



## Tool 8.8 Shelter programmes

### Overview

*This tool reviews some basic considerations that must be kept in mind in providing victims with safe shelter.*

One of the first steps to be taken by victims wishing to escape from the control of traffickers is to find a safe and secure refuge. Despite the prospect of continued abuse, many victims choose to stay because leaving can involve more danger and greater vulnerability. The lack of a safe and secure refuge often results in the victims returning to their abusers after an initial escape, because of the fear of violence and the intimidation they are subjected to. It is therefore critical that real and practical options for their safety and security (in both the short and long term and in both the State of destination and that of return) are made available to victims of trafficking.

### Types of shelter

The victims of trafficking have short-term and long-term needs for safe shelter. The nature of the shelter they need may evolve as their individual situation changes and they advance in their process of recovery. The need they experience may be for one of the following types of shelter:

#### ***Immediate, safe and short-term shelter***

The most basic and immediate requirement is a protected and secure shelter at the time of contacting the authorities or the agency providing assistance or before deportation or repatriation. In these shelters the victim is protected from harm from the trafficker and has access to immediate short-term assistance. This may include basic medical attention, short-term counselling, legal information, emergency financial assistance and access to information.

#### ***Temporary but safe and secure shelter with opportunities for other needs to be met (e.g. medical, psychological, legal)***

Shelters in the State to which the victims are returning will often need to provide some support to facilitate the rehabilitation process and the victims' reintegration in their families or communities. Without the protection of the shelter and the interim assistance it can provide, victims may be at risk of further harassment, or revictimization.

#### ***A halfway house, hostel, transitional housing or other assisted lodging arrangement***

Where temporary visas and other programmes enable victims to stay for some time in the destination State, victim support programmes, in partnership with Governments and immigration authorities, provide shelters where victims can stay without fear of unwanted

interference for a period while they recover from their ordeal and find some new direction for their lives. The essential elements of these shelters are a supportive environment, the provision of information about available services and access to community facilities and services. When victims are not faced with imminent deportation or repatriation, less institutionalized forms of shelter may be appropriate.

### ***A place where they can live independently***

In some circumstances, returned victims of trafficking will be so ill that their need for shelter will be a permanent one. This is often the case for victims who are seriously ill with hepatitis or HIV/AIDS. These victims may be rejected by their families or communities and have little chance of finding employment or security. Their emotional needs may be great and opportunities for assistance and self-development may best be provided by longer-term or permanent shelter and support.

Safe housing and shelter should be flexible to adapt to different target groups (men, women, children) and individual victims of trafficking with individual needs. Specialist non-governmental organizations provide the expertise and operational management, with funding from Governments. With this planned approach, the victims' move towards independence and control over their lives.



The critical aspect of shelter programmes is that the housing provided is matched to comprehensive and focused programmes of assistance, with the type of shelter matching the stage of recovery and the needs of individual victims of trafficking.

### ***Housing needs of child victims of trafficking***

Children's needs for shelter are different from those of adult victims and separate shelters and programmes must be available for child victims of trafficking. Vulnerable because of their age and without the protection of a family, children tend to need safer and more protected environments for longer periods. The assistance they require must often be provided over a longer period than for adults. There is considerable evidence that child victims of trauma may have longer-term and more serious reactions than adults.

For those States which do not provide separate shelters for child victims of trafficking, existing systems of child protection may be able to provide the children with shelter, medical and psychological support and education and training.

## **Models of shelter**

### ***Drop-in and counselling centres***

Drop-in centres or counselling centres can form a link between specialized services and the police, outreach agencies or other institutions that come into contact with presumed trafficked persons. These centres provide initial counselling; assessment of social, medical and psychological needs; specialized services, including shelter; and further referral of the presumed trafficked person.

Drop-in centres should create a database of social services in the State that is accessible to trafficked persons. Furthermore, they can collect anonymous data on trafficking cases. In Serbia, for example, a team consisting of representatives of the main anti-trafficking non-governmental organizations and social welfare authorities was created to assess trafficked persons in a referral and counselling centre (drop-in centre) and then refer them to advanced services, including a shelter.

### **Confidential shelter**

A confidential shelter should create a safe haven for a trafficked person by providing high security standards while respecting their right to privacy and autonomy. In general, this involves accommodation facilities with a secret address for presumed trafficked persons who may still be in danger from traffickers. The use for this purpose of decentralized, flexible and secret apartments, instead of one central building, has the advantage of a higher level of security. Once such a system is in place, apartments can be rented and given up frequently, so that the person's address remains secret for longer periods. Moreover, decentralized apartments help ensure the provision of housing suitable for different target groups, such as men, women and children.

Some States, the Netherlands, for example, use the existing infrastructure of shelters for female victims of domestic violence. In this case, clear agreements and a transparent division of tasks must be in place between the counselling centre (drop-in centre) and the shelter.

In general, good management of a confidential shelter requires sound regulations to be in place on such issues as admission procedures, staff regulations, termination of accommodation, handling of complaints of occupants and administrative procedures.



*Source: National Referral Mechanisms: Joining Efforts to Protect the Rights of Trafficked Persons; a Practical Handbook (Warsaw, OSCE, 2004), available at:*

[www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2004/05/2903\\_en.pdf](http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2004/05/2903_en.pdf)

### **Recommended resource**

#### ***The IOM Handbook on Direct Assistance for Victims of Trafficking***

Chapter 4 of *The IOM Handbook on Direct Assistance for Victims of Trafficking*, published in 2007, addresses the establishment of shelters for victims of trafficking, shelter management and staffing, procedures for assisting residents of the shelter, the treatment of shelter residents and the provision of shelter services and assistance. This extensive chapter offers essential resources, such as guidelines for developing staff codes of conduct, shelter rules and residents' rights.



*The IOM Handbook on Direct Assistance for Victims of Trafficking* is available at:

[www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/cache/offonce/pid/1674?entryId=13452](http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/cache/offonce/pid/1674?entryId=13452)

## Promising practice

Because of the holistic approach which is required in providing meaningful assistance to victims, promising practice with regard to shelters for victims of trafficking has been provided in the tool on integrated services (Tool 8.10).