

## **Latin American and Caribbean countries debate regional guidelines for the social inclusion of survivors of human trafficking**

**Buenos Aires and Washington, DC, November 11, 2020** - The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Organization of American States (OAS) held the first regional workshop on the social inclusion of survivors of trafficking in persons.

The event took place virtually on November 10 and 11, and representatives from ministries and institutions in charge of social inclusion policies, as well as national bodies that combat trafficking in persons, from OAS member states participated in the workshop.

During the workshop, a proposal of regional guidelines was presented to the participants, with a view to consolidate a common frame of reference that strengthens policies and programs to support the processes of social inclusion of survivors of the crime of trafficking.

Through this event, IOM and OAS are promoting and accompanying the States' efforts and strengthening the institutional care and support responses to the social inclusion of survivors of human trafficking.

The meeting takes place within a regional context characterized by high human mobility throughout the continent. According to the [Assessment on the situation and impact of human trafficking in humanitarian contexts in South American countries](#) recently published by the IOM, most of this migration occurs in precarious contexts, with the population forced to make long journeys, in overcrowded or street situations, without access to livelihoods and exposed to numerous risks of abuse and exploitation.

The current COVID-19 pandemic has generated a greater precariousness of the living conditions of migrants. Therefore, people stranded or those who have lost their jobs are today more than ever at risk of being victims of the crime of trafficking. Also, according to the study, criminal networks recruit online and through delivery service offers. Protection systems at the national and local levels to prevent, combat and assist survivors of human trafficking have been seriously challenged and affected in this context.

The IOM Regional Director for South America, Marcelo Pisani, recognized the efforts of the States of the region to guarantee support to survivors of human trafficking but pointed out the importance of further strengthening social inclusion policies as an effective measure against revictimization.

In this regard, Pisani explained that the mechanisms for protection and assistance to victims must include facilities to access the labor market and comprehensive legal and psychosocial assistance that prevents revictimization. "People who have been victims of this heinous crime need specific attention to be able to resume their lives and to feel an important part again in their social sphere," added Pisani.

Pisani stressed that this assistance should be offered regardless of the immigration status of people who have survived trafficking situations or the degree of cooperation they provide in the criminal justice system's processes.

Along the same lines, Farah Diva Urrutia, Secretary for Access to Rights and Equity of the OAS highlighted the need to broaden the perspective in the discussion of the realities and vulnerabilities faced by survivors of trafficking in this social dimension, to achieve their effective and sustainable social inclusion. She pointed out that, "to achieve this, it is essential that States have long-term actions, mechanisms and public policies, and not only actions that address short-term problems."

Urrutia reiterated the willingness of the Secretariat for Access to Rights and Equity to continue accompanying OAS member states in matters of trafficking in persons from the perspective of inclusion, providing the necessary tools and spaces for exchange and technical cooperation. This, in conjunction with the OAS Secretariat for Multidimensional Security, which, through its departments of Public Security and Transnational Organized Crime, serves as the Technical Secretariat of the authorities against trafficking in persons.

IOM Regional Director for Central America, North America, and the Caribbean, Michele Klein-Solomon, highlighted that ensuring the social inclusion of survivors of trafficking is essential and vital to meeting their protection and assistance needs. "At the individual, community, and structural levels, actions must be taken to support their recovery and the restoration of their rights," emphasized Klein-Solomon.

Betilde Muñoz-Pogossian, Director of the Department of Social Inclusion of the Secretariat for Access to Rights and Equity of the OAS, highlighted that social inclusion serves the purposes of prevention and protection, being "a tool that serves on the one hand to address the circumstances of vulnerability in which people live before becoming victims of trafficking and, on the other hand, to reintegrate survivors of trafficking into society."

On the first day of the workshop, broadcasted live on social media (add link to Spanish and English), the participants shared good practices on policies and programs for the social inclusion of trafficking survivors. They also agreed on the importance of developing and strengthening regional guidelines for the social inclusion of victims.

The second day, which had a more technical approach, aimed at working on the proposal of *Regional Guidelines for the social inclusion of survivors of trafficking in the*

*Americas.* Attendees shared observations on the document to build and consolidate a common frame of reference to strengthen policies and programs to support the social inclusion of survivors of trafficking.

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