



Office for Victims of Crime

July 1999

OVC Fact Sheet

Advocating for the Fair

Treatment of Crime Victims

Office for Victims of Crime International Activities

Part of the mission of the Office for Victims of Crime is to provide international leadership in promoting effective and sensitive victim services and rights around the world.

— Kathryn Turman, Acting Director, OVC

As countries and their citizens become more linked through tourism, internet usage, and international trade, issues of violent crime and victimization increasingly become an international concern and focus. The Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) has recognized a growing need for services for American citizens victimized abroad and foreign nationals victimized in the United States. For example, OVC is responding to the plight of victims of terrorism, commercial exploitation, international trafficking of women and children, and international child abduction. As a result, OVC is working to improve coordination among government and nongovernment agencies involved with international victimization cases and to improve information sharing around the world on victims' issues. The following is a list of recent OVC initiatives and activities to improve international awareness of and responsiveness to victims' rights and needs and to further the integration of crime victim issues into all international discussions of crime.

Assistance for Victims of Terrorism Abroad

The Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 broadened OVC's authority to assist victims of terrorism abroad as demonstrated by the following examples:

- **Assistance for Victims of U.S. Embassy Bombings in Kenya and Tanzania.** In the aftermath of the simultaneous bombings of 2 U.S. Embassies in East Africa on August 7, 1998, OVC has worked with many different Federal agencies including the U.S. Departments of State, Defense, Labor, Health and Human Services, Justice, Office of Personnel Management, the Agency for International Development, and the Central Intelligence Agency, to ensure that information, benefits, and services are made available to the victims of those attacks. OVC has funded positions at the U.S. Department of State

to assist these victims in accessing services; obtaining compensation for medical expenses; victim travel to Nairobi, Kenya to participate in memorial ceremonies; and getting information on the criminal trial. OVC also hosted a meeting for the victims and surviving family members to provide information about benefits and the current status of the criminal case.

- **Assistance for Victims of Bombing in Dharain, Saudi Arabia.** Following the bombing of Khobar Towers in Dharain, Saudi Arabia, OVC used its new authority under the Antiterrorism Act to ensure that the survivors of the 19 military service members killed in that attack were aware of compensation and assistance benefits. OVC, in conjunction with the FBI, the Department of Defense and the Department of the Air Force, hosted a meeting at the FBI Academy at Quantico, Virginia for the surviving family members of the servicemen killed in the bombing of Khobar Towers and established a 1-800 line for the families and the other victims in the U.S. Attorney's Office in the District of Columbia to provide current information about the case investigation and the status of the alleged terrorists.
- **Development of Federal Protocol for Responding to Victims of Terrorism Abroad.** Recent international terrorist attacks against the U.S. have illuminated many of the unique and complex problems in coordinating an appropriate short- and long-term response to victims of terrorism abroad and the need to develop a Federal protocol for responding to future international terrorist incidents. Terrorism crimes tend to involve large numbers of victims and may include employees of various Federal agencies, as well as tourists, business representatives, and foreign nationals. Obtaining critical information about victims and providing emergency relief and ongoing services may be complicated and difficult. Access to

compensation, benefits, and services can depend on which agencies victims work for and their residency status. OVC has taken a leadership role in coordinating the development of a high-level working group to develop a Federal protocol to ensure a more seamless response to victims of such incidents in the future.

Coordination with the U.S. Department of State to Assist American Citizens Victimized Abroad

■ International Victim Compensation Program

Resource Directory. An increasing number of countries provide victim compensation to foreign nationals; however, international victimization poses administrative obstacles both for victims seeking compensation and for programs providing financial assistance. In response, OVC coordinated with the Department of State to find out how many countries have crime victim compensation programs and to publish this information in an International Victim Compensation Program Resource Directory. The first Resource Directory was published in 1996 and has been updated annually. OVC received 115 responses to its latest survey, 28 of which described existing programs. The programs, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and compensable expenses covered by these 28 countries and the United States are described in the 1998–1999 edition of the Resource Directory. The directory is available through the OVC Resource Center at 800–627–6872 and through the Web site at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/intdir/>.

■ Information to Embassies and Consulates.

OVC works closely with the State Department to provide information and assistance when U.S. citizens are victimized abroad. For example, OVC staff worked with the State Department to develop detailed informational materials on OVC's services and on victim compensation and assistance programs that exist in every State in the United States. The State Department sent this information to all Embassies and Consulates overseas. This material provides a ready reference for Embassy and Consular staff to use when they are contacted by Americans who have been victimized abroad and are looking for information about the services and compensation available upon their return to the United States. OVC is also providing funds to the State Department to establish a full-time victim assistance specialist to work in the Office of Overseas Citizens Services.

International Tourist Victims

- International tourists who become victims often face unique issues, such as isolation, culture shock, lack of familiar social supports, travel stress, and language barriers. OVC is funding a 2-year project to improve the capacity of communities in the United States to provide more effective services to foreign travelers who are victimized in the U.S. and to assist other countries in improving their response to U.S. citizens who are victimized abroad.

OVC has awarded the grant to the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA). To accomplish this goal, NOVA, assisted by an international advisory committee, will conduct an international search for promising practices, policies, and procedures for assisting international tourist victims. The resulting information will be made available through: 1) the NOVA database of international programs and practices; 2) an OVC bulletin that addresses the range of unique issues facing international tourist victims and key elements of programs or practices that have been established to assist them; 3) succinct tourist brochures that can be given to tourists going from and coming to the U.S. summarizing general information on forms of victimization that may affect them and general resources available; and 4) a companion handbook for use by victim assistance programs when they work with tourist victims that can be tailored to different cultures and populations.

International Trafficking of Women and Children

OVC is working in a number of areas to address the needs of victims who are trafficked across U.S. borders for exploitative purposes. OVC staff currently serve on several departmental task forces that are working on issues relating to the international trafficking of women and children. In addition, OVC has undertaken the following projects:

■ Direct Services for Trafficked Victims (Grant).

In FY 1997, OVC funded the Filipino American Service Group, Inc. (FASGI) to provide direct services to Asian women and children trafficked and held as garment or sex industry workers. FASGI worked to assist trafficked women in re-establishing healthy and normal lives, ensure their availability for service as effective material witnesses while reducing the costs to taxpayers, and provide a model that can be used in other regions of the country. The project developed guidelines for use by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and the U.S. Courts in releasing trafficked women to community care, and developed a preliminary curriculum for a continuum of care for "Southeast Asian Women in Transition."

■ Focus Group on Assisting Trafficked Victims.

In June 1998, OVC convened a focus group on assistance and outreach to victims of international trafficking. The victimization that flows from such trafficking is significant, yet for many reasons, these victims are largely without services. The purpose of the focus group was to gather views about how best to meet the myriad of needs of victims of international trafficking, including those who have been trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation, slave labor, and other unlawful purposes. Victim service providers, immigrant rights advocates, and others who come directly in contact with trafficked victims attended the meeting. In addition, representatives from the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, the Federal

Bureau of Investigation, the Department of State, and the Department of Labor attended the meeting. Recommendations were made which OVC planned to incorporate in future program development.

- **Law Enforcement Training Video.** OVC is currently working with the Department of Justice Worker-Exploitation Task Force and various service providers throughout the country and numerous nongovernmental organizations to develop a training video for Federal law enforcement personnel on the issues facing victims of trafficking. This video is expected to be completed in August 1999.

Immigrant Victims

- **Victim–Witness Unit, Immigration and Naturalization Service.** Documented and undocumented immigrants are particularly vulnerable to crime in the United States. They are less likely to report crimes and access services for many reasons: they may fear deportation; they may distrust law enforcement; and/or they may not be aware that services exist. OVC has been working with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to establish a victim–witness program to identify victims of crime and refer them to services. Since its inception, INS has established 68 Victim–Witness Coordinators throughout the country to assist crime victims. OVC, in conjunction with INS, has recently developed a training video, “A Balance to Maintain,” for all INS employees on victim’s issues, and a national training program is under development.
- **Torture Victims.** Thousands of victims of politically motivated torture currently reside in the United States. While the torture took place in other countries, these victims are seeking treatment and assistance in the United States. In November 1998, OVC conducted a focus group with the Center for Victims of Torture (CVT) in Minneapolis, Minnesota to explore ways that OVC can work with CVT to educate victim service providers about the unique needs of these vulnerable immigrant victims. CVT has conducted several training workshops for Federal law enforcement personnel and is exploring ways to broaden awareness of available training for victim service providers around the country.

United Nations Interface

- OVC staff has participated in the annual United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Vienna, Austria a number of times. The United States has cosponsored resolutions to foster implementation of the 1985 United Nations Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power, and OVC has taken the lead in coordinating the development of the *United Nations Handbook on Justice for Victims* and the accompanying *Guide for Policymakers* on implementing the principles set forth in the Declaration in countries around the world. OVC sponsored 2 international expert group meetings to draft the handbook and guide; the first was in

Tulsa, Oklahoma, and the second was in Washington, D.C. In total, experts from nearly 40 countries attended these meetings and participated in the development of the *Handbook* and *Guide for Policymakers*.

Kidnaped Children Taken Across International Borders

- Since 1985, the Departments of Justice and State have had a cooperative agreement with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to track kidnaped children taken across international borders and to help their parents obtain lawful custody under the Hague Convention’s Treaty on international child abductions. To assist in this effort, OVC established a fund to help parents with inadequate resources accompany their children back to the United States.

Commercially Exploited Children

- OVC staff helped prepare the U.S. Delegation to the World Congress Against the Commercial Exploitation of Children held in Stockholm, Sweden, on August 27–31, 1996. OVC provided funds for the development of a publication entitled, “Child Sexual Exploitation: Improving Investigations and Protecting Victims — A Blueprint for Action,” which was distributed at the conference. Since the World Congress, OVC has participated in a working group comprised of representatives from the President’s Interagency Council on Women, the State Department, the Department of Labor, Department of Defense, the U.S. Customs Service, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Department of Education, and various Department of Justice agencies to develop a coordinated Federal strategy for prevention of, investigation of, and intervention in cases of commercial exploitation of children.

Rape Victims

- Several years ago, in collaboration with the State Department’s Office of Diplomatic Security, OVC provided funding for the development of forensic rape kits suitable for use in developing countries. These kits were then distributed to State Department medical clinics worldwide, and training was provided on their use.

Restorative Justice for Juveniles

- For the past several years, OVC has been engaged in partnership with other Department of Justice agencies to advance the understanding of restorative justice principles and to provide forums for jurisdictions to network and exchange ideas about these principles and their practical application. Restorative justice focuses on addressing the harm caused by crime, thus placing the needs of the crime victims in a central position in the administration of justice. OVC is currently cosponsoring, with 4 other Department of Justice agencies, a series of 5 regional symposia in the United States on restorative justice. An International

Conference on Restorative Justice for Juveniles was held in November 1998 in Florida. Additional conferences are scheduled through the year 2002. The conference series grew out of a United Nations working group on restorative justice.

OVC Resource Center Response to International Crime Victim Issues

■ The Office for Victims of Crime Resource Center (OVCRC) is a dynamic information resource that responds to queries on a variety of victim issues from victim service agencies, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners from around the world. OVCRC has responded to requests from multiple countries including Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Malaysia, and New Zealand on a variety of subjects, such as child abuse, domestic violence, rape and sexual assault, victim compensation, restitution, victims' rights, and victim-offender mediation. OVCRC has recently expanded its international outreach by establishing an international selection in the Victims Resources section of the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) home page (<http://www.ncjrs.org>). OVCRC has also provided information and materials at a number of international crime victim-related conferences.

The following are publications that are currently available, or soon will be available, on the International Section of OVC's Web site:

- *International Victim Compensation Program Resource Directory.*
- *United Nations Handbook on Justice for Victims and Guide for Policymakers* (in draft).
- *Child Sexual Exploitation: Improving Investigations and Protecting Victims — A Blueprint for Action.*
- *New Directions from the Field: Victims' Rights and Services for the 21st Century* (Chapter 18: "International Perspectives in Victims' Services).
- *National Victim Assistance Academy Text* (Chapter 21: "Special Topics—International Issues in Victim Assistance.)

International Visitors

■ Each year, OVC provides briefings to dozens of visitors from around the world who are interested in victim assistance efforts in the United States. Recent visits have included officials from Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Guatemala, Japan, Mexico, The Netherlands, Nigeria, South Africa, and Turkey. In addition, students from Australia, Germany, Nigeria, and Rwanda attended OVC's 1998 National Victim Assistance Academy.

For more information about OVC's international activities, please call 202-307-5983, or visit the OVC Web site at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/>.

**July 1999
FS000229**

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Office for Victims of Crime

Washington, D.C. 20531

Official Business
Penalty for Private Use \$300

PRESORTED STANDARD
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
DOJ/OVC
Permit No. G-91