

## The Reintegration of Filipino Victims of Trafficking into their Home Country: from the IOM Tokyo Tracer Study

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Keywords: Human Trafficking, Reintegration, the Philippines, Japan

For Victims of Trafficking (VoTs) rescued and identified in Japan, IOM Tokyo started Return and Reintegration Assistance programme in 2005, within the framework of *The National Action Plan of Measures to Combat Trafficking in Persons* set by the Government of Japan.

The programme targets VoTs who have foreign nationalities, and are officially identified by authorities, namely the National Police Agency and/or the Immigration Bureau (Ministry of Justice), in Japan. According to the National Police Agency, the number of VoTs identified by police agencies from 2005 to 2016 was 496, of which, 404 individuals were from foreign countries. The number of VoTs by the Ministry of Justice during the same period was 337.

Among those officially identified VoTs, IOM programme had assisted a total number of 307 individuals to return home from May 2005 to March 2017, by the end of 12<sup>th</sup> programme year. Out of the 307 VoTs, 159 individuals or 52 percent availed themselves of the reintegration assistance which was also voluntary in nature. Majority of the assisted victims in Japan came from Southeast Asia. The number of assisted victims from the Philippines was 134, accounting for 44 percent of the total.

Assisted VoTs from the Philippines are predominantly women and girls, with average age in the mid-20s when they were trafficked, and trafficked for purpose of sexual exploitation. Before the review of criteria for entertainment visa in 2005 and 2006, majority of the Filipino trafficking victims entered into Japan with entertainment visas. Currently, they mainly stay in Japan using child/spouse visa of Japanese nationals.

In 2017, we started conducting tracer study to 41 VoTs who returned the Philippines with IOM assistance during the past 12 project years. The objective is to examine the challenges and assess the achievements of IOM assistance for the further improvement in future. Out of 41 VoTs, 35 VoTs provided valid information by filling out the questionnaires sent to them. Almost all of the 35 VoTs received some kind of reintegration assistance.

Collected information confirmed that the most required assistance upon their return was to find their jobs. This is consistent to the information that almost 60 % of them received assistance for business set-up/expansion and 50% of them received training/education. Legal assistance, housing assistance, and schooling for their children were also needed by a number of the returnees. It is notable that more than 20% of them mentioned direct assistance to their children or parents, not to themselves, as their priority. Not a few returnees have financial responsibility to their

families after their return, and at the same time, the family often support their business set up and reintegration.

Among those who started business with the support from IOM, more than 60% are currently running their own business where they returned. Those who closed the business faced insufficient earning or capital. More than 60% of the returnees' main source of income is their own business or employment. Less than 30% of them rely on their family or friends for their livelihood.

Majority of the returnees feel positive impact on their self-sustainability, self-esteem, family relations, and future perspective as results of reintegration assistance. Half of them answered that the reintegration assistance met their expectations. However, several returnees mentioned the need for improvement in the area of direct assistance including reintegration assistance, post assistance services such as referral system and linkages to other services by NGOs/GOs, and pre-departure assistance/orientation .

After the return, none of them or their family has encountered any risk of (re-)trafficking. However, not many of their economic status have been improved. Due to the difficulty in securing/ increasing their income, more than 70% of the returnees wish to leave the country again.

From our findings, generally, IOM programme has contributed to the VoTs' long term reintegration in economic, social, and psychosocial ways. As VoTs' requirements are broad from job creation to family support, IOM needs to keep providing more comprehensive assistance, which matches the recent trend of our reintegration assistance. The questionnaire is the first step of our tracer study. We will continue to the case studies to have in depth analysis for the betterment of the programme.

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