



IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND EXPERIENCES: LESSONS LEARNT FROM SWOARD



Knowledge Management - Labour Migration Project - Phase 111

August 2016

Abbreviations

CBO	Community Based Organisation
CSO	Civil society organisation
DS	Divisional Secretariat
DO -FE	Development Officer –Foreign Employment (under MFE, attached to the Divisional Secretariats - responsible for labour migration)
FBR	Family Background Report
GN	Grama Niladhari (Village head, administrator)
GND	Grama Niladhari Division (lowest administrative structure; village)
LMPSL	Labour Migration Project Sri Lanka
MFE	Ministry of Foreign Employment
MIU	Migration Information Unit
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SLBFE	Sri Lankan Bureau of Foreign Employment
SWOAD	Social Welfare Organisation Ampara District
ToT	Training of Trainers

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 Introduction	4
2 District Information	4
3 Disseminating information – Implementation Strategy.....	5
4. Experiences with regard to Development Officers –Foreign Employment (DO-FE).....	8
5. Experiences with regard to Family Background Report (FBR)	8
6. Grievance handling.....	9
7. Psycho-Social Support.....	11
8. Return & Re-integration.....	12
9. Unique experiences & Strategies.....	12
10. Current advocacy issues.....	13
11. Conclusion.....	13

1. Introduction

Social Welfare Organisation Ampara District (henceforth referred to as “SWOAD”) was established in 1995. It is a Non-Governmental Organisation registered at the national NGO Secretariat. SWOAD is working towards the welfare, social and economic development of the individuals in the Ampara District. It has carried out many projects in order to uplift the standard of living in the community.

SWOAD has been in partnership with SDC since 2013 and is currently implementing SDC’s safe labour migration project with a view to reducing the costs of labour migration. SWOAD through this project predominantly works in the areas of safe labour migration information, financial literacy, psycho social support and grievance/complaints handling.

This report is based on the lessons learnt and experiences gained through the field visit made to SWOAD on 13.07.2016 and 14.07.2016.

2. District Information

Ampara District consists of 20 Divisional Secretariats. 1st Phase of the Safe Labour Migration project was implemented from 2013- February 2016 in 5 DS Divisions¹. 2nd phase commenced in 2016 and is expected to be implemented in 7 DS Divisions until 2019. SWOAD is currently implementing the project in 10 DS divisions² (182 Grama Niladhari Divisions). The project has phased out of 2 DS divisions.

3. Disseminating information - Implementation strategy

SWOAD has a well-established mechanism in place to disseminate information pertaining to safe labour migration.

¹ Pottuvil, Thirukkivil, Sammanthurai, Navithanvely and Irakkamam DS divisions.

² Pottuvil, Alayadivembu, Akkaraipattu, Addalachenai, Nintavur, Karaithivu, Kalmunai, Sammanthurai, Irakkamam and Uhanani DS Divisions

(1.) Migration Information Unit

SWOAD's well established migration information Unit provides information and advice on safe labour migration.

(2.) Trainers

SWOAD's trainers provide training on safe labour migration to the following officers.

- Leaders of community based Organisations (CBOs). 20-25 CBOs per division are generally trained on safe labour migration.
- Government Officials - DO-FEs, Grama Niladharis, Mid Wives, Samurdhi Officers
- School teachers / principals

It is also important to note that some Government officers - Eg: Samurdhi Officers during their meetings, allocate certain amount of time and allow SWOAD staff to provide safe labour migration information to the members of the community.

By involving different stakeholders - government officials, CBOs and school teachers, the sustainability can be assured even beyond the project period.

(3.) Community level meetings

- Migrant Group Meetings – Returnees and in-service Migrants' families gather once a month to discuss issues and share their experiences.
- Community awareness Meetings - SWOAD staff conducts awareness programmes to disseminate safe labour migration information.

(4.) Public Forums

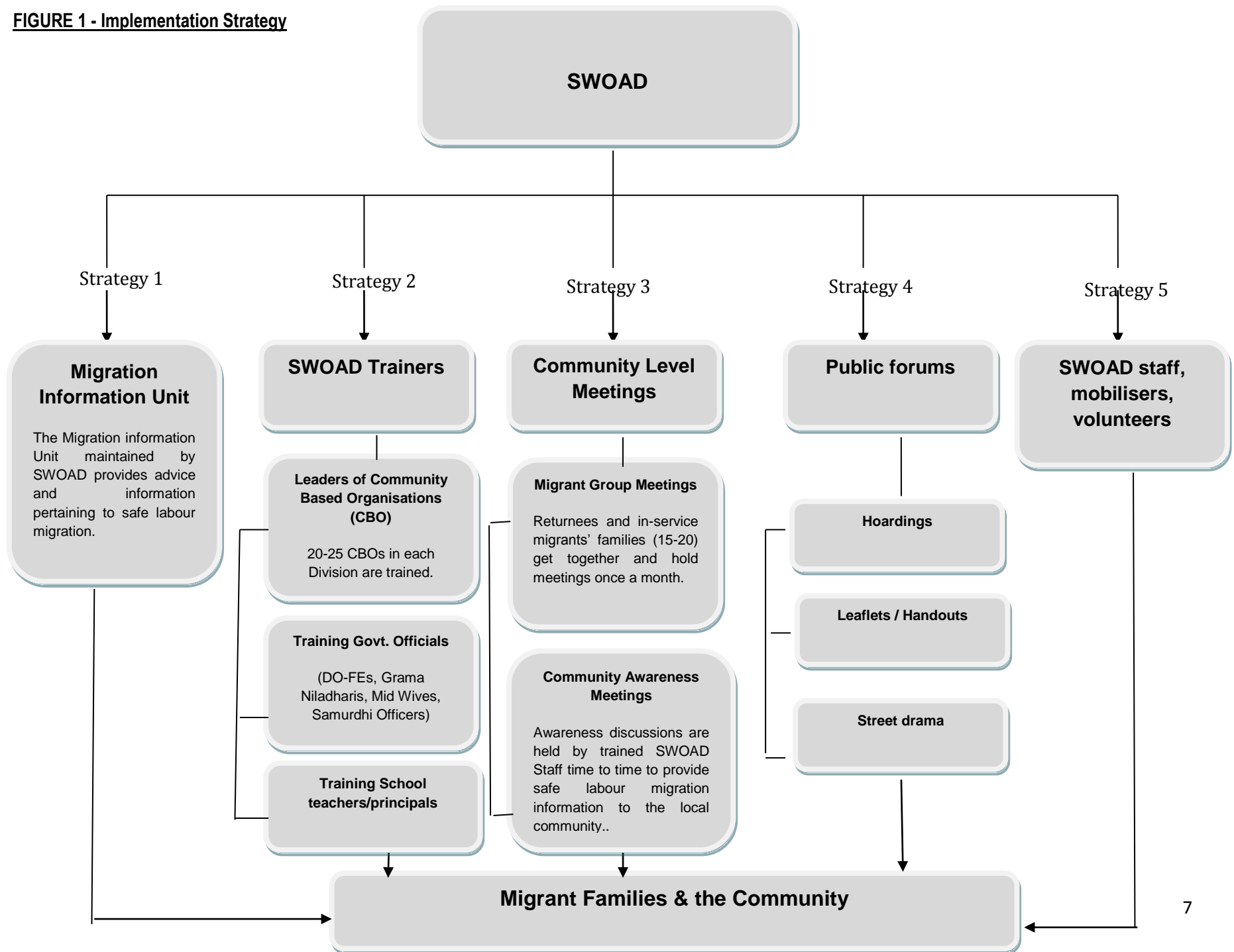
SWOAD raises awareness at the community level by conducting Street dramas, displaying Hoardings and distributing leaflets/ handouts.

(5) Trained staff

SWOAD's staff is comprised of 12 mobilizers, 6 field coordinators, 1 information officer, 1 project manager. The said staff as well as the trained Volunteers are actively engaged in providing safe labour migration information at the grass root level.

Home visits are made by SWOAD staff to follow up on the FBR approved/rejected cases. FBR rejected females are supported by SWOAD staff to seek alternative employment opportunities. Those who have been granted FBR are strengthened and prepared for safe labour migration and action is further taken to ensure the protection of their children and families.

FIGURE 1 - Implementation Strategy



4. Experiences with regard to Development Officers –Foreign Employment (DO-FE)

3 Development officers (DO-FEs) have been appointed for each division. All DO-FEs based in Alyandivembu division are males. Absence of female DO-FEs in the said division has been identified as a key area of concern.

SWOAD has built a good rapport with the DO-FEs as well as with the divisional secretaries in the implementation districts. The support and assistance thus gained from the government officials would ensure the sustainability even beyond the project period.

5. Experiences with regard to Family Background Report (FBR)

Apart from the 5 year age limit of children stipulated in the circular issued by MFE, DO-FEs in Ampara generally reject the FBR in the following instances:

- When no adequate care arrangement is available for the children.
- Females with differently abled children.
- Females with young unmarried daughters.

“Case conference approach” has been adopted as a tool for collective decision making in 2 DS Divisions in Ampara at present. The Divisional Secretary, prior to signing/approving the FBR, calls upon all the relevant officers to meet and analyse the prospective migrant worker’s family situation in detail. DO-FEs along with other Government officials involved in the FBR approval process (whose signatures are required on the FBR) gather and decide during a meeting whether the FBR should be issued to the individual concerned. This practice, albeit not mandated by any ministerial circular, reduces room for arbitrary decision making as it is a consultative process.

SWOAD reports that as per MFE’s recent circular, even if the Child is under the age of 5, DO-FEs can make a special request to MFE through the respective Divisional Secretary to consider the application for FBR if the migrant has a valid reason to migrate. However, this appears to be purely a judgement of the DO-FE to request the MFE to grant permission for the migrant worker to leave the country.

6. Grievance Handling

SWOAD has provided sufficient training on grievance handling to paralegals. During Phase 1, SWOAD has successfully trained 83 paralegals. The main criteria for the selection of paralegals are recognition received from the community, ability to provide ground level services, sufficient knowledge and interest on the subject. DO-FEs, Government Officials, leaders of community based organisations, teachers, volunteers are generally trained as paralegals by SWOAD. SWOAD receives an update from them on a monthly basis.

Members of the mediation board are also provided training on grievance handling mechanisms. Hence, they possess sufficient knowledge on migration and are in a position to mediate migration related matters more effectively.

As teachers and Government officers are provided training, they are in a better position to provide basic services to the community even beyond the project period without the assistance and intervention of SWOAD. As the aforementioned officers have also been made part of the grievance handling process, members from the community will continue to approach them when they are faced with migration related issues. Moreover, SWOAD expects that trained paralegals in different divisions will continue to provide their services to individuals in their locality even beyond the project period.

SWOAD further offers paralegal advice through legal aid clinics.

The complaints/grievances/information received through the aforesaid channels are processed/analysed by the migration information Unit of SWOAD. All complaints received are documented and properly maintained.

When complaints are made to the SWOAD Migration information Unit, the initial screening of documents is done by paralegals. “Case analysis” approach is adopted by SWOAD staff/paralegals to analyse cases. If the matter cannot be solved at organisational level, it is subsequently referred to SLBFE.

SWOAD has maintained a good rapport with the decentralised SLBFE Office in Ampara. Owing to this reason, there have been instances where complaints received by SLBFE-Ampara have been referred to SWOAD.

Reportedly, when complaints received by the decentralised SLBFE Office in Ampara are referred to SLBFE Colombo, no acknowledgement of receipt is made or case reference details given to the aggrieved party. Therefore, when SLBFE Ampara posts these complaints to SLBFE Colombo, cases cannot be traced as there is no reference number given by SLBFE Ampara. Complaints tend to get lost during this process and the aggrieved migrant worker/family member has to re-lodge his/her complaint at the SLBFE Colombo.

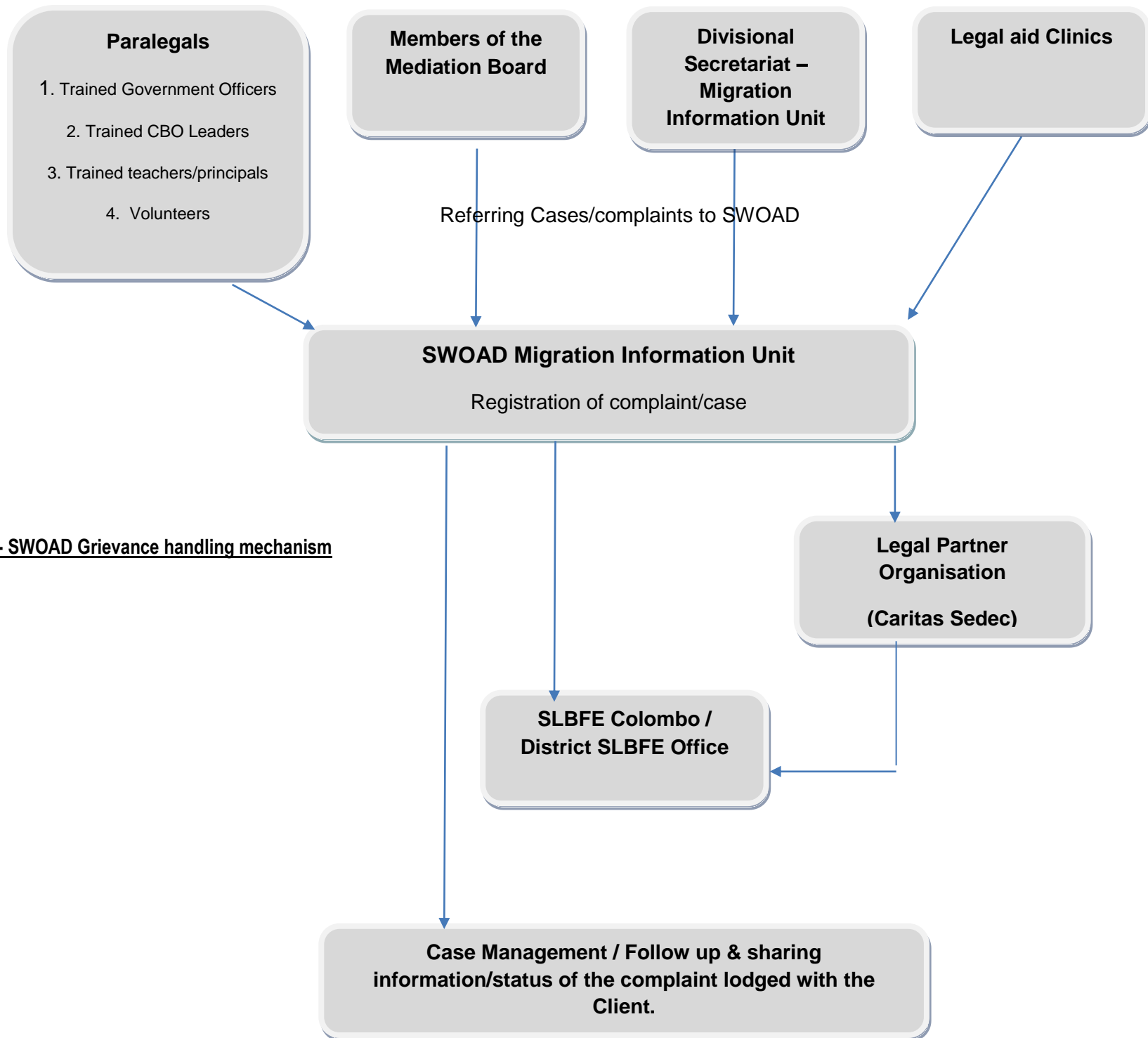


FIGURE 2 - SWORD Grievance handling mechanism

7. Psycho-Social Support

●SWOAD staff -12 mobilisers and 6 coordinators have received psycho social training to deal with basic psycho social issues experienced by migrant workers and their families. Identified individuals with psycho-social needs are referred to medical treatment, Counselling, family support counseling, provided with education-basic needs support mechanisms accordingly. Ground level identification is made by SWOAD and subsequent referrals are made to the relevant Government officials.

In addition, SWOAD has provided psycho-social training to the following Government officials:

- DO-FEs.
- Early childhood development officers.
- Government Psycho social assistant
- Government officers/Psychiatrist – attached to the Ministry of Health
- National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) Officers
- Child rights promotion officers

Village level Child Monitoring Committee (VCMC) which falls under the purview of the Child protection unit of the Department of child probation gathers once a month to discuss issues pertaining to children in the locality. VCMC comprises of Grama Niladhari, Economic Development Officer, Samurdhi Development Officer and Pre-school teachers.

Once an issue is identified through VCMC, home visits are made to the family requiring psycho-social assistance. Identified cases are referred to the counselor or the divisional secretary as appropriate. If a solution cannot be reached at the DS level, it goes to District secretary (GA) for further consideration and action.

Case conference approach is another tool for identifying cases requiring psycho-social assistance. These meetings are presided by the Divisional Secretaries. Government Officials and representatives of NGOs participate in such meetings.

Furthermore, cases requiring psycho social support are also referred to SWOAD by teachers and school principals.

8. Return & Re-integration

SWOAD provides return and re-integration assistance through various channels:

- Returnees as well as the families of in-service migrant workers are provided relevant information through the migrant groups monthly meetings. Reportedly, 49 migrant groups have been formed by SWOAD so far in the implementation divisions.
- Re-integration facilitation and guidance meetings for returnee groups are held by SWOAD at divisional level.
- Home visits are made to returnees and their families by SWOAD staff to provide them with advice and re-integration assistance. In addition, financial literacy and management skills of the returnees are enhanced.
- SWOAD further facilitates career guidance and vocational training programmes through the skill development officers of Divisional Secretariats particularly for the unemployed youth.

9. Unique experiences & Strategies

SWOAD has developed its own unique implementation strategies. Disseminating information through Government Officials as well as through teachers/principals can be viewed as a sustainable mechanism for disseminating information to the migrants as well as the members of the community.

Through the home visits made by SWOAD staff, FBR approved individuals are strengthened and prepared for secure/ safe labour migration. Those who have been denied of FBR are provided support and advice to seek alternative employment opportunities. Individuals whose FBR has been rejected are likely to be in a vulnerable position. Raising awareness amongst such individuals prevents migration through illegal channels to a great extent.

Furthermore, the Government officers as well as SWOAD staff act as paralegals providing necessary information to the migrants. It is reported from phased-out project locations that people continue to seek the advice and guidance of the paralegals in the locality. Even though the project has phased out of certain locations, paralegals residing in such locations still receive complaints from the migrant workers or their families. Paralegals continue to refer these cases to SWOAD. It is observed that SWOAD maintains a good rapport with the Government officials in Ampara. This contributes towards successful implementation as well as the sustainability of the project even beyond the project period.

10. Current advocacy issues

Following advocacy issues have been raised by SWOAD.

(1.) When returnees claim compensation, the medical practitioner is required to sign the relevant form issued by the SLBFE. However, medical practitioners are reluctant to sign these forms and instead, tend to issue separate medicals regarding the injuries suffered by the migrant worker. Such medicals are not accepted by the SLBFE. Owing to these procedural difficulties migrant workers often find it difficult to obtain compensation.

(2.) Irregular patterns of compensation – It is reported that the amount of compensation granted even in alike claims/similar injuries appear to be drastically different.

(3.) The migrant worker is required to travel to SLBFE -Colombo for his/her inquiry on a number of occasions. Having to travel to Colombo from East on numerous occasions bearing their own travel expenses is challenging for the migrant worker. Furthermore, absence of recruitment agents during the inquiry prolongs inquiries. It is further reported that adequate interpretation is not being provided during the inquiry.

(4.) When cases are referred to SLBFE Colombo, no acknowledgement of the complaint is made/ no receipt issued. When SLBFE Ampara posts these complaints to SLBFE Colombo, it cannot be traced as no reference number/receipt is issued by SLBFE Ampara. Due to these issues, the migrant worker is compelled to re-lodge his/her complaint at SLBFE-Colombo.

(5.) It is reported that the SLBFE Ampara Office is in a very remote locality. Travelling to such remote locations is challenging for the migrant worker.

11. Conclusion

SWOAD has a well-established, sustainable mechanism to disseminate information to the migrant families. Through Government officials, teachers/principals and the various community level meetings, migrant families receive adequate information/advice to make sound & well informed decisions and to address their issues. SWOAD has taken the initiative to receive and analyse complaints, and refer them to either SLBFE Colombo or the legal partner organisation – Caritas Sedec on behalf of the migrant worker.