ILO Mekong Sub-Regional Project to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women (TICW)  
Sharing Experience and Lessons Learned (SELL) series

SELL-4

The whole is greater than the sum of the parts:  
*working together* (Programme coordination)

**Background and context**

The overall aim of coordination 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. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts: each contribution is enhanced or enlarged by the weight of the contribution by others.

In all five project countries, partnerships have been made and motivation generated with relevant government ministries which have responsibility for social affairs, employment and industry, as well as with employers’ and workers’ organisations and academic institutions. In China (Yunnan province), Vietnam and Lao PDR, governmental partnerships, from central down to provincial, district and village level, remain the principal networks for implementation, together with the mass organisations for women and youth. In Thailand and Cambodia, as well as government agencies, national NGOs with experience in related fields and usually already established in the selected target areas, have become important implementing partners, for whom the principles of sharing and coordination usually come readily.

The ILO-TICW project’s National Project Coordinators (NPCs) are just that. Their role is to ensure that relevant issues are dealt with by relevant agencies, that links and networks are set up to facilitate sharing of information and experience – both horizontally and vertically - for lobbying and policy development, and for advocacy on how to combat trafficking in children and women. At sub-regional level, the NPCs meet together regularly to discuss their work and share country experiences in their varied contexts. Within different aspects of national projects, pro-active vertical and horizontal coordination and information sharing have been encouraged from the start.

**Implementation**

At the country level, several effective and locally sustained coordination networks existed at provincial, district and local levels, especially in Thailand. The project has managed to plug into these. In other countries, the project has had to be rather more pro-active in bringing the players together on the issues of TICW.

In Cambodia and Thailand, National Steering Committees on child labour (NSC) existed prior to the start of the project. These NSC meetings are normally chaired by a senior official of the Ministry of Labour (& Social Welfare), and consist of members from many and varied GOs, NGOs and business environments. Their varied deliberations have fed directly into global conferences on trafficking (Stockholm in 1996 and Yokohama in 2002), and continue as important fora for debating the TICW issue.

Also at the country level, the national and provincial stakeholder ownership meetings are fundamental to the lateral think-tank and participatory approach of the ILO-TICW project. Stakeholders come from all relevant agencies and have a voice in devising how the project should be implemented in the country, through meetings and other fora including participatory planning and monitoring workshops for example.
In Thailand, at the provincial level, ILO-TICW's office and NGO partners participate in the activities of the Chiang Mai working group to co-ordinate Child Rights Protection. This is a model of a multi-sectoral multi-disciplinary working group for child rights protection, including protection against trafficking in women and children. It started from concrete cases of child abuse, and the commitment of some local government agencies and NGOs which started to work together without any budget (members contributed what they could). Since 1998, meetings have taken place monthly to share information, and plan joint action. The members consist of social workers, psychologists, sociologists, counselors, policemen, lawyers, doctors, nurses, and the attorney general.

This provincial organisation has succeeded because it started with 'the will to do' and voluntarism rather than with 'budget' and 'duty'. It has received official government support regarding facilities and resources, so there is a clear coordinating centre, with committed staff, together with a clear joint work plan. The members of the network know one another well. The model is simple and cheap, and replicable in other provinces (such as Chiang Rai).

The Chiang Mai provincial working group to co-ordinate Child Rights Protection, the Mae Sai District Centre for Child Rights Protection, and the Northnet Local Community Network existed already with active and committed members from NGOs and GOs. The TICW project could join these coordinating groups for support and exchange of information, and has been an active member of them.

The project partner in Phayao Province is the governmental Provincial Public Welfare Department (PPW), working in collaboration with two national NGOs. The activities in Phayao are notable for the good GO-NGO collaboration and backing from the authorities including strong commitment and leadership from the Vice-Governor. The three major implementing agencies presented a work plan for government support and now meet on a monthly basis to share work progress. In addition, the three levels of committees: provincial (chaired by Vice Governor), district (chaired by District Chief) and community levels, were established in order to co-ordinate efforts vertically as well as horizontally. This collaboration takes the form of financial contributions, the provision of training as well as the close collaboration with the NGOs involved in the project, and efforts at making use of departmental plans in ways that can help achieve project aims. “Having NGOs work together with us on the project helps fill in the gaps left open by government agencies. We can’t do everything all by ourselves. We need to work in partnership” says Ms. Ranee Wongprachablap, the Project Coordinator from Phayao Provincial Public Welfare Office.

The existence of strong Village Operating Committees is evident in Chum district of Phayao province. Youth Groups and Women’s Groups work together with the Education Office, school Principals and teachers. It is reported that a number of crucial elements in this success had been to promote youth and student groups and cultural committees (to facilitate the flow of cultural values from adults to youths); to mix groups at risk with those not at risk; to promote income generation alternatives, family values, and to encourage prevention, including learning from the media and from those who return from working outside the village. The project has learned much from this experience.

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1 Raks Thai Foundation (CARE) and PPAT, the Planned Parenthood Association of Thailand.
2 Including coordination by the offices for Education, NFE, Agriculture Administration, Public Welfare and Community Development.
In Cambodia, the Provincial Trafficking Coordination Units of Sihanoukville and Prey Veng Provincial Committees have tried to coordinate all NGOs and all government departments to share experience, information and resources to combat trafficking in children and women during implementation of activities. The Units have provided training on village baseline data collection to all members of provincial committees, district working groups and village leaders in the two provinces.

District working groups with clear roles and responsibilities have been created, together with strategies to develop integrated district plans as part of the provincial plan, which has strong support from the provincial governor. All village leaders have committed themselves to collect data with support from district working groups, especially from commune leaders. District governors, commune leaders and village leaders have understood that to prevent trafficking, every village should have enough information or village baseline data to analyse the priority needs of families having children at risk of trafficking.

Co-ordination among NGO and GO partners also resulted in sharing and providing human and material resources to the project - education material (video tapes, documents on human rights, women's rights, children's rights, trafficking in Thailand, sex trade, constitution, legal codes, improved agriculture), generator, loud speakers, motorcycle, technical staff including trainers, teachers and accountants, use of office and stationery. Relevant additional courses have also been offered, such as a 1-day seminar for commune and district leaders on dissemination about combating human trafficking, and a monthly seminar on the promotion of children's rights.

These activities have been successful because of good rapport among the various implementing agencies and the TICW project and as well as among all the relevant institutions, good participation from local authorities, community organisers, parents, youth and children within communities, and joint funding arrangements among various relevant agencies.

In Yunnan province (China), the Steering Committees at provincial and prefecture levels consist of members representing all government organizations concerned. The provincial committee is chaired by the provincial chairperson of the Women’s Federation, a mass organisation. The comparative advantage of this is that a political structure ensures the political commitment of the government and all its agencies. Each of the members has a clear mandate, goal and work plan. A vertical network is directed from province to prefecture, to county, to township, to village communities, with communication made along existing lines. Such vertical coordination results in effective policy advocacy, converting good experience in interventions into policies at different levels.

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3 VCDC, LICADHO, UNHCR, CMDC, KSEDO, CCPCR, HCC, EYS, dept of Agriculture, dept of Education, district dept of SALVY.
4 Cambodian Educational Network (CEN), World Food Programme (WFP), CEDAC, PRASAC, CORD and PADEK.
‘Women’s Homes’ (WH) were set up in 12 project target villages in Yunnan in late 2001 under the Project’s awareness raising and publicity campaign, and are a model of excellent coordination. For example, the village committees provide the buildings, the Legal Bureau and Women’s Federation provide information on legal migration and women’s rights respectively, and the Agriculture bureau supports technical training. The WH is a new venue for discussions and meetings, a centre for information sharing, training, and entertainment - which has transformed the fragmented, boring and isolated lives of the village women and young people who use them. The WH have helped empower villagers to contact each other and even villagers from other communities to interact, and to discuss migration and trafficking, and alternatives to it. Children have held knowledge contests here on gender equality and trafficking prevention. Villagers who like to perform produce shows to promote awareness of trafficking prevention, and attract more people to participate in project activities. Village activism and action in the prevention of trafficking has increased through the WH focal point (the local Women’s Federation representative).

As the Project developed, members of County and Township Working Committees, the Women’s Federation, the Agriculture, Education, Health, Justice and Labour Bureaus, project staff and technical trainers technicians have organised more and more project activities at the WHs. Before every training at the WH, participants can watch VCDs on science and technology and health care. After the meetings they sing together to strengthen bonds between cadres and villagers.

Good co-ordination since the beginning of project implementation has also resulted in the government mobilizing resources to support Project Counties technically and financially. For example, computers have come from the Labour Bureau; funds for training from the Agriculture Bureau; vehicles, fuel, facilities and mission expenses from the Finance Bureau; a cash collection was organised by the Women’s Federation for training and advocacy.

One strong example of coordination in Lao PDR was how the project worked in “piggy-back” with the National Statistics Bureau to cover all 900 villages of Khammouane province as part of the government’s poverty survey. The purpose is to see the whole picture of migration in one province. In the other two project target provinces, the same kind of data collection is taking place, but restricted to the target districts only (see SELL-1 on baselines for more information).

Horizontal sharing among the 3 project provinces in Lao PDR has been promoted *inter alia* through the cross-participation of the provincial representatives at the 3 Provincial Stakeholders Ownership exercises. The mass organisations have also been involved in such horizontal coordination, which has had good results in terms of learning from each other’s experience.

In Viet Nam, substantive coordination was required to develop two action programmes: one for the Viet Nam Women’s Union (VWU) with the Committee for the Protection and Care of Children (CPCC) and the other for the Dept of Social Evils Prevention (DSEP). For DSEP there was horizontal coordination among CPCC, VWU, Border Guard Command, Ministry of Public Security, and vertical coordination among the subsidiaries of each of these five organisations. The action programme for VWU and CPCC was to launch national awareness campaigns with Viet Nam National Television and National Radio. It will take time to see how this coordinated action pans out.
Achievements

From the start the project has encouraged and achieved both vertical and horizontal linkages and coordination in many aspects of the project. For example, capacity building has been implemented at national, provincial and district levels – focusing on topics that add value\(^5\) - with lateral linkages to partner agencies in the country and across the region.

- **Innovative/creative**

  It is unusual for a governmental agency to be the coordinating body or secretariat for a number of non-governmental agencies for the ILO-TICW project, as is the case with PPW in Phayao province in Thailand. There are excellent working relations among the partners to this coordination effort, leading to effective work. The commitment of the PPW government agency in Phayao is demonstrated by its provision of 60% of the project budget. Another reason for effectiveness is that having an official government agency as secretariat gives the project and the relevant issues the recognition and clout that an all-NGO effort could not have.

- **Effective/impact**

  In general, good coordination has the effect of disseminating information about the issue more widely than would usually be the case. There has been evidence of mainstreaming of the TICW issue into the programmes of other agencies (see SELL-7 for details), as well as financial and material contributions, meaning that more work is being done beyond the original scope of the ILO-TICW project.

  In **Yunnan**, by all accounts the Women’s Homes are having the effect of transforming village women’s lives, empowering them, and improving their livelihood.

  The Women’s Home model has become so popular in the target villages of **Yunnan** province that another 53 WHs have been established in neighboring villages and across the Counties. The Government agencies and bureaus are clearly able to coordinate their contributions well, and ensure that everything needed is made available.

  In **Cambodia**, the strong backing of the provincial governors in most of the project target provinces is reinforcing the coordination efforts of the partners, including in the essential task of research and data gathering at different levels, where information is fed up and down.

  In most countries programme co-ordination has been particularly successful at provincial level – as illustrated in the following diagram - by bringing in national level representatives, and staff from selected districts for inputs reflecting grassroots realities, and by bringing along representatives from other provinces for horizontal sharing. A good example of such exchanges is a recent meeting in Champassak (Lao PDR) where results of participatory monitoring across three provinces were cross-shared and analyzed for policy planning.

\(^5\) Project management, planning, basic analysis skills, monitoring, etc.
- **Sustainability**
Because the government is part of the anti-trafficking effort in all countries, there is high probability of sustainability overall. In Yunnan and Viet Nam, the partner agencies have their own official structures and mandates, into which the prevention of trafficking can easily fit. In other countries, there is wider and deeper understanding of the issue as time goes on, and better preparedness to continue combating trafficking in children and women beyond the life of the ILO-TICW project.

- **Relevance/responsiveness**
In Yunnan, there is frequent vertical interaction between the Provincial Steering Committee and project working committees at prefecture, county and township level. These cross-level meetings provide good opportunities to share information and experience. Similar mechanisms are at work in Phayao and Nong Khai provinces of Thailand, in the 3 target provinces in Lao PDR, and in Prey Veng and Sihanoukville provinces of Cambodia.

- **Efficiency**
The sharing of human and material resources, as has been observed in many aspects of the project, means that efficiency is being achieved through economies.

**Lessons learned**

- Coordination among NGOs themselves and between NGOs and GOs is not always easy. They sometimes have no time to meet regularly and discuss their respective roles in field work. Some agencies (or individuals) do not want “to be coordinated” and resent such efforts by others.

- NGO-government collaboration requires trust and openness. High level support needs to be given to coordination efforts, so that time spent on developing coordination with other agencies is considered time well spent.

- Support from national level ministries to allow their staff in bureaus at provincial level to co-ordinate is also important in terms of creating an enabling environment within the government machinery. This issue was raised during a roundtable in Thailand where provincial level government officials were willing and eager to co-ordinate with other ministries and NGOs but were reluctant to do so without national level support.

- Those that participate in co-ordination events need to be given the authority to represent their respective agencies so that decisions on programme co-ordination can be made. Proper preparation through consultation with colleagues, and de-briefings to colleagues afterwards are crucial in getting organizations to work together.
• Attempts to co-ordinate have more chance of success if there is a neutral secretariat that backstops inter-organizational meetings.

• Stakeholders in Cambodia and Viet Nam expressed during a roundtable that in their understanding ‘co-ordination’ meant: sharing information upwards to the ‘co-ordinator’ and control, or management, of funding and information by that co-ordinator, rather than efforts among equals to come to a range of interlinked interventions. For example in Viet Nam, coordination is structured around the Department for Social Evils Prevention (DSEP) of the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs. As a result of this understanding, other stakeholders like the Vietnamese Women’s Union, the Committee for Protection and Care of Children and the Ministry of Public Security hesitated to make their own initiatives, preferring to be subject to plans introduced by the DSEP.

• Provincial meetings which include participants from district and national level, as well as observers from other provinces, offer good opportunities for sharing of information and reporting downwards (for empowerment), upwards (for mainstreaming), and horizontally (for replication).

• Networking and collaboration mechanisms at provincial, district, sub-district and village levels need to be pursued through all interventions.

Conditions for replicability

• High level support by senior government officials to allow their staff to spend time on inter-organizational meetings is crucial for co-ordinated programming.

• For a Women’s Home to be set up, a building needs to be donated or made available, funds for increased electricity need to be covered, as well as for basic furniture and audio-visual materials. A good social organiser (e.g. from the local Women’s Federation) is needed who can maximise the benefits of the WHs to prevent trafficking, who can arrange outreach to remote villages where women and children are also at risk of trafficking, and who can ensure close collaboration between the relevant Bureaus.

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

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