



INTERPOL

SOTERIA

Preventing individuals from using aid work as means to access and offending against the vulnerable

BACKGROUND

Aid organizations employ highly mobile international staff to work in fragile environments, delivering humanitarian assistance to alleviate the suffering of some of the world's most vulnerable communities. Perpetrators of sexual exploitation and abuse have used staff and volunteer positions in the aid sector to harm the same people they are meant to help. The globalized nature of aid work presents challenges to robust screening, particularly after humanitarian emergencies that require immediate relief on the ground.

ABOUT PROJECT SOTERIA

INTERPOL, in partnership with the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), have established *Project Soteria*, an initiative that seeks to develop mechanisms for safer recruitment of staff in the international aid sector, and prevent sexual offenders from using positions in the sector to access and offend against children and vulnerable adults.

INTERPOL's mission is to enable police around the world to prevent and fight international crime. Only through international cooperation can police hope to make the world a safer place.

The project takes its name from Greek mythology, where Soteria was the goddess or spirit of safety and salvation, deliverance, and preservation from harm. The project proposes to establish an advanced level of collaboration between law enforcement agencies and non-governmental organizations operating internationally. While it predominantly focuses on reducing the risk of accused or convicted sex offenders working in the humanitarian sector, it also aims to ensure the strongest mechanisms for detection, investigation and reporting of cases are in place.

Soteria comprises of two phases:

- a) During the **assessment phase (2020-2021)** INTERPOL will conduct a feasibility and needs assessment study in close collaboration with law enforcement and aid sector organizations.
- b) If the assessment phase is favourable, the **delivery phase** will seek to implement the identified solutions in selected pilot countries and organizations.

CAPACITY BUILDING

To achieve these goals, the national law enforcement agencies of our member countries need to enhance their specialist investigative skills and tools to effectively tackle the menace of sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid recipient communities. This also includes expanding the knowledge and capabilities of countries in the areas of criminal records, case management, sexual offender management, information sharing and intelligence analysis.

During the ongoing assessment phase, INTERPOL is evaluating the current national capabilities of selected countries in Africa and Asia to identify where their sex offender identification and case management systems could be strengthened and propose potential solutions. During the implementation phase, the key inputs gathered during the assessment will serve to improve these countries' capacity of criminal record and sexual offender management, as well as information sharing across INTERPOL NCBs. With respect to countries where the practice of criminal records and sexual offender management requires capacity building, INTERPOL will provide expertise and support to develop such systems.

ANALYSIS AND OPERATIONAL SUPPORT

There is lack of systematic research and global information in this area, but there is agreement across the aid and law enforcement sectors that this kind of sexual exploitation and abuse is perpetrated across different countries, organizations and institutions.

The role of INTERPOL is to lead the global law enforcement community in collecting, coordinating and disseminating actionable information and intelligence, and supporting and enhancing domestic and international enforcement in collaboration with other key partners. It is envisaged that an increased understanding and awareness of offender behaviour and the associated Modus Operandi will invariably lead to preventing and bringing to justice individuals exploiting vulnerable persons.

ASSISTANCE TO AID SECTOR

INTERPOL is currently defining the type of assistance it can offer aid sector organizations to improve organizational capability in the prevention and detection of sexual abuse and exploitation.

The aid community has engaged with INTERPOL with a commitment to develop a long-term and comprehensive strategy as well as to define relevant actions and tools, ensuring a survivor-centred approach.

INFORMATION SHARING & PROMOTION OF INTERPOL GREEN NOTICES

Travelling sex offenders have to cross international borders in order to reach their destination country. INTERPOL Green Notices warn Member Countries about sex offenders who have been previously convicted of sex offences and are likely to travel and reoffend in other countries, providing preventive added value. Whilst some countries regularly use Green Notices for this purpose, they are not widely used by most Member Countries. Soteria seeks to examine the broad use of Green Notices to determine the impediments to their use and to work with Member Countries to increase their use to prevent sex offenders crossing international borders with relative anonymity.

For more information regarding the project or participation, please contact soteria@interpol.int