

Meeting the Challenge

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

International Labour Organization

CHINA

SCHOOL AS A TOOL

How improving access to quality education also educates ethnic minority girls on the dangers of migration and trafficking

THE PROVEN PRACTICE:

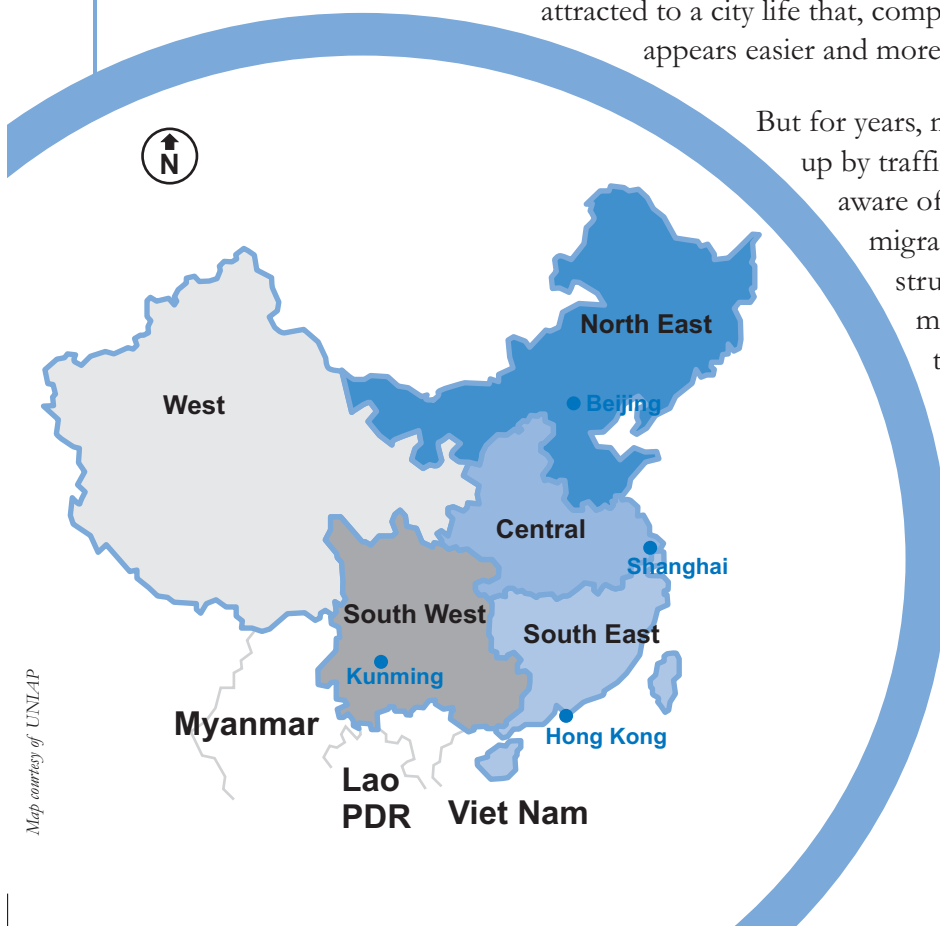
Spotting a gap in prevention efforts and adjusting the education-based response to include scholarships, innovative participatory learning methods that better relate to community realities and keep vulnerable students in school longer, working intensely with families and educating community members about trafficking to encourage their support in stopping it – in short, a holistic approach.

The Spring Bud programme in Yunnan province, China

THE INITIAL CHALLENGE:

With increasing development and a surplus of agricultural labourers, the traditional practice of economic sustenance has been losing its appeal in Yunnan province. Rural inhabitants are easily inclined to migrate in hopes of earning larger incomes and improving their meagre standards of living. The motivating migration factors are even greater for ethnic minority girls in remote, impoverished areas who have limited access to education and are attracted to a city life that, compared to picking tea leaves, appears easier and more glamorous.

But for years, many girls have been picked up by traffickers because they aren't aware of the risks associated with migration and lack support structures throughout the migration process. (Some trafficked girls never meant to migrate and were abducted from their community or sold by a family member; but they are a minority of cases.)



Map courtesy of UNLAP





Yunnan Schoolgirls - This is a photo of a project-supported school in rural Yunnan Province where vulnerable ethnic-minority girls are assisted to stay in school longer thus avoiding/delaying migration to cities where they can face coercion and abuse.

THE SECONDARY CHALLENGE:

In 2000, the International Labour Organization initiated its Mekong Sub-regional Project to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women (ILO-TICW), which in Yunnan entailed training teachers on prevention and safe migration and making anti-trafficking a compulsory subject in all primary and secondary schools in two counties. While migration dropped in those areas after the first phase ended in 2003, many girls still had limited knowledge of trafficking risks and little awareness on accessing economic opportunities locally. The reason: They were not in school to hear the messages.

And the girls weren't in school for several reasons: Learning wasn't engaging because teachers had insufficient training and poor working conditions; parents didn't see the need to keep girls in school because it had no relevance to their socioeconomic needs, particularly it didn't respond to the local labour market needs; and instruction was not offered in a local cultural context and thus had little meaning.

THE RESPONSE:

Working with the Education Bureau and using skills and systems built up in the first phase, the ILO-TICW project staff confronted the identified educational deficiencies of access, quality, relevance, cultural sensitivity and skills training that surfaced from the monitoring and evaluation processes.

The Spring Bud pilot programme was developed with three "pillars": 1) scholarships to ethnic minority girls in four counties (Jiangcheng, Menghai, Menglian and Yuanyang); 2) improving the quality of education; and 3) building community momentum for involvement in protecting girls and also for replicating the programme elsewhere in China.

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The four counties are located in remote border areas where poverty and the existence of many marginalized ethnic minority groups are particularly vulnerable to traffickers. In line with the Government's move to promote nine years of compulsory education, the projects' efforts have concentrated on dealing with problems of poor families, poor quality of teaching and the difficulty of enrolling girls into school and preventing them from dropping out.

THE PROCESS:

In the first phase, the ILO-TICW project staff worked with the Yunnan Provincial Women's Federation to establish a project plan, a steering committee and a project management office. The Women's Federation pinpointed the Education Bureau as the primary partner for delivering trainings on trafficking, vocational and life skills and public health. Consultants trained a core group of teachers who in turn trained other teachers and then students. The Women's Federation took charge of adult vocational training and business development.

Project staff then trained representatives from 14 relevant bureaus, such as judicial, law, police and agriculture, on migration, trafficking, equity and life skills. Bureau heads were first approached to agree to inclusion in the project. Once trained, bureau officers visited schools to discuss their own roles in society; the visiting police officer taught girls how to use the emergency phone number if ever they were in danger.

The Spring Bud programme continued the use of cascade trainings, in which recipients of a training were responsible to in-turn train others in the same topic.

To improve access to education, scholarships were given to 800 ethnic minority girls in four counties. This included assistance for transportation, boarding costs and other school fees. Girls were screened by the Education Bureau on the basic criterion of vulnerability; families unable or unwilling to provide funds necessary for a daughter to go to school determined acceptance into the programme.

To improve education quality, an innovative ILO programme called SCREAM – Supporting Children's Rights Through Education, the Arts and the Media – was introduced to teachers. SCREAM involves new socially, economically and culturally appropriate modules that use participatory methods. The training focused on topics neglected in the standard curriculum but applied to the vulnerabilities that ethnic minority girls typically encounter, such as child labour. Through deep-learning methodologies, such as drama, creative writing and art, SCREAM introduces young people to complexities and helps them develop appropriate responses and channel their creative energy in a positive and constructive way. SCREAM modules were designed using interactive



approaches and encourage active involvement through the sharing of views and experiences, role playing, discussion and debates. The method makes education more relevant, easy to grasp and culturally sensitive.

Each week, students had at least one 45-minute SCREAM session in which trafficking, gender equality and job-finding skills were addressed from different angles, often with guest speakers.

New teaching modules were developed on:

- **Trafficking risks:** Both what a trafficker may say in the village to coerce a family, and how a girl could be trafficked on her way to the city or while she is already there.
- **General life skills:** Including public health knowledge, HIV prevention and negotiation skills.
- **Vocational training:** Including hospitality training.
- **Gender equity:** Modules on equity between the sexes that runs across all other topics.

The girls were encouraged to take their SCREAM lessons as well as the skits, dances and songs to their communities. “The girls taught us how to raise pigs and goats,” noted one farmer.

To encourage teacher ownership of the SCREAM methodology, students provided feedback and advice and the teachers were allowed to revise the curriculum. A partnership workshop was organized in the second year of the programme for administrators, officials and teachers to refine the participatory monitoring and evaluation tools, which were then tested in target schools and communities.

To improve community participation in protecting girls, government bureau members were included in relevant trainings. The Women’s Federation, on their own-funded initiative, developed brochures on trafficking prevention and safe migration that they distributed; the Education Bureaus developed vocational skills handbooks for girls and community members and conducted trainings on cultivation skills, animal husbandry, handicraft design, small-business development and hospitality skills.

OUTCOMES:

- 800 at-risk girls received direct assistance for three years of lower secondary education support; they were trained in cultivation skills, animal husbandry, home appliance repair, domestic service and handicraft making.
- Advocacy with parents got a further 637 children back into primary schools and 728 children back into lower secondary education in 2004.

- 65 educators received training on SCREAM methodology, anti-trafficking lessons and techniques; copies of SCREAM modules were translated into Chinese and distributed to education points; instructional handbooks on six topics (trafficking, vocational training, life skills, gender equity, law and rights, working conditions) were produced.
- 25 partners attended a replication meeting to share experiences and take the project to other counties.
- A documentary was produced on positive lessons of the Spring Bud programme and distributed to 129 counties in Yunnan province.

Anecdotal evidence and small independent studies have indicated that the trafficking of girls has decreased and girls' ability to protect themselves has increased.

The education assistance helped increase confidence, assertiveness and self-reliance among the girls and helped them focus on their own education. They have been encouraged to return to their villages and promote awareness on the importance of education and the dangers of trafficking as well as on HIV prevention. The vocational and hospitality trainings allowed the girls, who spoke their own dialects, to better communicate with Mandarin-speaking people. The public health and life skills trainings gave them tools to handle their changing environment.

Yunnan Schoolgirls
newspapers - these rural
ethnic-minority
schoolgirls (at another
school) in Yunnan
Province take part in an
awareness raising exercise
about the realities of
human trafficking as part
of a holistic curriculum
that empowers girls.



Explained one teacher, “Change is clearly visible in the girls. They are no longer willing to do small menial jobs; they have more skills, and when they go looking for a job, they are looking for jobs that can make use of their skills.”

Teaching quality has improved to better meet the practical needs of girls. Teacher training has been undertaken to encourage more participatory approaches to learning. Teaching content has also been adjusted according to the practical needs of the labour market, and children have been involved in defining teaching content. CD-ROMs demonstrating a variety of participatory teaching methods have been produced and distributed to teachers. Teachers are now using more innovative and participatory teaching methods, resulting in both teachers and students enjoying the school experience more. Student attitudes have shifted from “I have to go to school” to “I want to go to school.”

Better information sharing among teachers and their students has led to the development of an early-warning system for identifying children vulnerable to dropping-out, which allows for prompt action on the issues that might cause them to leave.

The interactive teaching methods were passed on to other teachers not in the project and enlivened many teachers’ approach to their jobs. Noted one: “We teachers have created an internal support structure to answer any questions we have and to share good strategies. I will continue to use these methods because they are more effective than the traditional ones. I will also use the techniques for other subjects because they make the message more impacting.”

Through the Spring Bud programme, the communication between schools and communities, schools and families and parents and children was enhanced. Communities have cooperated with schools to establish a Drop-out Report System. Schools have signed an “agreement letter” with parents to ensure their children’s enrolment and completion of three years of middle school education.

School enrolments have increased due to the SCREAM methods, word-of-mouth excitement generated by the Spring Bud programme and the trainings and presentations made by the girl recipients.

Community awareness on the risks of migration and trafficking as well as gender issues has increased. This achievement included the plays and skits performed by girls participating in the programme. Community members have become more active in protecting girls and young women, including investing more in their education.

Combined with these community-based efforts, the project has advocated with local government to make education a higher priority, in particular through increased spending and better management of local schools, controlling the cost of schooling to reduce the burden on parents as well as the development of funds for the education of students from poor backgrounds. The local government is more proactively managing schools with the “leading groups”, which provide a mechanism for communication, information sharing and collaboration.

Adults who participated in the trainings have reported increases in per capita income.

The Education Bureaus and Women’s Federations forged strong relationships in each country, which has resulted in increased funding for trainings on topics related to trafficking and gender equity. The Women’s Federations have gained access to many more communities, which means more women have learned of resources and vocational trainings available to them through the Federation.

ONGOING CHALLENGES:

- To ensure sustainability, the project focused on building up the institutional capacity of both the education and other government bureaus by writing policy briefs and papers to be integrated into the curricula at the provincial level. But a system is needed to provide continuous training and updating of the curriculum. Without updates, the project is expected to grow stagnant and the SCREAM skills to become rusty.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- Having a holistic approach allowed for flexibility within the programme to address different challenges of different communities. One county, for example, suffered exceptionally from poverty and thus the opportunity cost of girls’ education was more of an issue than in another county where there was more economic development and thus other reasons for girls dropping out of school, such as the quality of teaching.
- To increase the number of girls being enrolled and staying in schools, the project worked intensively with their families. Persuasion, combined with direct financial assistance (covering transportation, lodging and other costs) provided the motivation for parents to allow and – unusually – to actively encourage their girls to complete the three years of lower secondary school.



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