Start with what you have and where you are  
(Skills training for self-employment)

Background and context

An essential element of combating trafficking is to help make it worthwhile – economically and socially - for people at risk of trafficking and exploitation to stay where they are. Poverty is not the only reason why families sell children or why young women willingly enter commercial sex work. It is also because of boredom – what is there to do in the village for young people? It is also because of the pull of consumerism. Advertising and mass media communications make sure that most village people have heard about the “bright lights” of the city. They too would like to have a TV, a fridge, a motorbike, a generator for electricity – not unreasonable desires – and see there is no chance to get these things by staying put.

The TICW project comprises at its base three linked areas - capacity building, awareness raising and direct assistance. Direct assistance is the support provided to enable those at risk of trafficking to identify and engage in appropriate sustainable income generating opportunities in the village or to participate in legal labour migration schemes. These small projects are the concrete proof of serious external support to those at risk, who often live in remote and inaccessible areas where traditions are strong, and opportunities for change usually have to be sought elsewhere. In the words of a Chinese participant to a recent consultation meeting for planning the next phase of the TICW project “Without direct assistance, capacity building and awareness raising (on TICW) are nothing”.

A large number of such direct assistance activities are now going on in all five project countries, with support from partner agencies. Training in both technical and basic management skills, including basic literacy, non-formal education and community organising, has been provided to youth and women for the various activities, in order to ensure the likelihood of success and durability of their undertakings. In this way the project has attempted to provide an enabling environment in which both the basic survival activities of the rural poorest, and the small livelihood enterprises of the not-so-poor, can prosper.

The ILO-TICW project has attempted to provide this training on-site (or as close as possible), rather than in vocational training centres in the town or city, and also to make sure it is varied enough to provide self-employment at home for the sale of goods or services that local people need and want. Such training was furthermore not offered in isolation but where possible along with related micro-finance and business development services. There are instances in other projects where many people from the same villages have received the same skills training, resulting in fierce competition later on, and the need eventually for some to move away to be able to make a living. Moving away has also often been the result of the more traditional centre-based vocational training, which leads to expectations of wage employment, rather than self-employment, while wage employment opportunities in rural areas are limited at best as illustrated in the following diagram.
Typical employment segmentation in developing countries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rural areas</th>
<th>Urban areas</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self employment</td>
<td>Self employment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wage employment</td>
<td>Wage employment</td>
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Implementation

In Yunnan province of China, the Agriculture Bureau of the target counties developed income activities based on discussions with villagers, evaluation of their land, and an analysis of available markets, market prices, and market access by villagers. The assessment included an analysis of the soil to establish its potential for a variety of cash crops, the agriculture and animal husbandry skills and knowledge of the villagers, and possible options for improving the skills base and the possible new crops and animals that could be grown and raised in the community. It was found that target communities were mostly poor and living in remote mountain villages with difficult road access, therefore skills training needed to be based on self-employment and agricultural activities.

How, then, to identify the most appropriate cash crops and/or animal husbandry? This was done through discussions with target communities, market study, followed by community-based skills training on cash crops suitable for local development.

The Agriculture Bureau carried out a local Rapid Market Appraisal to determine the kind of crops being sold and their value in order to assess what possibilities were on offer. Based on this information, the Agriculture Extension Officer returned to the village with a tailored proposal for discussion with villagers on the best alternatives to increase income opportunities in the community. Once these were agreed upon, the training materials were developed or existing materials adapted as appropriate.

In the past, skills training for villagers had been organised in centres far from the community, which sometimes did not provide appropriate training. Villagers attending these classes often returned home unable to apply the newly acquired skills, or were frustrated by the lack of means available for them to use. In addition, little support was available in the form of follow-up. In the TICW project the Agriculture Bureau developed and tailored existing materials to the needs of the target communities, then held the training inside the village with as little theory as possible and a maximum of hands-on, practical application.

In Cambodia, rural skills training - mainly mobile courses - have been provided through NGO project partners to well over a thousand rural people in areas where trafficking occurs, with a focus on improving and making profitable what people already do. Some unschooled trainees have received non-formal education (NFE) courses and learned basic literacy before embarking on skills training. Technical courses have included animal raising (cow, pig, duck), vegetable growing, sewing and tailoring, and small business management (including rice and cow banks). In addition, village development committee (VDC) members have been trained in community organising, animal husbandry, small loan management and report writing. VDC members also learned how to use participatory rural appraisal (PRA) techniques as a method to carry out training.

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1 Jiangcheng and Menghai Counties
and employment needs assessment of village people at risk. The VDCs have been active and supportive in project management and participatory monitoring. There has been close cooperation and collaboration with agriculture offices and relevant specialist local institutions, which have developed appropriately pitched training modules, conducted training and also helped follow up trainees in implementation of their own businesses.

In Thailand, there has been similar activity as in Cambodia, with links between NGO project partners and local training institutions. Direct assistance interventions have included the promotion of income generating occupations and the establishment of a Revolving Fund system. Training approaches have included study trips, identification of income activities, upgrading skills and credit management, all of which have been provided to target groups in target villages to promote their livelihood. Alternative livelihood strategies have been identified through village meetings, sub-sector analysis and a holistic planning workshop.

One such alternative livelihood strategy concerns tourism in Chiang Rai province, where the main attractions for visitors are the ethnic minority people, their traditional clothing and villages, and the beautiful mountain scenery. One NGO partner\(^2\) is working to promote the sale of local handicrafts, including the use of on-line e-commerce. It is also providing training to families living in remote villages (accessible only on foot) to be tour/trekking guides (the husband) and home-stay hosts (the wife). This type of eco-tourism is becoming more and more popular, particularly with foreign visitors. Many would pay substantial sums for the opportunity to spend the night in a genuine wood and bamboo village house in a remote mountain valley.

Other technical training at community level includes boar raising and integrated agriculture and animal husbandry and up-grading the quality of community products to meet market standards.

In Phayao province, at least 300 families in six target villages have received training to enable them to improve their income situation to prevent trafficking. Continual meetings among the target families and the district team, village committee and target families participate together to identify potential income generating activities, household expenditure reduction and savings.

In Chiang Mai province, a study trip was organised for 23 key village leaders. The group went to Lampang province to observe the set up of a wide range of activities - revolving funds, rice banks, grouping of village women, management of local natural resources (a community forest), a weavers’ group which uses natural dyes, livestock raising, fish culture in cemented ponds, reducing household expenses (in order to save), crop cultivation without chemicals, and making bio-fertilizers. With this approach, the participants could see clearly what was going on, and could speak directly to those involved. Through this, they improved their ability to express themselves, learned how the group approach worked, and created a self-help network within the four villages. A forum was then held to discuss and disseminate the results of the study trip and to share this experience. Agreement was reached concerning the guidelines for implementation of activities within their own villages through the participation of 61 villagers (represented by 5-7 key leaders from each village sector) together with the project working staff.

In Lao PDR, a mobile vocational and business training team was set up at provincial level through Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MoLSW) skills development training centres, provincial and district agricultural extension workers, and a national NGO partner. After identification of needs and aptitudes, as well as rapid market appraisals on the demand for and pricing of potential products by self-help groups, rural skills training for organised target groups in 22 villages of three provinces has been provided in chicken raising, mushroom growing, quality rice plantation, fish culture etc.

\(^2\) Mirror Art Group in Chiang Rai.
A good example of horizontal sharing and learning is Khantabouly district in Savannakhet province, which has built up useful experiences with skills training in the growing of watermelons and mushrooms. They are to share lessons learnt with the other two districts where the revolving fund is to be distributed.

There has been close working collaboration with the Ministry of Industry and Handicrafts and the National Chamber of Commerce for local product marketing, and with other agencies concerned with vocational skills training, agricultural extension and non-formal education.

Achievements

- Innovative/creative
  Mobile training or bringing the trainer to the village instead of sending the villagers to the vocational training centre somewhere else has had the effect of making sure each trainee can take forward her/his new skills into a gainful activity. It has also meant that other family members can pick up and learn relevant new skills quickly, by helping with the (usually agricultural) work.

  Basic business management skills have been integrated into the training, together with the collection of market information, to ensure that eventual small enterprises (predominantly cash crops or sale of animals or handicrafts) are locally viable.

  The close involvement (often including training) of village institutions has meant there is broad moral support for new entrepreneurs at whatever scale, as well as the link to the community anti-trafficking campaign.

  Training in household expense reduction and savings in North Thailand is a non-traditional approach to increasing income, and proved effective.

- Effective/impact
  In Yunnan province, China, the provision of rural-based skills training (combined with micro-finance support) has had positive results beyond increasing the disposable income of target families. Some of these have a direct bearing on the prevention of trafficking including:

  • Increased school attendance of children whose families could not afford to send them to school previously.
  • Reduction of "blind" migration and trafficking from target communities. Available statistics indicate that between 1999 and mid 2000, blind migration from target villages amounted to 976 cases. Since the beginning of the project in mid-2001, the known blind migration and trafficking cases from target villages has gone down to 364. In control villages within the same Counties, there were 509 cases of blind migration and trafficking from 1999 to mid 2000, while since mid 2001 in the control villages the figure has gone down to 435, and those who did leave from target villages were better prepared.

  — Er Du, a 17 year old girl, planned to follow other villagers and leave home for a job after graduating from middle school. The ILO TICW project was then being implemented in her village. Based on her increased awareness about the dangers of trafficking she dropped the idea of leaving. Instead, her family sent her to participate in agricultural training. She learned how to reform low-yielding tea gardens and how to plant new tea. Since she has mastered how to pick, process and appraise tea, her family has established a small tea processing workshop and she is happy to be able to work within the village.

  — Xiao Luo, a villager, was trafficked to Shangdong Province in 2000. She returned with the assistance of the County, Township and Village Working Committees and attended agriculture training. She now tends 6 pigs and 10 chickens, and plants coffee on 0.7 Mu of land. Per capita, her family income has increased from RMB 400 to RMB 780.
In Lao PDR, before the project started, 106 villagers were missing from Nong Ilueang village, Song Khone district of Savannakhet province. 59 individuals have returned from Thailand since the project started after hearing about training opportunities and the revolving fund. Some of them participated in the first round of the revolving fund, in particular in the chicken raising project, in which participants learned veterinary skills and how to vaccinate their poultry stock to ensure their survival. All returnees have remained in the village since returning. No new trafficking cases have occurred since the project started, and traffickers now fear to enter these villages.

The impact of the project can also be seen directly – as a result of increased income people have bought bicycles, villages have built schools, more children attend school. Young men are self-employed in the village, producing concrete poles, well rings, bricks and other construction materials after identifying a local market need. Migrants (young women and men) have returned from Thailand on hearing about the project, and have taken up training opportunities in their home villages. There has been a decrease in the number of migrants crossing the Mekong into Thailand, as a village leader explained:

“(since the project started) ...... The unity and cohesion of the village improved ...... we were able to build and renovate the primary and secondary schools, the numbers of illegal migrant workers in Thailand have reduced from 106 people (71 females) ...... to only 47 ...... In the near future, there will be more people returning because their parents have sent them news about the project ...... the project will boost up the revolving fund and expand the shares for small enterprise development. There will soon be electricity in the village and that will be beneficial for boosting up the Income generation alternatives (IGA) and Small and medium sized enterprises (SME) that is better than selling labour abroad”.

“Local chicken raising could improve the livelihood of the families ...... better than some other activities. The villagers compared the income of those who returned from working in Thailand, most of them were exploited and some didn’t even get their wages ...... creating more burden for their families. Jobless youth and poor families are well motivated with the IGA, if they finished lower or higher secondary school and do not have placement to further their education”.

The diagram below shows the dramatic project impact on the former tradition of migration out of Nong Ilueang village.
Villagers see the main success of the project as a process that they own and where they can suggest their own preferred solutions, where planning is holistic (thus realistic) and where the results are real - improved livelihoods.”

- Relevance and sustainability
Relevant new skills relating to agriculture and other rural production are easily passed on within families through their participation in the new or improved practice. They become the “new tradition” of how to do something. If a cash crop enterprise develops, other family members have to help and then also learn how to manage it. The establishment of good relations between villages and district authorities and training institutes can be maintained.

An example from Yunnan province China shows that agricultural skills training interventions have yielded good results with funds generated for children’s schooling – children who might otherwise have migrated or been trafficked.

— In 2001, a villager named Yan Han grew “Diantun 502” on a 15 Mu plot (approximately 100 Sq.m.). In previous years he had grown crossbred paddy rice on the same land. But this year due to the new rice and better techniques he was able to increase his income by RMB 4,800 (USD 581). Yan Guang also grew “Diantun 502” and made a net income gain of RMB 4,850 (USD 587) over the previous year.

- Efficiency
The cost of training is greatly reduced when only the trainer has to move (to the village area) and be given accommodation, rather than all the trainees to a training centre. Theory is kept to a minimum, and hands-on prioritised, so that post-training implementation and results come quickly.

The project made efforts to not ‘reinvent-the-wheel’ but document and make accessible to project stakeholders existing knowledge, in particular through a publication entitled: ‘Non-formal education and rural skills training: Tools to combat the worst forms of child labour including trafficking’. The paper capitalizes on knowledge in other ILO units, and good experiences in other non-ILO funded projects.

Lessons learned

• Market opportunity analysis is crucial before deciding on what skills training to provide, as is an analysis of the potential of the villagers and of the land and other community resources. Skills training well adapted to the needs and potential of the community as well as to market demand is more likely to result in income generation opportunities that will bring real benefit.

• It is good to diversify production and not to train all villagers in one set of skills, as this may result in competition in the community and ultimately drive prices down. It is better to provide training in a diversity of skills to ensure all can then earn a decent living.

• The provision of training in the target villages is more effective than centre based training in the cities. It puts the villagers more at ease, allows a larger participation of villagers, give opportunities for the trainers to move from the theory to the practice in the real context that is familiar to the villagers. It also makes for training that is best adapted to the needs of the villagers and leads to self-employment. By contrast, centre-based vocational training leads to expectations of wage employment and can encourage migration (which can lead to trafficking).

• Access to credit and/or guaranteed funds are crucial in order to provide villagers with newly acquired skills the possibility to put them to use right away. Skills that cannot be applied on account of lack of resources (often small amounts) mean that the investments made in the skills training will not be applied and consequently be wasted.
• Agricultural extension workers going to the field to assist in solving problems encountered during training helps build the confidence of the farmers and improves results.

• Skills training for the beneficiaries was often frustrating and difficult because of very low education levels and poor analytical skills found in the villages. To overcome this hurdle, organizations such as CAAFW in Cambodia utilized drawings, posters, and pictures to suggest concepts into the minds of beneficiaries and to get them talking about issues in their own terms.

• Trainee participants should be carefully selected. Sometimes partner agencies have not fully researched the potential of relevant participation in the area, and there have been few young people, girls and children involved as a result.

• Refresher training, or updating of skills needs to be built into the project.

• It is more effective and efficient to make existing knowledge available more widely, than to provide new knowledge. Thus the “building from where we are” approach is best.

• The organizations involved in the provision of skills training for working children are often small and engaged in a range of activities, and the skills training is just one of these activities. As a result, they often do not have special training methodologies for this group, and many organizations are in dire need of institution building. It is suggested that they set up platforms to exchange information and experiences, and out-source specific activities to specialized agencies. A further strategy might be to mainstream the concerns on trafficking into the activities of regular training organizations, both in the public and private sectors so that these agencies reach out to families whose children are at risk of trafficking. In this way the total capacity to address these problems will be enormously increased, while the impact of the professional training providers may be higher (although not necessarily so).

• Most local organizations would greatly benefit from improved access to existing information on good practices and lessons learned, the sharing of experiences from other countries and access to international good practices.

**Conditions for replicability**

• Market analysis should be undertaken in target areas prior to training in order to assess the potential of existing or new/different products

• An assessment of the existing skills, knowledge and potential of target communities needs to be done first

• Willingness of the training institutes to provide village-based training (rather than center-based)

• Immediate availability of credit and/or guarantee funds to kick-start income generation alternatives

• A venue for the establishment of a library with relevant training and reference materials for income generation alternatives and training; for the non-literate, the availability of backstopping in some form

• Integrate gender equality into project training – especially girls and women should be encouraged to participate
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For detailed information on the TICW project see: www.ilo.org/asia/child/trafficking

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