

The exercise will be carried out in consultation with stakeholders, in order to identify gaps in those areas and to come-up with practical recommendations to determine “how-to” enhance economic and social empowerment of returned victims of trafficking.

Implementing Modality

The Role of the ILO

The ILO will be responsible for the overall management and technical guidance, financial and technical reporting to the donor. Project teams will be established in Bangkok and Manila which shall be under the technical supervision of the ILO-IPEC Mekong Sub-Regional Project to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women in Bangkok.

The project partners

The implementation of the programme components will be mainly subcontracted to partner government agencies, non-government organizations and other stakeholders.

In the Philippines, the project will closely work with government and non-government entities providing services to returned migrants and victims of trafficking such as the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), Development Action for Women Network (DAWN), BATIS Center for Women and Kanlungan Center Foundation, Inc. It will also work through existing coordinating bodies where possible, so as to ensure complementation of services and best use of comparative advantage.

The project will also collaborate with local government units (as may be identified based on the overall profiles of the target groups), training institutions and employers and workers associations. Local government units play critical role in facilitating community-based reintegration through the involvement of communities and families. Training institutions shall be tapped to equip returnees with appropriate skills. Skills enhancement is not the ultimate goal of the project but their economic empowerment through engagement in decent and gainful occupation or economic activities, thus, also the need to engage employers’ groups and workers’ associations in the process.

Targets and Results

The project hopes to reach out to 150-200 returnees per year. The target shall not be limited to official returnees but shall attempt to trace unofficial returnees through various networks. For the purpose of prioritizing targets, returnees from South East and East Asian countries (i.e., Japan, Malaysia, South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan) shall be prioritized.

At the end of the project, targeted returned victims of trafficking will have been assisted, empowered and protected from re-trafficking and the capacities of service providers to reintegrate victims of trafficking will have been improved.

Strategy for Sustainability

In order to ensure the sustainability of the project’s impact as a whole, the project will emphasize the documentation of good practices of effective intervention models and lessons learned as well as case studies. As appropriate, the project aims to disseminate them for possible adjustment and replication by other agencies and mainstream them into the policy framework of relevant agencies and institutions.

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International
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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT OF RETURNED VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN THE PHILIPPINES AND THAILAND: The Philippine Component

A PROJECT BRIEF

Introduction

Trafficking in children and women constitutes a serious violation of human rights. The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), also known as the Palermo Protocol, puts equal emphasis between the provision of assistance to and protection of victims of trafficking in persons and the crime aspect of the problem. The ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour includes trafficking in children as one of the priorities for urgent action. The ILO Convention No. 29 on Forced Labour calls on States to suppress “any work or service which has been exacted under the menace of any penalty, and for which the person has not offered himself voluntarily”.

In Southeast Asia, Thailand and the Philippines are among the countries facing serious problems of trafficking in persons. Many women in both countries are lured to the promise of overseas employment, but end up in exploitative situations like prostitution, pornography, other sexual exploitation and forced or bonded labor. Efforts are being made through the enactment of laws and development of policies and measures to prevent this situation from continuing and to protect the rights of trafficked persons. A recent ILO study on trafficking in persons in Japan, however, underlined the need to extend services to victims beyond the point of departure. However, the return and reintegration process, as one of the several stages of migration, has remained the least concern of policy and program interventions, or if so, has been improperly attended to.

Many victims of trafficking face a myriad of problems upon return. Aside from the trauma they suffer and the stigma attached to their being exploited, victims of trafficking have to endure and cope with reintegration problems with their families and communities. They experience rejection by their families who have hoped better living conditions through their remittances. More often than not, however, victims of trafficking come home

empty-handed, with inadequate savings, or heavily indebted. Much as they want to work in their countries of origin, they possess inadequate skills or lack qualifications, aside from the scarce local job opportunities. Compounding their situation is their fear of retaliation from their traffickers and recruiters.

The lack or inappropriateness of reintegration services contribute to the problem, making returnees vulnerable to re-trafficking.

The Project

Given this situation, and in the light of recent migration policy and law enforcement changes in many destination countries in Asia which is seen to result in more repatriation, the International Labour Organization (ILO) proposed to support a humane reintegration process of returned trafficked victims back to their countries of origin. The project emphasizes the long-term economic and social empowerment and the provision of core social services to the victims. The Government of Japan through the UN Trust Fund for Human Security has extended financial assistance to the project entitled, “Economic and Social Empowerment of Returned Victims of Trafficking in Thailand and the Philippines”. The three-year project aims to contribute to the reduction of trafficking in children and women for sexual and labour exploitation in Asia through support to a humane return and reintegration process of victims of trafficking in their countries of origin.

The Project Components

The project will be undertaken with local agencies, government and non-government, providing immediate services upon return and longer-term assistance towards the victims’ full recovery and reintegration.

Direct Support for the Economic and Social Empowerment of Returnees

This component is further sub-divided into two phases or stages – the first, immediately upon return and the second, the long-term reintegration process.

Upon return, trafficked persons shall be provided with social services such as psycho-social counseling and health care in order to recover from traumatic experiences and health problems. Referrals shall also be facilitated through a sufficient and effective referral services with the help of continuously updated information on the kinds of government and non-governmental assistance and support available for returned victims that match their needs. Other services will include provision of legal counseling and assistance, peer support mechanisms and provision of small grant money for those returnees with serious financial problems.

The second stage of support involves longer-term reintegration services through economic and social empowerment activities. Economic empowerment component of the project will include provision of career counseling and occupational guidance, implementation of income generation activities, access to small-credit and savings schemes, business and vocational trainings and job placement services, among others.

Effective referral mechanism and data base will likewise be established to support the provision of appropriate services. Awareness-raising activities will likewise be undertaken for families and communities to facilitate the recovery and reintegration of trafficking victims.

Institutional Development

The project shall also provide technical advisory and capacity building services for organizing the central referral mechanism for returned trafficked victims, including the systematic data collection/documentation of returned trafficked victims’ cases and follow-ups, as well as trainings for service providers and civil society groups so that an effective mechanism for the victims’ reintegration will be enhanced and become more sustainable.

At the beginning of the project, rapid assessment/mapping exercise of existing services and process will be conducted, in particular in the areas of referral services, career counseling, vocational training and job placement for returned victims.