
HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN UKRAINE – 2010 SITUATION BRIEF

Trends:

In 2010 IOM has seen an increase in the number of identified victims of trafficking (VoTs): from 773 in 2009 to 1,085 in 2010. The increase in identified victims is believed to be connected to several factors, among them the after-shocks of the economic crises as well as improved cooperation between IOM, partner NGOs and Government agencies.

Most of the victims identified in 2010 were trafficked to the Russian Federation and Poland and more than half were exploited in forced labour. Trafficking of Ukrainian citizens within Ukraine is also on the rise (10% of 2010 cases as compared to 3% in 2009). The number of identified cases of exploitation in the construction and agriculture sectors increased compared to 2009, while trafficking for forced prostitution has been steadily decreasing in the last several years. The number of male VoTs identified in steadily growing (from 23% of male IOM beneficiaries in 2009 to 36% in 2010), mostly thanks to the targeted efforts of partner NGOs at the local level.

A continuing trend observed by IOM in 2010 was the increase of sexual violence and sexual exploitation against female victims of labour exploitation.

2010 saw a dramatic increase in the number of identified child VoTs, an outcome of intensive capacity building and networking efforts for state shelters for children, orphanages, boarding schools, and juvenile detention facilities. 123 minors were identified as VoTs in 2010 (compared to 47 in 2009), 60% of them are girls. 47% of child VoTs were exploited in forced begging, 33% for commercial sex and 12% in forced labour. Most minors were exploited within Ukraine (65%) and in the Russian Federation (31 %), either sold or handed over to traffickers by their own parents/guardians. Street children were occasionally recruited and exploited by their peers.

For the first time on such a considerable scale, in 2010 law enforcement identified close to 25 victims of organ trafficking, exploited by a Ukrainian-Israeli organ trafficking syndicate. Kidneys of the victims were removed in Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Ecuador. Most of the victims were young men in difficult economic situation with lower levels of education from Ukraine, Moldova, Uzbekistan and Belarus. Recruiters posted advertisements on the internet or lured victims into selling their kidneys through personal contacts. Traffickers misled the victims into thinking that the transaction was legal, sometimes signing contracts with them. The victims were typically paid the agreed sum and provided with adequate health care before the organ removal, however rarely received post-surgery care. The consent of this category of victims makes it difficult to identify such cases.

The analysis of IOM's beneficiaries' stories indicates that the majority of VoTs of internal as well as cross-border trafficking continues to be recruited through informal channels/ personal contact. The crime itself is becoming more hidden, as traffickers adapt their approach and treatment of victims towards less physical violence and more psychological manipulation. Often VoTs are given some freedom of movement and receive some remuneration throughout and after exploitation.

Risk groups:

IOM observed that persons who lost their jobs or significant parts of their income as a result of the global economic crisis were particularly vulnerable to trafficking in 2010. The lack of perspectives for re-employment at home forced them to seek work abroad. Older women, who re-enter the labour market after years of childcare, are increasingly at risk for labour exploitation.

Children from socially disadvantaged families and those in state custody are extremely at-risk of being trafficked and exploited inside Ukraine for begging, commercial sex, and production of pornography. They remain a significant part of the risk group even after reaching adulthood.

Since the beginning of its Counter Trafficking Programme in 2000, IOM and its partner NGOs throughout Ukraine assisted 7,343 victims of trafficking who had been trafficked to more than 60 countries all over the world.

For more information please contact Ruth Krčmář at rkrcmar@iom.int