SOMTC CONSULTATION WORKSHOP ON THE ASEAN-AUSTRALIA COUNTER TRAFFICKING (ASEAN-ACT) WORK PLAN 2020-2023

ADVANCING VICTIM RIGHTS

20 April 2021



SCOPE

- 1) Background
- 2) National Approach Against Trafficking-In-Persons (TIP)
- 3) Advancing Victims' Rights A Victim-Centric/Sensitive Framework



1. BACKGROUND

- a) TIP is a transnational crime
- b) Singapore is an attractive economic hub due to favourable economic conditions, large migrant workforce and our hub status
- c) Vigilance against transnational criminal elements





INTER-AGENCY TASKFORCE ON TIP WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT APPROACH

National Taskforce

Ministry of Social and Family Development

Support systems (victim care/support) Ministry of Home Affairs (Co-Chair)

Sex trafficking policy

Ministry of Manpower (Co-Chair)

Labour trafficking policy and enforcement Ministry of Health

Organ trafficking policy

Attorney-General's Chambers

Ministry of Law Ministry of Foreign Affairs Singapore Police Force Immigration and Checkpoints Authority

Prosecution

Legal policy

Foreign policy and international collaboration

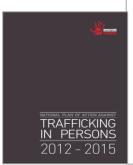
Enforcement

Enforcement



SINGAPORE'S JOURNEY IN COMBATTING TIP

MHA and MOM co-led Inter-agency Taskforce formed



Launch of National Plan of Action (NPA) 2012 - 2015

- Set-up of Seafarers' Welfare Centre
- Prevention of Human Trafficking Act (PHTA) passed in Nov.

- Ratified ACTIP
- First conviction under PHTA
- Launched National Approach Against TIP
- Re-launch of public awareness grant



•ASEAN
handbook of
international
legal
cooperation

2011

2013

2015

2017

2010

2012

2014

2016

2018

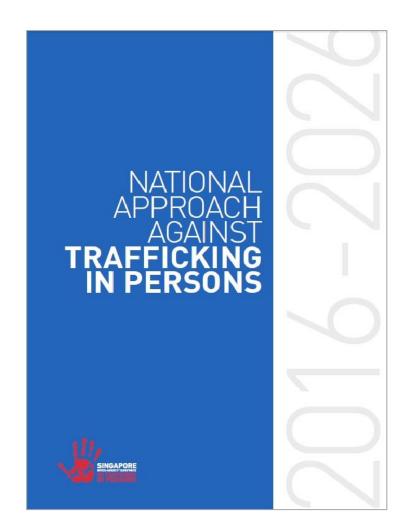
Cabinet endorsed
Whole-ofGovernment effort

Government of to combat TIP

SINGAPORE
INTER-AGENCY TASKFORCE
ON TRAFFICKING
IN DEPSONS

- MP Christopher de Souza announced Private Member's Bill on TIP in Parliament in Nov
- \$80,000 TIP Public
 Awareness Grant launched.
- PHTA came into force 1 Mar
- Acceded to UN
 TIP Protocol in Sep
- ACTIP came into force 8 Mar
- Bohol TIP work plan

2. NATIONAL APPROACH AGAINST TIP



- a) 10-year plan launched in March 2016
- b) 4 Strategic Outcomes
- c) Whole-of-Singapore response to ensure Singapore's efforts remain effective and sustainable



SINGAPORE'S 4PS TO COMBAT TIP

 Initiatives aimed at raising general awareness, and prompt action of stakeholders to increase detection and reporting.

Prevention

Prosecution

• Initiatives aimed at effective investigation, prosecution and enhanced enforcement actions to ensure traffickers are punished adequately.

Partnership

Protection

 Initiatives aimed at <u>information-sharing</u> <u>and cooperation with</u> all stakeholders. Initiatives aimed at <u>protection</u> <u>measures which</u> are victim-centric.



NATIONAL APPROACH AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

Prevention

- Build Awareness
- Encourage reporting of TIP Cases
- Enforce against TIP

SINGAPORE INTER-AGENCY TASKFORCE ON TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

Prosecution

- Review legislative frameworks
- Improve investigation and prosecution processes
- Enhance competency development
- Support TIP victims in getting compensation

Protection

- Maintain system to support TIP victims
- Protection for TIP victims and informers
- Build capacity of frontline officers and social workers

Partnership

- Strengthen international & regional partnerships
- Partner local Civil
 Society
 Organisations
 (CSOs) and
 businesses to
 develop prevention
 measures
- Conduct regular dialogues with stakeholders

3. ADVANCING VICTIMS' RIGHTS

- A VICTIM CENTRIC/SENSITIVE FRAMEWORK

- a. Investigation process
- b. Victim assistance support
- c. Home leave
- d. Special care after case conclusion
- e. Funding for NGOs
- f. Confidentiality of victims' identities
- g. Legal protection

A) INVESTIGATION PROCESS

- a) Investigators play a key role in victims' recovery.
- b) Our <u>victim-centric investigation approach</u> incorporates enforcement with caring for and empathising with victims' situation, which provides effective support to victims and ultimately fosters victims' trust in Singapore authorities.
- c) During interviews, arrangements are made for interpreters and/or female officers to be present to assist in the interviews, where necessary, to treat victims with empathy and dignity.

B) VICTIM ASSISTANCE SUPPORT - PROVISION OF SHELTER FOR TIP VICTIMS

- a) The Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) and the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) work closely with NGOs the Good Shepherd Centre (GSC) and Migrant Workers Centre (MWC) respectively to provide shelters for sex and labour TIP victims.
- b) Due to COVID-19, safe management measures were introduced at all shelters, resulting in a reduction of capacity. The NGOs are in close contact with MSF and MOM to alert them if there is shortage of space for TIP victims in the shelters.

At no time is any TIP victim requiring shelter services turned away.



B) VICTIM ASSISTANCE SUPPORT - CUSTOMISED CARE PLAN FOR TIP VICTIMS

- a) Customised care plan for TIP victims include:
 - i. Shelter, medical care, counselling and interpretation services
 - ii. Shelter may also facilitate victim's return to his/her country of origin (with victim's consent) and link the victim to services with the NGO's overseas sister organisations.
- b) Due to differing needs, different NGOs manage sex TIP and labour TIP victims accordingly:
 - i. The GSC manages the care plan for sex TIP victims.
 - i. Hagar manages the care plan for labour TIP victims in close collaboration with MOM.

C) HOWE LEAVE

- a) Arrangements can be made for victims who are material witnesses in a court case to leave the country pending trial proceedings, as Singapore is fully cognisant of the importance of TIP victims reconnecting with their family for emotional support.
- b) Under the TIP Victim Care Framework, investigators assess such requests made by victims on a case-by-case basis.
- Upon being informed of a victim's need to go on home leave, officers would make the necessary travel arrangements including the purchase of air tickets and obtaining of necessary visas.

D) SPECIAL CARE AFTER CASE CONCLUSION

- a) Even after cases have concluded, victims still receive special care. The investigator arranges for the victim's air-ticket and informs his/her Embassy, parents/guardians and destination law enforcement agency of his/her arrival details.
- b) Alternatively, the investigator liaises with a local NGO that would arrange with their overseas partners to check in on the victim's well-being at his/her home country.
- c) Arrangements are also made for the victim or the NGO to update the investigator after they have returned to their home country.

E) FUNDING FOR NGOS

a) The Singapore government contributes funds to NGOs that provide support services and for the NGOs' ad-hoc refurbishment projects and staff training.



F) CONFIDENTIALITY OF VICTIMS? IDENTITIES

- a) Proceedings involving child victims of sexual exploitation <u>must</u> be heard in-camera: Section 18(1)(a) PHTA
- b) Proceedings involving adult victims may be heard in-camera upon application to Court: Section 18(1)(b) PHTA
- c) PHTA <u>prohibits</u> the publication of a sex trafficking victim's identity and any other act likely to lead to the identification of the victim: Section 18(2) PHTA. This is regardless whether proceedings are heard in-camera or not.
 - For TIP cases involving other forms of exploitation (other than sexual exploitation), gag orders are generally also imposed to protect victims' identity.

G) LEGAL PROTECTION

- a) While assisting with investigations, the victims will be issued a Special Pass to allow their legal stay in Singapore, and have access to a range of support services and assistance.
- b) As a matter of practice, Singapore authorities usually do not prosecute TIP victims for offences which they are compelled to commit as a direct consequence of being a TIP victim.



THANK YOU!

CONTACT DETAILS:

Ms Michelle <u>Yap</u>
Deputy Director (International Operations Management)
Joint Operations Management & Policy, Joint Operations Group
Singapore
michelle_yap@mha.gov.sg

Ms <u>Lim</u> Ka Woon

Manager (International Operations Management)

Joint Operations Management & Policy, Joint Operations Group

Singapore

Lim_ka_woon@mha.gov.sg

