



National Referral System for Assistance and Protection of Victims and Potential Victims of Trafficking (NRS)

National Referral System: The National Referral System for Assistance and Protection of Victims and Potential Victims of Trafficking (NRS) is a comprehensive system of co-operation between governmental and non-governmental agencies involved in promoting human rights and combating human trafficking based on common and internationally recognised standards of activity. On December 5, 2008, the Strategy and Action Plan for the NRS were approved by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova and became a legally binding document on February 10, 2009. Currently, the NRS is being integrated into the national system of protection and social assistance.

Background: Trafficking in human beings ranks third in the world after the illegal sales of arms and narcotics in terms of profit and is a specifically pressing issue for the Republic of Moldova. Being a country of origin for human trafficking, and to a lesser extent a country of transit, from the former soviet states to the European countries, action had to be taken at the national level to combat and prevent this phenomenon.

The Government of Moldova has recognised the importance of preventing this phenomenon and has taken a Proactive Prevention Approach, by providing direct assistance to persons at-risk of being trafficked, as it was discovered that both victims and potential victims share a similar profile; often single parents, victims of domestic violence, persons with a low level of education and those from poor rural areas that have minimal opportunities. Special attention has also been given to children and disabled people who additionally fall under the category of at-risk persons. To combat trafficking and assist victims and at-risk cases, the Republic of Moldova needed to develop an integrated system of assistance which came in the form of the NRS.

The NRS was launched by the Ministry of Social Protection, Family and Child (MoSPFC) in partnership with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in 2006. Within the MoSPFC, the National Coordination Unit (NCU) was established and is responsible for the referral procedures and the co-ordination of activities from the identification of victims and potential victims, to their repatriation and the provision of direct assistance. Due to the co-operation between the Government of Moldova and non-governmental agencies, small and stand-alone projects turned into a unified system. Institutional and legal reforms now facilitate the repatriation, rehabilitation and re-integration of both trafficked victims and potential victims into the Moldovan society.

Evolution: The NRS was originally launched in five pilot rayons in 2006. Currently, in each rayon, a Territorial Committee to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings that is responsible for coordinating the prevention and counter-trafficking activities, works in parallel with a Multidisciplinary Team of specialists responsible for providing protection and assistance directly to beneficiaries. By June 2009, the NRS had been expanded to 27 territorial administrative units: 24 rayons, including 1 rayon in Transnistria, 2 municipalities and 1 town. By 2011, the NRS will be expanded to provide protection and assistance to vulnerable persons in all rayons throughout the Republic of Moldova.

Approach: The Strategy of the National Referral System ensures unconditional access for victims and potential victims of trafficking in human beings to comprehensive assistance by: (1) prevention through raising awareness and reducing the vulnerability of at-risk individuals through direct assistance, (2) protection and assistance through the processes of identification, repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration of the victims, (3) prosecution and assistance programmes for victim/witnesses in legal proceedings.

The process of referring victims to specialists and specialised services is essential for the rehabilitation and reintegration process. In this process, the Assistance & Protection Centre of Chisinau plays a major role as a crisis intervention centre for identified victims of trafficking and at-risk cases. At this Centre, victims, at-risk

cases, and children of victims, can receive food and shelter, medical, psychological, social and legal services. The rehabilitation and reintegration services provided through the Centre are offered to both victims identified abroad (transnational), and victims and at-risk cases identified internally. These support services are additionally complemented by the delivery of individually tailored medium and long term assistance to the beneficiaries.

To improve the prevention of potential victims from human trafficking, a Hotline run by the NGO International Centre La Strada is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to answer questions about trafficking, migrating abroad, and to receive SOS calls from victims, their relatives, friends and so forth, and to refer them for further assistance. The Hotline also provides information regarding leaving abroad that any person may need for protecting themselves and making the most informed decisions about their future. In Transnistria, a Tiraspol-based toll-free Hotline 0 800 88888, launched on February 1, 2006 and operated by the NGO Interaction, provides information about migration and trafficking (prevention calls), and is also used to identify victims in need of assistance (SOS calls).

To ensure the reintegration of beneficiaries into society through direct assistance, the MDTs in co-operation with IOM and local NGOs provide case monitoring and counseling, as well as support for (re)insertion into educational institutions, vocational training, employment mediation, business development training and assistance in the form of micro-grants to foster the economical empowerment of (potential) victims.

The key approach of the NRS is to establish co-operation and co-ordination between the counter-trafficking actors at every level: state structures, international organisations, non-governmental agencies and individuals at the local, national and transnational levels. This multidisciplinary network is ensured by:

- Pro-active prevention;
- Capacity building programmes;
- Technical assistance;
- Normative framework development.

MDTs and other actors such as family doctors, social assistants, law enforcement agencies and prosecutors, involved in prevention and protection activities, are trained to provide timely and adequate assistance to victims of trafficking and at-risk cases, taking as a priority a human rights based approach.

Through the Parliament approval of the NRS strategy, the Government of the Republic of Moldova has been facilitating the harmonization of national legislation on trafficking in human beings with international standards. To compliment this harmonization, the NRS strategy complies with the priorities held in the National Strategy for Development for 2008-2011, and is gradually being integrated into the National System of Protection and Social Assistance ensuring a human rights based approach to the policies and procedures. In this fashion, the NRS is assisting in improving the national policy and procedures for social assistance to victims and persons at-risk.

A unified referral system for victims and potential victims of human trafficking will capitalize database collection, optimize human resources, and the expected results will be an increased number of identified and victims and cases at-risk provided with timely assistance, as well as the enhancement of the efficiency of prevention and protection activities. It is important to help victims of trafficking, but it is much better to prevent potential victims from being trafficked. The NRS takes a pro-active prevention approach through direct assistance to those most vulnerable as in all things, prevention is better than a cure.

Development Plans: The objectives of the NRS for 2009-2011:

- Targeted prevention through combating Domestic Violence;
- NRS implemented at the community level;
- Development and consolidation of the Government of Moldova's ownership in assistance and protection of victims and at-risk cases;
- Harmonization of the national legislation in accordance with international standards;
- Elaboration of regulations and quality standards for providing protection and assistance at national and transnational level;
- Development and consolidation of the institutional mechanism, strengthening of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders capacities;

- Increased allocation of financial resources in the social assistance budget for the implementation of specific protection measures for victims and potential victims of trafficking.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the National Coordination Unit (NCU)?

The NCU is based at the Ministry of Social Protection, Family and Child and its functions include monitoring and evaluation, data collection, information dissemination, and the organization of capacity building programs for district (rayon) and community level social assistants and Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs). A centralized database of human trafficking and at-risk cases assisted within the system is under development. In addition, the Unit coordinates the activities of the NRS actors related to the referral of beneficiaries for protection and assistance at the transnational, national and local levels.

What are the Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs)?

A Multidisciplinary Team is formed in the rayon and consists of representatives from the Social Assistance and Family Protection Directorate (coordinator), Education and Youth Directorate, Medical and Sanitary Institution, Police Commissariat, Territorial Registry Office, Territorial Office of the National Employment Agency, specialized NGOs and other local relevant counterparts. At the initial stage, all stakeholders participate in a training provided by the experts in direct assistance for victims of human trafficking and cases at-risk.

The role of the MDT is to provide individually tailored protection and assistance support to the victims of trafficking during the reintegration process. Additionally, the Teams are responsible for the referral of the beneficiaries from the local level to the NCU for crisis intervention/short rehabilitation at the Centre for Assistance and Protection and/or for any other type of assistance not available at the local level.

What are the Territorial Committees?

The Territorial Committees to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings are in charge of coordinating the prevention and counter-trafficking activities at the rayon and community levels. They are responsible for the implementation of tasks and activities to combat human trafficking at the local level. The Territorial Committees work in compliment with the Multidisciplinary Teams on the side of policy implementation.

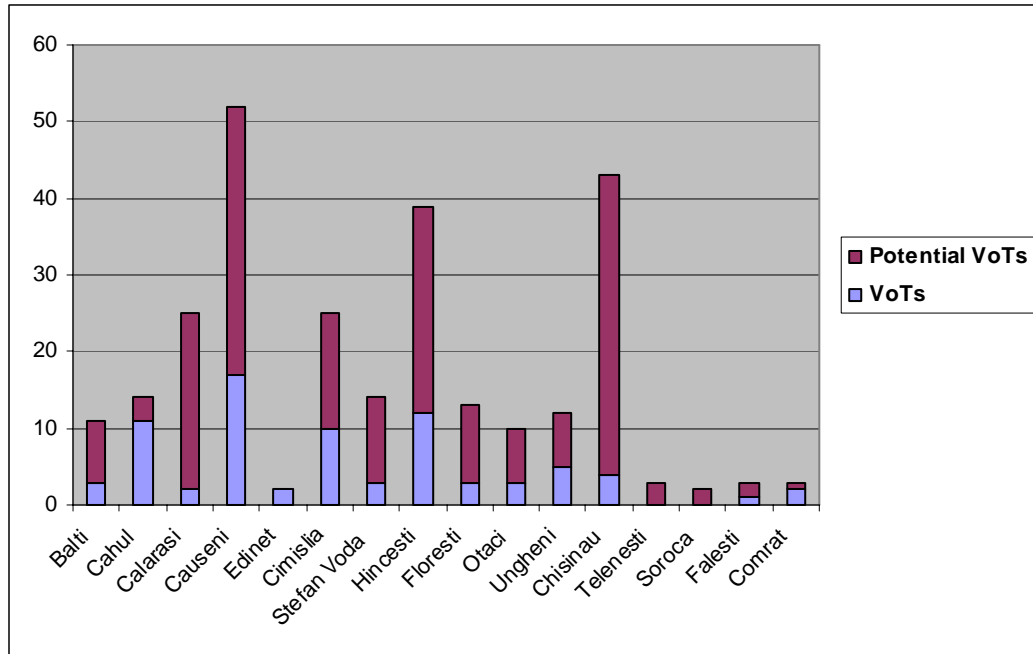
What is the Assistance & Protection Centre?

The Assistance and Protection Centre is the only facility of its kind in Moldova. Operational since 2001, the Centre has continually worked to provide timely and adequate assistance to both victims and at-risk cases. In 2006, a Government owned facility was identified through the Ministry of Health and renovations began so that in 2007, the new facility would be fully operational. In 2008, through considerable contributions from the Ministry of Health and the MoSPFC, the Centre was handed over to the Government from the IOM and was established as a public institution that would receive funding from the state.

The Centre offers recovery assistance such as safe accommodation, medical care, psychological counseling and legal assistance to survivors of trafficking and vulnerable persons for short term periods. All participation in recovery assistance programmes is both voluntary and confidential. Since its opening, the Centre has assisted 5,183 beneficiaries, victims of trafficking, potential victims of trafficking and stranded migrants, as well as their families. The beneficiaries include women, men, girls and boys. The Centre has the capacity to accommodate up to 24 persons.

How many people have been assisted within the NRS?

From January 2008 – December 2008, 84 victims and 203 potential victims have been identified and assisted.



Since the launch in 2006, until December 2008, the NRS has assisted 433 victims and at-risk cases.

Cases in the rayons involved in the NRS from 2006 to 2008

Rayons	Total/ rayons
1 Balti	32
2 Cahul	36
3 Calarasi	39
4 Causeni	87
5 Edinet	25
6 Cimislia	36
7 Hincesti	54
8 Stefan Voda	14
9 Chisinau	43
10 Otaci	10
11 Telenesti	4
12 Soroca	6
13 Ungheni	12
14 Falesti	3
15 Comrat	3
16 Nisporeni	10
17 Cantemir	3
18 Leova	3
19 Floresti	13
Total / Cases	433

In 2006, the NRS was implemented in five rayons. In early 2009, it was expanded to 22.



How to become NRS Partner and/or assist through NRS System?

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This publication was produced with financial assistance from the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of IOM and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The National Referral System is supported by the Government of the Republic of Moldova, Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the European Commission, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security.

