



International Organization for Migration

the migration agency

**Towards better synergy between research & operative work
to improve counter-trafficking efforts:
The example of analysing IOM case management data**

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Background

- At the global level, IOM & NEXUS receive funding from G/TIP (US DoS) to analyse case management data on trafficking and disseminate best practices.
- Formed a number of collaborations with research institutes:
 - Notably, NEXUS Institute.
- IOM/ NEXUS: (2009-2011)“Taking stock and moving forward. Considering methods, ethics and approaches in trafficking research and data collection”.

A Case Management Approach to data collection- IOM database

- Operational since 1999/ 2000
 - First in South Eastern Europe;
 - Then, globally.
- Developed to facilitate the internal, standardized (single) case management of victims assisted by IOM programmes.
- The system has since been expanded and improved regarding thematic and geographical applicability.
- Today installed in 72 IOM missions in all regions of the world, with data (approx 16,000 cases) covering 85 source and 100 destination countries.

The IOM Database as a tool to assist research?

- Not sufficient to only collect data, we need to analyse data (where consistent with original consent & de-personalized).

“Research and data are paramount for our work and I really do not understand why people and managers that are out in the country and in the field do not understand this because it is really mandatory. Without data especially on counter trafficking, there’s nothing you can do.”

Using data, noting trends

- Victim data is one important source of information;
- Can prove central to understanding and combating human trafficking:
- Victim data can shed light on a range of issues:
 - Risks & vulnerability factors;
 - The needs of different groups of trafficking victims;
 - The gender dimensions of trafficking;
 - Details of the trafficking process;
 - The perpetrators involved, their modus operandi, the routes used and so on.
 - Emerging trends and patterns (and dispelling myths)
- To inform policy and programmatic response.

Practical benefits to this model

- May help to negotiate issues of consent and access;
- Facilitate rapport & trust;
- Constant, standardized data capture, over time → potential for increased data quality, depth of information, and comparability.

Taking stock, noting challenges

- IOM/ NEXUS (2010): Beneath the Surface. Methodological issues in trafficking research and data collection:
 - Data collected in a case management setting not without its problems.

“[Generic tools] may not be designed to capture the subtle nuances unique to the cases. Recordings of these “nuances” give us a more accurate picture of evolving and changing indicators and local trends.”

“You can’t take that kind of very complex set of circumstances [as seen in trafficking] and convert it into a more specific and simpler set of questions that you then ask and repeat and carefully make sure that you’re asking in very much the same way of everybody, rather than a kind of opened ended conversation.”

Key considerations

- Four over-arching issues (derived from IOM approach)
 1. Global or local approaches?
 - Tools need to be sufficiently standardized to ensure data quality and comparability;
 - Yet flexible to allow for local and cultural adaptation;
 - Implications on data quality and comparability.
 2. Service provider, researcher, or both?
 - There are benefits to using case management data for research;
 - But need clear boundaries, clear purpose, and agreed agendas;
 - Should not burden service providers (resources)

Key considerations (cont...)

3. Representative datasets?

- Case management data is only on assisted victims;
- Yet who gets identified, is an open question.

4. Assumptions, biases & agendas

- Can be biased by donor funding requirements & agendas
- The IOM database equally suffers from these biases: traditional representation of females; sexual exploitation; international trafficking; SEE.

Moving forward

- Efforts to analyse data should continue- need to advance understanding, and protect victims;
- But datasets need to be contextualized and limitations discussed;
- Value of service provider/ researcher partnerships;
- Similarly, equal attention needs to be given to all data sources, and all methodological approaches;
- IOM/ NEXUS: (2011- 2013) “Better analysis, better programmes. Evidence-based interventions in combating human trafficking”.

Thank You!

For more information, please contact:

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