

Relevant Background

The STOP THE TRAFFIK Group has a strong history of delivering activity with vulnerable communities that reduces their risk of being trafficked into exploitation. In the current crisis, we are working with a range of ground partners to produce this analysis.

We know from observing timelines with large unpredictable groups of people on the move (Rohingya and Syria) that initially they are subject to high levels of short-term assistance. Then as they settle, the trafficking operations begin to create structures to encourage higher-value individuals to go on a journey by promising them hope of a good opportunity that is exploitation. Timelines are difficult to predict, but at this point, it is not clear whether trafficking groups are organised in those refugee communities yet.

Ukrainian Refugees & Vulnerability to Trafficking & Exploitation

Introduction

A percentage of refugees have chosen to return to Ukraine, whilst those who remain in other countries across Europe, are currently finding some level of support to draw on from amongst host communities. Some host communities, such as Bulgarian coastal resorts, are becoming restless and tense.

The numbers of refugees outside of Ukraine are still staggeringly high at north of 6 million, and Ukraine in large parts has been physically and economically destroyed.

The following key judgments incorporate elements of the previous editions for relevance.

Previous Key Judgements

Please see previous editions here: [Key Judgements 1](#), [Key Judgements 2](#), [Key Judgements 3](#) and [Key Judgements 4](#).

Key Judgements

1) Resources of nation-state agencies and NGOs are reducing at border points. There are groups, the majority men, from several European nations arriving at border-crossing between Ukraine and its neighbouring countries. Many are well-meaning, but a number are clearly “hunters”. A Hunter’s motivation may be to make money from those refugees who can pay a fee, but there are also routine attempts by traffickers to recruit refugees into going with them. All information indicates that small groups of young women are likely to be targeted.

2) Ukrainian families are being encouraged to send their under-18 children to ‘safety’ with Ukrainians who have a pre-existing profile/ are domiciled in other European countries. There is evidence of intent to exploit some of the children sexually once outside Ukraine.

3) Under-18s are considered minors in most nations but are treated as adults in Ukraine. Many have travelled as refugees alone or in small groups. Minors are a target, particularly for sex offenders, and they are easy targets for fake job ads and grooming on social media.

4) Orphans from Ukraine, of which there is a good number, are a target for ‘back door’ adoption, which is extremely risky.

5) A good proportion of the 200,000 third-country nationals who left Ukraine because of the war originated from the Central Asian Republics (CARs) and remain in the receiving nations. Investigations are ongoing, trying to establish who has been in exploitation before becoming refugees. We believe they are highly vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation.

6) There is further evidence of a pipeline of Ukrainian refugees, young women and a proportion of unaccompanied minors (under 18, females) who are travelling via Romania/ Moldova via Bulgaria and Turkey (Istanbul) to Athens, where they are to work in the brothels managed by Greek or Albanian traffickers. This situation is likely to be replicated in other major cities in Greece and other Southern European cities.

Key Judgements Continued

7) Recruiters, probably Ukrainian, in Romania and Moldova are at work amongst refugee communities grooming and selecting for the traffickers in Greece. The traffickers in Athens and elsewhere are likely sending fees to the recruiters.

8) *It may be that active recruitment of refugees is now well underway, likely to be Ukrainian criminals in the first instance advertising fake jobs online and by word of mouth. This is also an indication that exploitation opportunities in sex and labour have been organised near and far.*

Information Requirements (what we need to know)

- 1) Unaccompanied young people (Under-18): *Are they on the move and is any evidence of trafficking?*
- 2) Third-country nationals: *Is there information indicating they have previously been or remain in the control of traffickers?*
- 3) Identification of recruitment methods, fake job ads on social media etc. is essential and urgent.
- 4) Any details on money systems being used by traffickers in Greece or elsewhere to receive payment for sex or make payments to recruiters.

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