

Safeguarding victims' rights and protecting witnesses and reporting persons

IOM's experience with trafficked persons

Introduction

- IOM is the world's largest provider of protection and assistance services to trafficked persons
- Since the mid-1990s IOM has assisted over 100,000 men, women and children subject to trafficking and others vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse

Services provided

- IOM offers comprehensive direct assistance packages to victims of trafficking in collaboration with our government and civil society partners.
- This includes accommodation in places of safety, medical and psychosocial support, skills development and vocational training, legal support and counselling, and the options of voluntary, safe and dignified return to countries of origin, integration in the country of destination or onward movement to third countries when needed.

Approach

- Our work is *victim-centred* and *rights-based*. This means that we consider law enforcement cooperation by the victim as their decision, and we help them assess if it is in their best interest.
- We recognize that social protection and law enforcement must work closely together to combat trafficking.
- We know that victim-witness intelligence and testimony can be helpful or even critical in investigations and prosecutions.
- We can therefore encourage or support victims and witnesses to cooperate with law enforcement if the conditions are right.

Lessons from the field

- A victim's initial contact with law enforcement deeply influences their future decisions on cooperation with law enforcement.
- Respectful, supporting, and kind interactions greatly increase the chances of their future cooperation.
- Having their immediate concerns and priorities acknowledged and respected also facilitates cooperation.

Recommendations

- Law enforcement actors should be sensitized to these realities before conducting anti-trafficking law enforcement actions
- Cooperation procedures between protection and law enforcement actors should be agreed prior to law enforcement actions
- Protection and law enforcement actors should be sensitized to their respective roles, responsibilities, and operational realities
- These measures help victims, law enforcement, and protection actors work together to ensure the best cooperation of all parties towards the greater objective of protecting victims and prosecuting traffickers.

Thank you!

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