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NATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION AGAINST

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TRAFFICKING  
IN PERSONS

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2012 - 2015

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## Foreword by Co-Chairs of Singapore Inter-Agency Taskforce on Trafficking in Persons

Singapore is a growing hub for people, trade and commerce. With its high connectivity, Singapore could be an attractive arena for human trafficking syndicates. Human trafficking comes in many forms such as sex trafficking, labour trafficking and peddling of human organs. These are heinous crimes which Singapore does not tolerate. We also recognise the potential threats posed by transnational organised crime groups in the region, whether they are sex, labour or organ traffickers. We are committed to deter these traffickers.

Since 2010, the Taskforce has been working with various stakeholders to put together this National Plan of Action (NPA). We strongly believe that this NPA will provide a common vision and platform for the Singapore Government and its partners in fighting human trafficking.

The NPA lists Singapore's strategy to combat human trafficking over the next four years through Prevention, Prosecution, Protection and Partnership. The taskforce has already embarked some of the listed initiatives. For example, efforts to develop a comprehensive NPA have involved partnerships with NGOs, academics and other interested parties.

On this note, we would like to thank everyone who had provided their time and thoughts on this NPA and also, to partners who are willing to work closely with us in our journey to combat trafficking in persons.

Jacqueline Poh  
Ministry of Manpower

Ng Yeow Boon  
Ministry of Home Affairs

# What is **TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS** ?

Trafficking in Persons (TIP) is a significant transnational crime which exploits vulnerable victims. As people increasingly move across borders in search of economic opportunities, this creates an opportunity for traffickers to exploit individuals with empty promises of good jobs and economic opportunity. Singapore is an attractive hub of economic activity with a high flow of people. In this regard, Singapore is no less vulnerable than other countries, and is seen as an attractive destination by human trafficking syndicates.

The Singapore Government views TIP as a serious crime and is fully committed in taking the necessary steps to detect and deter traffickers.

## Singapore Inter-Agency Taskforce on TIP

In recognition of 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). This Taskforce includes representatives from the Singapore Police Force (SPF), Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA), Ministry of Community Development, Youth & Sports (MCYS), Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Law (MinLaw), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Attorney-General's Chambers (AGC).

The Taskforce aims to develop a holistic perspective on the TIP situation, identify and implement Whole-of-Government strategies to combat TIP more effectively, both locally and internationally. The formation of this Taskforce underscores the gravity with which the Government views trafficking and its commitment to fight this crime.

**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 below eighteen years of age.

## Achievements

Since its formation, the Taskforce has embarked on several new initiatives.

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First, it has established initiatives to raise awareness and understanding of TIP within the enforcement community. This includes a training programme to ensure that public officers have a more accurate understanding of TIP. This will enable them to better identify TIP cases and assist victims in an appropriate manner.

Second, the Taskforce has also introduced new processes to improve detection of TIP cases as well as provide care for victims. This includes initiating proactive joint inspections on companies which repatriate foreign workers, and visiting sea ports to study ways to improve the assistance channels for fishermen in distress. Direct links have also been established between NGOs and the Government for quicker referral of suspected TIP cases.

Third, the Taskforce has stepped up engagement with other destination countries/jurisdictions and source countries. Some countries/jurisdictions with more experience in fighting TIP, such as the USA and Taiwan, have been helpful in sharing best practices with us. Some of these countries/jurisdictions are source countries of migrant workers who come to Singapore as sex workers or foreign work permit holders, including some of our ASEAN neighbours. Enhancing cross-national linkages allows for investigative cooperation and coordination against transnational syndicates as well as information-sharing for upstream policy intervention to reduce the occurrence of human trafficking.

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## Objectives

The Taskforce recognises that TIP cannot be eradicated easily, and a detailed plan and timeline are needed to combat this crime. The National Plan of Action (NPA) has set out strategic outcomes and implementation plans to combat TIP over the next four years.

The key objectives of this NPA are to strengthen Singapore's capabilities along the holistic "4 'P's" strategy:

- a. Prevention of TIP;
- b. Prosecution of offenders;
- c. Protection of TIP victims; and
- d. Partnerships with other countries, NGOs, academics and the private sector, to combat TIP.

This involves strengthening the identification process and enforcement against cases of suspected trafficking. This can be done by raising the awareness of trafficking indicators and tightening anti-trafficking procedures amongst enforcement agencies and targeted groups. Through the setting up of new processes, victims of trafficking would be afforded better access to assistance and protection measures. The Singapore Government also intends to increase dialogue with foreign governments/embassies to strengthen mutual cooperation in enforcement against perpetrators. NGOs will also be engaged as key players in raising the awareness of TIP and delivering assistance to victims. Finally, Singapore hopes to become an active participant in the global dialogue on combating TIP to coordinate and strengthen global responses.

The NPA was drafted between 2011 and 2012 by the Taskforce. In its development, we consulted and incorporated views from various partners including NGOs, foreign embassies, academia, businesses and members of the public.

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## **Enablers**

To enhance capabilities in fighting TIP, new inter-agency processes will be introduced to facilitate implementation of NPA initiatives.

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OUTCOME	INITIATIVES	RATIONALE	INDICATIVE TIMELINE
A. <i>Strengthen inter-agency coordination and partnership in tackling TIP</i>	1. Institutionalise Taskforce meetings.	A Whole-of-Government and collaborative approach is required to effectively identify gaps and combat TIP through outreach, prosecution and victim care.	On-going
B. <i>Effective implementation of NPA</i>	<p>2. Collate annual Self-Assessment reports of Singapore's efforts to combat TIP in order to sketch the operating environment, review actions taken, and adopt necessary measures to ensure that TIP objectives are met in the long run.</p> <p>3. Enhance data collection, statistical reporting and monitoring of TIP cases.</p> <p>4. Develop a budget and funding framework to support various TIP initiatives.</p>	Systems and new processes are required to track, empower and sustain initiatives to combat TIP.	<p>- 2012: Inaugural Self-Assessment report and funding needs assessment</p> <p>- On-going: Annual Self-Assessment reports with relevant data</p>
C. <i>Consider adoption of international standards on combating TIP</i>	5. Study the feasibility of accession to UN Palermo Protocol on TIP.	This signals Singapore's commitment to make reference to international benchmarks in combating TIP.	2013: Completion of review

## Prevention

Prevention is a key strategy in reducing the incidence of TIP through the raising of general awareness and prompt action by stakeholders. The education of government officials, employers, foreign workers and members of the public increases the likelihood of detection and reporting of the crime. Proactive checks are also conducted by government agencies to deter potential traffickers. At present, the ICA and Police Coast Guard (PCG) conduct sustained checks along Singapore's borders for signs of human smuggling. The SPF aggressively targets commercial sex syndicates and has put in place special measures to identify trafficking victims through enforcement activities. MOM ensures that workers are documented and actively enforces labour regulations to deter exploitation.

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OUTCOME	INITIATIVES	RATIONALE	INDICATIVE TIMELINE
<p><i>D. Heighten awareness of TIP amongst government officials, employers, workers, and members of public</i></p>	<p>6. Define sex and labour trafficking offences, as well as related offences within existing legislation.</p> <p>7. Conduct a comprehensive training programme for government officials and other relevant parties on identifying and dealing with TIP cases and victims.</p> <p>8. Conduct research studies, possibly with relevant third parties, to better understand the TIP situation.</p> <p>9. Embarking on various forms of public education, outreach and campaigns to raise awareness of TIP.</p>	<p>Increased awareness of TIP creates a foundation to effectively carry out other activities such as detection, investigation and subsequent prosecution of TIP offences.</p>	<p>- 2012: Definition of TIP offences, training programme, public education and outreach</p> <p>- 2013-2015: Joint research, public education and outreach</p>
<p><i>E. Early detection of potential TIP cases</i></p>	<p>10. Strengthen case referral mechanism for potential victims-NGOs and members of public to provide information on possible TIP cases to the authorities.</p> <p>11. Study the feasibility of setting up toll-free TIP Hotline to alert the authorities of possible TIP cases.</p>	<p>Early and effective detection allows for a swift response to TIP crimes and minimises exploitation of TIP victims.</p>	<p>- 2012: Development of case referral procedures and training to operationalise them</p> <p>- 2013: Completion of Review</p>

## Prosecution

In Singapore, human traffickers are currently dealt with under various pieces of legislation. The Penal Code and the Women's Charter include a range of offences to cover sex and labour trafficking offences. The Employment of Foreign Manpower Act contains comprehensive provisions to protect the employment rights and well-being of foreign workers, and the Employment Agencies Act regulates the activities of middlemen in Singapore. The Taskforce has not encountered cases of labour trafficking concerning Singapore citizens. Enhanced enforcement efforts will increase the likelihood that perpetrators are punished and traffickers are brought to justice.

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OUTCOME	INITIATIVES	RATIONALE	INDICATIVE TIMELINE
<p><i>F. Effective investigation and prosecution of TIP cases</i></p>	<p>12. Strengthen the information-sharing, investigation and prosecution processes for TIP cases including joint enforcement between different agencies.</p> <p>13. Fast-track investigation and prosecution of serious or aggravated TIP cases.</p> <p>14. Set up specialised enforcement teams for sex and labour trafficking.</p> <p>15. Share information on TIP incidents and cases across enforcement agencies through agreed processes and explore increased database linkages.</p>	<p>Where TIP crimes are clearly established through investigation, the successful prosecution of offenders and dismantling of syndicates are key components of an effective strategy to deter human traffickers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2012-13: Stronger TIP investigation and prosecution processes</li> <li>- Creation and enhancements of specialised enforcement teams</li> <li>- On-going: Increased database linkages</li> </ul>
<p><i>G. Commensurate penalties and deterrent sentencing for convicted TIP cases</i></p>	<p>16. Review all legislation related to TIP to ensure that the desired legislative framework facilitate the achievement of key TIP objectives.</p> <p>17. Engage judiciary and prosecutors to raise awareness on TIP cases, and work towards successful convictions and deterrent sentencing in cases where aggravated TIP offences are committed.</p>	<p>The review aims to ensure that Singapore's legislation adequately addresses the complexity of TIP crimes and that penalties are commensurate with crimes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2013: Completion of legislative review</li> <li>- On-going: Engagement of judiciary and prosecutors</li> </ul>

## Protection

TIP crimes are typically associated with the exploitation of human beings. Identified victims of trafficking should be accorded with protection measures that are victim-centered and provided with appropriate care. MCYS and MOM currently fund shelters and dormitories which offer protection to trafficking victims. The government also partners NGOs in the delivery of care and assistance to victims.

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OUTCOME	INITIATIVES	RATIONALE	INDICATIVE TIMELINE
<i>H. Enhanced identification and management of victims</i>	18. Develop clear operating procedures to identify victims of sex or labour trafficking.  19. Train enforcement officers to properly identify, manage and refer TIP victims.	Improving victim identification and management of victims is crucial to the rehabilitation process for victims.	- 2012: Procedures to identify victims  - On-going: Training for enforcement personnel
<i>I. Protection and care in a manner supportive to victims' needs</i>	20. Enhance victim care services including medical care, counselling services and translation services.  21. Review the adequacy and management of shelters for TIP victims.  22. Review the provision of legal assistance to victims.  23. Review access to work facilitation and training for victims.  24. Facilitate the re-entry and return of victims to their home countries, in partnership with civil society and other governments, where possible.	A comprehensive system of protection and care for TIP victims will assist in victim rehabilitation and provide a supportive environment for victims to report cases.	- 2012: Enhancing the victim care system  - 2013: Completion of review of shelter provisions, re-entry to home countries  - 2014: Completion of review of legal assistance, work facilitation and training

## Partnership

Information-sharing and multinational cooperation is necessary to bring traffickers to task as well as to develop proactive safeguards to prevent the exploitation of victims in source countries. Singapore collaborates with source countries by providing investigation assistance to foreign law enforcement agencies and working on cases referred by foreign embassies in Singapore. These embassies have been urged to encourage their nationals who are victims of trafficking to approach the Singapore authorities, even though victims may be asked to return home. To strengthen communication with foreign countries, the Taskforce meets with embassies regularly to discuss trafficking-related matters. In addition, partnerships with both domestic and international NGOs are important as these organisations play important roles in raising public awareness, case referral and providing support to potential victims of TIP.

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OUTCOME	INITIATIVES	RATIONALE	INDICATIVE TIMELINE
<p><i>J. Stronger collaboration with foreign governments including their embassies in Singapore</i></p>	<p>25. Engage law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders in source countries for joint-investigation and information-sharing, especially on TIP syndicates.</p> <p>26. Seek views and learn best practices from relevant countries on their experiences in combating TIP.</p>	<p>Effective collaboration is required for cross border / jurisdiction enforcement of syndicated and cross-national TIP crimes. There are also some destination countries which have valuable insights to share on their experience of combating TIP.</p>	<p>On-going: Engagement with foreign countries and enforcement agencies</p>
<p><i>K. Stronger partnerships with businesses and civil society</i></p>	<p>27. Work with NGOs to refer TIP cases seamlessly and provide necessary victim assistance services.</p> <p>28. Partnering NGOs, other interested and relevant organisations, or individuals on initiatives such as outreach, research and capacity building.</p> <p>29. Evaluate appropriate platforms or mechanisms for regular engagement and dialogue with civil society, foreign countries, relevant organisations and interested individuals.</p> <p>30. Engage businesses on corporate social responsibility for the prevention of TIP in supply chains.</p>	<p>Forging partnerships with NGOs, relevant organisations and other elements of civil society will assist the Taskforce to maximise outreach and tap into all available resources within society.</p>	<p>On going: Engagement with stakeholders</p>

OUTCOME	INITIATIVES	RATIONALE	INDICATIVE TIMELINE
<i>L. Contribute to the global TIP dialogue and enhance multilateral cooperation in combating TIP</i>	31. Participate actively in meetings, discussions and initiatives on TIP in UN, ASEAN and other international / regional fora.	It is important to contribute and learn from international and regional efforts on combating TIP.	On-going: Participation in international/ regional meetings, initiatives and conferences

## Conclusion

The NPA will guide the Taskforce in taking the necessary steps in fighting TIP from 2012 to 2015. The next fundamental review of the NPA will take place in 2015. While this document is intended to guide Singapore for the next four years, further amendments may be made to earlier initiatives to keep pace with the constantly evolving modus operandi of human traffickers.

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