

KEY INITIATIVES & ACHIEVEMENTS

Prevention

Enhancing Understanding of TIP Situation

1. Since its inception, the Taskforce has embarked on various initiatives to understand the TIP situation. This has included study trips to Taiwan, the U.S., and labour source countries, as well as consultations with various partners who have a keen interest in combating trafficking, including civil society organisations (CSOs), embassies and the academia.

Proactive Enforcement and Detection of Cases

2. The Taskforce stepped up proactive enforcement against TIP by intensifying audits on possible shell companies seeking to hire foreign workers (FWs), and conducting surprise checks on repatriation companies. Joint efforts between Ministry of Manpower (MOM) and Singapore Police Force (SPF) were conducted to investigate suspected TIP cases.

3. Enforcement was also done via the revised Employment Agencies Act (EAA) that came into force in Apr 2011. The EAA, among others, limits the debt burden that can be imposed on FWs and foreign domestic workers (FDWs) by Singapore employment agents to 1 month per year of work permit, subject to a maximum of 2 months.

Raising Awareness Among Vulnerable Groups and Key Stakeholders

4. The Taskforce spent considerable effort to raise awareness on TIP amongst the public, including FWs and FDWs so that they are made aware of their rights and their employers' obligations to reduce their vulnerability to being exploited.

a) Raising Public Awareness on Sex Trafficking

- Active publicity through TV programmes such as Crimewatch and print articles was conducted.

b) Education of Migrant Workers

- In Jun 2011, MOM rolled out enhancements to help FWs better understand their In-Principle Approval (IPA), which serves as the visa to enter Singapore.
- Pilot pre-departure briefings were conducted for FWs in China, India and Bangladesh.
- The Taskforce also produced the inaugural newsletter for Work Permit holders, "Working in Singapore".¹ The Taskforce also created a brochure titled "Don't be a victim. MOM can help you", which provides a checklist for workers in instances when they should approach MOM for assistance.
- MOM announced the implementation of a Settling-in Programme (SIP) for FDWs, which would provide, among others, information on conditions of employment.
- MOM also continued other outreach efforts to educate FWs about their employment rights and avenues for assistance. Such efforts included a guidebook for Work Permit holders, roadshows, posters, etc.

c) Education of Employers and Employment Agencies (EAs)

- Singapore stepped up publicity on the issue of withholding of passports by employers via inFOCUS, an e-newsletter for FDW employers. This information has also been disseminated in the compulsory Employer Orientation Program for first-time employers of FDWs.
- Singapore also started the Employment Agency (EA) Bulletin to communicate changes to the EA framework and feature best practices which EAs can adopt.

Strengthening Competency within the Government

5. Singapore has adopted a series of measures to enhance its capability in identifying possible TIP cases.

a) Identification and Management of TIP Cases

- SPF promulgated an internal operating procedure for the handling and investigation of sexual exploitation TIP cases.
- MOM rolled out a TIP reference resource for frontline officers geared specifically towards the identification of labour-related TIP cases.
- In addition, MOM and SPF jointly implemented an operating procedure to tighten the process of handling and investigating potential TIP cases.

¹ To enhance outreach, these newsletters were inserted into "Voice of Bengal", a Bengali publication that reaches out to the Bangladeshi community in Singapore.

b) Inter-Ministry Training

- Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) trained prosecutors and police investigators on techniques for interviewing child victims who may have undergone sexual trauma.

c) Engagement of Foreign Counterparts and Experts

- The Taskforce has also over the past year stepped up engagements with other countries. This included, among others, attending training courses by foreign counterparts and organising training sessions by TIP experts.

Increasing Opportunities for FDWs to Seek Help

6. MOM announced in Mar 2012 that it would legislate weekly rest days for FDWs with the option of compensation in-lieu for rest days foregone based on mutual agreement between the FDW and employer.

Prosecution

Labour Trafficking Indicators

7. In 2011, MOM translated the UN TIP Protocol definition into labour trafficking indicators for the Singapore context. To this end, the Taskforce met extensively with government bodies in other jurisdictions, as well as with TIP experts, to find out how we could better identify labour trafficking cases based on the TIP definition.

Reviews of Legislation Against TIP

8. Singapore is reviewing existing laws and studying the possibility of new ones relevant to TIP.

Investigations and Prosecutions

9. In 2011, the Attorney-General's Chambers (AGC) formed a dedicated unit to handle TIP cases. This team will continue to work closely with SPF and MOM to ensure thorough and speedy investigation of cases and prosecution of offenders.

10. MOM set up a centralised team, the Joint Operations Directorate (JOD), in 2011, to assist in the identification, delegation and coordination of investigations of potential TIP cases identified and raised to MOM. This has helped to speed up the investigative process of potential TIP cases.

International Cooperation

11. Singapore is also an active participant on regional and international platforms at the United Nations (UN) and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) levels. Furthermore, the upcoming INTERPOL Global Complex for Innovation (ICGI) in Singapore, which is expected to be operational by 2014, will be a vital platform

and resource to help Singapore better counter the threats of transnational criminal operations, including TIP.

Protection

Identification and Treatment of TIP Victims

12. The treatment of TIP victims has been systematised to ensure that such victims, when identified, are not automatically deported, but are instead provided a range of supporting services, including the provision of Special Passes,² if appropriate. TIP victims serving as prosecution witnesses in TIP cases may be allowed to find temporary employment through the Temporary Job Scheme (TJS) while their cases are being investigated. FDWs whose cases have been closed are also given opportunities to secure new employment through the Change of Employer (COE) facility.

Partnerships

13. The Taskforce has over the last year been actively engaging various stakeholders, including CSOs, embassies and the academia, to hear their views and develop a more effective and sustainable strategy to combat TIP.

Local Partnerships

14. In 2011, the Taskforce established direct links with CSOs so that information on possible TIP victims and their perpetrators could be directly provided to the government for investigation. The Taskforce also stepped up engagement with CSOs for TIP campaigns and events, and enhanced public and civic involvement in the drafting of the NPA through a public consultation held in Feb 2012. In addition, MOM also engaged CSOs through a training session, and conducted an engagement exercise to consult stakeholders on a variety of FDW issues.

Regional and International Partnerships

15. Singapore developed close working relationships regionally and internationally. Examples include participation in the ASEAN Heads of Specialist Units (HSU) on Trafficking meetings, and meeting with embassies to discuss TIP issues.

² E.g. to legalise the FW's immigration status.