

# Protection and empowerment of victims of human trafficking and domestic violence in Moldova



UN Trust Fund for Human Security



## Fast Facts

**Country:** Moldova

**Duration:** October 2008 to December 2011

**Implementing UN Agencies:** UNDP; UNFPA

**Other Implementing Partners:** IOM; OSCE; National Ministries; NGOs; community-based organizations; local authorities

**Budget:** \$3,451,764

**Key Words:** Human trafficking; access to health care; women

## BACKGROUND

At the outset of this project, Moldova was a major source country for human trafficking. Pervasive poverty, inadequate social services, unemployment and gender-based inequalities were some of the factors fuelling human trafficking in Moldova. Moreover, in a number of the poorest towns and villages as many as 40 percent of the population had migrated in search of work, breaking family structures and undermining community support mechanisms. In their desperation, many young women turned to the traffickers as their only hope for employment. Men were also at risk of being trafficked for forced work in labour intensive industries. Subsequently, the children of migrating or

trafficked parents were frequently abandoned and exposed to neglect and psychological stress, as well as the risk of human trafficking. At the same time, Moldova struggled with high proportions of domestic violence. Deterred by social stigma, most victims did not report the abuse and did not seek medical help. While the Government's efforts to quell human trafficking and domestic violence had successfully reinforced national legislation and victim protection programmes, translating these new policies to the varying local conditions across the country required support from a diverse range of national and international partners.

## PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the project was to prevent human trafficking and domestic violence and protect victims and those at risk through improved social services and empowered communities. This was to be achieved by (i) improving the capacity of Government agencies and civil society organizations to provide legal,

medical, psychosocial, employment and housing services offered to victims and those at-risk; and (ii) empowering individuals, communities and civil society organizations to address the root causes of human trafficking and domestic violence, and provide community-based services for at-risk persons.

### BENEFICIARIES

The ultimate beneficiaries of the project were victims of human trafficking and domestic violence as well as vulnerable women who were at risk of being trafficked

and violence. In addition, public service staff and civil society organizations benefited from capacity building to provide improved and integrated support victims.



## NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

(i) The project launched the Centre for Protection and Prevention, which offered comprehensive assistance to victims and women at risk. Through the centre, women benefited from safe accommodation, legal aid, psychological counselling, urgent medical care, long-term rehabilitation therapy and successful reintegration services. Meanwhile, the project provided training to bolster institutional capacities and upgrade existing local legislation in line with national legal frameworks on human trafficking and domestic violence. Consequently, the full implementation of the national legal framework was ensured and the necessary social services were provided so that victims in Moldova's most vulnerable rural communities could obtain the protection and assistance as set out by the national Government.

(ii) Furthermore, communities and individuals were empowered to engage in local initiatives to mitigate the risk of human trafficking. Through community-based advocacy and awareness-raising activities, the project generated public support to address gender-based discrimination and inequality and confront stigma against victims. In this way, disadvantaged rural communities increased their understanding of the

realities of human trafficking and became cognisant of national legislation to prevent trafficking and domestic violence. As a result, community participation in local solutions to address these issues and their underlying causes was greatly enhanced.

(iii) The joint project between United Nations agencies, in partnership with the Government and local stakeholders, generated synergies between local, national and international expertise and avoided duplication of practices. To ensure coherence between the many actors needed to address the complex issues of human trafficking and domestic violence, the project partners outlined clear guidelines that built on a common understanding of their goals. At the community level, coordination mechanisms were facilitated through multidisciplinary teams comprising social services, police officers, physicians, psychologists and politicians. This integrated strategy guaranteed the cross-sectoral partnerships between professionals needed to implement a comprehensive response to the multiple needs of victims and women at risk.

## LESSONS LEARNED

The project demonstrated the considerable benefits of context-specific and comprehensive solutions to combat human trafficking and domestic violence. With the participation of district authorities, civil society organizations and the affected communities, the project was able to identify the real needs of Moldova's vulnerable rural communities and the specific assistance required by the victims. Consequently, national legislation could be tailored to local realities which gave rise to more preventative solutions and generated immediate changes in the lives of victims. Moreover, through the establishment

of the Centre for Protection and Prevention, the project institutionalized a practice of multidisciplinary assistance and coordination at the local level. This strategy enabled the project to combine protection measures for individuals with community empowerment activities in a systematic and sustainable manner. Accordingly, gaps in existing social protection programmes were identified and addressed, and a comprehensive package of support was developed that exceeded the capacity of any one single institution.