

Providing Social Security and Protection for Women and Children in Difficult Circumstances

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The paper addresses the need to improve social security and protection for potential victims of trafficking, with a special focus on prevention and early intervention strategies. Some key characteristics of trafficking in Southeast Asia are presented as important considerations for any successful interventions, including the strong link between trafficking and migration; the targeting of the most discriminated groups; and special distinctions between women and children's rights. While social protection can be best provided at the community level, the trafficking crime often becomes apparent only at the point of destination. It is therefore argued that efforts at community levels need to focus on the reduction of risk and vulnerability.

When discussing social protection in relation to prevention of trafficking, "social exclusion" is therefore argued as a more relevant issue than poverty. In Asia, this is not just exclusion from the labour market, but also exclusion from access to land and credit, from citizenship, from participation in decision-making and exclusion from justice. The challenge becomes developing comprehensive protection policies with "social safety nets" that incorporate programmes and structures for reaching and including marginalized families whose basic rights may be violated daily. In addition, more targeted assistance and support is needed for women and children at special risk of exploitation.

The paper offers examples of social protection systems and initiatives in the region, both governmental (national social safety net programmes) or stemming from civil society initiatives (e.g. community watch groups). Together with a discussion on impact, an attempt is made to assess some of the lessons learned in the last decade. These include lessons for reaching the unreached, for enhancing participation in the development of efficient programmes, and for building interventions on local resources, institutions and capacities.

Photo courtesy: ILO

Seven key recommendations present strategies to improve both long-term security and short-term risk reduction. They include institutionalizing training on children’s rights, gender sensitivity and women’s rights, improving the knowledge base, strengthening the capacity of middle-level administrators, ensuring participation and empowerment of vulnerable groups, supporting targeted assistance and strengthening social work capacities and

social welfare systems. Issues raised for discussion focus on how governments in the region can initiate actions to implement the recommendations and how bilateral co-operation can be helpful. This includes prevention of the “push-down, pop-up” syndrome where improved protection in one location results in shifting the “supply pool” to another location.

I INTRODUCTION

This paper addresses the need to improve social security and protection for those women, girls and boys in the most difficult circumstances who tend to be prime targets for traffickers. While it is imperative that all duty-bearers address protection at all stages of the trafficking process, the focus here will be on prevention and early intervention strategies. This means reducing risk factors and increasing the range of options so that families and their members are not reduced to a limited set of harmful choices that draw them into the

“trafficking supply pool”. It also means addressing fundamental gender issues that make women and girls disproportionately at risk.

In the long term, protection requires addressing root causes and improving the circumstances of the most vulnerable, ensuring that basic economic, social and civil rights are realized. In the short term, it means creating mitigative interventions especially targeted to those at highest risk.

II KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR PROTECTION STRATEGIES

Some key issues need to be highlighted when developing strategies for the reduction of risk and vulnerability among women and children at the local level.

1 Differences in the rights of women and children

Women and children cannot always be lumped together when discussing trafficking. Legal and developmental distinctions between adults, children and young people must be recognized as they relate to root causes, motivation and appropriate protection strategies. In relation to protection from trafficking, women as adults, regardless of their circumstances have a full right to all their

freedoms, including the freedom to exercise their agency and to seek a livelihood.

Children, on the other hand, have the right to be heard and consulted in decisions that affect their lives but not the full responsibility to act in their own best interest. Parents and other adults in the community form the first line of duty-bearers for children.

2 A sense of duty – limited choices

A desperate need for income is a key factor in most cases of trafficking in the region. Difficult choices must often be made when a sudden shock

to families living on the edge of poverty, such as illness in the family or debt through gambling, impacts their ability to survive and develop. In these situations, many young women and children feel bound by duty and are willing to sacrifice their own well-being for the well-being of their families.

The majority take the initiative to leave their communities in search of legitimate work and become victims while migrating. Others are knowingly sold to agents as commodities and still others, primarily children may be fleeing abuse or violence at home. Very few are passive victims.

3 Gender issues

Inferior social status and defined roles in society also contribute to vulnerability. From an early age, girls are taught to be the caregivers and nurturers of the family. It is therefore not surprising at times of family economic crisis to find that it is young women and girls who are the first to feel they must make sacrifices. In addition, social stigmas resulting from rigid traditional beliefs about females are at play. For example, women and child survivors of rape and incest often run away from home to enter sex work or are sold by families due to the stigmatization associated with the loss of virginity before marriage. In these situations they are vulnerable to being trafficked. Gender education is essential.

4 Families under stress

The changing situation of families, the first line of protection for its members, especially children, must be considered in discussions related to underlying causes of trafficking. Poor, marginalized families are faced with stress factors that often lead to fragmentation and dysfunction. Family violence is reported to be widespread across the region – much of it hidden. Domestic violence against women impacts their resilience and reduces their choices. Families also uphold cultural traditions including those that sustain inequality and inappropriate power relationships. Families, as the primary social unit in society, are critical partners for any strategy to improve protection and

can be assisted to do better in protecting the fundamental rights of their members.

5 Trafficking and migration

While the point at which social protection from trafficking can be best provided is at the place of origin, this may present difficulties for communities. The reasons for a woman or child to leave their community are varied and range from low-risk to high-risk situations (Annex 1). Departure itself may not give sufficient indication of the nature of the movement. This can represent a point of “powerlessness” for communities when migration is not prohibited and when social relationships are based on the rights to freedom and choice.¹ However, it is also clear that in all communities certain women and children are more vulnerable to being approached by traffickers. Thus, the focus must be primarily on risk reduction with targeted interventions as deemed appropriate.

6 Trafficking – a lucrative business

Recognition must be made of the fact that trafficking in persons as commodities is a lucrative industry. Numerous persons are profiting or benefiting at many levels. This includes members of families and communities at local level; officials and police at all levels; owners of entertainment establishments (both legal and clandestine); and people in positions of power. The benefits from this criminal activity far outweigh any income levels that can be earned through available legal means. Social protection and safety nets cannot compete in relation to levels of income and must therefore also focus on rights, values and restoring dignity.

Protection requires addressing root causes and improving the circumstances of the most vulnerable, ensuring that basic economic, social and civil rights are realized.

7 Push-down, pop-up phenomenon

Experiences in the region have given rise to concern over the “push-down pop-up” dilemma of the trafficking scenario. While successful interventions may be made in one community or country, the

lack of reduction on the demand side results in a shift of the supply pool to the next vulnerable community or country. Successful community-based protection strategies will have limited impact and only result in transferring the problem until more attention is paid to regional co-operation and to tackling the demand side.

III EXISTING INTERVENTIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

“East Asia and Pacific countries account for one quarter of the world’s poor. Although countries such as Japan, Singapore, Brunei and the Republic of Korea boast high per capita incomes, Cambodia, Myanmar, Mongolia, Vietnam and Lao PDR are all near the bottom of the human development index....Within countries, statistical averages hide vast income discrepancies between women and men, rich and poor, urban dwellers and their country cousins.”²

When discussing social protection in relation to prevention of trafficking, “social exclusion” may be argued as a more relevant issue than poverty. In Asia, this is not just exclusion from the labour market, but also exclusion from access to land and credit, from citizenship, from participation in decision-making and exclusion from justice. The challenge becomes developing comprehensive protection policies with “social safety nets” that

pay special attention to and incorporate programmes for reaching and including the poorest, the marginalized, and the discriminated groups. In addition, more targeted assistance and support is needed for especially vulnerable women and children.

Social protection systems and initiatives that do exist in the region are quite diverse in both their approach and capacities. In the more developed countries they include welfare benefits such as unemployment compensation, social security benefits, food and education subsidies, veterans assistance, and emergency assistance following natural disaster. In less developed countries, social protection systems are extremely weak, have limited coverage and rely heavily on activities provided in co-operation with local NGOs and international humanitarian aid organizations.

IIIa NATIONAL “SOCIAL SAFETY NET” PROGRAMMES

Formal social safety nets do exist. For example, the Government of Indonesia in response to the Asian financial crisis or “Krismon” provided substantial subsidies for food, education, key health services and the creation of labour-intensive employment. In Vietnam, the Government has maintained a high commitment to social improvement and social stability in view of “Doi Moi,” the transition from a highly centralized economy to a socialist market economy. Free services and food as-

sistance have been made available for extremely poor families.

While these national protection schemes have proven to contribute to reducing the vulnerability and providing buffers for a percentage of the population, it has been documented that they often do not reach marginalized families who are most often the victims of trafficking (Annex 2).

IIIb GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY-SUPPORTED PROTECTION AND SAFETY

Reaching the most marginalized and socially excluded women and children has been primarily dependent on interventions taken by NGOs and community-based organizations or volunteers in most countries. For example, in the Philippines social mobilization is quite advanced and civil society works in close co-operation with the Government. Numerous initiatives exist such as community watch groups, gender sensitivity training, women support groups, parenting education, safe shelters, and street children programmes.

No doubt these efforts have had impact on reducing risk. However, the general consensus at the end of the last decade was that while there is

a notable increase in sensitivity and response for victims, there is no measurable indication of a reduction in the numbers of persons being abused, exploited and trafficked. A number of reasons may contribute to this situation. On the one hand, rapid change and negative effects of globalization make it difficult for protection initiatives to keep up with the growing disparities and the demands of exploitative and criminal activities. On the other hand, the most successful community-based protection initiatives tend to be limited in scope and reach, highly resource-consuming and dependent on a group of extremely dedicated individuals, making it difficult to replicate on a large scale.

IIIc LESSONS LEARNED IN PROVIDING EFFECTIVE PROTECTION FOR VULNERABLE WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Despite the fact that current efforts are not yet having a significant impact in reducing the numbers of vulnerable women and children in the “trafficking supply pool”, the efforts being made do provide a wealth of experience and lessons learned. Some key lessons are highlighted here.

1 Community-based programmes are essential to prevention and to reaching the unreached.

There are now enough experiences to show that innovative and relevant locally-based (rural and urban) approaches, can support early identification and interventions for women and children at risk with recognition of the fact that they have families and belong to communities.

A number of countries, for example, are establishing networks to improve child protection. In Indonesia, “Child Protection Bodies” are being piloted in seven provinces working closely with Child Watch Forums comprised of a coalition of NGOs. In the Philippines, “Councils for the Pro-

tection of Children” at provincial, municipal and *barangay* (village) levels have been established by presidential decree. In Thailand, Child Rights Volunteers have been initiated at the village level.

Some of these networks are making progress in raising awareness on the rights of children and women; providing information; monitoring at-risk children, young people and families; and supporting interventions as needed including rescue and referral for services.

2 When vulnerable women and children participate, programmes are more effective.

Poor households, especially women, often have limited or no input into decisions which affect their lives, resulting in community decisions reflecting the interests of the better-off households more than the poorer households³, as well as the concerns of men over those of women. Additionally, when reviewing special initiatives aimed at vulnerable children, it has been noted that the parents of these children are not consulted. Parent

involvement tends to be limited to the formal Parent-Teacher Associations that often represent the more stable and secure members of a community. Existing programmes that are effective have also recognized the resilient character of children, even in the midst of adversities and have allowed them to participate meaningfully in designing and executing projects.

3 Effective social protection policies and programmes require local resources and capacities.

Many countries in the region have put efforts into reforming legislation and policy to conform to international standards on rights and trafficking. However, the benefits of these changes do not reach the most disadvantaged women and children. Capacities and resources are critical to ensuring an enabling environment.

Skills of local administrators need to be strengthened. This also must include and go beyond the traditional skills associated with social service delivery when the intent is to reach the socially excluded. While village leaders, health workers and teachers need to be trained to respond to indications of risk, they cannot be expected to provide time-intensive counselling and social work assistance to women and children who may be suffering from intra-familial violence or who are coping with difficult choices.

4 Targeted assistance must be linked with institution building.

Many activities addressing special protection have been government- or NGO-run and community-, centre- or street-based projects reaching a limited number of women and children in need of special protection. Piloting and demonstrating what interventions work best in protection need to be linked with building systems and institutional mechanisms that encourage active participation of civil society in order to ensure the expansion and sustainability of these protection initiatives.

5 Information and monitoring mechanisms need improvement to reach the most violated women and children.

Many women and children in difficult circumstances remain invisible or highly mobile and engaged in occupations or activities that are not regularly monitored by any governmental body or NGO. Information available to date is not adequate for monitoring or planning purposes. Methodologies for obtaining more reliable, disaggregated data (such as age, sex, socio-economic group, ethnic origin, rural-urban base) need improvement, particularly a community-based mechanism where data and information are collected, analysed and acted upon by people at that level. For example, communities could use tools such as the Table of Risk (Annex 1) to assess and monitor departure from the community.

IV RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the realities, any strategy to reduce the numbers of women and children in the “trafficking supply pool” must examine the responsibilities of governments to realize the rights of the most vulnerable members of communities within their borders. Strategies must address both long-term security and short-term risk reduction. The following recommendations are proposed as priority actions to be considered within the context of

wider development strategies. They need to be considered as an integrated set of recommendations that together may help to reduce the risk factors that make socially excluded families, women and children vulnerable to trafficking including addressing the barriers they face in accessing existing social protection measures being taken by Governments.

IVa PROVIDE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS, WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER SENSITIVITY

Reducing the numbers of women, girls and boys in difficult circumstances requires an understanding of and commitment to human rights. As shown above, the persons most vulnerable to trafficking are persons whose rights are being violated daily. While a number of efforts are being made throughout the region to promote women and children's rights, they are not yet sufficient. In most countries, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on All Forms of Discrimination against Women have been translated into the local language. However, there are few versions that have been simplified for the masses and few in ethnic minority languages.

Training programmes on children and women's rights, as well as on gender, need to be institutionalized and supported to reach all levels of society on an ongoing basis. Included in this is the

need to recognize the universality of human rights, regardless not just of sex, age and ethnicity but also legal status – a crucial issue for many vulnerable women and children. Particular emphasis needs to be placed on women-specific rights such as reproductive rights, which were not originally recognized. Key measures include incorporating rights education into school curricula for long-term impact and providing targeted training for more immediate impact. Basic components of the training package need to go beyond just providing information, to include exercises that promote internalizing the concepts within one's cultural and social context. Thailand has made progress in establishing a training centre for children's rights at Mahidol University. A number of training teams have been trained in the curriculum as well as in interactive training methodologies and are now being contracted by various organizations.

IVb IMPROVE THE KNOWLEDGE BASE

Solid data, both quantitative and qualitative, is seriously lacking in the area of trafficking. Most existing data is based on small-scale studies and anecdotal accounts, which are then extrapolated into region-wide or even global statistics.

It must be acknowledged that we will never be able to accurately count the exact number of women and children being trafficked due to the illegal and clandestine nature of the business. However, we can measure and monitor trends through data collection at a number of key entry points, at the point of departure, of destination and following rescue.

First, existing community-based data collection needs to be improved, ensuring segregation by sex and ethnicity, and better used to address vulnerability to trafficking. In addition, mapping and monitoring of vulnerable groups must be undertaken on an ongoing basis with the devel-

opment of a set of risk indicators. This is essential to identifying and addressing root causes before women and children are faced with taking decisions that lead to trafficking. Tracing and tracking

“When the dominant anti-trafficking discourse and consequently 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.”⁴

children who drop out of school has proven to be successful in intercepting traffickers before they get far from their village. Engaging research institutions and independent researchers to develop new methodologies for participatory impact assessments are also critical to better understand the effectiveness or failure of interventions.

Documentation in the short term and birth registration in the long term is essential to both protection and ensuring adequate knowledge. Lack of identity and documentation is a core factor of social exclusion. It not only presents dangers for the undocumented, but also makes it impossible for

governments to be knowledgeable and efficient in their policy and planning activities.

A regional initiative to promote birth registration is being supported by PLAN International, UNICEF and the NGO Group for the Rights of the Child based in Geneva. Civil registrars have come together from a number of countries including Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam to share experiences and develop plans.

This project will help to reduce the risks faced by the most marginalized, the displaced and mobile populations by promoting registration for all children.

IVc STRENGTHEN MIDDLE-LEVEL ADMINISTRATORS

“I heard rumors about assistance for the poor, but no one seems to know where it is.”

From a discussion group, Tanjungrejo, Indonesia⁵

A key challenge for any Government is to get policies to the ground, ensure equitable distribution, and reach those they are meant to benefit. The 2000/2001 World Development Report identifies key problems to effective distribution to the poorest as:

- **Technical and logistical problems** – Poor people often live in remote, low-density rural areas that are expensive and difficult to serve.
- **Management and motivation problems** – Inadequate incentives exist for conscientious service delivery. It is often difficult to induce skilled civil servants to live in remote or rural areas and resources for building the capacities of district administrators is limited.
- **Governance problems** – Monitoring and regulatory capacities at local levels are often not adequate to support sound governance, competition and markets.

Efforts need to be made to strengthen the capacities of civil servants at decentralized levels to complement community coping mechanisms. Many district level officials are expected to function with few resources, often lacking basic office supplies, communication equipment and means of transportation. Providing material resources at this level must also be accompanied by information and understanding of national policy and procedures that promote equity and human rights and the skills to enforce these policies. The issue of gender balance needs to be seen as critical to rights-based administration and good governance. Ways must be found to move beyond the traditional exclusion of women in local government decision-making positions.

Lessons from Indonesia show that social pressures at the community level often influence how local officials distribute assistance. A positive experience noted in relation to equitable distribution of school subsidies was thought to be a result of teachers making the selection process rather than government officials.⁶ One can speculate that among teachers, there is likely to be a more positive gender balance in decision-making bodies than with some others.

Strengthening middle- and local-level administrators may not be a panacea for the problems of

distribution. However, it will provide opportunities to support more participatory and effective use of social protection funds by the many well-inten-

tioned leaders at local levels who are directly faced with the needs of women and children in difficult circumstances on a daily basis.

IVd ENSURE PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

No government or NGO can meet the needs of its entire population alone. Participation is not only a right but also the most effective and cost-effective means of protection for women and children. Too often social assistance is based on assumptions of dependency or stereotypes which do not recognize the active contributions made by these groups and their families. The Participatory Poverty Assessment conducted in Vietnam for the 2000 World Development Report⁷ noted the striking discovery that when coping with hardship and a drop in well-being, the households had to look mostly at their own resources and that there were many strategies.

Therefore, it is important that state systems do not reduce the importance of existing forms of resource transfer through family, community, kin or religion and substitute high-cost, state services for working arrangements already in existence. There is evidence that the development of informal social protection can have powerful benefits in terms of strengthening social capital, social cohesion and governance. This can only happen when the voices of the socially excluded are heard, when women are equal participants in community decision-making processes, including those representing the most disadvantaged, and when the views of children are sought and respected.

IVe SUPPORT COMMUNITY-BASED PROTECTION BODIES AND SOCIAL FUNDS

In response to the challenge faced by Governments and non-governmental organizations to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, community-based bodies have been established and tasked with advocacy, monitoring and developing interventions for children identified to be at risk. In Indonesia, Child Protection Bodies are being piloted in seven provinces working closely with Child Watch Forums comprised of a coalition of NGOs. In the Philippines, national legislation established the Barangay Councils for the Protection of Children and in Thailand Child Rights Volunteers have been initiated at the village level.

These bodies, when functioning, are often able to reach the more vulnerable children and their families. Though they vary in design and official mandate, they share some common characteristics. Members often selected, or elected from among members of the community, are trusted and have a demonstrated commitment to children and

rights. They incorporate a partnership between governmental and non-governmental organizations and often have representation from various members of the community including service providers, such as teachers and health workers, as well as parents and children. They are able to identify and respond to children at risk and often spend time at the household level to understand their specific circumstances.

In Cambodia, the Community-Based Child Protection Network supported through the Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour, Vocational Training and Youth (MOSALVY) was specifically established in certain areas to address the problems of commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking. Now present in 52 villages, they are already reporting some success in prevention and in intercepting traffickers before young women and children are taken across the border. More recently, Child Village Social Funds have been created with

UNICEF matching 40 percent of the village contribution.

These special protection bodies and village social fund models need to be further explored as a way

to work with village development committees to reach the most vulnerable and assessed in terms of their effectiveness and possible adaptation by women to address their specific needs.

IVf PROVIDE TARGETED ASSISTANCE FOR HIGH-RISK GROUPS

In communities identified to be at special risk, or for high-risk populations, targeted service provision and resources are needed. These services range from counselling and life or livelihood skills to safe shelters and residential schools for girls. For example, when domestic violence and rape are the risks, shelter programmes may need to be established to provide a safe environment for women and girls to be assisted with identifying their options. In situations where children are repeatedly sold, removal from the immediate family

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may be in their best interest, though always as the measure of last resort. Displaced persons, refugees, and undocumented groups, especially those in transient situations may also require specialized services to ensure protection from exploitation.

One example is the Development and Education Programme for Daughters and Communities based in Chiang Rai, Thailand. The project provides scholarships, education, accommodation and homes for vulnerable children. When the programme began, it became apparent that not all parents could be convinced that their daughters' education and safety were more important than their own desire for monetary gain. In these cases, girls were taken from the families to be educated in boarding schools with the hope of breaking the cycle of exploitation. While these programmes are quite successful and need to be supported, they are by nature limited in scope, cost-intensive and difficult to replicate.

IVg STRENGTHEN SOCIAL WORK CAPACITIES AND SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEMS

Providing specialized services and programmes for the most vulnerable in society requires strengthened capacities of social work skills including counselling. Social workers, both professional and paraprofessional, are the service providers in many parts of the world who are best positioned to respond to the psycho-social-, family-, and individual-based root causes that result in women, girls and boys being in difficult circumstances. However, many countries in the region do not recognize social work as a legitimate profession or give it so little value that incentives for entering the

profession are extremely low. With increasing attention to the situation of trafficking and other forms of exploitation, there is a growing demand for social work and counselling services. Yet there are no standards set or competencies established for training. Training can range from two days to six months resulting in the same title.

Traditionally, religious institutions such as the pagoda, church or mosque play a key role in responding to the needs of the most vulnerable. This assistance is essential and must be recog-

nized, encouraged and supported. At the same time, there remain problems with respect to both approach and exclusion when considering a rights-based approach. For example, the protection offered is often “charity”-based and in some religions the services provided are exclusive to boys. Training is also needed to build the capacities of these traditional providers of psycho-social support.

In Viet Nam, as well as in some other less developed countries in the region, the Government has begun to recognize social work as an important tool in solving difficult situations faced by women and children in need of special protection. They first co-ordinated basic social work training for staff of the Viet Nam Committee for the Protection and Care of Children (CPCC) and local organizations. They are now embarking on an Associate Degree (college/technical level) and a BA Degree in Social Work with a core curriculum for degrees designed by the Ministry of Education.

Giving more priority to establishing training in social work and setting standards for both professional and para-professional training programmes will potentially enhance opportunities to reach the most vulnerable and support problem solving. It can also promote rights sensitive, caring and effective responses for victims of exploitation and trafficking.

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ANNEX 1 LADDER OF RISK⁸

Highest Risk (trafficking)	• Person abducted or kidnapped
	• Person “sold” by relatives into prostitution or other exploitative situation
	• Person clearly forced to leave against own will
	• Person following suspicious/distrusted agent
Grey Area	• Person forced to leave by circumstances (e.g. child of broken family)
	• Person leaving the village with no explanation
	• Person leaving the village for a job prospect that is unclear or unchecked
	• Person leaving the village without clear goal
Lowest Risk (legal or illegal migration)	• Person following trusted agent
	• Person leaving the village for a clear, certain, non-exploitative situation

Many of the trends identified by the Participatory Poverty Assessments indicate that the future might see a widening of the gap between poorer and better off households, or indeed the gap in welfare between different groups. These include:

- In **Ho Chi Minh City**, the immense difficulties associated with only having temporary residency status mean that poor migrants face unusual constraints in trying to develop their household income bases. As long as the policy remains that they are to be excluded from certain services, then they will remain at a relative disadvantage (also a problem in **Tra Vinh** and **Lao Cai**).
- Poor households in **Ho Chi Minh City** repeatedly commented on the irony that the poor had to fund more of the infrastructure around them than the wealthy. This observation is based on the fact that better-off households tend to live on main roads or large alleys, where the government funds construction and repair works. Poorer households live deep in the narrow alleys, where pathways and lighting have to be provided by the community themselves. Better-located households are more likely to be able to secure electricity and water connections. Households deeper in the alleys tend to repurchase these services from the wealthier households at a considerable mark-up.
- The limited supply of subsidized, formal sector credit is accessed more readily by the better-off and the better-connected. This is the finding in all three rural project sites. (...) This has the unfortunate effect of leaving poorer households dependent on more expensive, informal credit while the better-off households secure cheaper formal sector loans. (...)
- The tendency for poorer households to withdraw their children from school before they have completed basic education suggests that the next generation from these households will also grow up poorer.
- In **Ha Tinh**, the practice of levying contributions on a per capita basis tends to be punitive for the poor, since the poorer households are usually larger. (...)
- The dynamic effect of richer households having better connections, which then brings them preferential access to services and scarce resources, was mentioned in **Ha Tinh** as a source of inequality.
- The unaffordability of health care for poor households: Ill health makes poor households much, much poorer, and poor households are more likely to have sick members. This circle can be seriously impoverishing. (...)
- The low level of input poor households have into decisions which affect their lives means that decisions might reflect the interests of the better-off households more than that of the poorer households.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Ginzburg, O; Protection Against Trafficking at Community Level; Chiang Rai (Thailand) Report; 2002.
- 2 UNICEF; Children on the Edge; 2001.
- 3 Vietnam-Sweden Mountain Rural Development Programme, ActionAid, Save the Children Fund (UK) and Oxfam (GB); A Synthesis of Participatory Poverty Assessments from Four Sites in Vietnam – Lao Cai, Ha Tinh, Tra Vinh and Ho Chi Minh City; Submission to the WDR; 2000.
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