



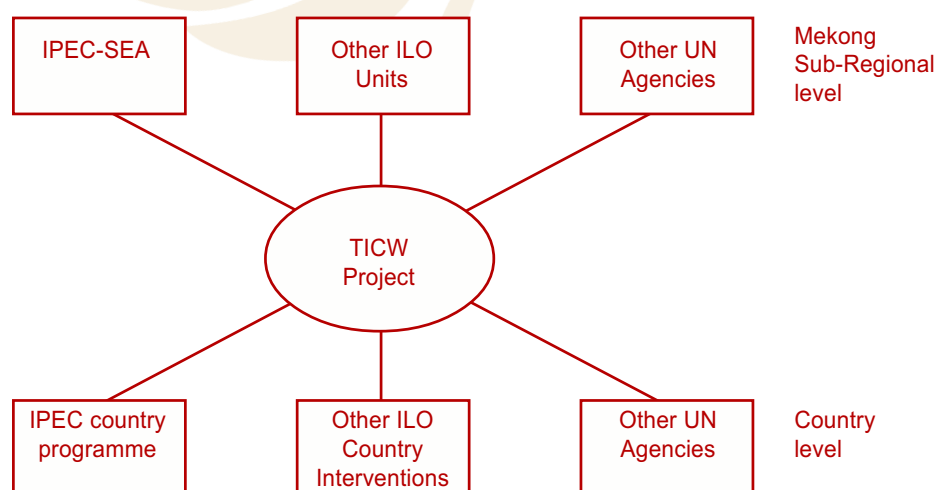
All together now! (Inter-agency collaboration)

Background and context

Trafficking in children and women is a complex issue which has many social and cultural dimensions. It should therefore be of concern to many and varied institutions, governmental and non-governmental, which are active in similar or related fields. The sub-regional ILO-TICW project office in Bangkok has forged strategic working relations with many international and UN organisations concerned with labour and human rights – IOM, ASEAN, UNDP, UNICEF, UNAIDS, ADB, etc - in order to establish its role in attacking the root causes of trafficking and promoting prevention as its main strategy. In the countries where the project is operational, a number of organisations were already active in the various aspects of rescue and rehabilitation of trafficked victims, in liaison with the law enforcement agencies, while preventive interventions were largely untouched.

As the project has moved on, the sub-regional office has cemented joint activities in partnership with different specialised technical units of the broader UN family, as well as within ILO – in particular in IPEC. Concerning alternatives to trafficking, work is being done with the IPEC Footwear & Fishing projects, on labour markets with the UN Inter Agency Project (UN-IAP), on psycho-social counselling & trauma with ESCAP’s Human Resources Development department, on workers/employers organisations with IPEC SEA and ILO/Japan, and on research and information sharing with UN-IAP, and the Regional Working Group on Child Labour (RWG-CL).

As the TICW project employs process-based approaches, works towards sustainability, and cannot be successful on its own, networking, coordination and collaboration have been crucial. This spirit of sharing and productive collaboration has been taken into each national project in five countries. It is all too easy for projects, especially complex ones, to become inward looking. Staff are too busy to spend time looking outside, where the rewards sometimes seem marginal. The TICW project has managed to join forces with others, both regionally and nationally, and has managed to do this in various ways by finding common ground with GOs and NGOs, and also with the UN and other international agencies.



Implementation

At the regional level, inter-agency collaboration and partnership have been achieved through joint data collection, exchange of information, referral services, having a shared pool of consultants, coordination among country focal points, participation in each other's committees and working groups, and striving to work towards joint committees, joint policy statements, joint lobbying and advocacy and joint funding of local partners. The overall aim is to add value to each other's work, avoid duplication of effort and wastage of resources, and to create solidarity and strength in advocacy about the trafficking in children and women issue.

1: Joint Interventions

The above partnerships with ESCAP-HRD, RWG-CL, UN-IAP, IPEC Footwear & Fishing, and a range of ILO units in Headquarters¹ have resulted, *inter alia*, in the production of practical working tools (Technical Intervention Areas – TIAs)² for the use of national project offices. The TIAs consist of comprehensive written guidelines or manuals on a wide range of relevant issues, and are for the use of National Project Coordinators, partners and others. The TIAs include case studies, good practices and lessons learned, and provide literature references for “how to do” materials. They complement each other, with a view to being used in an integrated manner in response to the multi-dimensional nature of trafficking. Summary notes have also been prepared as fact sheets. The TIAs have been produced with a focus on this particular project, but have been in high demand from other organisations.

In preparation for the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Yokohama, Japan (in 2001), a panel of Bangkok based United Nations agencies and international organizations collaborated to produce a collection of ‘good practices’ for combating commercial exploitation of children in East Asia and the Pacific. The seven agencies³ developed criteria for the selection of good practices, selected these – including the TICW-project – and coordinated documentation into a publication that was presented during the said conference in Yokohama.

In Thailand, a charity concert was organized to promote human security in Asia & the Pacific. The event included a performance by the Suzuki Orchestra of Turin (Italy) that is composed of 6 to 14 year old children, a photo exhibition, and VDO images covering human security issues including trafficking - and promising solutions. The event was jointly organised by the project, UNESCAP, UNAIDS, UNDCCP, and UNICEF.

¹ Start & improve your business (SIYB), Social Finance Unit (SFU), Small Enterprise Development Unit (SED), Gender Promotion Programme (Genprom) and the International Migration Branch (Migrant).

² TIAs have been produced, or are in production, on legal labour migration, rural skills training, micro-finance, psycho-social counselling, non-formal education, gender equality, project management, networking/coordination/collaboration, child-focused action research, and participatory planning, monitoring and facilitation (ToT).

³ ECPAT, ILO-IPEC, IOM, UN-AIDS, UN-ESCAP, UN-IAP, UNICEF.



2: Participation in regional coordinating bodies

The ILO-TICW project is an active member of the Regional Working Group on Child Labour (RWG-CL), *inter alia* providing technical backstopping to its research project⁴. RWG-CL is composed of two United Nations Agencies⁵, two international NGOs⁶ and one regional NGO (Child Workers in Asia – CWA). Each of these agencies has its own offices and partner agencies in countries in Asia, enabling broad outreach by the RWG-CL to hundreds of organizations⁷ all over Asia and the Pacific. Through its participation in this forum, the ILO-TICW project has working links to many related organisations, and can tap into these on behalf of the TICW country projects as needed. The RWG-CL members meet regularly (in Bangkok) to discuss mutual concerns and overlapping interests that have led to a series of joint initiatives/projects. The materials produced under these projects have been distributed widely through the RWG-CL network of partner agencies.

ILO-TICW project staff participate regularly in meetings of the UN working group on trafficking (UNWG). These meetings present an opportunity to share information and identify potential for collaboration. The project has made it a policy to share a quarterly progress report with all members of the UNWG.

When realizing that the project's sub-regional advisory committee was more or less composed of the same candidates as the think-tank to be set up for the UN-IAP, efforts were made to merge the two bodies resulting in the joint Sub-regional Advisory Committee (SURAC). This body meets at least once a year to discuss broad frameworks and advise both projects on topical issues.

3: Other linkages

The project initiated informal meetings with other projects (UN-IAP and IOM) that have substantial budgets to combat trafficking with the aim of identifying 'niches' for each project. The following understanding was reached: IOM would focus on the return and reintegration of trafficked people, IAP on co-ordination and information sharing, and ILO on prevention of trafficking. ESCAP-HRD, another substantial 'player', has a niche focusing on trauma treatment. UNICEF, which more recently embarked on an anti-trafficking project, has a broad focus on child protection.

The project has provided inputs to the Ausaid funded ASEAN project to combat trafficking. Discussions are ongoing with ADB concerning the negative side-effects of road construction (migrant labour, HIV/Aids etc), and how ADB can help mitigate these. Project staff have also provided input to the (World Bank initiated) Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper for Cambodia.

In recent months the project has worked intensively with SC-UK which is about to launch its next phase project to combat trafficking. The TICW-project has also drafted a next phase document of its own, and the joint meetings have been used to discuss complementarity and potential for collaboration, resulting in a set of guidelines on collaboration.

⁴ RWG-CL produced a research handbook (as another TIA) on how to conduct effective child-focused, action-oriented research on the worst forms of child labour using integrated research methods (the publication will be released towards the end of 2002).

⁵ UNICEF East Asia & Pacific Regional Office, and the Thailand Office, and ILO-IPEC, including the sub-regional office for Southeast Asia and the Thailand Office

⁶ Save the Children Alliance (Save the Children Sweden, Regional Office for Southeast Asia) and World Vision International, Asia & Pacific Region

⁷ The RWG-CL address directory covers over 1,600 organizations (and interested individuals) all over Asia and the Pacific.

4: National and sub-national inter-agency collaboration

In Cambodia, agreement was reached with UNICEF and UN-IAP to co-fund the technical backstopping of a body created to monitor the implementation of the national five-year plan to combat trafficking and sexual exploitation of children. In addition, two action programmes were devised to facilitate vertical and horizontal coordination, communication and information sharing among villages and districts up to provincial level, including the creation of provincial steering committees which report to the NSC. In coordination with UNICEF, UN-IAP and IOM, they undertake similar efforts in four other provinces of the country.

In Lao PDR, representatives of the UN-IAP sponsored anti-trafficking committee participate as observers in the ILO supported National Steering Committee on child labour and trafficking (and vice versa). This has *inter alia* resulted in a spread of geographical focus, with ILO's project focusing its operation mainly in Khammouane, Savannakhet and Champassak, and IAP therefore deciding to work in two other province/s. In Viet Nam a similar arrangement was made.

Achievements

- Innovative/creative

There is nothing new in inter-agency collaboration. What the project has achieved, however, is to sustain and build more and more links in the collaboration network. This takes time and effort, which is often lacking unless the area is prioritised, which is the case here.

- Effective/impact

Following the five national Roundtable meetings related to the TIAs on rural skills training and micro-finance, better linkages among 'expert service providers' and project partners/other organisations were established. The Industrial & Commercial Association in China is studying the access of poor people to credit. Agencies in Lao and Cambodia have been exploring rural skills training initiatives (rather than traditional centre-based vocational training services for wage employment).

- Sustainability

Joint work with different kinds of agencies means that the idea of preventing trafficking in children and women can get into the minds of people who might not think about it otherwise. The wider network of agencies ensures that the project thrust is not just dependent on its own office and funding, and that others can contribute to the cause both now and in future.

- Relevance

Collaboration with many international, regional and national organisations means that the ILO-TICW project is able to disseminate and encourage debate and action on an important issue about which little is known beyond the commercial sex work area, except by those directly engaged in the relevant sectors.

- Efficiency

Collaboration results in synergy and a more complex and higher quality output, not to mention the fact that joint interventions reduce costs. The jointly developed research handbook (RWG-CL) has been made possible by different agencies chipping into the total budget. Bringing together different perspectives from different agencies ensured that the handbook would be relevant to a broad audience and cover the issue from different angles – the same was the case for other TIAs.

The Subregional Advisory Committee (SURAC) is a joint effort of the TICW-project and UN-IAP that aims to provide advice on trafficking issues rather than for specific agencies, and prevents competition among otherwise competing advisory bodies.



Lessons learned

- Inter-agency collaboration is not always easy beyond basic information sharing, as time and effort are required to make links, build bridges between agencies, and devise and undertake joint activities. Often these efforts are not first priority, and are sometimes allowed to lapse. Collaborative initiatives are sometimes dependent on the energy and enthusiasm of individuals, and individuals move on.
- Different agencies, including donors, have different internal systems, different programme or project cycles and different fiscal years. It is a challenge to develop joint or collaborative activities in these circumstances.
- It is necessary to mainstream/integrate TICW-concerns into the policies of UN agencies and ensure co-ordinated rather than independent interventions. There are adequate resources available for anti-trafficking initiatives: meaningful co-ordination and management needs to improve.
- Concerning lessons learned in the development of TIAs, there is a wealth of knowledge in ILO, yet it can be difficult to tap. Personal rather than institutional contact usually works better when it comes to starting joint or collaborative initiatives, so effort has to go into researching and cultivating the right people. Inputs from local staff and partners is essential to develop 'hands-on' and practical tools. The participation of stakeholders takes a lot of time, but leads to higher quality product.
- To date, a number of broad niches for the major UN actors have been created, including ESCAP-HRD on psycho-social counselling, IOM on rescue and rehabilitation, UN-IAP on data collection and co-ordination, UNICEF on child protection and the ILO-IPEC (this project) on prevention. Consultation during the ILO-TICW Mid Term Evaluation showed that the niches are often too broad to prevent overlap (particularly those of the ILO-IPEC and UNICEF), suggesting the need for further communication towards identifying a strategic focus for each agency, and in a practical sense how best to complement each other's input at country level.
- The joint activities initiated by the ILO-TICW project have contributed to regional collaboration (through the TIAs - technical intervention areas). The project has made considerable effort to facilitate collaboration at national level through the design processes used. Yet there is evidence of some confusion amongst national government counterparts regarding liaison points with this and other projects addressing trafficking in Cambodia and Lao PDR. This suggests that project impact could be enhanced with further attention to its relationships with government structures (particularly in these two countries) and with other agencies working within the same provinces, districts or villages.
- Co-ordination among implementing agencies has improved within the last three years through efforts by this and other projects, as well as the inception of the UN-IAP and the RWG-CL. This trend would indicate greater motivation for collaboration, yet the challenge of *how* remains pertinent for ILO-IPEC and other agencies. It should also be noted that a lack of collaboration between donors on the resourcing of trafficking initiatives could threaten co-ordination among the implementing agencies.

Conditions for replicability

- People who represent agencies need to have the authority to make decisions on their agencies' behalf when in inter-agency meetings. Without this, moving forward on joint activities can become hostage to a constant waiting for the green light.
- If all those present in interagency meetings could share plans at the inception stage (rather than when plans have been finalised/formalised) there would be more scope for the identification of meaningful collaboration. Flexibility in this regard is important, though planning cycles among agencies will always differ.
- Interagency meetings should be used as opportunities for those present to share their plans on a regular basis, and to update other agencies on progress made.
- If interagency meetings become large (more than 10 participants) they can be useful for information sharing, though information may be more efficiently shared electronically, with the meeting reserved for discussion and debate. Large meetings are less suited for the initiation of co-ordinated and/or collaborative action, which needs to be done at a smaller more practical "working group" level.
- A secretariat that is funded with a staff is essential to facilitate co-ordination and collaboration.
- People who have known each other for a long time and have built up a relationship of trust are in a better position to bring their organisations together for joint interventions. Frequent staff changes can be an impediment to good inter-agency collaboration.

References

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For detailed information on the TICW project see: www.ilo.org/asia/child/trafficking

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