



**USAID**  
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# TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

## THE CHALLENGE

Ukraine has been a source, transit, and destination country for human trafficking since the early 1990s. Men, women, and children are trafficked for the purposes of forced labor and begging and sexual and other forms of exploitation. The main countries of destination for trafficked Ukrainians have been the Russian Federation, Poland, and Turkey, as well as internal human trafficking within Ukraine. The problem has been exacerbated by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Even before Russia’s invasion, Ukraine was already facing an increase in the scale of human trafficking caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing displacement from conflict-affected eastern Ukraine and occupied Crimea. The population is extremely vulnerable, an issue severely exacerbated by Russia’s invasion and the need for millions of people to leave their homes for safety in Ukraine and abroad. Fraudulent labor intermediaries/recruiters may take advantage of the war to exploit at-risk people.

Prior to Russia’s invasion in February 2022, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Mission in Ukraine[1] estimated that more than 300,000 Ukrainians had suffered from human trafficking since 1991. An estimated 46,000 Ukrainians were trafficked during 2019-2021; 29,000 abroad and 17,000 in Ukraine.

## OUR PROGRAMMING

To fight this form of modern-day slavery, USAID is working in partnership with the IOM, the Government of Ukraine, and local civil society organizations (CSOs) to counter trafficking in persons. USAID’s *Countering Trafficking in Persons (CTIP) Activity*, implemented by the IOM, works with key stakeholders to increase their capacity to identify, assist, advocate for, and raise awareness about victims of trafficking (VOTs).

**Advocacy:** USAID, IOM, and our civil society partners are working closely with the Ministry of Social Policy and National Social Service of Ukraine to provide expert analysis and input into Ukraine’s Law on Counter-Trafficking in Persons, the National CTIP Referral Mechanism, and the draft State CTIP Program for 2021-2025. USAID’s partners are actively engaged in advocacy to ensure that policies, regulations, and legislation adhere to the CTIP principles of prevention, protection, and partnership.

**Awareness Raising:** USAID’s partners raise awareness about the risks of trafficking through creative and innovative campaigns at the grassroots and national levels, using peer-to-peer approaches, art, and media. In recent years, USAID-supported outreach efforts have reached an annual audience of more than 15 million Ukrainians. In 2021, the *EVEN YOU* large-scale national information campaign used metro station billboards to reach an additional 80,000 people with trafficking prevention messages.

**Prevention:** Responding to the prevalence of young adult victims, USAID’s trafficking prevention efforts focus on outreach to younger audiences. USAID continues supporting targeted prevention projects among vulnerable Ukrainians, reaching more than 34,000 people in 17 oblasts with information about safe migration and employment.

USAID continues to support a toll-free National Counter-Trafficking and Migrant Advice Hotline 527, which provides advice and referrals to more than 22,000 callers annually. Following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the hotline played a critical role providing thousands of Ukrainians each week with information about safe migration.

**Capacity Building:** USAID works in 12 regions of Ukraine to build local capacity to implement Ukraine’s National Referral Mechanism. This assistance has helped more than 6,000 representatives of local governments, CSOs, and other stakeholders to learn to identify, refer, and assist VOTs. USAID also supports the 31-member strong Ukrainian NGO Coalition against Human Trafficking to empower it to advocate for improved prevention, prosecution, and protection of VOTs.

**Reintegration:** Since 2004, USAID has assisted more than 6,000 VOTs to reintegrate into their communities and economies. In 2021, USAID directly supported 658 VOTs (of them 203 women and 455 men) with psychological and legal assistance, family support, education, vocational training, and income-generating equipment. Since 2006, almost 600 VOTs have taken advantage of self-employment and micro-enterprise opportunities offered by the CTIP activity. USAID also supports the operation of the Medical Rehabilitation Centre for trafficking survivors, which is a unique facility in Ukraine providing free-of-charge medical and psychological consultations to VOTs and addressing their complex health issues in a safe and confidential manner.

**Partnerships:** New public-private partnerships fostered by IOM strengthened CTIP efforts in the country, empowering former VOTs to start their own businesses and access networking opportunities. USAID bolsters pilot activities focusing on community development and support to returning migrants as a means of targeted prevention at the community level. The main objective of this activity is to support newly amalgamated communities (NACs) formed in the framework of Ukraine’s robust decentralization reforms through hands-on, community-driven development projects aimed at socio-economic revitalization. A total of six NACs received support to build or renovate socially oriented infrastructure such as kindergarten, youth development centers, and community hubs that provide local residents with high-quality services.

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[1] [https://iom.org.ua/sites/default/files/omnibus\\_survey\\_results\\_eng.pdf](https://iom.org.ua/sites/default/files/omnibus_survey_results_eng.pdf)