

Information note: A human rights-based approach to trafficking - Giving Voice to the Victims

Human trafficking affects us all. Every country in the world is affected – either as a source of victims, a passage for victims or as a destination. Trafficking of persons is the fastest growing source of profit for organized crime. But trafficking remains under-reported and under-documented.

Victims of trafficking are not criminals

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) advocates for the human rights of victims to be placed at the centre of strategies to prevent human trafficking. “Preventing trafficking requires attention to vulnerabilities created through a failure to protect rights.” says High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay.

The Human Rights Office urges states to utilize the *Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking* developed by the Office in 2002, in their efforts to prevent trafficking and protect victims. States have a duty to protect victims of trafficking and punish the criminals who are involved in the crime chain.

Trafficking violates human rights

Trafficking itself violates the most fundamental of all human rights. “By using human rights as our point of reference we come to understand that trafficking is not just a problem of migration, of public order or of organized crime,” the High Commissioner says. “Trafficking is tied up in the discrimination and inequality that is behind so many human rights violations. Placing human rights at the centre of our work against trafficking means seeing trafficking as a violation of human rights.”

The victims

While women, men and children are trafficked both for labour exploitation and sexual exploitation, women and girls are often especially vulnerable. Victims fall prey to traffickers who may well be people they trust - parents, neighbours, friends and relatives – all in the hope for a better life.

Victims of trafficking need protection and assistance as well as access to justice. The Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, Joy Ngozi Ezeilo says in a report to the Council, “protection and proper identification of victims is the first and fundamental step ... People who are trafficked must be treated as victims and not as criminals.”

As the UN Human Rights Council meets for its 14th session, it will hear first-hand experiences of trafficking survivors and why their voices must be heard and their views considered.

An advance edited version of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking’s report is available at:

http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/14session/A.HRC.14.32_AEV.pdf

Activities on Human Trafficking in Geneva

1. **27-28 May 2010:** Two-day expert seminar (Palais des Nations Room XII)
2. **1 June 2010 (18:00 – 20.00):** Photo exhibition ‘Esclavage Domestique’: Domestic Worker or Domestic Slavery? (Door 40)
3. **2 June 2010 (15.00 – 18.00):** Plenary Panel discussion – Giving Voice to the Victims and Survivors of trafficking.
4. **2 June 2010:** Press Conference with the survivors