

TIP AND VULNERABLE MIGRANTS SITUATION

As the result of continuing challenges in economic and security situation in Ukraine, in the first quarter of 2020 (01 January – 30 March 2020), IOM Ukraine has identified almost twice more victims of trafficking (VoTs) than the previous year (428 VoTs as compared to 257 VoTs in the same period of 2019). This tendency has been extending since 2015, the second year of the conflict in eastern Ukraine. In the whole year of 2019, IOM had the highest number of VoTs (1,345 victims in total) ever assisted since the start of its Counter-Trafficking Programme in 1998.

Most of VoTs and returned migrants assisted by IOM were successfully reintegrated into society and employed in different spheres. However, with the current COVID-19 outbreak, most of them are now without any income or any source of livelihood, given that they are mostly self-employed or opening businesses. With loss of income or illness as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, VoTs and their families are already pushed into extremely vulnerable or exploitative situations.

To assess the influence of **the COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine on the needs of the victims of trafficking (VoTs)**, on 20–25 March 2020 IOM partner NGOs interviewed VoTs who received the reintegration assistance from IOM during December 2019 — March 2020.



24 NGOs, IOM local implementing partners in all regions of Ukraine except Kyiv and AR Crimea, provided data.



19 organizations reported they shifted to the **“work from home” modality**, while continuing to fulfill their everyday tasks — reporting, interviewing the beneficiaries, providing phone or online consultations to clients.



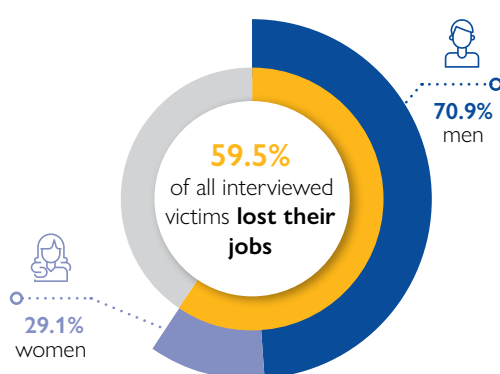
5 organizations informed that they have **mixed working modality**: some of the workers appear in the office when it is necessary or working in shifts.



42% of NGOs said their employees needed stress counselling.



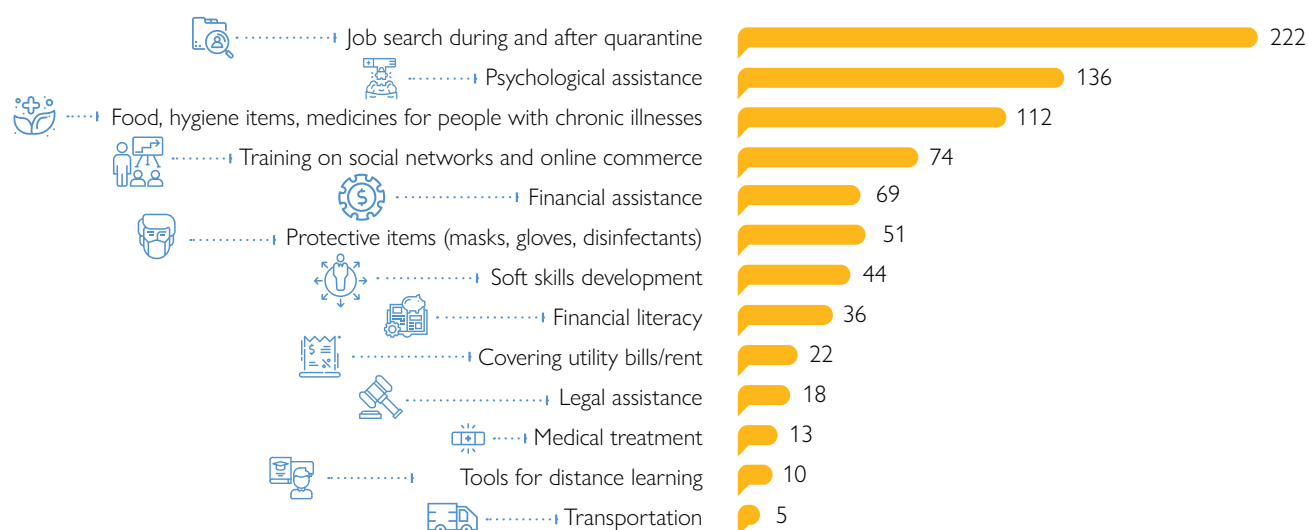
THE SURVEY COVERED **306 RESPONDENTS** (104 WOMEN  AND 202 MEN ) , WHICH IS **59%** OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF ASSISTED VoTs (DECEMBER 2019 — MARCH 2020 CASELOAD).



▶▶▶ Women were mainly self-employed and provided such services as manicure, pedicure, cooking semi-finished products, etc. The majority of men who lost their jobs worked in construction or provided repair services. Among the key reasons that caused the loss of their jobs, respondents named the inability to commute without private vehicles and halted passenger transportation across the country during the quarantine. Also, respondents highlighted the inability of their clients to pay for the services.



THE IDENTIFIED NEEDS OF THE VoTs:



POST COVID-19 NEGATIVE IMPACT ON TIP AND VULNERABLE MIGRANTS IN UKRAINE



The situation is constantly evolving, but COVID-19 impact on the global and Ukraine economy is already visible. Economic slowdown and increased unemployment globally will hit lower-wage migrant workers first. Millions of Ukrainians (as high as 3 million¹) whose households rely on their earnings abroad will be forced to return home to the labour market that is already under strain as thousands of Ukrainians risk to lose their jobs due to the economic disruptions caused by COVID-19. As reported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, in March 2020, over 155,000 Ukrainian migrants, including tourists, labour migrants and other travelers, came back to Ukraine.

The majority of Ukrainian migrants abroad are employed in low-skilled occupations and even small disruptions in income or increase in expenses could have a crippling effect on them and their families. Migrants engaged in informal employment will face even greater dangers of unemployment and exploitation including TIP. Facing the brunt of job cuts, some migrants will have to return home and look for new sources of income in the conditions of equally or worse affected domestic economy. It is critical that the response to a health emergency caused by COVID-19 also considers its economic impact and offers support to returning labour migrants and other vulnerable migrants, including victims of trafficking, violence and abuse.

IOM UKRAINE HAS IDENTIFIED THE FOLLOWING REQUIRED PROTECTION SUPPORT MEASURES:



Provide protection services (including medical, psychosocial, legal and income generating as well as family support) for returning labour migrants and other vulnerable migrants, including victims of trafficking, violence and abuse.



Disaster assistance/stimulus packages for previously supported VoTs: IOM has supported hundreds of microentrepreneurs among VoTs and returning migrant workers, for whom the COVID-19 outbreak might result in loss of sources of income. Financial aid will allow them to survive the crisis, support their households, and, if they have employees, prevent layoffs or make possible offering jobs for other community members.



Small-scale funding for infrastructure projects in newly amalgamated communities that will generate new jobs for returning skilled labour, have social effect and alleviate the negative consequence of the State Regional Development Fund being frozen for the period of quarantine.



Advocate with the national government authorities involved in identification and return of irregular migrants for immediate and direct access to health care as well as for opportunities for resolution of cases of irregular stay with regard to travel restrictions caused by COVID-19 pandemic – including temporary regularization of status, return and reintegration.

¹ Migration in Ukraine: Facts and Figures (IOM Ukraine, 2019)