

Chinese Cultural Webinar

**MODERN
SLAVERY**

**ORGANISED
IMMIGRATION
CRIME**



Introductions/background to project

- MSOICU

- Guest speakers:

Dave Wilson, West Midlands Regional Coordinator, MSOICU

Jabez Lam, Community Organiser, supported Morecambe Bay and Dover 58 investigations

Miriam Hargreaves, Vista/Harbour Church

- Reasoning behind the project
- Methodology
- Handouts

Reflection: Media references and narrative of the Chinese culture: To what extent does an awareness of risk and exploitation influence a 'decision' to travel overseas?

Intro & historical background

- **People's Republic of China (PRC)**
- Population 1.4 billion in 2020 (Source IOM)
- **Imperial China - reinforced disparities**, national resentment, drive for sovereignty. harsh laws, state control and labour practices
- 19th & 20th centuries - China facing exploitation from Western powers and Japan - Opium Wars and various treaties.
- **Confucianism – hierarchical relationships**, submission to authority, power imbalances, making exploitation more likely. Maintaining peace, not causing embarrassment—saving face.
- **Daoism** – simplicity, balance, lack of materialism. **Justifying exploitation** - acceptance of one's position.
- **Communism** – PRC established in 1949. Land reforms, collectivisation, forced labour, political persecution.
- Rapid economic growth, industrialisation from late 1970s (China as world's factory'), marginalised communities, **exacerbated disparities, worker exploitation.**
- South China –more open minded than in the North.
- **Organised crime, expected and accepted.**
- NRM referrals from Chinese nationals
- Human smuggling.
- Estimated 5.8 million people were living in modern slavery in China on any given day in 2021. (Source: 2023 Global Slavery Index)

Greetings/Language

- **Respect for elders** – greet elders first. Use Mr/Mrs/Ms with surnames.
- Nod/small bow.
- **Physical contact** - handshakes, fist and open hand instead (although not generally used for younger generation), respect personal space
- Eye contact.
- Softly spoken, make themselves smaller. **TIP – can attempt to mirror them.**
- Importance of **tone**
- Gentle, calm especially first engagement avoid slang words, speak slowly.
- Mandarin as national language. Cantonese spoken in Hong Kong, Guangdong and Macau. Regional dialects.
- **Tip: Ask about family, if they have eaten, offer warm water. Show compassion, keep conversation light**
- **Tip – State not a suspect upon initial contact, reiterate to build sense of safety.**
- **Interpreters** – balance out possible lack of trust with non-native Chinese and language barriers. Victim ‘losing face’ Consistency as key. Gender
- Long conversation does not indicate depth of conversation.



Greetings continued

- **Nǐ hǎo 你好 – Hello**
 - Are you okay?: 你还好吗? (Nǐ hái hǎo ma?)
 - It's safe here: 这里很安全 (Zhèlǐ hěn ānquán)
 - Ni chi fan le ma? 你吃饭了吗? Have you eaten?
 - Bie dan xin. 别担心 - Do not worry.
 - Bie hai pa. 别害怕 - Do not be afraid.
 - Wo men shi lai bang zhu ni de, 我们是来帮助你的 - We are here to help you.
 - Pinyin: nǐ fù mǔ hǎo ma? 你父母好吗? How are your parents?
 - Where in China are you from? Ni lai zi Zhong Guo na li? 你来自中国哪里?
 - **You like to eat flour-based food? Ni xihuan chi mian shi, hai shi mi fan? 你喜欢吃面食还是米饭?**
- TIP: NOTE, this is a useful way to distinguish people from south to north part of China, with the former having strong preferences for rice.**

Key cultural elements



- Polite, reserved, hardworking, strong sense of honour, harmony, **avoid conflict.**
- **Reticence to share**, can lead to risk of exploitation – trafficker ‘taking care’ of them,
- **Indirect communication style**, especially sensitive topics
- Hospitable, need to give back, **pay your way**. Chinese value of ‘**Chiku**’ – normalising exploitation.
- Reciprocity especially if helped by someone higher up in society.
- Respect, ‘**not losing face**’, debt bondage, returning to trafficker, preserve honour.
- Hierarchical. **Oppression** faced within Chinese systems.
- **Strong ethnic identity**, Over 50 ethnic groups, Han Chinese majority.
- Tolerant culture, unless upset/disrespected.
- Rural areas remote, huge country.
- Focus on collective. Sacrifice own identity.
- **Work centred.**
- **Informal transactions**, cut corners. Frugal, but luxury brands - sign of success.
- **Family focused**, "family" or "**jiā**" at the heart of almost everything
- **Struggle to say no.**
- Respect for traditions.

Taboo's/ prejudices

- Police contact – shameful.
- Being disrespectful.
- Dishonour, not meeting obligations, **not paying your way. Case study**
- Deportation to China.
- Children out of wedlock.
- Financial dependence on family/not supporting the family.
- **Sex working.** Women as mothers/daughters, dutiful, demure role – Confucianism origin. **Not seen as victims. TIP: Mention indirectly, until feel safe. Be mindful of Terminology.**
- Racism – people from Hong Kong and Macau looking down on mainland China. Tibetans & Muslims from Western China.
- Disabled people. Saving-face culture influence.
- LGBTQ+ community.
- Gambling, addictions
- Chopsticks - not touching unless eating or point at people.
- Mental health.



Migration

- Many migrated from Fujian province.
- Reasons for leaving - education and work opportunities, better job life balance and quality of life, escaping domestic abuse or political persecution, gain independence from family.
- Internal migrant workers vulnerable to exploitation in China.
- The government hukou (household registration) system.
- **Pressure to send money home and to return home.**
- **Sexually exploited women in UK – left China due to husband’s debt to loan sharks/business collapsing/gambling addiction. Wife forced to work in UK to pay back debt, deceived on type of work. Others from poorer backgrounds.**
- **Competition between women. Women moved between brothels (may say parlours).**
- May stay on past repayment of debt.
- Arrival by air, recruited by links to loan shark. Passports removed, taken to place of work.
- Some will take on managerial role, becoming part of system.
- Working illegally (apart from sex working) not seen as shameful, but hard working, enduring hardship.
- Construction sites – bunk bed accommodation, carry own sleeping bags
- **Varying awareness of risk, access to information so controlled. Experiences not retold, saving face.**



Migration continued

- **Those exploiting own ethnicity – ‘doing them a favour’, exploitation viewed differently.**
- May increase risk of re-trafficking if returned to China.
- UK Diaspora. China Towns. ONS census records have recorded the Chinese population in the UK rising from 146,462 in 1991 to 445,619 in 2021.
- **TIP: NGO support – need to have the role explained.**
- Smuggling/overstayers as opposed to trafficked to UK. Increase at New Year and new university term, stay on as tied into debt.
- Recent waves of mass migration to the UK include:
 - 1950s to 1961s Post WWII decolonialisation
 - 1980s-2010s PRC Chinese post Tiananmen massacre and Hong Kong Handover
 - 2020s Post 2019 Hong Kong democracy movement
- **TIP: International Social Service Hong Kong branch www.isshk.org**

Family/gender dynamics

- Multi-generational living.
- **Confucian values**, obligation for parents care, written into law.
- Family businesses common, whole family's earnings.
- Limited social services.
- Wife takes care of husband's parents too.
- Low unemployment, even in rural areas, work the land. Work ethic to improve status, gain a larger car/property.
- **Gender roles**: male dominated, sons given money to marry, seen as more important. Women put up with suffering, viewed as subservient. (Women in brothels need to ask permission from men to engage with Police/NGOs)
- Choosing not to marry/marrying outside family's expectations brings dishonour.
- **Divorce, extramarital affairs widely accepted; migration and separation of couples.**
- Bride trafficking from SE Asia to China.
- 1 child policy





Education

- Education and status very important.
- High costs for education
- Tiger mothers
- **Pressure to achieve, wealth important to display**
- **Family success**, family's reputation tied to accomplishments of one member, failure reflects poorly. **Migration as an option for those not performing.**
- Historically girls seen as less important, sons will provide
- Respect very important – children will raise hand to speak.
- Highly educated - well regarded. Much competition for university places.
- Males in particular feel shame if not succeeded. Trauma.
- **Chinese students in UK vulnerable –WeChat recruitment. Students asked to launder money, import drugs.**
- More opportunities in the cities; wealthier families pay to access more and better opportunities.

Religion, beliefs & festivals

- **Not discussed in public**, religious persecution, although more subtle.
- Chinese Communist Party (CCP) – atheist
- **5 official religions** recognised – Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, generic Protestantism, and Catholicism
- Religion as a **cause of conflict** - Tibet in 1959
- No children under 18 allowed to enter/attend a church.
- Lunar New Year or Chinese New Year (春节, Chūnjié)
- Mid Autumn Festival – (中秋节, Zhōngqiū Jié)
- Dragon Boat Festival
- Tolerance of other religions to a point.
- Christianity a threat to Communism.
- Triads rooted in Buddhism and Taoism.
- **TIP: Registration plate/reference number with multiple 8s**



Food

- **Importance in building connections**
- Symbolism
- Cooked and hot!
- Eating out
- Street food (Dai Pai Dong) and smart restaurants.
- Rice and noodles
- Dim sum dumplings (jiaozi, 饺子) for breakfast and New Year with pork and vegetables, symbolise wealth, prosperity
- Fish (yú, 鱼) represents abundance.
- Sticky rice dumplings (zongzi, 粽子) wrapped in bamboo leaves.
- Tea, brandy and beer popular drinks along with beer.
- Alcohol - impact
- **TIP: 2 fingers table tapping**
- Taboo foods for pregnant women
- **TIP: Central China and SW China – ‘spicy provinces’, North more salt and oil.**



Interaction with authority

- **Hesitancy to engage**, last resort, sort out issues themselves,
- Takes time to **build trust, perseverance needed**, fear repercussions
- **Set clear expectations**, stick to them. Chinese community will observe.
- **Tip: Advise not the same as Immigration/Home Office. Government bodies perceived as interconnected entities.**
- **Tip: visible presence of community police officers and campaigns focused on building trust with communities, NGO support with explaining the Police's role.**
- How victims are treated initially impacts engagement
- Police's role in China, corruption
- **Triads and the sex trade**, initiation ceremonies
- United Front linked to Triads.
- **WeChat control, recruitment of victims**, fearful of surveillance
- **Brothels managers as Alphas**
- Conditions in brothels
- **Daigou**
- Joint working with Chinese and UK Police
- China's response to MSHT crime

Interaction with authority cont.

- OCGs opting out of class A, firearms and OIC detectable crimes
- **Challenges for forces:**
 - language barriers
 - sourcing reputable interpreters
 - lack of Chinese officers
 - OCGs operating across regions
- Chinese OCGs record all activity on phones.
- Bank usage
- Todi and Co
- **Tips:**
 - **Separate from other Chinese, even interpreter**
 - **Turn off phones Wi-Fi and Bluetooth on visits**
 - **Explain rights and UK system, advise and reiterate on safety**
 - **Get beyond brothel management, understand the hierarchy, geography and scale. Who is controlling or facilitating their travel?**
 - **Use of NGO's, FI's, translation tools etc. Complex cases, multiple resources needed – cultural resources too!**
 - **Google old news stories on Chinese crime in 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, listed on Companies House etc.**
 - **ABE/VRI interview to be offered where possible and appropriate**
 - **MSHT to be raised early on if indicators present. Get prepared statement about MSHT concerns. Be aware of clients going missing if released into NRM accommodation. Be aware of vulnerabilities.**
 - **Control – do not need evidence, consent to travel is irrelevant**
- **Learning from Dover 58 – 18th June 2000 - Jabez**
- **Learning from Morecambe Bay NW England, 5th February 2004 - Jabez**



Do's & Don'ts

Do's	Don'ts
Set out clear and realistic expectations of what you are going to do and ensure they are stuck to; advise you are there to determine the facts and will keep an open mind.	Assume a sex worker is not a victim just because they are not seeing themselves as one, or just purely because they have high value goods.
Persevere with engagement, be patient and respectful	Dismiss their silence, as this often reflects thoughtfulness or discomfort, not necessarily agreement.
Reiterate that victims are not a suspect upon initial contact.	Jump to conclusions or make assumptions about a potential victim's circumstance.
Dig deeper in terms of investigations but be mindful of how relatives and friends of victims are treated too, as this will impact how the Police are viewed by the Chinese Community as a whole.	Criticise China or the Chinese.
Consider sex workers to be victims and advise them of this, so they do not assume you are going to arrest them.	Ask sensitive questions straight away and certainly not where others can overhear. Privacy is very important in the culture.
Attempt to clear up myths and lies stated by traffickers, instead educate on their rights and the system here.	Be overly casual or informal in your behaviour, this might be misinterpreted as a lack of professionalism or respect.

TIPS: Acknowledge Cultural Differences and sensitivity to customs, such as the importance of family or saving face (mianzi) to assist with breaking down barriers and make your conversations more effective.

Have NGOs present on visits to brothels and parlours.

Thank you for listening

Q&A Session

Scan the QR or
use link to join



<https://forms.office.com/e/Fke5iEwarW?origin=IprLink>