

NATIONAL  
APPROACH  
AGAINST  
**TRAFFICKING  
IN PERSONS**



**SINGAPORE**  
INTER-AGENCY TASKFORCE  
ON TRAFFICKING  
IN PERSONS

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# FOREWORD

by Co-Chairs of Singapore Inter-Agency Taskforce on  
Trafficking In Persons

Trafficking in Persons (TIP) is a complex and serious transnational crime in which vulnerable individuals are deceived or coerced into providing sexual or labour services; while others have had their organs trafficked.

Singapore is often described as a transit or destination country for trafficking activities and has episodically seen instances of foreign nationals being trafficked for sexual and labour exploitation. Our robust laws and active enforcement efforts have kept the TIP situation in Singapore under control. Notwithstanding this, Singapore remains vulnerable to such crimes because of our attractive economic conditions and status as a regional hub. This challenge is exacerbated by the increased movement of persons across national boundaries today. We remain committed to combating this crime. Offenders will be severely dealt with and victims provided with the necessary support and protection.

Since the formation of the Singapore Inter-Agency Taskforce on TIP in 2010, we have put in place a comprehensive framework to address TIP issues. This includes the National Plan of Action 2012-2015 (NPA) which has guided

the Taskforce's efforts to enhance our competency in combating TIP. One key milestone was the enactment of the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act (PHTA) which came into force in March 2015. The passing of the Act was led by Member of Parliament Mr Christopher de Souza with the strong support of the Taskforce and members of the public. It serves to deter TIP and support the rehabilitation of trafficked victims.

The new National Approach against TIP builds on the foundational work laid by the NPA. It outlines the long-term direction that will guide stakeholders in addressing TIP issues. We have canvassed views from a diverse group of stakeholders through public consultation sessions and REACH's online public consultation portal. Many of the views have been considered and incorporated. On this note, we thank everyone who had taken the effort and time to provide their feedback. We would also like to thank our partners, including members of civil society organisations, who have continually supported the Taskforce in our journey to combat TIP.

**Marvin Sim**  
Ministry of Home Affairs

**Alvin Lim**  
Ministry of Manpower

## What is Trafficking in Persons (TIP)?

TIP is a significant transnational crime which exploits vulnerable victims. As increasing numbers of people move across borders in search of economic opportunities, traffickers make use of such opportunities to exploit individuals with empty promises of a better life. Victims are typically deceived or coerced into providing sexual services, forced labour or have their organs removed. In Singapore, the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act (PHTA) aligns itself with international standards by adopting the same definition used in the United Nations TIP Protocol.

Article 3 of the [Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime](#) states that

- (a) "Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;
- (b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;
- (c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered "Trafficking in Persons" even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article;
- (d) "Child" shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.

## Trafficking in the Context of Singapore

As Singapore continues to grow as a global hub of economic activity with high flows of people, it remains a tempting destination for criminal syndicates to use as a transit point or a destination country for their trafficking activities. Our strong border control measures, a well-documented workforce and close inter- and intra-agency coordination, however, continue to limit the opportunities for syndicates to carry out TIP activities in Singapore.

The focus on TIP in Singapore extends beyond Singaporeans and includes non-Singaporean residents who are more vulnerable, such as those entering the country under tourist visas to work illegally as sex workers; or lower-skilled migrant workers entering the country to supplement manpower needs.

# SINGAPORE'S JOURNEY IN COMBATING TIP

## Singapore Inter-Agency Taskforce on TIP

Recognising the threat of TIP, the Singapore Government formed an Inter-Agency Taskforce in 2010, co-chaired by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the Ministry of Manpower (MOM).

stakeholders and was launched in March 2012. The NPA guided the Taskforce in its initial years to build a strong foundation to combat TIP. A total of 31 specific initiatives under the NPA were reviewed and completed. A key milestone was the enactment of the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act.



The Taskforce coordinates the efforts between government agencies to identify and implement strategies to combat TIP. We work closely with various stakeholders such as civil society organisations (CSOs) and academic institutions to realise our plans and strategies.

## National Plan of Action (NPA) against Trafficking in Persons (2012-2015)

The National Plan of Action (2012-2015) was developed in consultation with various

## Prevention of Human Trafficking Act (PHTA)

The passing of the PHTA was led by Member of Parliament Mr Christopher de Souza with the strong support of the Taskforce. The Taskforce also canvassed views from 300 participants involving CSOs, academic institutions, business associations, and members of the public.

The PHTA provides a more targeted

and effective means of prosecuting TIP offences and protecting TIP victims and informers. The law defines the offence of TIP based on an internationally-accepted definition of TIP. The Act also criminalises the abetment of TIP and those who knowingly profit from such activities. Severe penalties are prescribed to reflect the seriousness of the crime and to serve as a strong deterrence to potential offenders. This includes mandatory prison sentence of up to 10 years and a fine of up to S\$100,000 for the first offence. The court may also impose caning of up to six strokes for the first offence, and mandatory caning of up to nine strokes for recalcitrant offenders. In addition, the law empowers enforcement officers from the Singapore Police Force (SPF), MOM and Ministry of Health (MOH) with specific powers to investigate TIP related offences under the PHTA.

Besides enforcement, the PHTA also provides measures for the care of trafficked victims and encourages the reporting of trafficking activities. These include mandatory in-camera court proceedings for child victims, media gag order for all proceedings involving sexual exploitation, and protection for informers to incentivise the reporting of TIP activities. Basic support measures such as shelter, food and counselling services are also provided under the PHTA. These are supplemented with administrative support measures

such as transport allowance, medical care, repatriation and temporary employment opportunities. Such an approach provides for the needs of each victim to be assessed thoroughly, and support measures to be customised accordingly.

The PHTA adds on to our arsenal against TIP and helps us to deal with the complex nature of TIP more effectively and comprehensively. Cases that do not fulfil all three limbs (i.e. Act, Means and Purpose) under the PHTA may still be dealt with under other existing legislations, such as the Penal Code, Employment of Foreign Manpower Act, Children and Young Persons Act and Women's Charter.

## United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (UN TIP Protocol)

Singapore acceded to the UN TIP Protocol in September 2015. The UN TIP Protocol is an optional Protocol supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime ("UNTOC"). It seeks to prevent, suppress and punish TIP perpetrators while protecting victims and promoting cooperation among State Parties to meet these objectives. Singapore's accession to the UN TIP Protocol reiterates our strong commitment to combat TIP.

# A SNAPSHOT OF KEY INITIATIVES FROM 2012 TO 2015



## PREVENTION



Offered a total of \$160,000 under the TIP Public Awareness Grant to support CSOs in developing awareness campaigns for the public. A TIP module was also conducted for trainee teachers. More than 3,000 participated in these events.



Raised public awareness of prosecuted TIP cases in national broadsheets.

- The Straits Times
- Berita Harian
- Lianhe Zaobao



Published collaterals to inform prospective migrant workers about Singapore's employment regulations and channels to seek assistance even before they arrive.



Issued TIP information cards to SPF and MOM frontline officers to better identify and respond to potential TIP victims.

Conducted enforcement checks on errant employers and employment agencies to detect scams and malpractices.



## PROSECUTION



Passed the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act (PHTA).

Reviewed legislations to deter potential traffickers.



Included TIP offences into the Schedules of the:

- Corruption, Drug Trafficking and Other Serious Crimes (Confiscation of Benefits) Act
- Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Act
- Extradition Act

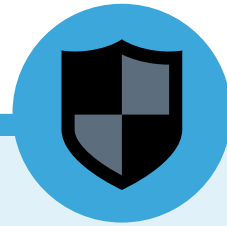


Passed the Organised Crime Bill and raised penalties under the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act and Employment Agencies Act.



Set up specialised units in SPF, MOM and the Attorney-General's Chambers (AGC) to investigate and prosecute TIP cases and developed cross-agency protocols for data sharing and joint enforcement.

Conducted trainings for frontline officers, including Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA), MOM and MHA officers.



## PROTECTION

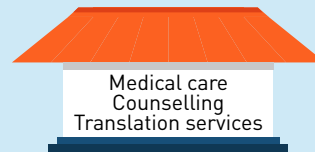


Implemented the PHTA which requires mandatory in-camera court proceedings for child victims; media gag orders for sexual exploitation cases and provision of support services.



Instituted protection of informers to incentivise the reporting of TIP activities.

Funded a drop-in centre at Jurong Fishery Port for fishermen who may be TIP victims to seek help.



Funded shelters and victim care arrangements by NGOs/VWOs for TIP victims.



Conducted trainings and established processes to identify, manage and refer victims of sex or labour trafficking for support services.

Implemented the Temporary Job Scheme for TIP victims who are willing and able to work.



## PARTNERSHIP



Collaborated with other countries for case investigations.

Developed a referral mechanism in 2013 to reduce procedural impediments in handling cases referred from NGOs.



Partnered Hagar International to train over 4,000 SPF officers to identify victims of TIP.

Conducted study visits to Tier 1 countries such as the USA and Taiwan to learn best practices in managing TIP cases.



Participated in regional and international forums by organisations such as ASEAN and the UN.

Acceded to the UN TIP Protocol.



Ratified the ASEAN Convention against TIP.

# THE NATIONAL APPROACH AGAINST TIP

## Need for a Longer Term Approach

The National Plan of Action 2012-2015 (NPA) focused on addressing the immediate legislative and operational gaps. With the specific initiatives under the NPA completed and a strong foundation established to combat TIP, a longer term approach is needed to address TIP issues and to ensure that efforts to combat TIP crimes are sustainable. The National Approach sets out the key strategies and the desired outcomes to guide Taskforce agencies and stakeholders when developing their work plans to combat TIP. This approach recognises that Taskforce agencies and civil society partners have achieved a reasonable level of competency in combating TIP over the past few years and have the confidence to develop their own specific sub-strategies and initiatives to take the fight against TIP to the next higher level.

The National Approach against TIP was developed in consultation with the public and various stakeholder groups such as CSOs, academic institutions, business associations and faith-based organisations. Stakeholders provided their views through three public consultation sessions and via REACH's online public consultation portal. Many of the views provided formed the basis on which the National Approach against TIP was developed.

## The "4 'P's" Framework Remains Relevant

During the consultation sessions, stakeholders agreed that the "4 'P's" framework of 'Prevention', 'Prosecution', 'Protection' and 'Partnership' remains relevant and is in line with internationally accepted best practices. We will therefore continue to centre and develop the new National Approach and desired outcomes around this framework.

To realise the four desired outcomes, the following pages highlight key areas of work to be pursued over the next ten years.

### Continuing Relevance of a Multi-Stakeholder Approach

Combating TIP is a responsibility that is shared by all stakeholders to achieve the desired outcomes.

Our strategies and areas of work are focused on engaging and securing collaboration with the broader community to combat TIP.

Framework	Desired Outcomes
<b>Prevention</b> of human trafficking	A public that is aware of TIP crimes and actively takes steps to prevent, combat and suppress TIP.  Government officials and stakeholders who are well-trained, competent and professional in identifying and dealing with TIP cases.
<b>Prosecution</b> of offenders	An effective end-to-end criminal justice response to TIP crimes, involving comprehensive investigations and prosecution of all offenders who may be involved in trafficking or the exploitation of victims.
<b>Protection</b> of victims	An appropriate victim care and support framework that looks after the needs of all victims of trafficking.
Working in <b>Partnership</b> with stakeholders domestically and internationally	A strong ecosystem comprising both domestic and international stakeholders to put forth a whole-of-Singapore response against TIP.



# PREVENTION

The Taskforce will continue to steer overall efforts of government agencies to deter and prosecute traffickers, while facilitating assistance to victims. It will also continue to engage stakeholders to address TIP issues.

CSOs interact closely with victims and provide added insights into their concerns and interests. They are also well-placed to promote TIP awareness and assist distressed victims.

Employers and industry associations must ensure their employees are not victims of TIP. Employment agencies too must ensure ethical recruitment practices.

The media plays a key role in educating the public so that general awareness concerning TIP grows.



Increasing public awareness raises the odds of identifying and reporting potential TIP activities to the authorities.

Academic institutions can play a crucial role in deepening the understanding of trafficking through joint research initiatives. Studies can assist in enhancing the strategies to combat TIP.

The Taskforce requires close partnerships with international partners to improve enforcement and awareness-raising response. Embassies can continue playing a part in coordinating support for victims.

**Outcome:** A public that is aware of TIP crimes and actively takes steps to prevent, combat and suppress TIP. Government officials and stakeholders who are well-trained, competent and professional in identifying and dealing with TIP cases.

Prevention can be achieved through proactive awareness-building and detection of TIP cases. Potential victims need to be aware of the employment situation and requirements in Singapore and not be misled by traffickers. The general public should also be educated to recognise signs of TIP crimes as heightened awareness can increase the likelihood of detection which enables prompt rescue and enforcement actions to be taken.

- **Enhance the TIP Public Awareness Grant**

The TIP Public Awareness Grant is useful in supporting CSOs and individuals with good ideas to develop activities to increase the awareness of TIP. The Grant will continue to be refined to improve its effectiveness.

- **Reach Out to Prospective Migrant Workers Locally and in Source Countries**

The Taskforce and CSOs could work together to educate prospective migrant workers on their employment rights, and the available recourse if they find themselves in possible TIP situations. For example, the current pre-departure information provided by MOM to prospective migrant workers in source countries could be further enhanced to include information on TIP and more widely disseminated in native languages.

To achieve this outcome, a few priority areas have been identified:

### Building Awareness

To create greater TIP awareness, the Taskforce could:

- **Develop Regular and More Targeted Outreach Programmes**

Outreach efforts will focus on increasing awareness of the general public and migrant workers on TIP crimes and channels for victims to seek assistance. Information on TIP could be disseminated through the internet, print publications, and at locations where such vulnerable groups congregate.



## PROSECUTION

- **Study and Research on Evolving Trends in Human Trafficking, Especially in the Local Context**

The modus operandi of human traffickers is continually evolving. For example, the use of digital technology by syndicates to conduct trafficking activities is becoming common. Increasing our awareness on the latest human trafficking trends will allow us to develop more effective strategies to combat TIP crimes. The expertise of academic institutions would also be useful in supporting these efforts. Schools and vocational institutions could conduct educational workshops and programmes focusing on TIP issues to raise awareness amongst students.

### Reporting TIP Cases

The Taskforce will continue to work with CSOs to reduce impediments to reporting of TIP crimes and assist victims who may be afraid of approaching the authorities for help. Existing channels such as the Police's dedicated channels for reporting of TIP information and MOM's customer service hotline will also be publicised to encourage reporting of suspected TIP activities. The Taskforce will collaborate with businesses and industries (e.g. hotels and transport) to raise awareness on TIP so that they can help report suspected cases.

### Enforcing Against TIP

- **Enforce Against Suspected Sex TIP Activities and Labour Violations While Enhancing Intelligence Efforts**

Immigration officers will continue to maintain their vigilance to detect potential trafficked victims at the checkpoints. SPF will continue to conduct enforcement at entertainment outlets and other areas known to attract vice activities so that sex trafficking can be detected early. Similarly, MOM will continue to enforce against employment scams and malpractices to deter labour TIP offences. Agencies will continue to work together, as well as with overseas counterparts to increase their intelligence capabilities to better target offenders.

- **Publicise Concluded TIP Cases**

The Taskforce will continue to publicise successful prosecution of TIP cases in mainstream media and national television programmes with due measures taken to protect the identity of the victims. This would further increase public awareness of TIP issues and deter potential traffickers.

**Outcome:** An effective end-to-end criminal justice response to TIP crimes, involving comprehensive investigations and prosecution of all offenders who may be involved in trafficking or the exploitation of victims.

The PHTA establishes a robust legal framework to effectively tackle TIP. The PHTA is supported by other legislations such as the Penal Code, Women's Charter, Immigration Act, Children and Young Persons Act (CYPA) and employment laws which prosecute TIP related and ancillary offences. We need to continually identify gaps in our legal framework to stay relevant. Moreover, officers need to be competent in prosecuting offenders for the PHTA to be effective. CSOs also play a key role in the process by assisting victims through support services and legal assistance.

### Reviewing Legislative Framework Periodically

The Taskforce will review the PHTA and other laws to ensure that they remain relevant to tackle the evolving modus operandi of TIP crimes. The enforcement tools available should also be enhanced to ensure compliance with existing laws.

### Improving Investigation and Prosecution Processes

Enforcement agencies will enhance investigation processes to fast track cases and closure for TIP victims. Agencies could explore online

surveillance; develop financial intelligence and digital crime investigation skills to keep up with methods used by syndicates.

### Enhancing Competency Development

The Taskforce has developed a broad framework focusing on investigation, evidential requirements, and management of TIP cases. Officers also participate in international trainings by government agencies and CSOs. Relevant trainings could be extended to legal professionals and social workers who assist TIP victims.

### Supporting TIP victims in Obtaining Remedies

Victims require assistance during rehabilitation. Where possible, we would work with CSOs to explore ways for TIP victims to receive appropriate remedies including compensation from those convicted. CSOs may also provide support services and legal aid.





# PROTECTION

**Outcome:** An appropriate victim care and support framework that looks after the needs of all victims of trafficking

Victim care and support is crucial to our approach to combat TIP. Trafficked victims are often subjected to severe physical, psychological and social traumas. It is important that the welfare of all victims is prioritised and they are treated with empathy and dignity. They should not be prosecuted for violations of employment and/or immigration laws, or for any activity that they were involved in as a direct consequence of them being trafficked. The PHTA ensures that key victim support measures such as shelter, sustenance and counselling are available to meet the victims' immediate needs. Providing adequate support and victim care would promote victims' reintegration into society. Furthermore, these efforts would encourage victims' participation in the criminal justice process.

## Maintaining a Support System to Assist Victims

- **Monitor and Enhance Victim Care Arrangements for Trafficked Victims**

The Government has supported and funded CSOs that provide victim support services such as shelter, sustenance and counselling. We will continue to develop our network

of CSOs to enhance our victim care arrangements. In addition, specialised support could be made available for child victims and those with other more special needs (e.g. severe trauma or abuse).

- **Enhance Rehabilitation for Trafficked Victims**

The Taskforce is aware that temporary employment opportunities for TIP victims are important to support their rehabilitation. Some flexibility should be developed to enable TIP victims to seek temporary employment opportunities where appropriate. In instances where employment is not possible, the Taskforce could work with CSOs to explore other meaningful activities, such as skills training, to help them gain useful skills and build their confidence to reintegrate into society.

- **Facilitate Victims' Stay in Singapore and Smooth Return to their Home Countries**

Government agencies issue special passes to legitimise victims' stay when investigations are on-going and allow them access to a full range of services and assistance.

The Taskforce could also support CSOs in working with their overseas counterparts to help victims return safely to their home countries and reintegrate smoothly into society.

## Protecting Trafficked Victims and Informers

The PHTA provides measures to protect the identity and safety of informers and trafficked victims. The Government and CSOs could continue to explore ways to encourage victims and informers to report TIP activities without the fear of intimidation and harassment.

## Building Capacity of Frontline Officers and Victim Care Providers

Frontline officers and victim care providers should be regularly trained to ensure victims are treated with empathy and dignity, while making sure their needs are met.



# PARTNERSHIP

**Outcome:** A strong ecosystem comprising both domestic and international stakeholders to put forth a whole-of-Singapore response against TIP

Singapore's accession to the UN TIP Protocol affirms the Government's commitment to prevent human trafficking. However, the Government's effort alone is not sufficient. There needs to be effective and sustainable partnerships. Singapore has proactively cooperated with international organisations such as the United Nations and ASEAN to develop safeguards against trafficking. Domestic partnerships with CSOs, embassies and businesses have also been crucial in areas such as public awareness, referral of potential TIP victims and victim support arrangements. We will continue to build on these multi-stakeholder partnerships by focusing on the following areas:

## Strengthening International and Regional Cooperation

- **Contribute to the Global Dialogue in Combating TIP**

Singapore will continue to build on our partnerships with like-minded countries to share best practices, strengthen networks and enhance information sharing. Apart from participating in international forums and conducting study visits,

the Taskforce will also explore opportunities to support other forms of capacity building activities such as training workshops and forums on TIP issues.

- **Facilitate Coordination and Cooperation in Solving TIP Crimes**

Local law enforcement agencies and international counterparts can facilitate the exchange of information within the ambit of our laws and our international obligations. Enforcement agencies can also leverage on existing international mechanisms, including INTERPOL tools and databases to facilitate cross-border crime investigations such as money laundering, corruption, and smuggling of migrants.

- **Engage Foreign Embassies to Reach Out to Migrant Workers**

The Taskforce can increase dialogues with embassies and foreign missions based in Singapore on issues faced by their nationals that can potentially lead to trafficking situations. Embassies should also encourage their nationals who are victims of trafficking to approach the Singapore authorities.

## Partnering CSOs and Businesses

- **Increase Public-Private Partnerships to Support TIP Victims**

The Taskforce and CSOs can partner companies which are keen to exercise their corporate social responsibility to find suitable employment for trafficked victims or conduct skills development training for victims.

- **Encourage Business Communities to Adopt Measures to Prevent TIP in Supply Chains**

The Taskforce and CSOs can encourage companies to champion best practices on ethical recruitment and share their experiences more widely. Industry associations and companies could develop guidelines and audit mechanisms when working with third party labour suppliers. Companies could also implement measures to encourage employees to report non-conformance issues, and train employees to be alert to TIP activities in the course of work.

## Conducting Regular Dialogues with Stakeholders

The Taskforce organises regular stakeholder engagement sessions to discuss TIP issues and to provide updates on the Taskforce's efforts.

The Taskforce will explore setting up a working group comprising diverse stakeholders to share and discuss ways to enhance our efforts.

# CONCLUSION

Although Singapore has made significant progress in combating TIP, the multifaceted nature of TIP will require the continual development of good strategies to tackle emerging TIP trends. The National Approach against TIP sets out the broad strategies and desired outcomes, and will guide the Taskforce and its stakeholders over the next 10 years.

The Singapore Government will continue to commit resources and cooperate internationally and domestically to combat TIP. With the efforts and commitment of all stakeholders, the Taskforce is confident that we are able to achieve the outcomes.





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