



ICAT calls on stakeholders to include victims and survivors' perspectives in all anti-trafficking actions

Statement by the Inter-Agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT) on the occasion of the World Day against Trafficking in Persons, 30 July 2021

"Giving survivors a voice is critical in the fight against trafficking in persons, as they are familiar from the inside with the phenomenon. As trafficking survivors, we call for mechanisms enabling us to work together with governments and civil society actors to achieve better results in our joint fight."

(Angelina Kurdenok, survivor of human trafficking and member of the International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council (ISTAC))

On the occasion of the World Day against Trafficking in Persons, the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT) collectively pays tribute to victims and survivors of all forms of trafficking in persons, and underlines the importance for States and relevant stakeholders to build their anti-trafficking efforts around victims' needs and sensitivities, taking into account the trauma endured, and in full respect of their human rights.

Victims and survivors are key actors in the fight against trafficking in persons and lead the way by sharing their experiences and knowledge about this crime and its consequences. The inclusion of their voices and perspectives is crucial in informing prevention strategies, fostering prosecution of criminals profiting from exploitation, enhancing identification and rescue of victims, as well as their recovery and social inclusion. The importance of involving survivors in anti-trafficking action, including children, was highlighted in the 2020 [ICAT Analytical Review](#) of anti-trafficking efforts in the past two decades.

Inspired by victims' and survivors' resilience and courage, ICAT recognizes their leadership and urges all relevant stakeholders to listen to their voices and learn from their experiences when designing anti-trafficking policies and programs. ICAT stresses that such engagement must be undertaken in a safe and ethical manner, avoiding re-victimization, including of victims and survivors' families and communities. ICAT further recommends that their contribution and expertise be appropriately recognized.

In this context, ICAT welcomes the recent launch of the [International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council \(ISTAC\)](#) by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, and encourages the establishment of survivor-based advisory entities at national level. Any newly



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established survivor-based entity should not replace but complement already existing survivor-, child- and community-led initiatives.

In order to ensure that victims and survivors fully exercise their leadership in anti-trafficking efforts, it is imperative to eliminate barriers and stigmas, including by fully implementing the principle of non-punishment of victims for unlawful activities that they committed as a direct consequence of being trafficked. At the same time, States need to implement measures aimed at empowering victims and survivors, including children and youth, and enabling them to regain full independence, such as educational and employment opportunities.

ICAT is committed to establishing and strengthening partnerships with victims' and survivors' networks and will develop joint guidance on the inclusion of their perspectives in counter-trafficking responses in 2022.

Speaking with a united voice, ICAT will also contribute to the third appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons in 2021 and bring to the fore the importance of the active participation of victims and survivors in all anti-trafficking interventions.

