

Working with the least-served people



30 million jobs are required every year for new entrants to the labour market to keep up with the growth of the global working age population, according to the United Nations. This is felt in Cambodia too, and a high number of young people seek to migrate for work. One young man from the target area of ICC Trafficking Response project in Preah Sdach district was almost cheated into illegal migration, due to his dream of improving his family's living standards.

This young man tells: "Rice-farming is not enough anymore for my family to depend on, as my earnings are not sufficient to provide for my wife and four children". He therefore decided to migrate for work abroad, so that his family can have a better living standard - even though it was a tough decision to leave his family. He had heard an announcement on the local radio calling people to work abroad, with the possibility to earn between 2,000 to 4,000 USD per month. Together with one of his neighbours, they travelled to the capital Phnom Penh looking for the company, based on the address he had written down from the radio announcement.

The two men were not familiar with the city, so it took a long time for them to find the company in Phnom Penh. In order to apply for jobs abroad, they had to submit their ID cards and relevant family documents, before giving a blood test. The company informed them, that they also had to pay 2,000 USD for the company's service. The two men started to doubt. They recalled what they had learned in their Self-Help-Group during training courses held by ICC Trafficking Response project, on how to avoid illegal migration and human trafficking. The two men went to the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training to check if the company was on the ministry's list of approved companies. It turned out, that this particular company was operating illegally.

After returning home, the young man told the other villagers what had happened to him in Phnom Penh. He has now been selected to be a Watch Team member in his village, which the village is setting up together with ICC Trafficking Response project. He accepted this role, because he is encouraged and inspired by his own experience to combat any form of illegal migration and human trafficking. He is committed to the Watch Team's operation, and to share to others what he has learnt from ICC Trafficking Response team. He is also actively observing new issues related to illegal migration and human trafficking, and seeks support and collaboration from local authorities to combat it.

Awareness raising, proper arrangement and legal paper-work are essential in order to make safe labour migration abroad. However, a newly released report shows, that many Cambodian migrants are still working illegally in Thailand. By being an illegal migrant in Thailand it includes the risk of abuse, exploitation and modern-day slavery. The ICC Trafficking Response project continues to work with the civil society, local authorities and villagers in Preah Sdach district to protect their teenagers and young people against illegal migration, human trafficking and modern-day slavery.

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