



VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING: A STATISTICAL PROFILE – 2014
IOM MOLDOVA

In 2014, IOM Moldova provided assistance to 75 newly identified victims of trafficking (VoTs), registering an overall decrease of 18.5% compared to 2013, when there were 92 newly identified VoTs. During 2014, 39 VoTs identified in previous years continued to receive qualified and individually tailored assistance.

OVERVIEW:

According to the extensive knowledge gained from working with VoTs and the data gathered throughout the years, social and economic vulnerabilities are key factors that can expose different segments of the population to the risk of being trafficked. 81% of the adult VoTs identified in 2014 were unemployed when they entered the trafficking chain, 68% of adult VoTs completed 9 grades or less, while 67% of the VoTs came from rural areas. Besides that, the lack of family support (single parenting, lack of parental care, etc.) and previous experiences of violence¹ contribute to create a favourable environment for recruiters and traffickers, being the main push-factors motivating VoTs to accept dubious work offers or unsafe travel proposal. Acknowledging that, the work of IOM Moldova, together with the state counter trafficking (CT) agents and NGOs, focuses not only on the identification, protection and assistance of VoTs, but also on prevention, through social and economic empowerment measures for potential victims, including victims of domestic violence, families facing extreme economic hardship, single parents, stranded migrants, persons with disabilities, as well as children without parental care.

During 2014, IOM Moldova, in cooperation with national and international partners, including state agencies and civil society organizations, identified and assisted 75 new VoTs. Out of 75, 63 were adults (with the share of male VoTs steadily increasing from 21% in 2010 to 28.1% in 2014). Most of the adult victims were aged between 18-30 (68%) and within this age group females represented the large majority (87.5%). Compared to 2013, the share of underage victims increased from 13% to 18% of the VoTs newly identified and assisted (out of 12 children assisted in 2014, 7 were girls and 5 boys, 78% aged 14-17).

With regards to the type of exploitation, the data gathered during 2014 confirm the previous years' trend, with the large majority of VoTs trafficked for sexual exploitation (45.3%) and 29.3% for labour exploitation. Exploitation in begging has significantly increased in the last years, from 5% in 2013 to 18.7% in 2014. Combined exploitation was faced by 2.7% of VoTs.

Russia remains the main country of destination of VoTs (30.6%), followed by Ukraine (14.7%), Turkey (13.3%), United Arab Emirates (5.4%) and Cyprus (4%). Victims were also identified in Italy, Israel, Malaysia, Germany, Belarus and Thailand. The number of VoTs identified in the territory of the Republic of Moldova slightly decreased from 27% in 2013 to 24% in 2014.

The large majority of underage victims (11 out of 12) were personally contacted by the recruiter (either acquainted to or unknown to the victim-), while one child was contacted through the Internet. As a general pattern, girls were recruited by women, while boys by men. As to the purpose of the exploitation, 30% of minors were exploited for sex purposes, 30% for begging and 23% for labour (the others facing combined exploitation). Minors were mainly trafficked internally (50% - 4 were sexually exploited and 2 forced to beg). Besides Moldova, Ukraine (2 minor VoTs) and Russia (2) were the main countries of destination, followed by Italy (1) and Turkey (1).

¹ It has been estimated that around 40% of the VoTs have been previously victims of violence, including domestic violence, being it physical, sexual or psychological.

Personal contact also remains the main method of recruitment of adult victims of trafficking both women and men. In this context, it is worth noticing that an increasing number of women were contacted by traffickers through the Internet (8 in 2014, compared to 2 in 2013 and none in 2012). This being a new phenomenon, the level of awareness of the potential risks hidden behind messages and proposals received online is extremely low.

As to the profile of recruiters, women were contacted by persons both known and unknown to them, by men and women equally, while men were mostly recruited by other men. The main countries of destination for women were Russia (26.2%, with 8 VoTs trafficked for sexual exploitation and 3 for begging), Turkey (21.4%, all exploited in the sex industry), Moldova (14.3%, half trafficked for sexual exploitation and half for labour and begging), United Arab Emirates (9.5%, all exploited in the sex industry), Ukraine (9.5%, half exploited in begging and half in the labour market) and Cyprus (7.1%, 2 for sexual exploitation and 1 for labour). A woman was internally trafficked for removal of organs. Russia also represented the main country of exploitation for men (47%, all exploited for labour), followed by Moldova (29.4%, 4 VoTs exploited for labour and one for begging) and Ukraine (23.6%, half exploited for begging and half for labour).

More than half of the VoTs were identified by state institutions, police officers and Multy-Disciplinary Teams of the National Referral System for Assistance and Protection of Victims and Potential Victims of Trafficking (NRS)² working at district and community level in the country, while 9% were referred by NGOs. In 2014, a higher share of VoTs were identified by IOM field offices in Moldova and abroad (20% compared to 13% in 2013), whereas self-identifications remained very low (only 3 cases). Even though in some cases VoTs do not identify themselves as such and refuse the assistance they are offered within the Centre for Assistance and Protection of Victims and Potential Victims of Trafficking (CAP), the large majority of the victims accept to enter the rehabilitation and re-integration programme. In 2014, 57% of the VoTs benefitted from medical help, 55.6% received social assistance, 54.2% were provided with psychological support, while 43% received legal aid and/or support in obtaining official documents.

RECENT TRENDS:

The data referring to 2014 confirms the trends registered in the recent past, with the duration of exploitation for sexual purposes decreasing from 1-2 years to several months or weeks, with the exception of few victims who endured exploitation for 3 to 9 years. The median duration of exploitation (regardless its purpose) was 6 months, while the average duration was 13 months. Besides that, the conditions of exploitation are “better”: the victims are paid small amounts of money, they are allowed to contact their parents/children and are allowed partial freedom of movement. These manipulative techniques have caused many victims to fall under an illusion of well-being, to consider their traffickers as friends and in some cases to return to their traffickers/pimps after being rescued or arrested by police and deported (in 2014 the share of re-trafficking remained steady at 11%, as in 2013).

In 2014, an increasing number of VoTs with mental and/or physical disabilities were identified and assisted. Very often, disabled people live in extremely vulnerable situations, being in many cases orphans, children from boarding schools and/or homeless. Having no documents or official residence they cannot receive invalidity pensions and are thus precluded from receiving any kind of economic support from the state. People with disabilities are mainly exploited for begging, being a quite easy and lucrative target for traffickers because of their vulnerable position and the strong emotional impact they are likely to have while asking for money in the big cities’ streets.

² The National Referral System for Assistance and Protection of Victims and Potential Victims of Trafficking (NRS) is a comprehensive system of co-operation between governmental and non-governmental agencies involved in promoting human rights and combating human trafficking based on common and internationally recognized standards. The implementation of the NRS in the regions of Moldova was done through the creation and training of Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) which are the main operational units of the NRS, operating on different levels and bringing together a wide range of specialists (social workers, policemen, prosecutors, doctors, teaching staff or other educational officials, representatives of public registry, bodies, lawyers, psychologists etc.).