



Tool 7.8 The return and reintegration process

Overview

This tool explains the stages in the process of returning victims of trafficking to their country of origin and reintegrating them there.

International Organization for Migration guidance on referral and reintegration

(The IOM Handbook on Direct Assistance for Victims of Trafficking)

Chapter 3 of *The IOM Handbook on Direct Assistance for Victims of Trafficking*, published in 2007, offers invaluable guidance on victim referral and subsequent reintegration. The publication covers a wide range of support measures leading up to and provided throughout the reintegration process, emphasizing that assistance must be offered on a case-by-case basis in accordance with individual needs and fundamental human rights. An overview of the stages of return and reintegration are summarized here.

Stages of the return process: referring State

Victims should be returned voluntarily, and ideally with their informed written consent. Victims may be requested to sign a voluntary return declaration. The length of time needed to organize an assisted voluntary return depends on the circumstances in each situation; time is required to secure documentation and mentally and physically stabilize the victim. Priority should always be given to the victims' health and security.

Medical assistance

Pre-departure medical assistance is usually limited to basic or emergency health care and basic medical assistance. Special attention should be given to medical conditions which are highly infectious and/or those which could impede the victim's safe travel. Effort should be made to provide treatment which cannot be provided in the victim's country of origin.

Temporary accommodation

Safe temporary accommodation may be necessary while preparations are taking place. Such accommodation can be obtained through Government structures or international or local non-governmental organizations.

Temporary documentation and visas

Where traffickers have confiscated victim's documentation, it will be necessary to arrange replacement travel documents through relevant embassies or consulates. Contact should not take place where asylum procedures are pending, or where the victim has expressed a wish to apply for asylum based on a fear of returning home. In the interests of the victim's security and identity, only the minimum amount of information that is necessary to obtain documentation should be provided to embassy or consular personnel.

Security assessment

In some cases, the victim will be shunned, hurt or killed if he or she returns to his or her family or community. The person may also face legal ramifications upon return to the country of origin. Before victims are returned, an assessment of the risks which they face must be undertaken, taking into consideration issues such as the initial causes of trafficking, the socio-economic situation of the family, the attitudes of the family and community, whether the person is threatened with criminal or civil sanctions upon return, the state of infrastructure in the country of origin, whether there is a functioning witness protection programme, whether there are medical, psychological and legal services available, whether there is the possibility of training and educational programmes to minimize the risk of the person's revictimization.

Reintegration plans

An extensive reintegration plan should primarily be left to the receiving country into which the person is being reintegrated. Such a plan should give the victim a clear understanding of what to expect and should not create unrealistic expectations.

Travel grant

Sometimes a grant of food, water or other relevant supplies is necessary. Often it is better to provide the person with the actual service (such as prepared meals and prearranged accommodation) than cash, which can be inappropriately spent or lost.

Preparation of the victim

Returning victims should be made aware of the return assistance that will be provided. They should also be made aware of the duration of time the return process is estimated to take, and anything which may delay or expedite the process. Information should also be provided to the victim about:

- Available rights, options, rules of return and their justification
- The telephone number of the receiving organization as well as the name of the individual to contact
- Payment of a travel grant (if relevant)
- The prohibition on consuming alcohol on the journey (particularly if on medication)
- Assistance realistically available in the receiving country

It is important to explain to the victim that the final reintegration plan will be drawn up by the receiving country after a reintegration assessment.

Before the victim's departure, the following conditions should be met:

- That the victim has indicated understanding and consent regarding all departure procedures
- That in cooperation with the victim, a safe and appropriate place to stay on arrival, at least on a temporary basis, has been determined
- That all necessary legal, administrative, identity and travel documents of the victim have been secured prior to departure

- That all relevant service referrals and suggestions for follow-up care have been explained and provided to the victim
- That when referring a victim to a service delivery organization in the receiving country all necessary documentation and available security information have been forwarded to the receiving organization
- That when referring a victim to a partner non-governmental organization or other service provider in a transit country or the receiving country, all travel and service arrangements have been secured and confirmed in advance and recommendations have been sent to, and received by, the partner non-governmental organization or other service provider
- That the victim has been given a copy of all relevant personal documentation, including documentation of medical care, case progress and other data, as necessary
- That the victim has been fully informed of all the steps regarding departure, transportation and follow-up assistance

Communication procedures between the referring and the receiving State

In coordinating the return process of victims, communication between referring and receiving service delivery organizations should be prompt and secure. The following notifications are recommended by IOM as minimum standards.

- Notification of a request for assistance by the referring organization
- Confirmation of a request for assistance by the receiving organization
- Reintegration assistance request by the referring organization
- Reintegration assistance confirmation by the receiving organization
- Post-departure confirmation by the referring organization
- Arrival confirmation by the receiving organization

International travel procedures

Where possible, the travel schedule should aim to get the victim back to the receiving country as early as possible in the day and only on working days. The preferred means of travel is usually air travel, as it is more predictable than other means of transport (such as train or bus) and is therefore to be preferred for the safety of the victim. If air travel is not possible, efforts should be made to identify alternative routing with as few transit points as possible.

Arrival assistance

IOM recommends that victims be encouraged to accept arrival assistance as part of their return assistance package. There have been incidents where victims were met by traffickers upon their return and quickly re-trafficked.

Case follow-up

Receiving organizations should make efforts to communicate to the referring organization regarding the status and well-being of the returned victim.

Stages of the reintegration process: receiving State

Reintegration processes differ according to circumstances, but the overall aim of the reintegration process should be to provide for the victim's safe, dignified and sustainable reinsertion into society and a normal life. Accordingly, the reintegration assistance rendered can include shelter, medical and psychological care, counselling, grants, school reinsertion and training. Some assistance will be provided by the receiving organization and other services are likely to be provided by non-governmental organizations and Government partners. Reintegration services should only be provided with the victim's consent.

Reintegration assessment and plan

Assessments of both the individual victim and the situation to which he or she has returned should be carried out. A realistic reintegration plan should be formulated by the receiving country on the basis of these assessments, addressing such components as:

- Family mediation/reunification
- Medical/health concerns
- Financial issues (reinstallation grants, family or dependent support grants)
- Legal considerations
- Education/vocational training/apprenticeships
- Income-generating activities
- Security

Initial support by the receiving service delivery organization

Initial support may include arrival assistance, an immediate and comprehensive medical/psychological examination and treatment, short-term housing and help with various other social, legal and economic needs of the victim. Steps should be taken to avoid situations of dependency; the aim should be to help the victim become self-reliant.

Long-term support

Long-term reintegration support may be provided through (preferably formalized) collaboration between the receiving service organization, local or international non-governmental organizations and Government partners. Such reintegration activities may include:

- Medical/health-care services
- Counselling
- Financial assistance
- Legal assistance
- Reinsertion into the educational system
- Vocational training
- Micro-enterprise and income-generating activities
- Job placement, wage subsidies, apprenticeship programmes
- Housing and accommodation

Formalized memorandums of understanding between the Government and other service providers which clearly outline agreed responsibilities and services to be provided are useful.



Source: The IOM Handbook on Direct Assistance for Victims of Trafficking, available at:

www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/cache/offonce/pid/1674?entryId=13452