

IOM-SUPPORTED COUNTER-TRAFFICKING AND MIGRANT ADVICE HOTLINE RECEIVES REPORTS ON RECRUITMENT FRAUD

IOM experience globally and in Ukraine reveals that crisis situations such as the current COVID-19 pandemic lead to increased vulnerability of population to exploitation. To inform Ukrainians about the risks, IOM conducted a counter-trafficking awareness-raising campaign in the Kyiv metro. Posters, featuring IOM Ukraine's Counter-Trafficking Goodwill Ambassador and Eurovision-2016 winner Jamala, were placed at 715 metro carriages from 26 May until 9 June 2020, reaching over 1.3 million passengers with messages on trafficking prevention and with contacts of the IOM-supported National Toll-Free Counter-Trafficking and Migrant Advice Hotline 527.

Over 70 per cent of people who reached the hotline having seen its advertisement in the Kyiv metro, already have a labour migration experience. From all the requests related to work abroad, most were about employment in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Germany. In total, from 26 May until 29 June 2020, the IOM-supported National Toll-Free Counter-Trafficking and Migrant Advice Hotline received 2,318 calls.

A student from Kharkiv who was visiting Kyiv and saw the hotline advertisement in the metro called the hotline to ask for advice. She has signed a contract with an employment intermediary, which was supposed to find her a job at a hotel in Germany so she would be able to earn some money during her summer break. A problem occurred when the company suggested that the student applies for a German visa and pays for their intermediary services as soon as possible, while they were refusing to provide the name of her future employer.



Another potential labour migrant who learned about the hotline from the advertisement in Kyiv metro was a woman who lost her job in Ukraine due to the quarantine restrictions. She started searching for employment abroad through the Internet and found a vacancy at a food processing plant in Germany. The woman was told that she should pay EUR 300 to the intermediary as soon as possible to get this job. The

company said that the woman would have to travel to Poland visa-free, and bus transportation from Poland to Germany would be organized for her and other migrant workers.

Both women received a consultation on how they could protect their rights and safeguard themselves from the risks of fraud and exploitation.

In crisis situations, migrants are often at risk of increased vulnerability to exploitative practices, including human trafficking. Ukrainian migrant workers who are employed in low-skilled or informal sectors are prone to the risks of exploitation as evidenced by the high numbers of Ukrainian victims of trafficking who were identified before the pandemic. With the inevitable loss of employment due to COVID-19, people previously less at risk of trafficking may become more vulnerable as a result of unemployment due to the pandemic, while vulnerabilities of persons already at risk of trafficking may be further increased.

IOM SURVEY: EASTERN UKRAINE MICRO- AND SMALL BUSINESSES REQUIRE SUPPORT IN WAKE OF COVID-19

Micro- and small enterprises in the government-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions have had to dismiss one in three employees due to the COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine, revealed [a survey](#), conducted by IOM.* Forty-nine per cent (49 per cent) of firms owned by internally displaced persons (IDPs) had to cease operations. Among the companies owned by members of Donetsk and Luhansk regions host communities, the shutdown share was lower — just over 35 per cent.

The average drop in sales during the quarantine was estimated at 25 per cent for the companies with monthly sales ranging from UAH 5,000 (USD 188) to UAH 50,000 (USD 1,878), and at 44 per cent for the enterprises with monthly sales from UAH 51,000 (USD 1,915) to UAH 250,000 (USD 9,391).

“The role of micro- and small businesses in eastern Ukraine, heavily affected by over six years of ongoing hostilities, is hard to overestimate, as they provide much-needed services and create jobs in their communities,” said Anh Nguyen, Chief of Mission at IOM Ukraine.

“Because of their pre-existing vulnerabilities, IDPs appear more at risk of being unable to recover from the economic shock of COVID-19 control measures. Female-owned businesses are under greater strain as well,” Anh Nguyen explained.

Almost one third (29 per cent) of all businesses which had to shut down operations said they would not be able to reopen after quarantine restrictions are lifted without external support. Female respondents were less confident in their ability to restart a business without external support compared with males.



Photo: IOM / Anna Pochtarenko

Ivan Zhydkov, the owner of a meat-processing plant near Sloviansk, Donetsk Region — is still restoring his business after the ordeals of 2014, when conflict erupted in eastern Ukraine.

Recently, Mr Zhydkov participated in IOM Ukraine's economic empowerment programme for IDPs and other conflict-affected populations. He received some of the much-needed equipment as a grant.

“We are lucky,” said the IOM grantee. “Compared to other businesses, we suffered almost no losses during the quarantine. People still need food. Due to the closure of street markets, we had to reconsider the distribution, but our production and

Over a half of the businesses surveyed by IOM (55 per cent) indicated the need for financial assistance to cover their fixed operation costs, including staff wages; 41 per cent reported needing equipment to help run businesses online; 37 per cent said they wanted additional tax holidays or tax reduction; 15 per cent stated they required training on online business management.

“IOM calls on international, government and private stakeholders to jointly support the micro- and small businesses in eastern Ukraine,” said Anh Nguyen.

IOM has been one of the key providers of livelihood support to vulnerable populations in Ukraine. Since 2014, it has provided grants for vocational training, self-employment or micro-business to over 11,000 of conflict-affected people, 61 per cent of them are IDPs and 53 per cent women.

sales volume remained the same.” The enterprise employs about 30 people. All kept their jobs and salaries. What changed during the quarantine is that every work shift now begins with taking body temperatures and assessing general health condition.

Another change: as an alternative to public transport, management pays employees who own cars a little extra to shuttle colleagues back and forth from work.

The survey was conducted within the project “Essential Humanitarian Assistance and Early Recovery Support to Vulnerable Returnees, IDPs and other Conflict-Affected Communities in Eastern Ukraine,” funded by the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM).



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* Four hundred and ninety-one (491) respondents from Donetsk and Luhansk regions, government-controlled area, were interviewed from 11 to 12 May 2020 via phone. One fifth (121) of the respondents were IOM beneficiaries who received in-kind livelihood assistance through IOM projects from 2016 to 2019, and others were non-beneficiary local entrepreneurs. Women represented 53 per cent of the surveyed entrepreneurs.