



IOM International Organization for Migration

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**PREVENTION, PROTECTION AND
ASSISTANCE SCHEMES TO VICTIMS OF
TRAFFICKING: POLICY AND EXAMPLES OF
IOM PREVENTION AND RETURN &
REINTEGRATION PROGRAMMES**

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Abstract:

This paper will focus mainly on IOM's experience in the Counter-trafficking field in Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans, particularly in relation to prevention of trafficking and direct assistance to victims, mostly women and minors trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Information campaigns are crucial short-term instruments in helping to raise awareness of potential victims and general public, thus contributing to the prevention of trafficking. In addition, information campaigns targeting the general public and users in countries of transit/destination can also assist in the prevention of re-trafficking, as well as identification and assistance of victims. For the purpose of this paper, the presenter will focus on the example of IOM's information campaign in Kosovo. Moreover, within a protection framework there is also a need to provide appropriate assistance to victims of trafficking, as a way to address their needs, including return and reintegration assistance to countries of origin. For the purpose of this presentation, the paper will focus on the examples of return and reintegration scheme in Romania¹.

¹ The information hereby presented is based on several IOM documents and reports including project proposals and final reports.

Introduction

Trafficking in human beings is a major public and international concern over the last years. Victims of trafficking are usually involved in different sectors of the informal economy, yet trafficking in women for sexual exploitation is a distinctive and highly disturbing form of this wider phenomenon. Even more disturbing is the increase number of minors², also trafficked for sexual and other forms of exploitation, such as begging, pick-pocketing, petty-crime, etc. Several studies have point out that despite the lack of precise date, trafficking in human beings are on the rise, and victims of sexual exploitation are becoming more mobile within the national territory and in between countries.

The 1999 report by EUROPAP/TAMPEP confirmed that the BENELUX region experienced the highest level of mobility, and the biggest proportion of migrants working on prostitution compared to France, UK, and Ireland. Mobility within national borders and in the region is directly linked to changes in policy on immigration and prostitution law, as well as public tolerance and police control. Consequently, one can say that in the long run transnational approaches within the BENELUX area is the most sensible way in order to tackle the problem of trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation. As for Central and Eastern Europe in relations to the Balkans, the socio-economic and political crisis, followed by military and post-conflict phase has made the region a fertile ground for the recruitment and exploitation of victims.

It is important to stress that economic, social and gender inequalities are the root cause of this type of migration from the source countries, thus many individuals risk everything in an attempt to improve their living standards. Moreover, many victims tend to come from families structures that are either broken or have a significant level of internal conflict as a consequence of high unemployment, low income, social insecurity, and in some cases, a high birth rate. Based on the IOM 2001 study on unaccompanied minors trafficked to Europe under the European Commission - STOP Programme, researchers noticed that Eastern European girls tend to be more individualistic, thus facilitating the

² Children under the age of 18.

work of recruiters when promising better opportunities for employment and a "new life". As for the Albanian cases, particularly the boys, there is certainly pressure from the families for them to emigrate in order to work and send remittances back home. It could therefore, be said that Albanian minors bear similar characteristics to those of adult migrant workers, yet they are highly vulnerable due to their status and age to traffickers/exploiters. Moreover, as regards girls trafficked for sexual exploitation, the involvement of family members having close connections with such activities is visible, particularly in the case of Albanian and Bulgarian nationals. Minors have often experienced a high degree of violence, frustration or disappointment prior to migration.

The utilisation of traffickers by migrants places them in a vulnerable position, including bonded labour and forced prostitution. Traffickers usually control their victims via methods of physical and emotional manipulation, which is possible given the lack of identification, isolation, and fear of deportation or reprisal against family members in the country of origin.

IOM Mandate & Policy

IOM's³ involvement and approach to trafficking is based on its migration mandate whereby: "IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society and acts to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and work towards effective respect of the human dignity and well being of the migrants"⁴. IOM is particularly concerned about those migrants who are, or have been, deceived or coerced into situations of economic exploitation, which occur through forced labour, forced servitude, coercion, debt bondage, or other violations of their fundamental human rights.

Since 2001, IOM has adopted the definitions of Trafficking and of Smuggling as included in the Protocols supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized

³ IOM Counter-trafficking Strategy for the Balkans and Neighboring Countries, January 2001. IOM Geneva.

Crime. According to the Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, trafficking means: the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the 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.

The objectives of IOM are to curtail migrant trafficking and protect the rights of migrants caught up in the practice⁵, through awareness raising campaigns, return and reintegration activities and capacity building with relevant authorities and partner, such as non-government organizations and international organizations. In order to achieve those objectives IOM has been carrying out a number of counter-trafficking activities at the regional and the national levels in partnership with government authorities, international organizations and local NGOs. It is important to stress, that thanks to the good partnership and co-operation IOM enjoys world-wide, we have been quite successful in implementing a number of counter-trafficking activities which demands a high degree of sensitivity and specialisation, particularly when it comes to direct assistance to victims of trafficking.

I) Prevention – Raising Awareness Via Mass Information Campaigns:
Kosovo

⁴IOM Resolution N0 923 (LXXI) of 27 November 1995.

⁵ The IOM Global Counter trafficking policy and strategy are reflected in the IOM documents -MC/EX/INF 58 and MC/INF 245.

- **General Introduction**

Information campaigns are crucial instruments in preventing trafficking in human beings. Often, potential migrants, particular women and minors, have a distorted perceptions and insufficient information on the real conditions they will face in the country of destination. Most migrants are unaware of the practical, legal, social and economic consequences involved in moving to another country, thus traffickers often take advantage of this lack of information to lure their victims with promises of employment and a better life. Information campaigns main aims is to provide potential migrants with accurate information on migration issues in order to enable them to make an informed decision regarding their migration plans. Information campaigns offered factual information on the possibilities, advantages and limits of legal migration, as well as providing practical information such as visa requirements, residence, working and immigration procedures, as well as common methods of recruitment by trafficking networks, including warnings of false promises, dangers and consequences. Moreover, information campaigns can also achieve an increase level of awareness among target audiences about this issue, thus influencing public opinion, changing common perceptions and misconceptions about migration or of those being exploited, as well as fostering dialogue and solutions finding.

In co-operation with the government in the Candidate countries and relevant NGO partners IOM have carried out a number of information campaigns aiming at preventing trafficking in human beings in the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Romania, the Baltic States, and more recently IOM is planning to implement an information campaign in the Slovak Republic and Slovenia. Moreover, IOM have also implemented information campaigns in the Balkan Region, such as in the FYR of Macedonia, Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Information campaigns consist of a variety of communication activities using several media in order to reach a wide audience (i.e., TV documentaries, radio broadcast, printed materials, round table discussions, etc).

However, it is important to stress that prior to each information campaign an action oriented research is carried out in order to take a comprehensive balanced vision of the trafficking phenomena in the country, as well as to design the most effective intervention.

- **Kosovo**

The information campaign implemented in Kosovo in 2000⁶, was part of an overall comprehensive anti-trafficking programme, which also included assistance to victims of trafficking. The comprehensive programme aimed at establishing an early warning and reporting mechanism on trafficking in human beings to and from Kosovo, thus including data gathering, awareness raising campaigns and training of law enforcement officers, civil administrators, and community leaders in trafficking related issues. Moreover, the intention was to bring about the trafficking phenomenon into the open while developing the capacity of those involved to deal with the problem in the long run. Prior to the campaign, while there was little factual data on migrant trafficking to and from Kosovo, there were a number of early warning signals, which needed to be addressed immediately. First, the ground conditions for traffickers in 1999 were ideal, since it included indicators such as post-conflict economic conditions of the majority of its inhabitants, poor border control, lack of a reliable documentation system, as well as the reality of a high proportion of displaced persons originating from rural areas, residing in urban centers. In addition, the use and know-how of smuggling networks in the early 1990's by the local population, combined with limited employment opportunities lead many to believe that such activity would be reinitiated once the conditions were stable. Moreover, one could also site:

⁶ Based on IOM Pristina project proposal, briefings and reports on counter-trafficking activities in Kosovo 1999-2002.

1. The rapid changes occurring in the society combined with the aspirations of young women to migrate abroad due to the lack of local opportunities, as another factor contributing to the strengthening of trafficking networks;
2. Following the cessation of hostilities, and with the international security forces deployment, this was also taken as one of the additional factors. This is so, as experience in Bosnia and Herzegovina have shown that a large international presence triggers specific mechanisms which lead to the increase of sexual exploitation, often involving trafficked women and children from neighboring countries. This experience could easily be repeated given the situation in Kosovo; and finally;
3. A very real threat to civil society was posed by criminal networks, which have developed and strengthened their positions and have forged strong alliances with international organized crime. Albanian gangs had at the time started to monopolize the prostitution business in some European cities and co-coordinating their activities with the human smugglers.

It is important to point out that information campaigns were implemented in conjunction with activities aimed at assistance to victims. The first IOM Counter-Trafficking information campaign launched on May 2000 in a regular UNMIK Press conference had as its slogan:

You Pay for a Night: She Pays with Her Life

Forced Prostitution = Slavery: There Is No Choice

The aim of the campaign was to produce a climate for zero tolerance for the trafficking of women in and out of Kosovo. By raising awareness, this first campaign aimed to break the taboo amongst the community on trafficking for forced prostitution, but also clearly demarcated the differences between prostitution and forced prostitution. The campaign strove to unite the international community in the condemnation of trafficking and achieved the

introduction of a code of conduct for UN and international aid agencies on the frequenting of bars and brothels. The intention was to change any climate of acceptability or the mythology of a morality based on individual choice, again emphasizing that in the frequenting of bars and brothels, international representatives and by default their organizations, are condoning and supporting slavery. The campaign was targeted at clients and potential clients, mainly representatives of the international community in Kosovo, international NGOs, UNMIK and KFOR. Local clientele were also targeted, and the poster was originally published with a bilingual slogan in English and Albanian, and subsequently in Serbian.

The campaign slogan was used both on the poster and on the leaflet header. The information leaflet was produced with individual stories of two women who had been trafficked into Kosovo. The stories are based upon interviews of real cases of women who had been assisted by the Counter-trafficking Unit Direct Assistance Department. The leaflet also states how trafficking in women and children is a global business, producing huge profits for the criminal network and perpetrators, and thereby indirectly addresses the criminal aspects of trafficking inside Kosovo. 30,000 leaflets and 5,000 posters were distributed throughout the province via community activists, local women's NGOs, the Kosova Network of Women, International NGOs, UNMIK focal points, OSCE, UNMIK police, local and international NGOs, IOM sub-offices and KFOR.

In addition, during the first phase of dissemination, a youth NGO named Post Pessimists, widely renowned in the Balkans for their cross-border activities and tolerance, published a magazine for young people, the front cover of which promoted the slogan. The magazine included several related articles by young journalists and was distributed to schools throughout Kosovo.

Moreover, the campaign also included the production and dissemination of a radio play entitled "Breathe with me" in association with local radio station Radio Blue Sky (UNIMIK

Radio). The play was based on the real life stories of women trafficked to Kosovo. Located in a café in Pristina, it is the monologue of Maria who recounts her story to an imaginary journalist. In addition, the campaign also focus on raising awareness amongst young people between 16 to 25 years of age, on trafficking for forced prostitution. This campaign in partnership with youth NGOs sought to promote a positive vision of the future for young people who often seek opportunities not in Kosovo but abroad and in Europe, provide accurate and useful information on working and studying abroad, and build the capacity of youth NGOs Post Pessimists and Alternativa in the production of information campaigns. .

Love Your Present Create Your Future campaign included a colorful spiral bound notebook, containing articles written by young journalists on trafficking. The notebook was launched at a popular concert in Pristina with 800 attendees and significant press coverage. To date, 10,000 notebooks have been distributed. T-shirts with the campaign slogan were also disseminated.

Some tangible results of the campaign include: (1) introduction of a new code of conduct by UNMIK's Office of Gender Affairs, (2) together with IOM, UNIFEM co-chaired a consultative committee of international representatives and local NGOs on the issue, (3) the campaign raised consciousness among the general public that traffickers form a cohesive mafia network spanning many nationalities. In addition, in parallel to the campaign several victims were identified and assisted (i.e., between February 2000 to December 2001, 254 victims were assisted).

II - Return & Reintegration Schemes for Victims of Trafficking: Romania

- **General Introduction**

Since the early 1990s, many countries in the EU have introduced or enhanced legislation against trafficking in human beings. For example, the Belgium law "On Trafficking in Human

Beings", introduced in 1995, provides for a combination of stringent sanctions of 10 to 15 years hard labour for convicted traffickers, and extensions of stay, as well as possible employment rights and assistance, for victims. However, prosecution of traffickers has proven to be arduous given the difficulties in obtaining evidence. As a result, in the end with or without prosecution victims of trafficking are still left with the need to rebuild their lives, despite their terrible experiences. As a result, appropriate assistance is needed in order to provide humanitarian assistance to the victims of trafficking, as a way to begin to address such an injustice.

Victims in their own limited ways tend to seek solutions to solve their problems, which may include the desire to return home. Voluntary choice of return rests upon opportunities available in the countries of origin for both sustainable livelihood and social services, yet in most cases migrants are unaware of the services available in the country of origin or whom they could turn to for assistance in the host/transit country. Successful return and reintegration assistance projects have already been implemented by IOM Mission world-wide. For example, in Thailand, IOM and its partner agencies provide victims with return and reintegration assistance, which addressed most of the immediate needs of the participants⁷. According to this project, an income-generator activity and psycho-socio support are key elements if the returnee is to have any chance of reintegration in the countries of origin. NGOs have a vital role to play as mediators between victims of trafficking, law enforcement agencies and other government organisations, both in countries of origin and transit/destination, and therefore are the main partners in the return and reintegration assistance schemes to victims.

⁷ One of the most important contributions of this project was the setting up of a mechanism of return and reintegration that was both human and sustainable, while responding to the needs of the victims in the receiving and sending countries. The programme provides the returnees access to important services such as, medical assistance, counselling, preparation of travel documents, temporary safe housing, education & training, and income-generating activities in the country of origin. Furthermore, the program was also successful in terms of preventing trafficking and re-trafficking.

Voluntary return programmes have proven to be a more humane and cost-effective alternative to forced deportation as they balance the need for the migrant to avoid the stigma of forced deportation, and its possible negative repercussions regarding successful reintegration. The assisted voluntary return programme basically consists of three stages of implementation: pre departure, travel and post-arrival. It offers information and counselling for potential returnees in the host country, travel and identification arrangements, and finally post-arrival reception, information, referral, and assistance in partnership with local authorities, NGOs and social services. Return and reintegration proceed on a case-by-case basis, as victims' situation, needs and priorities differ widely according to a variety of circumstances, not least in the countries of origin.

Romania

Romania⁸ is predominantly a country of origin and transit for victims of trafficking in women. However, more recently there are indications of Romania becoming a destination country as foreign victims are identified within the country. The victims identified to-date do not originate from the Balkan region, but rather from the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. The Balkan region is, however, significant in terms of trafficking from Romania. The Romanian police and NGOs are aware of, and currently also tackling, the issue of internal trafficking within Romania's borders.

The perception of trafficking in Romania has undergone a dramatic change over the last year (i.e., 2000). Government attention has reversed from virtually ignoring the phenomenon to significant changes in law enforcement procedures and a more sympathetic attitude towards

⁸ Applied Research and Data Collection on Trafficking in Women and Children for Sexual Exploitation To, Through and From the Balkan Region (A.R.T.B.): Country Report –Romania, IOM Bucharest, May 2001.

victims. Counter-trafficking in Romania is now supported by political will to take action against trafficking in human beings in general and trafficking in women in particular.

In 2001 the Romanian Ministry of Interior suggested that there has been a decrease in the number of cases of trafficking from and through Romania over the last few years. In 1999, 512 cases were recognized, falling to 363 in 2000. Figures from the border police, however, show the reverse. The border police press release reveals that most trafficked women and girls are from Romania, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. Victims are generally aged between 13 and 33 years old, with the majority between 17 and 23 years old. Romanian border guards also suggest that ages of victims generally vary between 18 and 30 years old. Most have primary and secondary education.

A survey of the 241 victims of trafficking assisted by IOM Bucharest between January 2000 and April 2001 reveals the following breakdown: Of the adults, 77 percent were under 23 years old and only three percent were over 30. Within the first four months of 2001, the number of under-aged victims decreased to 18 percent, as compared to 25 percent in 2000. Some victims come from dissolved or broken families, and many have families or children to provide for. An analysis of interviews with 50 Romanian victims assisted to return from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, FRY/Serbia, FYR of Macedonia and Italy shows that 16 percent had poor family relationships, while 44 percent affirmed they had a good relationship with their families. The remaining 40 percent either did not answer the question or did not have a family.

Return and reintegration assistance to victims of trafficking in Romania is part of a wider comprehensive counter-trafficking project which included, a national-wide information campaign on the dangers of trafficking, in cooperation with relevant partners - "People Are Priceless" (dissemination of video spot, posters, brochures; population reached: over 1,600,000).

In 2001, IOM Bucharest in co-operation with the local authorities and network of 24 NGOs directly assist 246 (47 minors) victims of trafficking. The range of assistance carried out included among other things, reception, shelter, medical assistance (primary care and psycho-social counselling), education and vocational training, and follow-up. Support and training was also given to the NGO working group for the standardization of the assistance services for the reintegration of victims of trafficking.

The Romanian trafficked woman is typically young (under 25 years of age) and seeking unskilled employment abroad, such as waitressing, housekeeping and au-pair jobs. Traffickers use the pretext of employment and arrange documentation and travel across one or more international boundaries. From initial recruitment to arrival in the country of destination, traffickers may sell the young woman several times. In most cases her passport is taken away from her, she is enslaved by debt-bondage, and can suffer repeated physical and psychological abuse, threats to her and her family's safety, and other coercive techniques in order to ensure her co-operation. Trafficked women and children face numerous health risks. In particular they are exposed to sexually transmitted diseases (STD), other reproductive tract infections (RTIs), unplanned pregnancies and physical traumas from severe beatings. Many women suffer severe psychological problems due to the abuses.

CONCLUSIONS:

- 1.** High profits combined with the low risks, have resulted in the domination of this activity by criminal organizations.

- 2.** Extensive research carried out by IOM provides ample evidence that despite an extensive mobilization of international instruments, strategies and actions to combat trafficking, large numbers of women continue to be trafficked from Central and Eastern European countries into the Balkans, European Union Member States, as well as other countries.

Overall, in order to prevent and combat trafficking, it is important to tackle issues directly related to criminal networks. However, it is equally important to deal with other issues that have the potential to decrease the vulnerability of the victims vis-à-vis the criminal networks, such as improving socio-economic opportunities in the country of origin, protection measures in countries of destination/origin, and finally legal opportunities for women to migrate, and thus contribute to the host/sending societies. According to the most recent statistics on gender distribution, about 47.5 per cent of migrants are women in the developed countries as principal wage earners.

Short biography:

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