



IOM International Organization for Migration
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations
OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

IOM Counter Trafficking Strategy for the Balkans and Neighbouring countries

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- **BACKGROUND**

1. Trafficking in human beings¹, particularly women and children, is a phenomenon of increasing proportions in the Balkans and neighbouring countries. The conditions conducive to trafficking are determined by a number of factors including: unemployment, lack of opportunities and lack of realistic information in the country of origin; civil and ethnic violence, the absence of legal instruments, the existence of porous international borders, corruption and non-existent or insignificant punishment for traffickers. The huge profits that are possible from trafficking, in combination with the low risks, have resulted in the domination of this illegal activity by criminal organizations. This phenomenon affects countries of origin, transit and destination of the victims.
2. IOM's involvement and approach to trafficking is based on its migration mandate whereby: "IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society and acts to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and work towards effective respect of the human dignity and well being of the migrants"². IOM is particularly concerned about those migrants who are, or have been, deceived or coerced into situations of economic exploitation, which occur through forced labour, forced servitude, coercion, debt bondage, or other violations of their fundamental human rights. Furthermore trafficking poses a migration management problem for governments of sending, transit and receiving countries.
3. The objectives of IOM are to curtail migrant trafficking and protect the rights of migrants caught up in the practice³, through awareness raising campaigns, return and reintegration activities and capacity building with governments.
4. This is a regional strategy to achieve those objectives in Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, FYR of Macedonia, Kosovo, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia including Serbia and Montenegro (hereinafter FRY), Croatia, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Italy and Ukraine.

¹IOM applies the definition of trafficking in human beings as stated in the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish trafficking in persons, especially Women and Children supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, as follows "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by the threat or use of force, by abduction, fraud, deception, coercion or the abuse of power or by the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation".

²IOM Resolution N0 923 (LXXI) of 27 November 1995.

³ The IOM Global Counter trafficking policy and strategy are reflected in the IOM documents - MC/EX/INF 58 and MC/INF 245.

- **IOM COUNTER TRAFFICKING EXPERIENCE**

5. IOM has been carrying out a number of counter-trafficking activities in this region both at the regional and the national levels⁴. In conjunction with the University of North London, UK, it is carrying out a project to develop best practices for agencies working on counter trafficking. The project is researching and evaluating the experiences and will develop training modules and conduct training for officials involved in Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo as well as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Croatia. For the OSCE Stability Pact for South-East Europe, the organization has been commissioned to conduct a research study entitled *Applied Research and Data Collection on Trafficking in Women and Children To, Through and From the Balkan Region (ARTB.)*. This study is intended to provide a regional overview of the current situation, resulting in a comprehensive database of up-to-date information and to create a network of correspondents who will regularly report on the situation in their country. The IOM regional office in Rome is supporting IOM missions in the Balkans in a number of programmatic and implementing activities; Counter Trafficking meetings have been organised among IOM offices in their region and the local partners in order to identify best practices and derive lessons learned.
6. At the national level, IOM offices are implementing several projects to assist the orderly, safe and dignified return of trafficked women to their home countries⁵. IOM has established systems and mechanisms to help identify, support and protect trafficked migrants in cooperation with different organizations and institutions by providing verification of identity, medical, transit and reintegration assistance. Mass Information Campaigns targeting potential victims, general public as well as potential users have been developed. Support to governments in the development of new legislations to fight against trafficking has also been provided.
7. A Counter-Trafficking Focal Point has been appointed in each IOM mission to facilitate implementation and coordination of activities. Based on IOM's operational field experiences, a Database, relating exclusively to cases of assistance to trafficking victims (experiences of victims, trafficking routes, modus operandi of traffickers) has been developed. This would enable a better analysis of the information and, therefore, a deeper understanding of this complex phenomenon. In order to address security issues affecting those staff dealing with trafficked victims, IOM has developed a Standard Operational Procedure (SOP) as a set of recommended rules and practices regulating the security of the staff of IOM and the victims of trafficking under IOM programmes.
8. IOM cooperates with other international organizations and NGOs, as well as with government authorities. It is fully involved in the activities of the OSCE Task Force

⁴ For more detailed information on IOM Counter Trafficking initiatives in these countries, please refer to Annex 1 A and 1 B.

⁵ To date over 550 trafficked women have been voluntary returned to their countries of origin by the mission in the region

on Trafficking in Human Beings. The Organisation chairs the Return and Reintegration assistance working group and co-chairs together with UNICEF, the working group of awareness raising; together with ICMC the Victim Protection working group. Through these working groups and based on its experience, IOM helps the Balkan countries in the development of their national programmes to combat trafficking in human beings (National Plan of Action).

• THE STRATEGIC APPROACH

9. To date, IOM's global strategy⁶ has been applied in the region. However, given the experience of the organisation and the characteristics of it, a more detailed Balkan and surrounding area counter-trafficking strategy is necessary. Each country has developed a number of programs that are appropriate to its needs. A specific counter-trafficking strategy in the region will identify which pieces are needed to complete the action. The sharing of information gained from ongoing and future information campaigns and return programmes as well as the close coordination with other active organizations will help identify where new hotspots may be developing or where new programs are needed. It is in this respect that an overall strategy will be crucial in linking the programmes already in place and help give an overview of where new programmes are necessary.
10. The following areas of activities represent the present IOM regional strategy to increase prevention and combating of trafficking in the Balkans and neighbouring countries⁷:
 - Rapid response to stranded persons, particularly women and children. To assist, via central coordination, with shelter, referrals, medicals, returns, anywhere in the region. This mechanism will be used for the assistance of stranded persons, who need immediate protection and return support and do not fall within the defined caseload of existing IOM counter trafficking projects or comparable assistance schemes.
 - Voluntary Return and Reintegration: these two activities have, so far, been treated together. Based on IOM caseload and on its experience it has been noticed that in order to make the return process more sustainable, the processes of return and reintegration should be delinked. That means that destination and transit countries will develop return projects whereas countries of origin will focus exclusively on reintegration activities. Countries like Albania, which is both a transit and origin country, will develop two different projects. This will permit IOM to have a common approach on return and reintegration but will give each country of origin the possibility to adapt it in accordance with local realities and needs. The delinking of return and reintegration will also avoid inequalities for reintegration activities within the same country for victims being return under different return project. This delinking will also facilitate the monitoring of the reintegration

⁶ See footnote 3.

⁷ Please refer to Annex 2 for some models of these activities.

activities that will be, from now on, a compulsory part of every reintegration projects. In the defined area the two activities will be the following:

⇒ Assisted return from countries of destination/entrapment to countries of origin, including support and assistance in transit and provision of protected shelter. IOM will continue its activities in collaboration with local and international partners in order to make the return process more efficient, less traumatic and safer for the victims.

⇒ Reintegration assistance in countries of origin, to address the root causes of trafficking and avoid potential re-trafficking of the victims after return. Reintegration elements to be included are, *inter alia*, medical and psychological assistance, security protection, vocational training, job referral, subsidised employment, self-employment and micro credits.

- Prevention of and assistance regarding Sexually Transmitted Infections and Reproductive Tract Infection and assistance in reproductive health and counselling as an integral part of assistance programmes. IOM will improve the capacities of agencies dealing with victims of trafficking to provide HIV/AIDS counseling. Therefore IOM will develop training, implement regional training workshop for agencies involved in protection of victims of trafficking, based on inputs from the workshop will develop guidelines for addressing HIV/AIDS issues among victims of trafficking, with focus on human rights protection. This should be applied for example in Serbia, FRY, Romania, Slovenia, Bosnia Herzegovina and Croatia.
- Information activities in countries of destination, transit and origin, targeting both potential victims and the general public. Based on past experiences in the region IOM will develop further awareness raising activities, above all in rural areas, in countries which have not been yet targeted and will further developed information activities targeting local and international law enforcement officials. IOM will increasingly develop trafficking prevention activities in schools in order to increase understanding of the danger of trafficking, realities of migration and awareness of available preventive support mechanisms among youngster. This type of activity, already developed in Bulgaria and Hungary, will be replicated in countries where the educational system is already well structured (Moldova, Romania, Italy, Croatia and Slovenia). Mass information campaign will be developed in FRY, Moldova, Slovenia, Croatia, Albania, BiH, FYROM and Kosovo.
- Research activities. A large amount of research has been carried out in the area. Based on the OSCE/IOM research, a network of people dealing with trafficking in different parts of the local administration and in several NGOs and International Organization will be established. This network will permit updated information on the major changes regarding trafficking in the region: routes, legislation, etc. IOM will also work on a standardisation of the information it is daily gathering through the assistance of victims of trafficking. The purpose being an information resource center on the phenomenon in the region for member states. Considering the general lack of available information, special research activities will be carried out in FRY, Moldova and Slovenia.

- Regional and subregional fora to bring together several countries sharing the same trafficking problems, often also the same traffickers organization. A regional approach can avoid reinventing the solution country by country and enhance cooperation among affected countries. IOM will facilitate meetings among governments and partner organisations in countries of origin (for example Moldova, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania and Ukraine), countries of transit (for example Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, FRY and Albania) and countries of destination (for example Kosovo, Bosnia Herzegovina). IOM will then facilitate the meeting among these groups of countries.
- Closer cooperation with NGOs and other intergovernmental organization working in the field of counter trafficking. Best practices will be established and applied in other countries, NGOs report activities will be standardised. In this regard, relationships with OSCE/ODHIR and the European commission, amongst others, will be enhanced.
- Transnational network development and planning, including capacity building activities among key parties from countries of destination and origin, including local NGOs and government counterparts. Particularly important in this regard will be the technical support for the drafting or updating of the appropriate anti-trafficking legislation in Moldova, Croatia, FRY and FYR of Macedonia.