop and selling cigarettes, sugar cane juice or telephone-calling service; one 16-year-old girl living near a brothel whose parents have AIDS was set up in a mobile beauty business. She also received a small grant from the Khmer HIV/AIDS NGO Alliance (KHANA),

through the KWCD. With her earnings, she supports her family and sends her sister and brother to school.

- Guideline booklets for setting up a network and peer educators were distributed to peer educators, network leaders, support/saving group leaders, gatekeepers and other relevant individuals.
- 600 saving books were distributed to peer educators, network members and gatekeepers (who used them to promote and encourage other women to save money); 40 of 61 members of three saving groups among the women in prostitution have built up a savings account, while 114 of 124 members of seven saving groups among karaoke workers have saved money.
- Four beauty parlour owners offered six-month apprenticeship training, and 20 women (two in brothels and the rest from karaoke bars) participated in the programme. Two of the trainees have set up their own business.
- The living environment and working conditions (long hours) have improved through the women's negotiation with employers and their health has improved through the sharing of information in various meetings organized by the HIV/AIDS working group, the Municipal Department of Health and the KWCD.
- Communities and local authorities, especially police officers, commune/village chiefs and commune women officers, have recognized the importance of a community network on preventing and protecting trafficking in children and women. Most reports of trafficking cases and other abuses in the entertainment sector have come from network members through the police hotline.

“The network activities are having a deep impact in the targeted communities,” said Chry Monyrath, a KWCD programme coordinator. “Police report there has been an increase in reporting of abuses, and entertainment business owners have been open in allowing their employees to participate in activities, which is increasing their knowledge and awareness on issues that can help them better protect themselves.”

ONGOING CHALLENGES:

- Though there has been no reported trouble, most of the staff and network members are concerned about their security after they report a trafficking case.
- Developing a savings mentality has been difficult.
- Finding sufficient employment alternatives also remains difficult.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- Effective cooperation in preventing trafficking has been established by encouraging people to make the project their own – getting them to take a more active role and to take responsibility for making it a success.
- Seeking support and agreement from senior officials (such as the heads of departments and non-government organizations) early in the project encouraged participation from their juniors. Once the provincial governor’s support for the project had been secured, officials’ doors opened more easily.
- Participatory planning and training around trafficking issues and project concepts and processes have built a common understanding and confidence in tackling the problem. NGO partners provided training to local community councils and village chiefs on collecting local data. Those involved reported that the training taught them new skills and, as a result of collecting local data, they got to know those in their village much better and can work together more easily.
- Regular meetings of project stakeholders has built trust and increased the level of cooperation.



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- An assessment of training employment needs and workplace placement for apprenticeships should be conducted at the start of the action programme.
- The network members of karaoke and women in prostitution, ex-trainees (post apprenticeship) and savings group members should be monitored and provided support. The 12-month programme was not long enough for them to develop capacity for taking on the network responsibilities without any support from the KWCD.
- Peer educators should meet regularly to discuss problems and actions that need to be taken.
- Awareness raising on child trafficking issues should be regularly conducted among women in prostitution and women working in karaoke and other bars, gatekeepers and local authorities, especially police officers and commune women officers.

