

Step by Step

UN Inter-Agency Project on Trafficking in Women and Children in the Mekong Sub-region



The UN Inter-Agency Project aims to reduce trafficking of women and children in the Mekong Sub-region through improving national and regional co-ordination, identifying and filling gaps in programme implementation and adding value to existing programmes. It includes Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Viet Nam and Yunnan Province of China and is supported by the UN Foundation (Ted Turner Fund) and AusAID.

COMMUNITY ACTION WITH A DIFFERENCE

Most community action programmes on human trafficking focus on points of origin. In Kien Svay District in Cambodia, however, one local NGO is engaging the community in fighting trafficking at the point of exploitation. Hang Vannak, UNIAP National Co-ordinator for Cambodia reports on what can be done with judicious use of limited resources.

With its small floating huts, guesthouses and restaurants, Kien Svay used to be a famous weekend escape spot in Kandal province. Then, within a period of a few years, the district became the worst nightmare of scores of women and girls forced or lured into prostitution with offers of well paying jobs, confined to small and sometimes secret rooms where they had to serve clients. In 2001 there were about 130 floating restaurants, karaoke parlours, guesthouses and brothels offering sex services in the district. At least 148 young women were involved as prostitutes, 62% of them under 18 years of age.

In October 2001 a Cambodian NGO, Healthcare Centre for Children (HCC) initiated the Project for the Protection of Trafficked or Exploited Children in Kien Svay with support from the United Nations Inter-Agency Project.

In a simple but efficient advocacy effort, HCC started its project by sending letters and seeking support from the Prime Minister, several ministries (Women's Affairs, Tourism, Interior), the Cambodian National Council For Children, and the Provincial and District Governors. A workshop on effective strategies for the elimination of trafficking and

sexual exploitation was then organised with the high ranking participation of national and provincial police, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, provincial authorities, NGOs and other major actors. The workshop concentrated on strategies for intervention and cooperation. It resulted in strong government support for HCC's project, both at the top-level and lower level.

Setting up a community network against trafficking was HCC's next step. The NGO conducted training sessions on child rights, trafficking issues and relevant laws, and asked participants to set up trafficking focal points in their communities. Local police were encouraged to collect statistics on the number of karaoke parlours, floating huts and restaurants, guesthouses and brothels in their area. Business owners were asked to report the number of people staying in their shops and to provide information about their age, place of origin and the kind of work they were undertaking. (Importantly this was not a one-off activity. Owners must report to the Police whenever a new staff member starts work and each case is followed up.) The local Police, with support from HCC, then asked business owners to sign contracts in which they committed to stay away from activities involving trafficking and sexual exploitation.

HCC completed its network with motorbike-taxi drivers, mobile vendors, boat paddlers and reliable neighbours, all encouraged to report incidents related to trafficking and sexual exploitation.

And indeed in the following months HCC's monitors kept strict surveillance on their

target areas, collecting information in both Kien Svay and Neak Leang, a ferry crossing point often used by traffickers and itself surrounded by 26 brothels. Information was collected from discussion with the volunteers and by direct observation, sometimes under-cover when HCC staff acted as customers of local establishments. Cases were directly reported to the National Police Task Force of the Ministry of Interior through the around-the-clock hotline. The hotline police contacted local police and prosecutors for intervention. Girls and women who were rescued were sent to confidential shelters of HCC, World Vision International or the Cambodian Women Crisis Centre for recovery and reintegration.

Facts and figures after nine months of project implementation:

- 11 complaints filed with the police hotline
- 9 brothels raided
- 28 girls and women rescued
- 5 brothel owners arrested and sent to the court
- 7 women voluntarily left their jobs and were successfully reintegrated back in their own communities
- Only 5 brothels remain in Neak Leang
- Police and local authorities keep statistics of the number of shops and workers
- HCC is lobbying officials to demolish sex-providing rooms attached to shops

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Notice Board

Partners in Change

The Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW) is organising a 3-day event on 6-8 November, 2002 in Bangkok. **Partners in Change**, will be a forum to take a reflective look at the concept of trafficking, exploitation and our actions against them. It is a unique gathering in that many participants belong to the so called 'marginalised groups' - trafficked women, domestic workers and sex workers. However, all of them have rejected 'permanent victimhood', organized themselves, questioned the attitude of mainstream society and policy makers towards them, and claimed their rights as human beings. **Partners in Change** will celebrate and analyse those courageous efforts, and discuss future collaborative strategies.

Panel discussions: Migrating for work—Rights and Vulnerabilities; Rebuilding Lives; Tools for Empowerment—Education and Training; Reclaiming Citizenship, Uniting Against State Perpetuated Oppression; Community Action for Security and Livelihood; Movements for Social Justice and Gender Equality.

For more information please contact:

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Further details of panel discussions can be found on their website: www.inet.co.th/org/gaatw

Recent Publications/ Working Papers



Prevention of Trafficking and the Care and Support of Trafficked Persons

This report was compiled by Dr. Celine Costello Daly, Horizons Project, Population Council, New Delhi, India, based on three reports prepared by The Asia Foundation and the Horizons Project, Population Council:

i. Jyoti Sanghera, Ratna Kapur, Celine Costello Daly, Vaishali Sharma Mahendra, Pankaja Bhattarai and Nick Langton. Trafficking in Nepal. An Assessment of Laws and Policies for the Prevention and Control of Trafficking in Nepal. December 2000.

ii. Catrin Evans, Pankaja Bhattarai, Celine Costello Daly, Vaishali Sharma Mahendra and Nick Langton. A Comparative Analysis of Anti-Trafficking Intervention Approaches in Nepal. December 2000.

iii. Vaishali Sharma Mahendra, Dilli Ram Dahal, Siobhan Crowley, Pankaja Bhattarai, Celine Costello Daly and Nick Langton. Community Perceptions of Trafficking and Its Determinants in Nepal. February 2001.

These reports are available on request from The Asia Foundation, Kathmandu.

New Newsletter

National Human Rights Office of Thailand

The newsletter of the Office of the National Human Rights Commission is a quarterly newsletter, which aims to be a channel of communication between other human rights organizations and ourselves particularly of regional concerns. This newsletter will also be distributed worldwide and contributions are invited on interesting issues concerning human rights issues.

There is no charge for this newsletter.

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Newsletter

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Opinion Piece

Can we outsmart traffickers?

By Nwe Nwe Aye

Many of us are honest in admitting that trafficking is on the rise in our region and in the world: in the battle between traffickers and anti-traffickers it may be said that 'we' are losing and 'they' are winning. While this might sound discouraging, I believe that a comparison between the way they operate and the way we work has much to teach us and can help us in refining our intervention strategy.

We use *development paradigms* in our analyses and planning while they simply use *demand-supply basics*. Poverty, lack of education, conflict and lack of jobs make it difficult for us to prioritise our interventions or zoom in on a single cause.

While traffickers have agents in every village and networks that reach all the way to policymakers and law enforcers, we struggle to form networks of community partners committed to combating trafficking. Our "networks" include a handful of organizations working at the region or city level, with some trickling down to a few villages. Our "working groups" meet once every few months. In some countries, our "partners" are chosen for us by the authorities, not necessarily among those most concerned with the issue of trafficking or willing to take the risks we would expect them to take – especially when we are unable to counterbalance these risks with material incentives. Finally, we even

struggle to gain communities' recognition of 'trafficking' as a problem.

While traffickers don't need to convene seminars, conferences or e-mail working groups, their work is well coordinated. Just pass an order specifying the type of merchandise you are interested in – age, sex, intended use and number of items – and they will deliver the goods in no time, no matter whether borders are open or closed. If the obstacles are important broker fees may go up, but deliver they will. These additional costs will not even be borne by traffickers, rather added to the victims' debt.

While traffickers' incentive is hard cash paid per head of trafficked victim, we struggle to find appropriate ways to *honor* the work of our volunteers – as we are not supposed to pay them in fear of *hampering sustainability* of our projects.

While we still work to define tangible impact indicators, traffickers' impact is not only tangible, it is visible: tin roofs, television sets, new motorbikes, jewelry, and children missing from households. This is for their *success*. *Failure* to us translates in less funding and a negative mid-term evaluation. To traffickers failure means loss of their livelihood, prosecution, social pressure, and possibly death.

We tighten laws to protect

our children – at the place of origin, at border points, in transit zones and destination areas. While border police stand dutifully at checkpoints, traffickers cross rivulets and woods and cities using a million different routes.

While we distribute pamphlets to children and families to educate them on how bad trafficking is, traffickers whisper fairy tales of money and gold to their ears. And they are not strangers like we are – they are friends and neighbors.

While a trafficker knows exactly which girls, boys, or households they need to target for a given 'order' we use a generic approach – our 'unit' of work is the province, township or cluster of villages. While identifying beneficiaries at the village level, we tend to follow the least resistance path by taking in articulate, active, amiable beneficiaries who might also be literate and maybe even well connected. Traffickers, on the other hand, will approach adolescent girls of widowed mothers or indebted families, who are neither at school nor at work, by luring them with attractive offers.

Their offers correspond to people's desires and hopes – providing an escape from desperate situations. Exploitative as it may be, it is nonetheless better than the home situation. And

While we distribute pamphlets to children and families to educate them on how bad trafficking is, traffickers whisper fairy tales of money and gold to their ears. And they are not strangers like we are – they are friends and neighbors.

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FIFTEEN MYTHS OF TRAFFICKING

The myths are not founded on any evidence-based data or research. While some of them may be based upon mere anecdotal information and sporadic media stories, others actually go against the grain of common-sense logic. And yet, they continue to be reinforced and recycled in established and reputable anti-trafficking fora

In this issue we chose to reproduce a few excerpts from an excellent as yet unpublished paper on trafficking, "Thinking Through, Thinking Beyond", written by Jyoti Sanghera, Senior Adviser for UNICEF in India. The document will soon be available from UNIAP and on our website.

The paper starts by taking issue with the way in which the 'problem of trafficking' has been addressed in India and the subcontinent by a majority of stakeholders over the past decade. "When the dominant anti-trafficking discourse and consequent understanding is grounded not in evidence-based data but in the construction of a mythology of trafficking which is non-factual then many of the interventions and programmes flowing from this understanding do not lead to the desired or expected results, i.e, the reduction of trafficking. The intention is not to deny the existence of trafficking as a problem but rather to explore its intricacies in order to generate deeper analysis, understanding and action."

Noting that despite all efforts in the region, trafficking has kept increasing, Dr. Sanghera continues, "this begs the logical question: If all the energies and monies deployed to curb trafficking are not only not resulting in its reduction but in an actual increase then where are we going wrong?"

She then goes on to list some of the major assumptions which constitute the basis of the dominant discourse of trafficking. Her analysis is based on the situation in India but we think it has wider applicability:

"These fifteen assumptions or myths constitute the dominant mythology of trafficking. The reason for terming them 'myths' is that they are not founded on any evidence-based data or research. While some of them may be based upon mere anecdotal information and sporadic media stories, others actually go

against the grain of common-sense logic. And yet, they continue to be reinforced and recycled in established and reputable anti-trafficking fora."

The document goes on to discuss the main reasons for the construction of these dominant myths, and the manner in which these myths and erroneous assumptions lead to lack of clarity in understanding the issue of trafficking. This consequently hampers the development of effective strategies. The paper includes a discussion of some of the controversial and 'grey areas' such as 'consent' and 'agency' among those who are deemed minors and outlines some guidelines for strategic interventions.

We highly recommend to anyone involved or interested in the fight against trafficking to read Dr. Sanghera's discussion paper.

The Matrix: Available, in living colour, from your nearest IAP Office

Responding to concerns over a lack of conceptual clarity in the trafficking sector, the range of different understandings, even among experienced practitioners, and the general complexity of the issues, our friends in Bangladesh have developed a Trafficking Matrix to help us along. The Matrix, which focuses specifically on adult trafficking, is an outcome of more than twenty meetings involving representatives from government (including law enforcement), donors, NGOs, and INGOs and universities.

Apart from helping to conceptualise the issues, the Matrix provides a very useful tool for mapping and assessing different types of interventions as well as developing indicators. It's available to anyone and feedback is welcome. We highly recommend a look. Work has just commenced on a separate matrix for child trafficking.

Please contact the IAP Management office for a copy.

FIFTEEN MYTHS OF TRAFFICKING

1. *Trafficking of children and women is an ever-growing phenomenon;*
2. *Increasingly growing numbers of victims of trafficking are younger girls;*
3. *Most trafficking happens for the purpose of prostitution;*
4. *Poverty is the sole or principal cause of trafficking;*
5. *Trafficking within the subcontinent is controlled and perpetrated by organized crime gangs;*
6. *All entry of women and girls into the sex industry is forced and the notion of 'consent' in prostitution is based upon false consciousness or falsehood;*
7. *Based on the assumption that most women and girls in prostitution are coerced and trafficked it is then assumed that they would be only too happy to be rescued and reintegrated with their families, or rehabilitated;*
8. *Rehabilitation into families and communities is viewed as an unproblematic strategy for it is assumed to provide adequate protection and safety to the victims of trafficking;*
9. *Brothel-based prostitution is the sole or major form through which sex trade in many countries is conducted;*
10. *Police-facilitated raids and rescue operations in brothels will reduce the number of victims of trafficking in the prostitution industry;*
11. *Absence of stringent border surveillance and border-control is the principal reason for facilitation of transborder trafficking;*
12. *Anti-migration strategies based upon awareness-raising campaigns which alert communities to the dangers of trafficking by instilling fear of strangers, and big metropolises and cities will curb migration and hence trafficking;*
13. *Strategies which club women and children together will be equally beneficial to both in extending protection against trafficking and redress after being trafficked;*
14. *All persons under 18 years of age constitute a homogenous category, devoid equally of sexual identity and sexual activity, bereft equally of the ability to exercise agency, and hence in need of identical protective measures;*
15. *Law enforcement is a neutral and unproblematic category and all it needs is sensitization and training on issues of trafficking in order to intervene effectively to curb the problem of trafficking.*

TRACE Trafficking – from Community to Exploitation

This article outlines an upcoming research project on child trafficking, TRACE (*Trafficking – from Community to Exploitation*) undertaken by the UNIAP in cooperation with UNICEF and with financial support from the Netherlands Embassy in Bangkok. The research will be implemented in Cambodia, Laos and Thailand.

The overall objective of the project is to bring field realities to the attention of project designers and to inform – to the extent possible – the development of innovative and effective anti-trafficking responses. The project will thus support two complementary efforts:

A Network of Young Researchers will work with local youth and children to raise and document issues related to trafficking in the community. Based on the idea of "Non-Rapid Research" researchers will spend up to several months in a given community and foster the involvement of young people in the search for community-based responses;

Ongoing cases of trafficking will be documented all the way from their starting point (the community) to the situation of exploitation. The focus will be both on the *trafficking process* and how it operates, and on the way in which *anti-trafficking safety nets* are expected (or fail) to protect potential victims.

Going beyond the community, this *tracing* component will allow the project to follow cases of missing children and to identify the chain of people and events involved in their trafficking. Research areas will thus include, in addition to the community and its larger context, agents involved in transportation and border-crossing, trafficking routes and exploitation.

*** * ***

Research areas under the TRACE project are flexibly defined in order to adapt to the specific information needs of local actors in each geographical or cultural setting. Issues covered could include the links between migration and trafficking, community level responses to trafficking, vulnerability factors, patterns of exploitation, possible anti-trafficking approaches in urban (receiving) settings, and a better understanding of "demand side" dynamics.

The expected outcomes of the project are a better understanding of the trafficking phenomenon from community to exploitation, and an improved response capacity at community level. The project will produce research reports on selected communities, a detailed country by country report, and six to ten case studies on trafficked children. A documentary film will record the research process and could later be used as an information-sharing and

awareness-raising tool. It is hoped that the *in-depth case study* format will enable to approach situations comprehensively and that, by looking at specific cases from both sides of the border, the project would contribute to bridging knowledge gaps on cross-border dynamics.

For more information on this project please contact Oren Ginzburg, Research Officer, UNIAP/UNICEF (oginzburg@unicef.org), or the UNIAP office.



Photo by: Department of Public Welfare

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communities will refuse to see the traffickers as 'bad' people: the majority of them may also render important services as job brokers or travel guides.

Many organizations are now using participatory techniques, placing children and communities on our side of the equation. This may not be enough. If we really want to reverse the dynamics of this combat we need to refine our strategy to match the *real world*. Only then will we be able to make a real change.

Of course, we cannot match traffickers' ways of working; we have our own principles and ethical frameworks. But our strategies for community-based interventions can be improved by trying to understand traffickers' techniques and by finding ways to break through:

We need to:

1) *look through traffickers eyes* when trying to identify target beneficiaries in villages. Only by selecting those who are most at risk of being trafficked will we be able to design truly efficient interventions

2) Explore ways to target traffickers at various levels: fostering social pressure; working with 'good' brokers who are willing and able to change their own practices and influence others to combat trafficking; supporting the establishment of village protection groups; and working on prosecution

3) Reduce the risk of trafficking among potential migrants by providing peer education on specific life skills

4) Develop sensitive monitoring tools to follow up trafficking trends drawing on local knowledge and research findings - such as behavioural surveillance surveys on risk factors associated with migration

5) Use local communication channels to raise awareness and develop specific strategies which address the concerns of individual target groups.

These are some strategies, which Save the Children (UK) came up with at a recent review workshop on 'strategic programming and impact monitoring'. I hope I will be able to inform you in the next year's newsletter on whether we manage to outsmart traffickers.

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Useful Links



Coalition to end sex trafficking and organize marginalized women and girls around the world.

<http://www.apne-aap.org/>

Features prevention programs, education, and rural outreach in response to the worldwide escalation of child prostitution and trafficking.

<http://www.freechild.org/>

Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs Releases Trafficking in Persons Report. 2001. Trafficking in Persons Report.

<http://www.state.gov/g/inl/rls/tiprpt/>

International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour. Mekong Sub-Regional Project to Combat Trafficking in Women and Children

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/bangkok/child/trafficking/>

CRIN - Network of organizations working to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child treaty.

<http://www.crin.org/>



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Editor's Notes

The Newsletter is published four times a year by the UN Inter-Agency Project on Trafficking in Women and Children in the Mekong Sub-region. The views expressed in the Newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor or the Project.

What's coming Up?

Date and Venue	Title/Activity	Organization
7-9 October 2002 Bangkok, Thailand	ASEM: Promoting Gender Equality to Combat Trafficking in Women and Children, Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UNIFEM	Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UNIFEM and UNESCAP
14-15 October 2002 Chiang Mai, Thailand	Special Issues Related to Monitories with Regard to Trafficking—Expert Technical Meeting	UNIAP and UNESCO
6-8 November 2002 Bangkok, Thailand	Partners in Change (see page 2)	GAATW
13-15 November 2002 Honolulu Hawaii, USA	The Human Rights Challenge of Globalization in Asia-Pacific-US: the Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children	Globalization Research Center, University of Hawaii-Manoa
28-29 November 2002 Bangkok, Thailand	Regional Conference Illegal Labour Movements: The Case of Trafficking in women and Children	MRLC
5-9 January 2003 Chiang Mai, Thailand	8th Biannual International Conference on Forced Migration and Global Processes	IASFM, ARCM

WE ARE ON THE WEB!
WWW.UN.OR.TH/TRAFFICKINGPROJECT



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