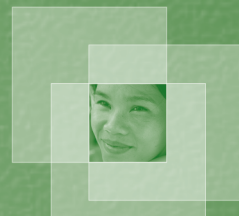




Meeting the Challenge

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



International Labour Organization

CAMBODIA

TASTE OF LIFE

How a soap opera brings trafficking awareness home

THE PROVEN PRACTICE:

Using a clever and popular medium and a groundbreaking production in a multimedia package to send messages about the dangers of trafficking to a large and particularly young population.

Mass audience soap operas in Cambodia

THE INITIAL CHALLENGE:

Classroom awareness raising has its place in terms of reaching young people with information and warning messages on the threats of human trafficking. But considering the numbers of young people who drop out of secondary school and the youth at risk who are too old for school, it is missing a huge segment of the vulnerable population. Even awareness raising in village meetings has its limitations, especially if messages are not passed on. So how can warnings and information assistance reliably be delivered to large numbers of young people in a developing country?

THE RESPONSE:

After reading about the success in weaving social messaging on the dangers of HIV infection into a popular and original Cambodian soap opera called *Taste of Life*, the International Labour Organization's Mekong Sub-regional Project to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women (ILO-TICW), approached the producers.

Considering 52 per cent of the rural population owns a TV in Cambodia and 85 per cent of the overall population has media access, ILO-TICW project staff thought mass media would be an effective channel for relaying their messages. The producers – working for the BBC World Service Trust – were very keen to take on a new theme of human trafficking.



Map courtesy of UNLAP





The BBC World Service Trust is the independent international charity of the British Broadcasting Corporation and innovatively uses media to advance development worldwide. Globally, the Trust works to influence reductions in mortality and morbidity, specifically to reduce child mortality, improve maternal health and reduce the incidence of malaria and other diseases, and address various related social issues. The Trust has been

working in Cambodia since 2003 on health campaigns related to HIV prevention and maternal and child health issues. Collaborating with several Cambodian broadcasters, the Trust has been producing the *Taste of Life* telenovella as part of a multimedia package that includes TV and radio public service announcements, three weekly radio phone-in programmes and accompanying print materials. The messages in the programmes were created in collaboration with many partners from government ministries, UN agencies and relevant NGOs. The *Taste of Life* producers saw parallels between trafficking and health issues in that both are a threat to society and thus to the viewers.

THE PROCESS:

To test the potential and with input from ILO–TICW, the Trust touched on human trafficking situations in two episodes of the first season story line. The drama, which used Cambodian actors, relied on real-life stories documented by the ILO and others to create the trafficking stories and dramatically portray the link between migration, trickery and exploitation. The episodes were followed up with audience surveys and proved memorable.

Based on that small but successful collaboration, the ILO–TICW team agreed to fund a longer and more detailed storyline to run in the second season of *Taste of Life*. Again in close cooperation with the ILO–TICW project staff, the Trust created a detailed storyline about the relationship between a female trafficker and Cambodian street children whom she tries to recruit for the purposes of labour and sexual exploitation in Cambodia. The trafficking storyline ran for 21 of a total 100 episodes, from late 2005 to March 2006. The series aired twice a week, and then the two episodes were repeated back to back on Sundays. At the end of the whole drama, the series was repeated.

The first and second series were broadcast for free on two of Cambodia's national TV stations, shown at primetime and with repeats on both channels. Both series have been re-run by the two TV stations.

The second-season programme had a declared audience reach of more than 4 million households, and follow-up research found significant recall among viewers regarding both the characters and the trafficking messages.

“The beauty of a drama,” explained Charles Hamilton, of the BBC Trust, “is you have more chance of reaching more people. Viewers follow characters for months and they identify with them and their situations.” Viewers also liked the “real society” aspect of the *Taste of Life* dramas, he adds.

The Trust conducted audience research for its storylines, and each episode was pre-tested to evaluate the impact of the messages and to determine if the viewers liked the “right” characters. The Trust conducted audience surveys, face-to-face interviews, questionnaires and telephone surveys. For the trafficking-related episodes, the Trust created four “audience panels” of Cambodians who answered questions regarding selected episodes. Each panel of participants was invited to watch and give feedback on six episodes, followed by face-to-face interviews and a quantitative-based questionnaire using a probing technique for both closed and open-ended questions. For the sampling frame, five provinces with a high risk of trafficking incidence were chosen. Purposive sampling was used to gain an urban/rural balance, select villages and choose respondents.



**From TV to the “big screen”**

Based on the success measured by the different audience surveys, the Trust in collaboration with ILO–TICW then experimented with another medium – big-screen cinema – to reinforce the trafficking messages. Approximately 100 minutes of the 21 episodes of the human trafficking telenovella storyline were re-cut into a feature film, at relatively low cost. To give the film a fresh look, considerable re-casting of characters and re-filming of new scenes was carried out. The film premiered at a cultural centre in the capital Phnom Penh, where government officials and other members of the anti-trafficking community were invited to an exclusive screening. The new film, *In the Dark*, featured many of the same stars in the soap opera but added a new element – a young boy who was very nearly trafficked across the border to Thailand to work on a fishing boat. The same “evil” character – a female trafficker, who in this case was acting as an agent and who had escaped punishment in the TV soap opera – finally meets justice when she is arrested for trafficking. The choice of a young boy as the character of a potential victim reinforced the fact that trafficking is as much about exploiting people in abusive labour situations as it is for forced or coerced prostitution.

Upon general release, admittance to the cinema was free. After the closing credits, the audience members were approached while exiting (with incentives offered to participate) and asked to answer a series of questions. They also were asked if they would provide their phone number for further interviews. A second telephone survey followed up four weeks after viewing the film to determine lasting impressions.

The multimedia campaign surrounding the *Taste of Life* telenovella and the *In the Dark* film included the TV and radio public service spots with trafficking awareness messages and 200 radio phone-in programmes on the leading FM radio station. The BBC Trust also developed a comic book, called *Popular Magazine*, that replayed the telenovella storyline and reiterated the key messages. The *Popular Magazine* was distributed throughout the country, including to school libraries. Messages also were rolled across the bottom of the TV screen during the soap drama's broadcast, largely posed in the form of a question, and viewers could send a text message response through their mobile telephone.

In the Dark was re-released for television in early 2008.

OUTCOMES:

- 21 episodes of the 100-episode television series *Taste of Life* that featured a strong storyline about trafficking.
- The drama series reached 69% of all television viewers in April 2005. The cinema feature film, *In the Dark*, which focused on a trafficking storyline, was made as a condensed version of the television series with nearly 20 minutes of new filming added to give it a new beginning; the 96-minute film played in cinemas in Phnom Penh and three provinces and shown later on television. The film reached some 4,471 viewers in the cinemas: 53% of them male, 69% of them aged 11–20 years, 84% of them students. Of 200 survey respondents, some 59% of them liked the film “very much”; females favoured it more than males; the strongest messages recalled were about trafficking; 84% of viewers had also seen the *Taste of Life* drama on television.



According to the viewers' responses, the film was widely understood to be warning audiences not to be easily fooled by traffickers, which was the main objective in raising awareness. And the depiction of "real society" issues and how to handle them also were understood.

- All four panel members, 169 in total, were regular viewers of the soap opera and older than 14; 79% lived in rural areas. Nearly all of them had heard of trafficking and mainly from television. By panel 3, more than 80% of the members recognized the drama as a trafficking story. By panel 4, this had reached to 87%. A majority of the respondents thought that girls in factories are the most vulnerable to trafficking, followed by those in a brothel.

Most of the panel respondents linked migration with trafficking:

- 69% said young people are at risk when they migrate to take a job
- 53% said children migrate to earn money
- 12% said parents sell their children
- 8% gave other responses.

The panel respondents said young people can avoid being trafficked by:

- Demanding that parents be allowed to come and see the jobsite (52%)
- Ask more questions before agreeing to go with the broker (44%)
- Stay in school (44%)
- Stay home (42%)
- Make photocopies of all the broker's ID cards and car registration (35%)
- Be more suspicious of the broker and the job offered (32%)
- Arrange to contact family on arrival (16%)
- Take photos of the broker and leave them with the family (13%).

ONGOING CHALLENGES:

- It is difficult to touch on issues that might seem critical of a neighbouring country or government.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- Television producers are very open to unsolicited approaches by civil society advocates, such as the UN or NGOs, because they can provide fresh story ideas.
- Making stories based on real-life testimonials helps bring authentication to dramas.
- Cambodian audiences value the “real society” aspect. The TV drama was known for depicting real contemporary Cambodian life, so a story about trafficking was a good fit. The film audience also liked the real society aspect.
- A popular TV drama about real society is a good foundation for a film about trafficking.
- Mass media is needed to reach mass audiences.
- Although producing a TV series can be expensive, when free air time and repeated airings are factored in, it proves to be cost-effective in the end.



Meeting the Challenge

Mee

CAMBODIA

