



National Forum on Trafficking Kitchener-Waterloo, November 2013



Highlights

On 27 November, 2013, the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) hosted a National Forum on Trafficking in conjunction with the CCR Fall 2013 Consultation in Kitchener-Waterloo. The Forum provided an opportunity for participants working on trafficking issues to network and share ideas in assisting trafficked persons in Canada. The discussion also focused on priorities in the areas of policy development, awareness-raising and service provision.

68 individuals participated in the Forum. Participants included representatives of non-governmental organizations, service providers, academics, as well as representatives of different levels of government and law enforcement involved in work on trafficking, primarily from British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec.

The Forum was divided into four overarching sessions dedicated to:

- > Sharing challenges, experiences, responses and strategies to better assist trafficked persons and to work collectively with other organizations and sectors more effectively;
- > Exploring the intersections and continuum between situations of forced labour and trafficking in persons, as well as sharing strategies to raise awareness;
- > Analyzing existing policy gaps and barriers to protection for trafficked persons;
- > Identifying common priorities within the areas of policy, awareness-raising and service provision and discussing plans for moving forward together.

The Forum discussion highlighted a continued need for awareness on the issue of trafficking in persons among different groups and sectors, including a sustained effort to focus on labour trafficking in Canada. While participants acknowledged awareness-raising was crucial, it was also noted that it was important to focus additionally on priorities that fall within the realms of service provision, case management, and both short- and long-term protection needs, which to date have received less attention.

Participants expressed the need to continue to build and strengthen connections between organizations, law enforcement and diverse sectors, as well as with different levels of government (municipal, provincial and federal) so as to effectively and efficiently manage cases and address the needs of trafficked persons. They also stressed the need to implement a gender and race analysis and a “no harm” approach in all anti-trafficking work, including outreach efforts, service provision and policy development. Moreover, it was suggested that more information-exchange and networking opportunities be created between anti-trafficking and migrant workers groups to further discuss common concerns surrounding forced labour and trafficking.

Finally, participants emphasized the importance of shifting consciousness and anti-trafficking approaches from a predominant focus on prosecution towards one that prioritizes the needs and rights protection of trafficked persons in Canada.

Priorities in moving forward

Participants identified a number of priorities to move forward based on the challenges, trends and experiences discussed during the Forum. These concentrate on the areas of policy, service provision and awareness-raising and can offer guidance to the ongoing work of NGOs, service providers, law enforcement, immigration agencies, policy makers, and other groups involved in anti-trafficking initiatives across Canada.

Policy

In regards to policy issues, there is a need to:

- > Assess conflicting definitions of trafficking in persons in Canada, analyze their operational impacts (e.g. on identification of trafficked persons, data collection, collaboration, prosecution) and identify ways to deepen the understanding of trafficking and its various forms.
- > Focus on protecting the human rights of trafficked persons and on addressing their immediate and long-term needs.
- > Modify policies that limit trafficked non-citizens' access to statutory protection and increase newcomers' vulnerability to trafficking, including:
 - > Bars on access to Temporary Resident Permits (TRPs) for people whose refugee claims have been rejected, withdrawn or abandoned and for trafficked persons considered "designated foreign nationals" (see information on these and other limits to access to TRPs for trafficked persons: bit.ly/1gktbsH);
 - > Conditional permanent residence for sponsored spouses (see information on the program and the increased risks for sponsored spouses: bit.ly/1mPoch2);
- > Implement provincial monitoring systems for the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, following the model of Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

Services

To address gaps in service provision for trafficked persons, there is a need to:

- > Improve service providers' access to reliable and sustainable funding, including specialized services.
- > Explore solutions to address the lack of adequate housing for trafficked persons with varied needs (women, children, men, newcomers, survivors of labour trafficking and survivors of sex trafficking).
- > Enhance and support access to legal services for trafficked non-citizens.
- > Support training for settlement workers on trafficking, including on identifying and working with trafficked persons.

Awareness-raising

It is important for awareness-raising and outreach efforts to:

- > Create a better understanding of different forms of trafficking in Canada and abroad, among organizations, law enforcement, immigration agencies, policy makers, prosecutors and the general public.
- > Clarify the root causes of trafficking, both locally and globally, and include a focus on labour trafficking explaining the continuum between forced labour and trafficking in persons.
- > Engage provincial and municipal governments to prioritize and recognize trafficking in persons locally, regionally and nationally.
- > Increase targeted efforts among diverse groups (e.g. front-line and settlement workers, youth, aboriginal populations, the private and government service sectors, law enforcement).
- > Work with the media on responsible messaging and outreach.
- > Broaden efforts in order to reach beyond urban centres to include suburban centres.
- > Share information on services available to trafficked persons in different communities.



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