

## ADDRESSING THE ROOT CAUSES



### Tool 9.2 Addressing the root causes of trafficking

#### Overview

*This tool discusses the root causes of trafficking in persons and the economic and social policies identified in the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings aimed at addressing those root causes.*

### What are the root causes of trafficking?

The root causes of trafficking are various and often differ from one country to another. Trafficking is a complex phenomenon that is often driven or influenced by social, economic, cultural and other factors. Many of these factors are specific to individual trafficking patterns and to the States in which they occur. There are, however, many factors that tend to be common to trafficking in general or found in a wide range of different regions, patterns or cases. One such factor is that the desire of potential victims to migrate is exploited by offenders to recruit and gain initial control or cooperation, only to be replaced by more coercive measures once the victims have been moved to another State or region of the country, which may not always be the one to which they had intended to migrate.

Some of the common factors are local conditions that make populations want to migrate in search of better conditions: poverty, oppression, lack of human rights, lack of social or economic opportunity, dangers from conflict or instability and similar conditions. Political instability, militarism, civil unrest, internal armed conflict and natural disasters may result in an increase in trafficking. The destabilization and displacement of populations increase their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse through trafficking and forced labour. War and civil strife may lead to massive displacements of populations, leaving orphans and street children extremely vulnerable to trafficking.

These factors tend to exert pressures on victims that “push” them into migration and hence into the control of traffickers, but other factors that tend to “pull” potential victims can also be significant. Poverty and wealth are relative concepts which lead to both migration and trafficking patterns in which victims move from conditions of extreme poverty to conditions of less-extreme poverty. In that context, the rapid expansion of broadcast and telecommunication media, including the Internet, across the developing world may have increased the desire to migrate to developed countries and, with it, the vulnerability of would-be migrants to traffickers.

The practice of entrusting poor children to more affluent friends or relatives may create vulnerability. Some parents sell their children, not just for the money, but also in the hope that their children will escape a situation of chronic poverty and move to a place where they will have a better life and more opportunities.

In some States, social or cultural practices also contribute to trafficking. For example, the devaluation of women and girls in a society makes them disproportionately vulnerable to trafficking.

Added to these factors are the issues of porous borders, corrupt Government officials, the involvement of international organized criminal groups or networks and limited capacity of or commitment by immigration and law enforcement officers to control borders.

Lack of adequate legislation and of political will and commitment to enforce existing legislation or mandates are other factors that facilitate trafficking in persons.

In response to the above root causes, most prevention strategies fall within one of the following categories:

- Reducing the vulnerability of potential victims through social and economic development
- Discouraging the demand for the services of trafficked persons
- Public education
- Border control
- Preventing the corruption of public officials

## OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings

### ***Recommended preventive action at the national level***

The Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings adopted by OSCE contains a number of measures recommended for adoption at the national level in order to prevent trafficking in human beings. They consist of: (a) measures relating to data collection and research; (b) border measures; (c) economic and social policies aimed at addressing the root causes of trafficking in human beings; (d) awareness-raising measures; and (e) legislative measures. The following economic and social policies are recommended:

#### ***In countries of origin:***

- Considering as priority goals the fostering of social, economic and political stability, and the reduction both of migration caused by deep poverty and of supply factors of trafficking. Policies followed in pursuit of these goals should also promote both economic development and social inclusion.
- Improving children's access to educational and vocational opportunities and increasing the level of school attendance, in particular by girls and minority groups.
- Enhancing job opportunities for women by facilitating business opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Organizing SME training courses and targeting them in particular at high-risk groups.

#### ***In countries of destination:***

- Implementing measures to reduce "the invisibility of exploitation". A multi-agency programme of monitoring, administrative controls and intelligence gathering on the labour markets and, where applicable, on the sex industry, will contribute greatly to this objective.

- Considering the liberalization by Governments of their labour markets with a view to increasing employment opportunities for workers with a wide range of skills levels.
- Addressing the problem of unprotected, informal and often illegal labour, with a view to seeking a balance between the demand for inexpensive labour and the possibilities of regular migration.
- Tackling underground economic activities that undermine economies and enhance trafficking.

***In both countries of origin and countries of destination:***

- Taking measures to raise levels of social protection and to create employment opportunities for all
- Taking appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of gender equality, the right to equal pay for equal work and the right to equality in employment opportunities
- Addressing all forms of discrimination against minorities
- Developing programmes that offer livelihood options and include basic education, literacy, communication and other skills, and reduce barriers to entrepreneurship
- Encouraging gender sensitization and education on equal and respectful relationships between the sexes, thus preventing violence against women
- Ensuring that policies are in place that allow women equal access to and control over economic and financial resources
- Promoting flexible financing and access to credit, including microcredit at low interest
- Promoting good governance and transparency in economic transactions
- Adopting or strengthening legislative, educational, social, cultural or other measures and, where applicable, penal legislation, including through bilateral and multilateral cooperation, to discourage the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation of persons, especially women and children, and that leads to trafficking



The full text of the OSCE Action Plan can be found at:  
[www.osce.org/documents/pc/2005/07/15594\\_en.pdf](http://www.osce.org/documents/pc/2005/07/15594_en.pdf)