



VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING: A STATISTICAL PROFILE – 2013
IOM MOLDOVA

In 2013, IOM Moldova provided assistance to 92 newly identified victims of trafficking (VoTs). This represents a 45% decrease compared to 2012 when large groups of victims had been identified in Kosovo and Ukraine, pushing up the number of new cases to 170. 58 victims identified in previous years continued to receive assistance in 2013.

OVERVIEW:

Based on the in-depth knowledge gained from working with victims of trafficking over the past decade, it became increasingly clear that all victims had been in particularly vulnerable situations, which made them fall prey to traffickers: situations such as domestic violence, single parenting, situation of children from boarding schools or unemployed persons with low education (under the 8th or 9th grades) and/or from poor rural areas with minimal opportunities (in 2013, 70% of VoT's were unemployed prior to their exploitation and the vast majority left for work). This is why prevention of THB through social and economic measures for potential victims is an important integral part of the NRS¹, reducing the beneficiaries' risk of being (re)trafficked.

In 2013, IOM Moldova, in cooperation with national and international partners, identified and provided assistance to 92 VoTs: 80 adults (58 women and 22 men – the proportion of men to women has been steadily increasing in the course of recent years from 21% in 2010 to 31.5% in 2013), and 12 children (5 girls and 7 boys). Like in 2012, most of the victims (62%) were aged 18-30, while the share of underage victims increased from 8% to 13%. In 2013, 52% of the victims were trafficked for sexual exploitation whereas 36% of the victims were trafficked for labour exploitation (a 10 % decrease as compared to 2012). A smaller proportion of VoTs were exploited for begging purposes (5%) or faced combined exploitation (2%) such as labour, begging and sexual exploitation

The most common country of destination was again Russia – it accounted for 35.9% of the identified victims (in contrast with 2012 when a large number of Moldovans was discovered working on a farm in Kherson oblast', Ukraine). Other main destinations included Ukraine (13%), Turkey and the United Arab Emirates (7.6% each). Victims were also identified in Germany, Iran, Israel, Kazakhstan, Northern Cyprus, Poland, Serbia and the UK. The number of cases of trafficking identified within Moldova almost doubled, from 16 in both 2011 and 2012 to 29 victims in 2013 (mainly exploited in agriculture). Underage victims accounted for 40% of the victims exploited in Moldova, of whom 40% were victims of sexual exploitation.

In Russia, 79% of the victims were women, of whom 76% suffered sexual exploitation. Half of the victims in Ukraine were subjected to labour exploitation, a quarter to begging and the rest to the mixture of sexual, labour and exploitation in begging. All Moldovan victims in Turkey and the UAE were women aged 19-30 who faced sexual exploitation. One victim was trafficked for organ removal in Iran.

In 2013, over half of the victims were identified by the police or local authorities (43 and 7 respectively), 13% – by IOM field offices, and 28% – by NGOs. Many of the victims treat their trafficking experience as failed migration and rush to find a new job in order to provide for their families. Hence they do not identify themselves as victims and thus refuse the psychological or other assistance available to them through the Centre for Assistance and Protection (CAP). Nevertheless, many did benefit from various types of assistance – 46% accessed medical help, 88% were provided with social assistance, 51% took advantage of psychological support and 53% received legal aid.

¹ 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. http://iom.md/attachments/113_Final%20Brochure%20EN.pdf

In addition, the rate of VoTs that benefited from continuous/repeated assistance doubled in 2013 (from 18% in 2012 to 39% in 2013). This can be explained by the fact that, due to the traumatic experience of exploitation some victims do not fully acknowledge their problems and needs at the identification stage and revert later for assistance (most often medical and social). Thus, it is important to keep the individually-tailored assistance programme open for VoTs and their family members, taking into consideration all of their needs, regardless of time period that passed since they entered into assistance programme. In 2013, the number of identified cases of re-trafficking stood at 11% (7% in 2012).

Many of the identified VoTs had experienced violence prior to the trafficking experience. 40% of the VoTs helped in 2013 had previously been victims of violence (physical, sexual and/or psychological) – a 10% increase following the decrease seen in previous years (38% in 2011 and 30% in 2012). It is important to note that not only women were physically abused – 15 men were identified as domestic violence victims. Most of the underage victims had also been previously abused.

The recruiters of VoTs identified in 2013 were most often people known to the victim (almost 55%), with men (55%) recruiting more than women – the same trend as in 2012 (although in 2011 women constituted 2/3 of the recruiters). As in 2011 and 2013, male VoTs indicated to have had only male recruiters with a few exceptions, while female VoTs had been recruited by both men and women with a slightly higher share of women. Unlike in 2012, underage victims were almost always recruited by men. Traffickers generally have well-established relationships in the country of destination and know the local language, legislation and traditions. Therefore they have a high ability to convince potential victims by fraud.

RECENT TRENDS:

The trends in trafficking are constantly changing. In contrast to previous years, the duration of exploitation for sexual services decreased from 1-2 years prior to 2011 to several months or weeks in 2013. The median duration of trafficking experience for all victims was 6 months; a small number of victims endured exploitation for 5 to 10 years or longer.

The conditions of exploitation are “better”, the victims are paid small amounts of money, are allowed to contact their parents/children and provided with partial freedom of movement. These manipulative techniques have caused many victims to fall under an illusion of well-being, where they consider their traffickers as friends, prompting some to return to their traffickers/pimps after being rescued or arrested and deported by the police.

Fewer victims are identified abroad. Most of them are mistaken for prostitutes and deported – it was found that many beneficiaries came into trafficking from prostitution and vice-versa. The level of self-identification is also low. Many victims do not know their basic human rights and do not realize they were actually sold and exploited, mainly due to the changed conditions in which VoTs find themselves. They do not know they can ask for assistance and have the right to be protected. Others do not ask for assistance and do not have similar acute medical and psychological needs as victims in previous years. In regards to recruitment, some of the victims knew or suspected what would happen to them abroad; however, the promises they were given upon recruitment were immediately broken upon entry into the countries of destination.

There is a rising trend of labour exploitation in Russia and the Ukraine, with an increased proportion of men being trafficked to those countries. However the main type of exploitation remains sexual and targeted at women in countries such as the UAE, Northern Cyprus and Turkey.
