



The Spring Rain Campaign: Promoting safe migration using the Railway Network (China)



International
Labour
Organization

BACKGROUND

The Project “Prevent Trafficking in Girls and Young Women for Labour Exploitation within China” (CP-TING) (2004-2008) is a partnership between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the All-China Women’s Federation (ACWF), and involves close collaboration with government and non-government organizations.

More than 150 million migrants are moving from rural to urban areas in search of work in China and a growing number are young women. Migration of rural surplus labour to urban areas helps to restructure the rural economy, accelerate the pace of urbanization, and increase rural incomes. However, there is also a downside. A growing number of migrants are young women with lower levels of skills and education than young men. Because they tend to migrate through informal channels, they are more vulnerable to being trafficked. Based on the conviction that the most effective long-term solution to human trafficking is to prevent girls and young women from becoming victimized in the first place, CP-TING Project’s objective is to reduce the vulnerability of the target group by promoting education (for girls at risk under 16 years of age), and safe migration into decent work (for young women at risk aged 16 to 24).

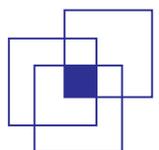
Each year after the Spring Festival, tens of millions of young women migrants flood into China’s towns and cities in search of work. In Guangdong province alone, the number of passengers travelling reached new heights in 2007: 12.3 million train journeys and 17.5 million bus journeys. A significant proportion of these girls and young women are insufficiently prepared for migration and employment and are at serious risk of being trafficked into labour exploitation. This is, therefore, an opportune time to step-up safe-migration awareness raising, particularly on the railways – a key battleground in anti-trafficking work. Where transit workers are aware of trafficking and are trained to recognize it and address it, the crime can be greatly reduced.

In addition to promoting safe migration, secondary objectives of this initiative were to open the door to collaboration with the national-level Ministry of Railways, to enhance their crucial role in preventing trafficking for labour exploitation, and to establish linkages between the project’s sending and receiving provinces.

ACTION

During the Spring Festival peak travel period, CP-TING Project operated a large-scale campaign at 22 rail stations. The target group for awareness-raising was the young migrants moving through stations. The 2007 “Spring Rain Campaign” employed a comprehensive communication strategy and mobilized volunteers and railway staff to provide assistance and information to the target group – young women migrants. Local leaders spoke at rail stations,

Good practice





In five provinces, over 2,500 railway staff, government officials and volunteers were actively involved in providing information and assistance. Nearly 1 million promotional materials were distributed. Substantial media coverage reached out to an even wider audience.

and the media highlighted the issue of trafficking to a wider audience. The activities organized across China were based around a common theme, with common slogans and logos designed at the national level. Within this overall strategy, local sites had sufficient space to develop more specific activities, outputs and locally developed materials – as considered appropriate to their region.

An effective information, education and communication (IEC) strategy was developed for the railways network. Migrants were targeted with a range of informative and user-friendly publicity materials to raise their awareness of the threat of trafficking and measures that could be taken to reduce that threat. To ensure that the Spring Rain materials were retained, they were designed to be functional and durable – e.g. playing cards, bags, calendars and fans. The playing cards provide messages relating to self-protection in cities, safe migration for decent work, rights at work, women's rights, HIV/AIDS, self-defence and social skills. A two-minute flash animation was also produced to screen on trains and in the station waiting rooms. Narrated by a cartoon phoenix named “Fei Fei”, it describes how a girl named Xiao Wei avoided the risks involved in migration to find a decent job in the city. Banners were on display in and around the train stations; audio announcements were broadcast regularly; and safe migration messages continually flashed on information boards.

ACHIEVEMENTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In five provinces, over 2,500 railway staff, government officials and volunteers were actively involved in providing information and assistance. Nearly 1 million promotional materials were distributed. Substantial media coverage reached out to an even wider audience. For example, Anhui TV screened a show highlighting a different aspect of trafficking prevention each day; Anhui Countryside Radio discussed the campaign on the air, and set up a hot line for consultation, and a special column called “Xiao Yu, Xiao Wei teach you how to prevent trafficking” was featured in the Hefei Evening News. Feature articles were also produced that described trafficking risks and highlighted relevant government policies.

Feedback collected from young women migrants was very positive – they found the materials informative and user-friendly. Having a combination of local materials developed by each participating site supplemented with agreed upon national campaign messages and products proved to be a good strategy.

A clearer understanding was gained regarding the needs and attitudes of women migrants. By engaging in face-to-face consultations with girls and young women, many of the local leaders had an opportunity to collect first-hand knowledge about the migration experience of the target group. A focus group discussion with migrant girls and women in Huizhou city revealed that much of the information on formal migration channels, employment agencies

and labour contracts was new to them, particularly to first time migrants. The feedback provided by volunteers regarding the migrants' queries helps to lead to more tailored and targeted information materials and volunteer training in future campaigns.

Young women migrants were linked with decent work opportunities. For example, in one province (Guangdong) the contact details of nine nonprofit employment agencies in five cities were printed in the publicity materials. In the 12 days of the Spring Rain Campaign, 61,553 migrant women visited eight of the recruitment agencies and 22,572 (37%) successfully found employment. The figures for the ninth agency were calculated as part of the job fair in Huizhou city, where more than 3,000 migrant women found decent work.

SUSTAINABILITY

Every spring in China, campaigns continue to be organized at transportation hubs to educate the some 9 million migrants who move to cities for work every year. Because the planning and execution of the 2007 campaign was carried out with responsible stakeholders from the design to evaluation, important stakeholders remain engaged and committed to carrying out future campaigns within the scope of their work. The messages and the materials of the campaign have been mainstreamed into the work of the local government in a number of cities. The Ministry of Railways clearly recognizes the imperative of keeping passengers safe. Labour agencies and employers see the opportunity to hold job fairs at rail stations to promote decent work opportunities. Trade unions during the same period organize labour-sending arrangements, which include transportation for young migrants.

In order to ensure sustainability, some external budgetary support and organisational initiative are likely to be necessary to jump-start the campaigns. In the longer-term, the capacity of the railways network should be enhanced to deliver safe-migration messages as part of their core work in a year-round campaign, with certain peaks for the Spring Festival and other holidays.

The Spring Rain Campaign has been shared with other countries in the Greater Mekong Sub-region, India and Zambia. Art work from the campaign and safe migration messages was made available to similar campaigns organized in Asia.

LESSONS LEARNED

Migrant women and girls are often reluctant to approach volunteers to pick up promotional materials and ask for help. This may reflect the fact that migrant women and girls see themselves as having low social status and see the volunteers as authority figures. Hiring migrant girls or mobilizing them as volunteers to distribute the material among their peers would seem to be a promising means of addressing this obstacle.

In order to attract young women migrants, it is important that the safe migration messaging is branded in a way that girls and young women can recognize and trust. The campaign needs to develop simple and recognizable logos and slogans in consultation with the target group. "Xiao Wei" brochures prepared by CP-TING Project were colourful, clear and contained plain-language messaging appropriate to young women.

Because of the various stakeholders involved in large scale campaigns, time is needed to forge more value-added linkages between provinces. Spring Rain activities that followed in 2008, while smaller in scale, were based on inter-provincial cooperation for implementation.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the All-China Federation of Trade Unions host compatible events during the same period. It is useful to jointly share good practices and lessons learned, and examine the scope for integrating key messages and communication methods.

NECESSARY CONDITIONS

Evaluation needs to move beyond reporting activities and outputs to measuring results and documenting lessons learned. Evaluation must be prioritized in the planning stage. The capacity for gathering feedback must be enhanced, and addressed well in advance of the intervention.

REFERENCES

- A Summary of the Spring Rain Campaign 2007 available at CP-TING Project Web site (www.preventtraffickingchina.org) and CD-Rom.
- Safe-Migration Playing Cards.
- Xiao Wei goes to the city (a girl's guide to safe migration).
- Flash animation.
- Guide to Dealing with the Media for Staff and Key Partners of the CP-TING Project.

CONTACT:

Jia Guo, National Programme Officer, IPEC Beijing, China (guoj@ilo.org).

International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)
ILO - 4 route des Morillons - CH-1211 Geneva 22 - Switzerland (www.ilo.org/ipec - ipec@ilo.org).

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