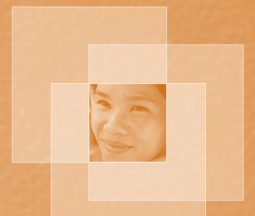




Meeting the Challenge

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



International Labour Organization

VIET NAM

CREATIVE COMMUNICATING

Reaching vulnerable people
through alternative channels

THE PROVEN PRACTICE:

Using street theatre, contests, house-to-house visits, counselling, children's forums and women's group meetings to innovatively inform young people and families about the issues and dangers of migration. Activities were integrated into existing agendas and communication activities of a variety of departments and agencies, brought together in a cohesive collaboration.

Awareness raising in southern Viet Nam

THE INITIAL CHALLENGE:

There are significant increases of South Vietnamese girls and women migrating out of the area and the country, including by marriage to foreigners. For instance, since 1993 and in the area of Tay Ninh, Hau Giang and Can Tho (once two provinces but now two provinces and a city), some 20,600 women have married foreigners, primarily Taiwanese (with an increasing number of Koreans recently). These are impoverished areas where young girls typically receive little education and most families are in difficult economic situations. These are also areas with limited access to mainstream media, such as television and newspapers, so inhabitants are not well informed on many issues.

Under the National Plan of Action to Combat Crimes of Trafficking in Children and Women (2004–2010), the Viet Nam Women's Union is delegated with the leading role for awareness raising within communities on the dangers of migration, particularly human trafficking. However, despite commitment to the issue, its efforts were limited due to budget constraints and lack of skills and knowledge on the human trafficking issue for running an effective campaign. In addition, there was no comprehensive package of consistent training and information materials on combating trafficking in children and women.



Map courtesy of UNLAP





THE RESPONSE:

Working with the International Labour Organization's Mekong Sub-regional Project to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women (ILO-TICW) and inspired by methods applied in northern provinces during the first phase of the project, the Central Vietnam Women's Union sought to improve its ability, as well as that of other organizations, to reach populations in vulnerable areas. This included mastering techniques for developing quality information and education materials and communicating messages on trafficking prevention through mainstream media and alternative channels.

The ILO-TICW project targeted activities in Can Tho, Hau Giang and Tay Ninh provinces.

THE PROCESS: A National Advisory Committee was established, consisting of 11 members (from the Ministries of Public Security and Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs,

the Border Guard Command, the Vietnam Women's Union, the Committee for Population, Family and Children and others), with a consultative role for planning and implementation.

Each member was assigned a specific role, based on their mandate:

- **Provincial People's Committee:** As the most powerful local authority, it helps coordinate collaboration among related organizations and government agencies in the project.
- **Provincial Department for Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (DOLISA):** It is responsible to organize vocational training, job placement and community re-integration for cross-border trafficked children and women who return home.
- **Provincial Department of Education and Training (DOET):** It is responsible for the education activities to support children at risk of being trafficked. For example, the DOET organized forums for students and communication meetings on days when students gather in the school yard for briefings.

- Provincial Committee for Population, Family and Children: In collaboration with the Women's Union, DOLISA and DOET, it is responsible to launch information and education campaigns on trafficking prevention and provide support to targeted children at risk.
- Provincial Department of Public Security: Its tasks are to identify areas for anti-trafficking activities, mobilize authorities and communities to work towards preventing trafficking or reporting abuses, and motivate police forces to hunt down trafficking networks.
- Provincial Border Guard Command: Its task is to strengthen the policing of border gates to prevent or discover the illegal sending of women and children abroad.
- Provincial Department of Culture and Information and its branches at the three target communes: They help to launch IEC campaigns through mass media, such as broadcasting news on a regular basis via television, loudspeakers, panels and posters.
- Provincial Youth Union: In collaboration with other agencies, it promotes the IEC activities among youth through its local branches.

Then a Project Steering Committee (PSC) was set up in each province, with membership and roles mirroring the National Advisory Committee. With the Central Vietnam Women's Union as its focal point, the PSC managed the project, from the planning, coordinating of activities and providing guidance to the monitoring and overall supervision.

In collaboration with other relevant institutions, the Information, Education and

Communication (IEC) Department of the Women's Union developed training modules and materials for trafficking prevention that are appropriate to local conditions. They then conducted workshops to inform provincial Women's Union staff and their collaborating partners on the regional and national trafficking situation, related laws and international conventions and gender issues in combating the problem. They particularly emphasized tricks of



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traffickers, vulnerabilities to being trafficked, its consequences and prevention methods. The training also concentrated on good communication skills, understanding the strengths and weaknesses of all communication mediums and participatory monitoring and evaluation techniques. Members were asked to identify capacity and resources available in the region to design proper and efficient communication plans.

The PSCs then established IEC workers' networks, involving representatives from communes, village and district leaders of mass organizations, the Women's Union, teachers and youth. These groups conducted IEC activities in their communities.

The local IEC activities were designed to encourage participation from community people, especially those at high risk of being trafficked. Direct and indirect communication and target-oriented communication were used to deliver comprehensive messages.

With its government partners, the provincial Women's Union organized innovative approaches to reaching villagers (each commune project steering committee and the IEC workers carried out the activities):

- Workshops to launch the campaign on prevention of trafficking in communes.
- Direct communication or communication integrated into regular meetings of local authorities, women's groups and clubs; for example, policemen integrated awareness raising into community meetings or IEC workers participated in self-help groups whose members are women with difficult economic situations and borrowers in a credit scheme who meet regularly to share experiences in economic activities and family issues.
- Communication about trafficking issues through the mass media.
- Communication in public places where people gather, such as bus stations.
- Communication combined with the distribution of leaflets and home visits for one-to-one counselling (by IEC workers) for high-risk families.
- IEC worker-conducted counselling to the overall community during gatherings such as weddings, funerals and death anniversaries, which were quite popular.
- Forums for children and communication sessions in schools conducted by students; forums included creative information spreading activities such as fashion shows.
- Performance/music shows, contests with the theme of trafficking and IEC workers' contests to encourage excellence among them.
- Information panels, leaflets, booklets for peer educators and posters.

Although the IEC workers organized the performance shows and contests within their communities, the skits were written by the villagers.

Project messages focused on known tricks of traffickers and real-life cases of trafficking victims or unhappy marriages to foreign husbands. Awareness raising also included discussion on other relevant issues such as gender equality, legal literacy, family planning and health issues (sexually transmitted diseases and HIV prevention).

The Central Women's Union worked closely with the three provincial Women's Unions to ensure sharing and cross-learning, for the optimal use of limited resources. The coordination, collaboration and information sharing was strengthened by having a project steering committee at the commune, provincial and national levels, with specified roles and responsibilities for members, a regular meeting schedule and monitoring of activities.

OUTCOMES:

- 536 staff from all anti-trafficking-related organizations and offices at all levels in the project areas received training on trafficking prevention, related issues and communication skills.
- 350 people from communes and hamlets were trained to become IEC workers.
- The creative awareness-raising activities took place in targeted communes, reaching some 30,000 households in total.
- Appropriate and good-quality IEC materials on trafficking prevention, including 61,000 leaflets, 1,000 handbooks for IEC workers and 500 posters were developed, printed and disseminated; 12 large information panels were posted in high-traffic areas.
- The collaboration, management and monitoring of the anti-trafficking implementation from national to local levels was strengthened.

Involved staff reported that in some areas with poor transportation infrastructure, it was difficult to reach all members of the community effectively. However, by using a combination of mass communication channels, 80 per cent of people in the community claimed that they received project information.



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The forums for children worked very well. They had a positive impact on child participants as well as on relevant authorities who heard children's thoughts come alive in the forums. These events provided good opportunities for adults to listen to children and for young people to raise questions to adults and relevant authorities about the efforts required to protect their rights.

For adults, contests proved to be a key communication channel. It was somewhat difficult to mobilize local people to participate in meetings, but contests integrated into music events became an interesting channel that encouraged participation. All project contests capitalized on typical characteristics of southern Vietnamese, such as their love of music, their interest in true stories about real people and their desire to follow charismatic and successful leaders.

"Thanks to the widespread awareness-raising activities, community people are very vigilant to trafficking now. We have received several reports about suspected traffickers from villagers this year and have taken actions to stop them," explained Huynh Quang Minh, Deputy Chairman of the People's Committee of Go Dau town, Tay Ninh province.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- Audience-oriented communication was critical in reaching vulnerable groups and is the most effective way to raise awareness and encourage changed behaviour. Resources and time reserved for a project are often not sufficient to implement all communication activities effectively for all target groups. Thus, widely and thinly spread communication activities will not work. Instead, it is necessary to specify or prioritize the target audience and then develop communication plans to reach this target audience.
- Diversification of communication methods increased the community's access to information and retention of messages. In particular, communication activities were effective in attracting attention when combined with various performance shows. Capacity building was also critical to allow organizers to best use available resources and foster the communication strengths of sector agencies to launch comprehensive and efficient campaigns.



- A focus on what is meant by “trafficking” and providing information on safe migration were both important to the project. Making the “trafficking” term clear to target audiences and the wider community helped them to recognize risks in their lives that may lead to trafficking and to understand how trafficking may affect themselves, their families and the community. When developing messages on safe migration, there should be emphasis as well on developing ways to recognize traffickers’ tricks.
- Providing adequate information in a timely manner to project partners is critical for building their confidence. Because trafficking was a new topic to many peer educators, they depended completely on information provided by the project in education sessions. However, that information was disseminated only once. No advanced training courses were organized and opportunities for peer educators to join together to share information and experiences were sporadic. Some cassettes and leaflets had not been distributed to peer educators by the time the communication campaigns were launched in the community. This led to a lack of confidence among them, impeding their ability to deliver the messages to the target audiences. A plan for how and when to share and update information should be designed by project partners to better cope with the real situation where the community is ignorant about the issues related to trafficking.



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- Communication activities were not comprehensively evaluated for their effectiveness. But this is a crucial phase in any project, necessary for making changes and amendments to future work.
- Children's forums are places for children to exchange and share their experiences as well as speak out about their aspirations. They should be encouraged to take a proactive role in designing the content, managing and implementing activities in such forums. Interviews with participants indicated that the forums would be more effective with a participatory approach to involve children and if a variety of communication channels were employed, such as role-playing, communication through music, first-person narratives, talk shows or online interviews.

