



Evaluation Summaries

Reducing labour exploitation of children and women: Combating trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-region - Phase II - Final Evaluation

Quick Facts

Countries: Asian Regional: Cambodia, China, Lao People's Dem. Rep., Thailand, Viet-Nam

Final Evaluation: December 2008

Mode of Evaluation: Independent - Final

Technical Area: Child Labour

Evaluation Management: ILO-IPEC's design, Evaluation and Documentation Section (DED)

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Project Start: May 2003

Project End: October 2008

Project Code: RAS/03/04/UKM

Donor: United Kingdom, DFID

Keywords: Child labour, trafficking

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The International Labour Organization (ILO) during eight years (2000-2008) implemented a project (in two phases) in East Asia entitled Mekong Sub-regional project to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women (named TICW for short).

Strategic areas of work of the project were:

- Multi-national/bilateral, National and/or Local Policies: Capacity Building
- Knowledge Base
- Advocacy and Mobilization
- Direct Assistance in source and destination communities

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The scope of the evaluation included all activities to date including Action Programs of the TICW project.

The evaluation address issues of project design, implementation, lessons learned, replicability and recommendations for future programs.

It also evaluated the effectiveness, relevance, and elements of sustainability of the programme activities carried out.

The main purpose of the evaluation was to determine if the project achieved its stated immediate objectives (including specific targets) and explain why or why not and to assess the overall and specific outcomes and impacts of the project in terms of sustained improvements.

The evaluation was conducted with the purpose of drawing lessons from the experiences gained during the period of implementation and showing how these lessons can be applied in programming future activities. This also included looking at lessons that can be learned from unusually long project duration of eight years, in terms of sustainability.

The evaluation was set out to serve as an important information base and learning tool for key stakeholders and decision makers regarding any policy decisions for future subsequent activities in the Mekong region, and beyond, as well as for projects that may be designed under similar conditions.

Methodology of evaluation

The evaluation was carried out by an independent evaluator. The evaluation methodology included a desk review, interviews in person and by phone, participation in the Mekong Regional Conference: Prevention of Trafficking and an Evaluation

workshop with TICW stakeholders from five countries.

Main Findings & Conclusions

The evaluation has found that the Project has had varied levels of success and “up-take” in these countries and depending on a range of factors. The most important factor has doubtlessly been the extent to which the respective countries have been prepared to acknowledge that trafficking exists and indeed is a serious problem - both across the borders and *within* countries.

The evaluation has assessed that the TICW Project significantly has contributed to policy change, and raised awareness regarding the risks of unsafe migration. It has also developed models demonstrating that prevention of trafficking is possible and is benefited through coordinated action.

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Three of its four specific immediate objectives have been met and it has *contributed* to the development objective along with other players.

Recommendations, Lessons Learned and Good Practices

Main recommendations and follow-up

1. ILO should, whenever possible, continue to make use of the expertise and knowledge gained by the Project staff.
2. Decentralised decision-making and release of funds are crucial for a project with the size and complexity such as the TICW project. Improved mechanisms should be put in place when, and if, ILO decides to handle large programmes, such as simplifying formats and procedures - still maintaining/ensuring sound monitoring, transparency and accountability.
3. ILO-IPEC needs to assess how it can improve its backstopping functions in the future.
4. Although there certainly are challenges to manage long lasting Projects, including risks that activities start growing and become too thinly spread, the advantages are obvious. In this respect, ILO-IPEC needs to stress to its development partners that many interventions require longer and more engaged commitments from all concerned - if change (impact) is what is aimed at.
5. ILO-IPEC needs to be more engaged in developing approaches, together with the development partners, regarding institutionalisation and how best to assist Projects in their exit and phasing out processes. Exit strategies are as important as start-ups, requiring elaborate planning and collaborate efforts from the present and future owners of the interventions.
6. ILO-IPEC needs to continue to emphasise the importance of advocacy and awareness raising and ensure that future anti-trafficking Projects includes resources (including expertise) for this purpose, in a serious way.
7. Trafficking, labour exploitation (including worst forms of child labour) often occurs in the informal economy. In order to convince Employers and Workers to be more concerned about the need for antitrafficking measures and promotion of decent work, the ILO needs to find new strategies to motivate these constituents to take action, making them realise that they have an important role to play.
8. ILO should in the future programming place more effort to define objectives, goals, purposes which are clear without ambiguity – in the case of TICW there was some confusion in the LF, e.g. immediate objectives were also named outputs (this seems to have been caused by the fact that the donor and the ILO had different ways to use LF terminology).
9. The Project LF matrix should bring together, in one place, all the key components of a project, enabling everybody (management, team members, donors, evaluators) to easily appreciate and follow the thinking and strategy behind the project through reviewing the LF matrix. ILO-IPEC should further assist programmes and projects in developing skills on how to develop coherent LF matrices – preferably in teams/workshops with key project stakeholders.
10. In the future, ILO should ensure that field verification is part of final evaluations.
11. A lot remains to be done in order to assist countries and societies to form understanding, systems and enforcement to mitigate this serious problem. Among international organisations, ILO has a unique standing with its tripartite base, its capacities to develop and influence policy and its institutional knowledge. The ILO should, therefore, continue with its engagement in human trafficking/prevention of trafficking, with

focus on what it knows best – the “world of work”.

Important lessons learned

Projects should be given a chance to make a difference - and time is an important factor

The advantages of a long term such as in the case of the TICW Project¹⁵ in making a difference and reaching immediate objectives (or at least most of the objectives) is clear from the Project, and is therefore an important lesson to be learned for all development partners.

Project management should be provided advice and assistance on how to exit (phase out)

In long lasting and large projects, activity areas tend to grow and become varied, not always interrelated but adding to the complexity of the Project. The observations made by the evaluator during the evaluation of the TICW project, is that indeed there was a tendency for activities to grow a bit “out of hand”. Thus, the Project became almost unmanageable at SRO level.

Exit strategies and consolidation need to be considered and dealt with in all Projects. In large and complicated projects this becomes even more important and it can be more arduous for a Project management to close down a Project than to start it up - as closing down entails making conclusions about its achievements and merits, successes or failures as well as issues about sustainability and replicability.

All development partners should appreciate the factors involved in “changing mind sets”

Views have been raised that awareness raising do not have any effect against human trafficking. The Project has clearly shown that advocacy and awareness raising activities are necessary means in working with prevention in the fight against trafficking. Advocacy related activities are often the foundation on which policy changes are made and from which actions are generated to eliminate societies’ tolerance of exploitation, build support networks for, and with, the young and vulnerable.

Good practices

The Cambodia media example given the popular title “booking the tourism sector for a seat in anti-trafficking efforts”. The good practice is the innovative and, reportedly, far-reaching initiative by the Ministry of Tourism to prevent trafficking and exploitation in the tourism industry that involves four other ministries as well as employers and workers. It also includes networking from the central, provincial/municipal, district and local levels, capacity building, workplace monitoring, awareness raising, skills training and social

services to targeted groups in three provinces and useful manuals left behind for continued use.

Another example, also from Cambodia, with the popular name “A Taste of Life”, is about how a TV series (“soap opera” as the Project has called it) is spreading trafficking awareness. This has become known by many as a groundbreaking and very popular production (particularly among the young) and has reached a large audience.

The example of Employers’ Organisations in Kunming City, China, is an innovative and interesting example where employers participated in trafficking prevention, where codes of conduct were distributed – by employers for employers – to prevent trafficking in their businesses.

Another interesting example is in Northern Thailand, where cooperation between the Government, the UNICEF and Plan International resulted in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2003. This MOU resulted in nine Northern provinces in Thailand making commitments to establish coordination mechanisms to develop and implement policies, plans and prevention activities, involving a great number of agencies and organisations in the fight against trafficking and work related exploitation. The TICW Project has, in relation to this commitment, focused its work on supporting the multidisciplinary team in Phayao, as well as on operational guidelines at the national level.

Note that while the Project has provided some support to it, the MOU process is not driven by the ILO (mainly UNICEF and Plan International) and would have happened with or without the support of the Project. The Sub-regional Mekong Youth Forum is another good initiative in the fight against trafficking. It has managed to engage children and youth (and their families) in having a say, and prove their own perspectives on the causes and consequences of human trafficking, and be in direct dialogue with policy and decision makers – and thereby also making the anti-trafficking work more attractive for their peers – the ones who have to learn how to protect themselves from trafficking and exploitation.

The travel guide for young people Travel Smart – Work Smart, is another very good example of the TICW work. It directly targets young migrant workers and other vulnerable groups with ‘smart’ information on how to protect themselves from trafficking-related abuses, acknowledging that young people do migrate, and will continue to do so in their search for work and new lives away from home.