

## **Awareness and Empowerment session organized in Lebanon on the occasion of the World Day against Trafficking in Persons**

**30 July 2021 – Beirut, Lebanon** Marking World Day against Trafficking in Persons (TiP), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) together with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Lebanon organized an initiative, in collaboration with Caritas Lebanon and Legal Action Worldwide (LAW), engaging 96 migrants with the aim of raising awareness and empowering parents of undocumented children who are at risk of being trafficked.

This event took place on the 30th of July at Caritas Center in Achrafieh, Beirut. Caregivers were actively engaged in dialogue sessions that were facilitated by UNODC, Caritas and IOM. The event featured the risks of TiP on families and children, protective mechanisms from Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants criminal networks. Given that TiP is a form of violence against children, LAW conducted awareness session for caregivers on the right to identity and the importance of birth registration, both of which are critical for access of children to services, schools, health care and other rights and entitlements and to prevent them from being prone to violence, exploitation and abuse.

This event was also an opportunity to interact with children through recreational activities held at the Caritas school playground. Through COMPASS, a global project focusing on Cooperation on Migration and Partnership to Achieve Sustainable Solutions, implemented by IOM with support from Dutch government, dignity kits were distributed to all participants.

“The fight against Trafficking in Persons is far from over,” said Mr. Antonio Vitorino, IOM Director General adding that “the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the vulnerabilities of people in already precarious situations and has exposed even more children to risks of Trafficking.” Anti-trafficking strategies have to be embedded in every



*1 Photo: IOM Lebanon/2021*

aspect, the importance of which was emphasized by Mr. Vitorino and IOM Lebanon’s Head of Office, Mr.

Mathieu Luciano, who pointed out that “combatting Human Trafficking requires comprehensive approaches and strong partnerships, an approach embedded in IOM’s interventions”.

With the dramatic socio-economic situation that the country is facing, it is crucial for UNODC to address the risk of trafficking in person and smuggling of migrants. “Victims’ Voices Lead the Way” is the theme of UNODC work for this year stressing the importance of a victim-centered approach. Renee Sabbagh, UNODC Lebanon Head of Office, joined her voice to UNODC Executive Director, Ghada Waly: “Victims’ voices are key to preventing trafficking, supporting survivors, and bringing perpetrators to justice.”

The Caritas Lebanon Executive Director- Gilbert Zouein highlighted “the importance of prevention efforts and protection of victims, with special attention to be given to the application of non-punishment principle”. He added “Caritas Lebanon offers holistic services to victims regardless of their age, gender, race, ethnicity and religious beliefs”.

Organizations jointly highlighted the need to expand emergency relief programmes to address the immediate needs of vulnerable migrants and their children in Lebanon while providing them with access to more sustainable solutions, one of them being safe return and sustainable reintegration programs.

World Day against Trafficking in Persons was proclaimed in 2013 by the United Nations General Assembly, in its adopted resolution A/RES/68/192, on July 30. Such a day is necessary, as declared in the resolution, to “raise awareness of the situation of victims of human trafficking and for the promotion and protection of their rights.”

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