

The Frail Chain

*– Support for Child Victims of
Trafficking in the Baltic Sea Region*

Svante Weyler



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Foreword

*Ms Anniki Tikerpuu, Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs,
Chairperson of the Working Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk*

One of the important aspects of the WGCC programme on Unaccompanied and Trafficked Children has been an assistance and protection of child victims of trafficking. Due to the nature of the activity there is little hard statistical information. It is especially difficult to gather statistical information on children. Thus, our knowledge on the problem and its related aspects is rather limited to the estimations on individuals that are trafficked annually, a significant proportion being children. Some become unpaid domestic servants, or work in sweatshops, but many more are forced into prostitution and crime.

It has to be acknowledged that there are several limitations to the rehabilitation services for young people that have been trafficked in the Baltic Sea Region. Furthermore, there is also an observable void in the knowledge and expertise on comprehensive assistance to young people who are victims of trafficking. The latter has been addressed by the WGCC project on Comprehensive Assistance to Children Victims of Trafficking, the BSR CACVT Training project¹. It is a project implemented in the abovementioned region funded by the European Commission's programme Daphne II. In order to include the non-EU member countries to the training project, Save the Children Sweden and Oak Foundation have provided additional funding for the project. Currently the training programme involves 10 countries of which 6 are EU-members and other 4 their neighbouring countries.

The BSR CACVT project's aims are twofold. The project aims to provide training for relevant professionals and also map the problem of child trafficking in the region. The sub-project of mapping was targeted to explore the impact of the actions taken by ministries, authorities, agencies, NGOs and IOs on child trafficking victims. In the course of planning the project the WGCC identified a need to map the measures taken in child trafficking cases. Also, it was essential to investigate

¹ <http://www.childcentre.info/projects/traffickin/dbaFile13240.html>

the continuum of interventions to see whether they complemented each other. It was also relevant to map the procedures such as how does the police contact the experts of social assistance, how is the victim protected in the host country, whether and how is a guardian appointed and whether there are any immediate steps taken to ensure a secure housing for the victim. This report including accounts from young people themselves is the result of the mapping project that WGCC is proud to present.

As mentioned earlier, there is a lack of official data on human trafficking. The statistics are even more limited when it comes to data regarding children and young persons under 18. The currently presented mapping project does not claim to fill this gap, but it does draw attention to some trends that the WGCC recognises as an important issue for further investigation. It has been long identified that child victims of trafficking may well be exploited in several different ways. Fighting trafficking and protecting children from trafficking must be built on knowledge gained from a variety of studies on different forms of exploitation focusing on children, not only on the crimes committed against the child nor the criminals exploiting the child.

This report looks at what is known about child trafficking in the region. The WGCC will use this report and other actions taken to continue to fight vigorously all forms of trafficking and all forms of exploitation of children in our region.

The Working Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk acknowledges the support from the European Commission Daphne II programme that made this report possible.

Introduction

*Lars Lööf, Head of Children's Unit,
Council of the Baltic Sea States, Secretariat*

Children that have been trafficked hardly ever get to tell their own story. We listen to their experiences as these are mediated by others. When starting to consider this gap in our knowledge and the need to know how children and young persons themselves describe their experiences we also realised that the experiences that young people have of the assistance they were offered would be important to listen to. We need not only dwell on the terrible stories of their victimisation and exploitation, we need to let their experiences guide us as we try to design the most appropriate care, protection and rehabilitation.

We heard from experts in the professional network around the Baltic Sea States trying to contact child victims of trafficking that these often didn't respond too well to the care and the support offered. It somehow seemed that the image of the victim and the true victim didn't really match and the care and protection were designed out of the image of the child victim, not the true victim.

Another point of interest was how the different countries managed the often complicated structures nationally and internationally to deal with all aspects of child trafficking. As always when violence towards children is discussed, there are legal, psychological, medical, social and pedagogical considerations to be taken and these often do not coincide or point towards the same action. The police would need a witness that can participate in an interview and give a coherent testimony. The psychologist would need the child to remain in a peaceful and non-threatening environment and the pedagogue would like to assess whatever gaps in basic learning that are missing in order for the young person to embark on a training that would enable him/her to grow in self esteem and self worth. Valuable as all of these points of departure are, the only person that may adequately weigh one against the other is the young person her-/himself and they are not often asked. By talking to a few children and by listening to persons involved in assisting them we wanted to get a more distinct image of how programmes of support could build on reality instead of images of reality.

In some countries involved in the Baltic Sea Regional cooperation the different organisations active in supporting children that have been trafficked seem to be utilising each other's expertise in a dynamic way while in other countries efforts are not yet as concerted. We were curious as to what it is that makes one geographical area more prone to a collaborative approach than another. We also wanted to understand more how the existence of so many actors with so many different funders influenced the kind of assistance child victims received. We were convinced that the organisational structure would have a bearing on the quality of support that the organisation may offer the individual child victim.

The Working Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk, the WGCC within the Council of the Baltic Sea States has during the past years implemented the programme Unaccompanied and Trafficked Children in the Baltic Sea Region². One part of this programme is the establishment of National Contact Points on Unaccompanied and Trafficked Children in the CBSS region. A second part is the Baltic Sea Region Comprehensive Training on Children Victims of Trafficking, BSR CACVT. The present mapping and investigation into the reality behind child trafficking in the Baltic Sea Region is the third part of the programme. The European Commission, through the Daphne II programme has generously made the BSR CACVT training programme and this mapping possible.

All views expressed in this report are the author's own.

² http://www.childcentre.info/projects/traffickin/wgcc_programme/

Author's Introduction

There was, I was told, a feeling that insufficient attention was paid to the personal experiences of the child victims of trafficking. Victims were offered and accepted support, but then often disappeared within only a few days, long before any care plan could be drawn up, leaving word that they would be in touch or that they felt much better and wanted to get back home. Often the only thing left behind was, at best, a figure in the statistics of some of the institutions they came into contact with – and a hope that things would improve for them. This sparked the interest of the WGCC. Knowing that efforts are made to assist but that these are not put to use made it imperative to find out how these efforts were perceived by those they were meant to benefit. Why did young women offered support leave after just a few days? Why was it that the staff, usually well-trained in assisting young people, did not seem to gain access to these young people considered to be the most vulnerable of all? How come that some resources in some countries in Europe, specifi-

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After studies in literature and Russian at Uppsala and Stockholm Universities he has worked as chief editor of cultural magazines, with the Swedish Radio both with dramaturgy, cultural journalism, as a foreign correspondent and political commentator.

He is a regular contributor of articles and columns on literature and politics for the Swedish Radio and national newspapers. For the past 15 years he has worked as Publishing Director of Norstedts Publishing House and now runs his own publishing company, the Svante Weyler Bokförlag.

Svante Weyler is the author of two books: “Weyler’s Berlin” (Norstedts 1994) and “Ett hus i Ngouedi” (A House in Ngouedi, Atlas 2006). He is the father of three children.

cally collected to care for young victims of trafficking, were half-depleted when everyone said that there were numerous victims of trafficking out there? These questions could be answered by putting the crime of trafficking in its context as a highly organised, extremely clandestine activity and the victims painfully aware of the consequences should they start to cooperate with the police. Even so, the child victims definitely had something important to say to politicians, administrators, donors, experts – i.e. all decision makers – that might be of crucial importance when the work is assessed and evaluated.

I was commissioned to see how child victims of trafficking think about these issues and set out to find these young persons, to listen to them and to bring back their views. For obvious reasons the task soon proved very difficult. The number of children that I could meet under these circumstances was limited so I have put the personal stories I was given the chance to listen to in the perspective of a quantitatively more representative investigation conducted during the same period.³ The findings presented in the report referred to coincide with my own findings to such an extent that I have good cause to believe that the material presented in this report is in many important ways representative of many more than the actual cases presented.

Thus, this report does not claim scientific authority – but it does claim a political and a moral one.

During 2007 I have visited Lithuania, Belarus, the Ukraine, Poland, Russia and Sweden. I have sent out questionnaires to the institutions in all countries connected to the network (including Norway, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia and Moldova) set up by the CBSS Working Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk.⁴ I have attempted to get a basic overview of recent research in the field and the reports

³ Rebecca Surtees. Listening to victims. International Centre for Migration Policy Development 2007. This study was conducted in five countries: Albania, Moldova, Romania, BiH and Serbia and it covered the same aspects as my report was supposed to do.

⁴ For a full description of the WGCC Programme, please refer to http://www.childcentre.info/projects/traffickin/wgcc_programme/

issued by law enforcement bodies in the different countries. I have met with the different stake holders involved in the work on prevention of, the protection against and the prosecution of the trafficking in children. In several places and institutions I have had the opportunity to listen and talk directly to the victims. However, although it must be obvious to any reader, it must be stated initially that in order to establish the kind of contact with a victim of trafficking which can lead to a true understanding of his or her experiences you must spend days, weeks, perhaps even months together. I did not have that possibility. When I still tell and retell some victims' stories or views, I do it with the strong conviction that they are representative of many other child victims of trafficking.

In the report I have chosen to focus on the description of three situations or scenarios, each casting light on some of the most crucial problems in understanding the victim's situation and the victim's relationship with the succession of people and institutions he or she comes into contact with. The choice of these scenarios is not as random as it might seem at first.

Sweden represents a state within the CBSS network which is rich, has stable institutions, a highly developed welfare system and, where trafficking is concerned, is a country of destination. Lithuania represents a society in rapid political, economic and social change. It is a new EU-member, its institutions are underfunded, but it has a rich variety of NGOs working in the field of assisting victims of trafficking and it is a country of origin and transit. The Ukraine is a former communist country which experiences rapid but extremely uneven economic and social change. It displays an unclear political situation, institutions suffering from severe underfunding, and is a country of origin and transit. In my opinion these three countries can be said to represent the whole range of countries involved in the CBSS network.

I start by describing experiences in Kiev and Donetsk, the Ukraine. More specifically I concentrate on the story of Nadezjda, a young woman I met there. In my mind, her story can be seen as a check list for an assessment of the work with victims of trafficking. Could what happened to her have been prevented? Could she have been better protected and rehabilitated? Could those responsible for the crimes against her have been prosecuted?

The second scenario is Sweden, where the institutional and material resources are very different from those of, for instance, the Ukraine, but where the legal situation still exhibits serious shortcomings from the perspective of the child victim.

Third and last, I bring up the question of prevention from a somewhat different angle, by telling the story of a young woman from the city of Marijampole in Lithuania.

In a second part of this report I try to identify successes and problems and I also define some major threats to the work with prevention, protection and prosecution in this field.

Donetsk, April, -07

Nadezjda arrives at the offices of “Donetsk regional league of business and professional women” just on time, exactly as had been agreed between her and Sonja M., the psychologist. Sonja had called an hour before just to make sure she was on her way. Nadezjda lives in a small city bordering the suburbs of Donetsk, a city of somewhat more than one million inhabitants in the east of the Ukraine. This part of the country used to be the centre of the Ukraine’s, as well as of the entire Soviet Union’s, coal mining and metallurgical industry district. Its population is mainly Russian speaking even though nowadays Ukrainian is also widely used. Though Donetsk has seen better days, the situation is not as bad as in some of the smaller cities in the region, commonly referred to as *depressivnye goroda*, “depressive cities”, a name given to them after the innumerable closures of mines and factories. Broadly speaking, this is not a region where the political changes of the last ten, fifteen years are appreciated. The region constantly loses a lot of people to other regions and to other countries – and some of them, like Nadezjda, are lost in the saddest way possible.

Nadezjda is 18 years old. She has put on nice clothes and gives me a shy smile as we say hello. She has a thin, rather childish voice, lisps slightly but comes across as self confident. She was not always. This is her story, as related to me by Sonja M. before our meeting:

Nadezjda comes from a family with many children. When her father died, she went to live with distant relatives in order for her mother to be able to care better for the children left in the family. These relatives Nadezjda lived with both died in a tragic car accident and Nadezjda returned back home to her mother. As she had lost her documents, which are so important in the former Soviet Republics that the loss of them can be used against the citizen to deprive her of her rights, Nadezjda was denied a place in the local school and her mother sent her to a boarding school for retarded children. Nadezjda played truant because of the hostile attitude towards her from her school mates and her mother later allowed her to leave the boarding school. Back home, she awaited a new passport in order to be able to take up a job.

In the local market, her mother made the acquaintance of a woman who offered to help out with a job. This woman led her to another woman, Tatjana, who promised a job for Nadezjda in Moscow as a shop assistant. Later, when the ticket had already been bought, Tatjana told them that she hadn't been able to arrange the job as a shop assistant and that Nadezjda would have to start working under other conditions: She was now to perform striptease in front of a web camera in a closed room. Tatjana guaranteed total security for her and assured them that Nadezjda would be defended against any possible intruders or molesters. Nadezjda was terrified, but her mother persuaded her to go.

Nadezjda was sent by train to Moscow with a false passport. There was a man travelling with her in her compartment. He made his identity clear only after they had passed the border between the Ukraine and Russia.

Arriving in Moscow, he brought Nadezjda to an apartment where five other girls already lived. They were the ones who informed her of what the job was like and they were the ones who told her that she was to see several "customers" every day, and that she could not protest or resist. If she did, she would get beaten up and punished by not receiving food for two days. She would also be punished by being raped.

All the girls were permanently supervised in the apartment where the doors were locked. They were taken to clients under strict surveillance and in addition they were forced to find customers in the street.

After about three months, Nadezjda and another girl were able to escape together, assisted by a compassionate client. They hitch-hiked to the Ukrainian border where they turned to the Russian border guards to ask for their assistance.

Nadezjda tells me that the border guards took good care of her. They believed her story and helped her to travel to Kiev. There she was received by representatives from the International Organization for Migration, the IOM, who had been notified of her arrival. After a medical investigation, they put her up in a hospital for care. After a month and a half, she was in such a shape that she could be returned to her family in Donetsk. This is in accordance with IOM policy, always to seek to

re-integrate the child victim with her own family, despite the fact that her mother was active in her recruitment. The IOM contacted “Women’s league” and Sonja M. who met Nadezjda at her arrival in Donetsk and helped her back to her mother.

It is obvious to me that the relationship between Nadezjda and Sonja M. is very good and based on mutual confidence and trust. Nadezjda was not coerced into speaking about her experiences in Moscow when she came to the centre. According to her what they did was to offer support, warmth and friendship. They assisted her in picking up her severed contact with the school system and helped her with information about the different options regarding professional training that they could provide her with at the centre. My lasting impression is that the most important things they could give to Nadezjda were respect, confidence and trust.

At a later stage Nadezjda accepted their “offer” of assisting her in overcoming her frightful experiences as a child prostitute. She started seeing Sonja M. on a regular basis, talking to Sonja about her time in Moscow. Today she is still grateful to the organisation that these counselling sessions were not a precondition for the rest of the assistance offered.

The reintegration of Nadezjda was not always easy. She has had problems finishing school and the relationship with her mother is not the best. “I have told her about what happened in Moscow” she says, “but I don’t think she really understands”. Nadezjda shows a kind of understanding for her mother, as if she recognises the desperation that grows in the social circumstances the family were in.

A year ago she met a young man to whom she is now married, and they have a little daughter, M., of seven months. Her husband works in a factory and she herself has found a shift job cleaning a shopping mall. “Does your husband know what you have been through?” “Not really, but I think that he pretty much can guess.” This is nothing she wants to talk to him about; she prefers to try to leave it behind her. It is her husband who takes care of M. when Nadezjda is in town to meet with me. He can do that, she says, a little surprised herself it seems. He can cook for the baby too, she adds. Her mother helps her with the baby when she is at work. Nadezjda, her husband and their little baby M., share an apartment with another young couple, but it is obvious to me in the way she talks about her family

and about their life that she very much wishes for them to have an apartment of their own.

Nadezjda's story, so far, seems to end on a much more positive note than is the case for so many other child victims. Nevertheless, Sonja M. confirms that in her experience of meeting and working with these children for more than five years Nadezjda's story is typical of a child victim of trafficking.

Stockholm, October -07

Foreign minors suspected for criminal activity or foreign children found in the street without parents or any other adult carer, are taken to the central police station in Stockholm. Here two social workers, permanently placed there, contribute their competence to assist the police and prosecutor. They attend all the interviews and then they get to talk to the children alone, focusing entirely on the needs of the child. The social workers are responsible for attempts to contact the child's parents or guardian, and when the police are through with their work, they see to it that the child is taken to some kind of shelter or a family home.

When I interviewed the two social workers, they stressed the fact that their cooperation with the police was based on mutual respect for each others' roles, and that it was a great advantage to work so closely together. They also said that their relationship with social services in Sweden and abroad was good and fruitful, which made it possible for them to make the child's stay at the police station as short as possible.

They rarely come across cases of child victims of trafficking, which is quite understandable given the low number of cases reported. The Swedish National Contact Point (NCP) has had three cases reported during the period Nov 06 – Nov 07. Even if the real numbers are higher, trafficking in children is still a limited problem in Sweden. But the institutions involved are increasingly aware of it and its basic characteristics.

The two social workers, as well as police officers interviewed, are more concerned about another issue. When a non-Swedish child appearing to have no close relatives in Sweden is taken by the police in connection with criminal activity, the basic assumption is that the child is a "normal" criminal and not a victim of trafficking. Under-age, certainly, but normal. This can be illustrated by the following story of a child, based on a current ongoing investigation.

An 11-year old girl from a country in south eastern Europe, we can call her Fedra, had during a short period of time in Sweden been taken by the police seven times for pick-pocketing in seven different places. As you cannot arrest a minor in

Sweden, Fedra had been “handed back” the first six times to a man who came to the police station and claimed to be responsible for her. The seventh time, now in a suburb of Stockholm, the policeman in charge did not hand Fedra over to the man since the paper he showed them in order to identify himself as Fedra’s carer raised suspicions. It was a kind of contract signed by Fedra’s father giving the man the “right” to take her wherever he wanted. So, instead of handing Fedra over to the man, the policeman contacted social services and handed her over to them and a criminal investigation was initiated.

This may seem the most natural thing to do in this situation, just as it may seem absurd that it didn’t happen until the seventh time the girl was picked up by the police. Who would think that a young child of foreign origin caught pick-pocketing in Sweden, would be a “normal criminal” acting alone of her or his own free will? A child who, from his or her home abroad, organized the trip to Sweden, decided where and from whom to steal. But, as I was told by the social workers, later confirmed by police officers, this is the normal procedure in such cases. And, if you are a policeman on duty, you may have several very practical reasons for acting like this and thus making this “strange” assumption:

- Pick-pocketing is a well defined crime and if the person is very young, he or she is taken care of by social services. Trafficking on the other hand, is an extremely complicated criminal problem, both in law and in practice. The investigation will undoubtedly be complicated, take time and require personal and financial resources. It will involve cooperation with foreign countries and their law enforcement authorities, some of which have very different working methods and views on this problem. Even with countries that are members of the EU there are significant differences in these respects. Last but not least, the prospects of success are low, which is of importance for internal police priorities.
- There is also a problem with legal definitions: suppose that the person who comes to take the child really is the parent or can show in a correct way that he or she represents the parents. Then we have the tricky question: can a parent, directly or indirectly, traffic her or his child? A parent is rarely suspected of trafficking his or her own child even though we know that

transportation and exploitation at the hands of parents are not uncommon. Under these circumstances, is not the mere assumption that it is trafficking a kind of violation of the rights of the individual?

The law itself and the law enforcement institutions lag behind reality. The social workers I spoke to, who meet these children, are pushing hard for a change, in legislation, but even more in practice. They are supported by police officers in their efforts, and together they press prosecutors to try to bring one of these cases to court in order to get a legal precedent. They are now forced to watch children slip out of their social welfare system normally based on the free will of the child. They can only watch as the children leave the family homes where they are supposed to find shelter to go back to their supposed traffickers.

The Swedish experience and the case of Fedra shows that it is not enough with well-functioning institutions, raised awareness among police and social workers and other representatives for legal and social institutions. What is crucial if you want to disturb the criminal networks behind trafficking is that there exists a coherent system of laws, legal practices and allocated resources to the institutions. All of which is the domain of political decisions.

Marijampole, January -07

“Everywhere, where there is a big party, be it a football match or a party conference, there is a sex market.”

Monica Nilsson, social worker, Minneapolis

“In the run-up to the 2006 World Cup the media repeatedly reported that up to 40,000 prostitutes and women coerced into prostitution would arrive in Germany for the event. While the police and special counselling services at the venues confirmed that the number of prostitutes had indeed increased, the high number of punters expected failed to materialise. This resulted in prostitutes leaving the country even before the World Cup had finished.

During the 2006 World Cup, 33 investigations involving human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation or the promotion of human trafficking were reported. However, only five of these were directly connected to the World Cup itself.

Thus, the predicted increase in the number of cases of human trafficking and persons staying illegally in Germany to engage in prostitution during the 2006 World Cup did not occur. A strong police presence both before and during the major sporting event clearly had a deterrent and consequently preventive effect. The information campaigns conducted by the nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) in Germany and the countries of origin seem also to have had a positive effect.

Bundeskriminalamt: Federal Situation Report on Trafficking in Human Beings 2006

I would like to take you to a very small room in the basement of a house in the Lithuanian town of Marijampole. Marijampole is a city of about 50,000 inhabitants situated almost square on the Polish border. Known by few it is nevertheless very well-known to everybody in Western and Eastern Europe seriously into buying and selling used cars. Every week-end it turns into a giant market for used cars where old cars from the west go east. This is the major market place for used cars in the whole region. One can confidently assume that the majority of buyers and sellers are men. So each week-end, Marijampole is filled with men away from their families.

In the small room in the basement of a house, I met two very dedicated social workers, one of whom is Giedre from the catholic help organisation Caritas. They

introduced me to Klara. Klara is 16. She was, when I met her, very pretty but had a sad smile and appeared extremely thoughtful. She reflected in length on every question I put to her. Giedre had asked me, before I met Klara, to be very gentle with her and to try to put my questions as mildly as I could. I soon realised why.

Klara is from Kaunas, the nearest bigger town. Her father died when she was five, her mother then met another man and left Klara to start a new life with him, just like that.

Klara developed early and already at the age of 13 she met and fell in love with a married man. He was, she told me, a bad man. He abused her sexually and in many other ways.

When Klara was 15, a friend of hers suggested that in order to free herself from that man, she should come to Marijampole and become a prostitute. She was given the option of not being totally alone with one abusive man at the price of selling sex to many men. She went, very reluctantly, but instead of ending up in the street, she heard about Geidre, Caritas and their project from another girl, and went to meet with Giedre in that small room in the basement where we were now sitting talking.

Klara had tried to commit suicide seven or eight times. Her last attempt was just a couple of months before I met her. If it had not been for Giedre and her colleague from Caritas, the last and weakest link in a chain financed by charity stretching from catholic organisations in the west via Vilnius and then Kaunas to this little room in the basement of a house in the outskirts of Marijampole, Klara would not have had anybody to talk to about her experiences and problems. Without them she might have become a young prostitute, selling sex to the car-traders in Marijampole. Without Giedre and her colleagues she might have been dead by now.

There are two points to be made here. The first is obvious: if it was not for organisations like Caritas and devoted, extremely under paid social workers like Giedre, Lithuania would have problems, severe problems, taking care of its own children.

Another and a much more important point is that there would not be such a great need for Caritas or Giedre if there had not been so many men willing to buy Klara

and her friends in Marijampole. Anybody with some knowledge of how our society works would easily be able to realize that if you have a huge car market attracting a lot of men away from home, there will automatically and instantly emerge a big commercial sex market. Giedre told me that the market operates over the phone so it is not as easy to spot as the clearly visible sex commerce that previously emerged along the endless lines of waiting trucks on the borders of so many east-European countries.

Even though arguably predictable, the sex market is there. Since the knowledge existed that such circumstances would be perfect for the appearance of a sex market, one may argue that we encouraged its establishment. When the sex market is already well-established we eventually ask Caritas to do something about the victims of exploitation. In a small room in a basement. This is a chain of events that takes place all over the world and all over this region. In many places, large or small. In many of the countries in this region where the commercial sex market seems to many girls and their relatives to be the fastest or even only possible way of getting their share of the new wealth, these markets will emerge leaving victims in their wake.

I ask Klara about the future. She answers that she would like one day to help other girls in her situation. That does not mean that she has overcome her experiences. "I will never trust a man anymore", Klara says, "they are like animals." It will take long, if ever, until she has a good reason to think otherwise.

So much of the work on and against trafficking seems, probably for natural reasons, to be concentrated either on existing victims or on vulnerable groups, i.e. future victims. This, one could argue, is a child oriented approach. Klara was warned of what could happen to her, she had even seen the famous Swedish movie on this topic, "Lilja-4-ever", distributed all around the Baltic with the help of the Swedish authorities. She had seen it four times, she told me. At first she felt pity for the girl, then just disgust.

Prevention is traditionally directed towards the possible victims. An alternative approach would be to concentrate on the perpetrators. Would this, then, be to change orientation completely?

One could argue that the concentration of efforts directed towards the victims can be explained by the fact that it is much easier to reach both national and international consensus on this approach. It is almost impossible, even for the harshest regime, to tolerate child trafficking. The common willingness shown by states in the CBSS area and its neighbours, who in other spheres of society show a great diversity and sometimes animosity, to commit to a fast development of international cooperation on a common political ground, is a clear indication in this sense.

The trafficking in children for sexual purposes has a strong link to prostitution and to the commercial sex market. It is however much more difficult to develop a common approach to prostitution and to the legal status of the purchaser of sex /perpetrator or to the women selling sex. Here we see big differences not only between the countries on either side of the Baltic Sea but between countries all over Europe as well.

Thus, the question must be raised if the concentration on victims can also be explained by this difficulty in reaching international consensus on issues where public opinion varies. We can easily define the victim and the trafficker but we have a much bigger problem defining the person taking advantage of the trafficked child, the consumer or the group of persons that make up the demand for the services provided by the trafficked child.

Attention could be shifted to the demand side of trafficking as was the intention when the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman in Sweden at the time of the 2006 football World Cup suggested a Swedish boycott of the tournament should the German authorities not do all in their power to stop the expected explosion in prostitution in connection with the event. The quote from the report issued by the German *Bundeskriminalamt* above, shows that even if a country like Germany has a very liberal attitude towards prostitution as such, public opinion directed against buyers, of which the Swedish initiative might have made a small impact, can play an important role in the work against prostitution and the trafficking in children connected to it.

The chain of assistance

The different stages in most victims' experience, as demonstrated by Nadezjda's, Klara's and Fedra's personal stories but undoubtedly relevant in many other cases as well, form a complicated chain of events and contacts with different institutions.

- the recruitment
- the actual abuse and exploitation by pimps, organisers and customers
- the escape
- the contacts with police and/or border guards
- the reception by IOM or a state institution
- the referral to the local organisation in the child's region of origin
- the rehabilitation
- the re-establishment of links with school
- the establishment of links with vocational training
- assistance in improving contacts with family of origin
- psychological counselling
- medical assessment

These stages, individually or taken together, raise a number of questions which need to be answered:

- Could the recruitment, transport and subsequent exploitation have been prevented, and if so, at what stage and by whom?
- How were the victims treated immediately prior to the escape/rescue? Was local police involved? Were the perpetrators investigated and were charges brought against them?
- What arrangements were made to transport the victims back to their home region?
- Who received them and how were they received?
- How were they assisted after the initial protection phase?
- Were medical assessments made and if so by whom?
- Were psychological assessments made and if so by whom?
- Who assisted them in re-connecting with their families?
- How and when were they referred back to their homes?
- Who received them there and how?
- Have plans for their rehabilitation been put in place?

- Are the child victims themselves active partners in planning their own re-integration?
- For how long will the organisation responsible for rehabilitation and protection be able to maintain contact with them?

Each of these stages represents a fairly complicated problem, often involving many different persons and institutions. This becomes apparent if we, for instance, look at the chain of events that led to Nadezjda's escape and the assistance she subsequently received. Her experience could have been very different:

The escape as such: When she managed to escape into the streets of Moscow, she was lucky enough not to be spotted by the police. The police may in fact have taken her into custody for violating the administrative regulation of being in Moscow without a permit. Capture by the police would have led to Nadezjda's being taken to a shelter dedicated to children lacking documents permitting them to be in Moscow. This would have been true for many other cities and regions outside of Russia too. From these transit shelters young people are regularly returned to the country believed to be their country of origin. These transports are organised by the police and routinely carried out with rarely anyone interviewing the young person of her possible experiences of exploitation. The transportation relies on an agreement between the member countries of the Commonwealth of Independent states, CIS⁵, through which a speedy return of migrant young people can be expedited without too much bureaucracy. The mode of transport back to the country of origin depends on the resources available so sometimes children spend longer time in the transit shelters, sometimes transport is organised quickly. The process of sending young persons back to their country of origin also depends to a lesser extent on the contacts between the police forces concerned, but ordinarily Russian police will conduct the children to the border where they are handed over to, for example, the Ukrainian police. The Ukrainian police in such a case would in turn bring the young person to a Ukrainian transit shelter, where she would stay for a period of 30 days. During this time the staff will try to find out where the child's family is and if they can support the child. We will come back to this kind of institution further on.

⁵ Armenia, Azerbajdzjan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, the Ukraine, Uzbekistan

This chain of events, of which the escape is just one link, and all the challenges associated with it, has an extremely complicated structure. It is complicated in every case and everywhere, but as we shall see below, the complication turns out to be even bigger when we change from an individual to a more general perspective. When we examine the different kinds of institutions victims like Nadezjda, Klara or Fedra are confronted with we realise that these are all very different. They operate subject to different legal frameworks, apply a diversity of methods and have varying views of their work. Crucially, the financial resources available differ enormously. Nevertheless, all of these different institutions engage in integrated and coordinated efforts to assist Nadezjda, Klara and Fedra. Needless to say, without successful reintegration of the young people concerned the chances of successful rehabilitation would be minimal.

Nadezjda's personal history was sadly typical for many of the other victims. But what is just as typical for victims coming from this region is that if it had not been for the IOM and organisations connected to the IOM and like IOM funded and in practice run by foreign donors, such as the "Womens'league" in Nadezjda's case, there would have been no available assistance for Nadezjda's reintegration.

Victimised children have a right to continuity, care and predictability. We know that the more violent their experiences the more essential these prerequisites for child oriented assistance. Nadezjda was fortunate to have come into contact with people and institutions that recognised her as a victim of trafficking which made it possible for her to receive continuous support and care with at least a minimum of predictability.

The role of the IOM and of state institutions

Let us, again, turn to the Ukraine – keeping in mind that it is used as a kind of model for this analysis – and look at some important aspects of the chain of assistance.

The statistics from the IOM, the Ukraine, tells us that during the period from 2000-2006 a total of 3,544 victims of trafficking (a minor part of whom were

children) were provided with assistance by the IOM Kiev. More than half of these were victims returned from exploitation in Russia, Turkey or Poland. The IOM concludes that “the Ukraine is one of the major countries of origin in Europe for the trafficking in human beings”. Interestingly enough, the figures on which types of organisations that refer victims to the IOM show the immense importance of the NGOs. Almost 90% of the victims in the IOM statistics were referred to them by NGOs. Less than 2 % were referred by law enforcement units in the Ukraine. It is easy to assume that the law enforcement authorities cooperate with other state run reintegration programmes. They do not, at least not in Donetsk. On the other hand, there is no lack of trust between state agencies and NGOs.

The Republic of Ukraine is by no means indifferent to trafficking and to its victims. The Ukraine passed a law on trafficking already in 1998, well before many other countries in the region. There is a special unit for combating trafficking at the Ministry of Interior, with local offices in all the country’s regions. There is also a growing awareness of the problem among law enforcement authorities, as well as among politicians and the public.

The crucial problem seems to be the priorities set for child protection within the social system. Another issue is the quality of the state institutions and, as was shown in the case of Nadezjda, the capacities for social and psychological reintegration of the victims. This became abundantly clear after my visit to some other institutions in the Ukraine.

The detention centre

Larissa Zub is a psychologist with the rank of major in the army. She is employed by the Ministry of Interior as director of a detention and transit centre for young criminals in Kiev. According to Larissa, some of the boys and girls sent to the transit shelter she manages are victims of trafficking.

This is the kind of institution that Nadezjda would have been referred to, had she been taken by the police in Moscow instead of making it on her own to the Russian – Ukrainian border.

The reason children are brought to the transit shelter, a secure institution you can only enter via a guarded gate and where it is even possible to lock the dormitories from the outside, is either that they have been sent here by the authorities in another country or that they have been arrested for minor criminal activities such as pick-pocketing or shop lifting in Kiev while their families are in another part of the country. When I visited the centre, there were only three children there, two boys who had been caught stealing and a girl.

It is obvious from the first moment of our conversation, that Larissa Zub is more psychologist than army major. She does not, as the other employees, wear uniform, and the way she talks of “her” children shows deep involvement in their personal stories and destinies. But it is not until she takes me on a tour around the premises that her dilemma becomes totally clear to me.

The detention centre was originally built in 1935. It then held older detainees inside its thick walls. Though it is located in a residential area and surrounded by ordinary apartment buildings, it immediately comes across as a prison of the old type. Larissa is fighting to get funding for a general renovation. The last time something of the kind was carried out was in 1953 and it is apparent even to the most untrained eye that this is a building that is falling apart. When there was a fire in the kitchen and all the equipment was destroyed, Larissa turned to private donors to get new equipment in order to be able to feed the children properly. She is concerned, but says that she has been promised money.

The IOM rehab centre

The lasting impression from my meeting with Olha Malinchenko and Iryna Lysenko from the IOM rehabilitation centre in Kiev could not have been more different. They are perfectly satisfied with both the technical facilities and the financial means at their disposal for doing their job assisting adult and child victims of trafficking. The centre is financed by international donors through the IOM and they have no difficulties finding well-trained staff, though specialists on victims of trafficking are rare. The contrast both in terms of equipment and working conditions with respect to the children’s detention centre described above is striking.

In the IOM centre children spend up to three weeks before being referred back to their families and/or their home cities. They receive medical assessment and care as well as psychological support. The centre enjoys very good relations with law enforcement bodies, not least owing to the fact that these have realised that well assisted victims of trafficking are much more inclined to help the police in investigating the crime. The IOM people never force the victims to cooperate with the police but they strongly encourage them to do so.

Olha Malinchenko is convinced that only a minor part of the problem with trafficking of children is visible and that the children they see at the centre in no way constitute the totality of child victims of trafficking returning to the Ukraine. She comes to this conclusion by bringing up the fact that more than seven million Ukrainian citizens presently work outside of the country, and that recent IOM research indicates that the figures for trafficking normally co-vary with migration figures. But Olha Malinchenko also says that the trafficking itself is changing. Whereas earlier she saw victims (mostly victims of sexual exploitation through prostitution) being very brutally exploited for a longer period of time, a year or more, she now sees a different kind of exploitation of shorter duration. She estimates the time the victims are abroad to an average of four months. There are also new “methods” and ways in which this first period of exploitation comes to an end. The pimps that used to take all the money have now started paying the girl victim a part of it. In this way the victim’s own perception of her relationship with the pimp changes from simple exploitation without compensation to something more ambiguous. This puts heavy pressure on and increases the feelings of guilt of the victims.

The “Women’s League”

Back in Donetsk, Liudmyla Gorova started the “Women’s league” in response to the rapid deterioration of working conditions for women after the fall of communism. Its purpose was to provide unemployed women with professional training and mental support. Soon the programme of activities was extended to include social questions such as violence against women and trafficking. They started out in this field by providing information as a means of prevention. But soon they progressed to hands-on assistance work with victims. Their programmes are only

financed by donors with not a penny of financial support from the state or the city. The latter however do provide the organisations with office space in a damp and cold office building in central Donetsk.

All work of the organisation is based on projects with different and sometimes multiple donors. The first donor ever for the Women's League of Donetsk was an American organisation that from the beginning made it clear that they would not support the organisation for more than a limited and pre-determined period of time.

As we speak, Liudmyla Gorova manages seven different projects implemented simultaneously by the organisation. They are all sponsored by different organisations and none have a longer time scale than eight months. Her entire workload as head of the organisation consists of fund-raising; filling out and revising applications and filing reports. She is currently occupied with efforts to squeeze money out of local businessmen. She does this in part because of her fears that international support will decrease in the near future.

She informs me of her main sponsor's policy: the first year her organisation was given USD 100,000 with the donor's stated intention of progressively scaling down the support, so that by last year the donation was down to USD 50,000. The current seven projects add up to a yearly expenditure of USD 306,000.

At the end of this long chain, reaching from public aid agencies, private foundations and other funding agencies in Western countries, each with its policy for application and reporting, via intermediaries like the IOM or other international organisations who in addition might have their own agendas and interests, to the organisations in the field, like "Women's League" in Donetsk, there are numerous persons like Liudmyla Gorova, whose time is totally consumed by administrative tasks. One of her colleagues put it like this: "You get money for a year, you use it to what it is meant for during six months, then you start applying for new money during three months and the last three you sit and wait for an answer."

For a child or a young person dependant on assistance given by one of the organisations at the very end of this extensive funding-chain, the fact that it is indeed a

long chain may mean that support can only be given on an extremely short time scale. This results in a limitation of the possibility of a successful outcome of the reintegration process. A child in need of support that appears at the doorstep of an organisation dependant on foreign donors for their services in month seven of a twelve month project may consequently need to be cautioned that the support s/he is receiving may well cease in five months. This is not only detrimental as a result of the lack of time but it will also have a negative effect on the vital building of trust. A young person that has suffered violence at the hands of exploiters will not easily trust adults and will in fact take any sign of lack of dedication as evidence strengthening their general feeling that s/he will need to continue fend for her/himself as the adult world will do little to assist. This is how the donor agencies' reporting mechanisms and short funding perspectives have a detrimental impact on the direct assistance given to the child.

Assessing the chain of assistance

The chain, the child protection system or the social system supposed to take care of victims of trafficking consists as we have seen of three different kinds of institutions:

- state institutions (ministry of interior, police, detention centres etc)
- international organisations, sometimes appearing to take the role of the state
- national organisations, executing the task of the state or local authority

It is obvious that in many countries in the region there exists an unclear relationship between these three types of institutions and it is even more obvious that the differences in financial resources due to the institutions' legal status are enormous. To put it in very clear and concise terms: a child victim of trafficking in the Ukraine, cared for directly by the IOM or the organisations funded by the IOM or working closely together with them, is lucky enough to be met with fairly well-resourced institutions and agencies. Other children will not be so fortunate.

But before further examining the problems and risks facing the victims, let us see what has been achieved by way of improving the situation for children who have become victims or are at risk of becoming victims of trafficking.

“Nadezjda” was received by representatives from the IOM, who were notified of her arrival”

It is obvious that in most countries in the region, a basic network caring for trafficked children has been set up. It is more difficult, or even impossible, to assess the extent to which it is functioning. Most of those in direct contact with the victims that I met feared that they came into contact with only a minority of the victims.

The difficulties assessing the effectiveness of the network are of course related to the lack of reliable data, but they also have to do with the complicated mix of organisations responsible for the network: a combination of ministries, state agencies, municipal or regional institutions, international organisations and NGOs. There are vast differences between the countries in the region in how this is organised. Some countries have a fairly well established system where the protection of child victims of trafficking is taken on by institutions supervised by responsible ministries. Some countries are in a situation with evolving state structures, supported by international organisations like Caritas and IOM. In yet other countries there seem to be a large and noticeable gap between the internationally funded NGOs and the state institutions. In the Ukraine for instance, it appears that the IOM has the best overview of the situation, and it is they who aggregate and interpret data that is presented to the state authorities and not vice versa. In Denmark, the responsibility for collecting data lies with the Red Cross, commissioned by the state. The newly established National Antitrafficking Centre has to make sure that a national referral mechanism is in place and operating as soon as possible. The crucial question then is where the final responsibility for the functioning of the network lies: is it with the best informed bodies, often internationally funded or with the national/state bodies, usually underfinanced and possibly suffering from having the fight against trafficking as a lower priority than other important matters?

“Nadezjda tells me that she was well taken care of by the border guards. They believed her story and helped her to travel to Kiev.”

“On the seventh time, now in a suburb of Stockholm, the policeman in charge did not hand Fedra over to the man since the paper he showed them in order to identify himself as Fedra’s carer raised suspicions.”

There was one point on which everybody working with these issues that I talked to during my trips and visits agreed: there has been a change, and sometimes a radical one, in both awareness of the problems with trafficking and understanding of the vulnerability of the victims. In Lithuania, as in several other countries, the NGOs working with victims even run seminars with policemen. At these seminars they inform the policemen of the problem and they also share professional experiences of how best to interview child victims of trafficking. In St Petersburg, the relationship between NGOs and the police is at times a bit more delicate. Even so, I learned of several informal ways of cooperating, one example of which is where a local NGO working with street children is so important to the police that in return they get a kind of protection from the police for their field-workers. An official representative from the Polish Ministry of Interior has stated very clearly that the driving force in these matters were the different NGOs working in the country.⁶

At the same time, everybody agreed that there is still much awareness-raising work left to be done, especially in terms of increasing knowledge of trafficking among vulnerable groups such as young girls in social situations like Nadezjda's and Klara's.

⁶ See report from 4th Meeting of NCPs in Warsaw:

<http://www.childcentre.info/contactpoints/ncpmeetings/dbaFile14814.html>

The lack of reliable statistics

How many Nadezjdas, Klaras and Fedras are there? After more than a decade of both national and international attention to this problem, nobody can tell. This does not mean that there are no figures in circulation. Let us, once again, take the Ukraine as an example.

The official figure, provided by the police in Kiev, was that in 2006, 393 victims of trafficking had been reported, 92 of whom were minors.

In a report issued by IOM the Ukraine from December 2006⁷, the estimated total number of persons being trafficked from the Ukraine was over 115,000. Though it is not entirely clear if this figure is an aggregate or covers a limited time, it follows a pattern in the reporting on trafficking. Some, or even most, estimates are extremely high whereas official figures on identified and officially recognised cases are surprisingly low. The difference between the two is often astronomical.

One figure often mentioned is that about two million people globally are trafficked every year. It is not known exactly how many of them are minors and we do not know how many of these trafficked persons are victims of cross-border trafficking.

In order to get a clearer picture of how many children were involved in cross-border trafficking in the region of the Baltic Sea, I turned to the NCPs in the CBSS countries. One of their tasks is to keep records of trafficking in minors. They were now asked to report the number of cases from Nov 2006 to Nov 2007. The answers show the same pattern as above:

Denmark: 14 cases of suspected child trafficking

Estonia: No cases

Finland: 5 cases⁸

Iceland: No cases

⁷ Human trafficking survey: Belarus, Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania, and the Ukraine, dec 2006, available at www.gfk.com

⁸ Based on the figure from the reception centre in Oulo, Finland.

Latvia: 5 cases
Lithuania: 3 cases⁹
Norway: 23 cases
Sweden: 3 cases
Belarus: 23 cases

Germany: 62 cases¹⁰

The figures are reported to the NCPs by police, state agencies, social authorities and NGOs. Both the Norwegian and the Swedish NCP note that the statistics are unreliable.

Two things are important to note here. One is that the total number of cases reported is relatively small. The other is that the number of cases of cross-border trafficking within the CBSS area is also relatively small. Of the total of 76 cases reported above, only 8–9 were trafficked from one CBSS country to another.

In its annual situation report on trafficking of human beings for 2006, the German Federal Police (*Bundeskriminalamt*) reports 62 cases of trafficked children (of which only 4 cases were cross-border cases within CBSS region). This figure confirms the general pattern.

It is probable that the real figure of trafficked children within the region is higher due to flaws in both the fight against trafficking and in the reporting. However, it seems improbable that cross-border trafficking in general, and cross-border trafficking in the CBSS region in particular, constitutes a major part of the total trafficking problem.

Not even skilled researchers, commissioned by serious political leaders and institutions, have managed to make sense of these figures. Nor can they explain the extreme differences between the estimates of trafficked children and the numbers reported by police and other organisations and institutions. Suffice to say that

⁹ The Lithuanian figure is from 2007

¹⁰ The German figure is from German Federal Police report from the year 2006

many, if not most, political and financial decisions are based on at best uncertain, at worst catastrophically poor statistical material. The same goes for the numerous campaigns to raise public awareness of the problem.

To state the lack of reliable data is just as common-place. Each and every report I have come across either ends or begins by making this point. It speaks volumes that even Ms Karin Landgren, head of UNICEF's Child Unit, puts the need for reliable data high on a list of crucial factors in the efforts to fight trafficking¹¹. The reasons for this are obvious. The lack of reliable data can lead not only to wrong decisions being taken. It constitutes a permanent possibility for denial of the problem or at least the scope of the problem. Defending the rights of child victims is a political question. The children thus have to be represented by others in the political discussion, regardless of whether it takes place on the national or the international arena. Consequently, it is not in the interest of the children if the defence of and fight for children's rights are based on a weak or even a false empirical foundation. This will, without question, lead to a backlash in the fight for the rights of children victim of trafficking.

¹¹ In a speech made in Washington DC at the Swedish Embassy's seminar: Stop Child Trafficking November 6th 2007.

Domestic vs cross-border trafficking

There exist both national and international legal definitions of trafficking and of victims of trafficking. Further, the tendency seems to be that more and more countries in the CBSS region share these definitions, thereby making it easier for legal bodies to work together. Nevertheless, there are still, in the debate, open questions; questions on how to define both trafficking and victims of trafficking.

What seems most important in the context of this report concerning international cooperation in the work against trafficking, is the real difference between cross-border trafficking and domestic trafficking. It is obvious – and natural – that international interest in trafficking and in the victims of trafficking, both from the public and the political sphere, is mainly raised by the occurrence of cross-border trafficking, though this does not seem to be the main, or even the biggest problem. Domestic trafficking is a much bigger issue possibly followed by trafficking between countries with unprotected or poorly protected borders as is the case between Russia and the Ukraine and Belarus. The work with this report has convinced me that it is domestic trafficking and trafficking across these fairly unprotected borders that constitute the major part of the trafficking in children in the Baltic Sea region. There can simply be no other way of explaining the huge differences between the figures mentioned for trafficking in general and the figures reported from the different legal and social institutions concerned with cross-border trafficking.

However, public attention in the richer countries has been oriented towards cross-border trafficking. And successfully so. Cross-border trafficking mobilises financial resources in rich countries, it offers an ethically easily resolvable dilemma: “Should we in the West exploit the misery of the poor?” “No”! With our common efforts to stop cross-border trafficking, we give donors – private and institutional – a chance to stop or counter modern day slavery.

Domestic trafficking, on the other hand, is primarily a problem for the state in question. This makes a huge difference when we are talking about states with either very limited financial resources to solve the problem and to help the victims, or with a very limited interest in doing so. But for the victims themselves there is not much difference if the buyer speaks her mother tongue or not. Nor was I ever

given the impression that this made any difference for the people working directly with the victims. But since so much of this work is internationally financed and this financing builds on political decisions to a large extent made on the basis of animated public debate originally stimulated by the existence of cross border trafficking, there is an inbuilt latent threat to sustainability. What will happen to international support if it turns out that trafficking is to a large extent a domestic problem?

The richer countries then face a difficult moral question: Should the international community become involved only when there is a clear and tangible international aspect like cross-border trafficking and let domestic problems remain an issue for the country in question? Or do we still have a moral duty to interfere? Is there a political will in favour of interference? Paradoxically, this problem will become even more burning if the fight against cross-border trafficking is successful. Today, it is possible to publish a story about a child being trafficked from, say, Moldova to Sweden in the Swedish media. It is highly unlikely though that it would be possible to raise the same level of interest if the child had been trafficked to Moscow or Kiev, not to mention if the child is trafficked within its own country. Media interest in these questions, as was stated above, has proven to be very important both for raising money for the work with the children and to raise popular support for political measures.

The point here is of course not to say that it would be bad if cross-border trafficking was stopped, just to say that this achievement might constitute a threat to forces influencing the assistance, politically and more importantly financially.

A different approach

During the work with this report which, as mentioned in the introduction, was originally aimed at describing the very practical aspects of the victims' experiences, I have come to see an even greater need for a different focus. There is, I found, an active discussion going on about these practical questions among those directly working with them. That does not mean that the problems are solved, but they have been recognised and made objects of internal as well as external discussions, such as those taking place within the training programmes of CBSS. But when I asked social workers, psychologists, representatives of IOs and NGOs – about the most important problems they face in their work, they shifted focus from basic needs to issues on a totally different level. In this part of the report, I will try to address some of those aspects.

There are, as I see it, four major aspects to be emphasised in the process described above involving Nadezjda, Klara or Fedra as examples of child victims:

- *Rationality*: are the means available used efficiently – financially, administratively, etc.?
- *Sustainability*: how stable and how strong is the chain of institutions involved and how reliable is the funding?
- *Responsibility*: given the extreme mix of institutions involved, where lies the overall responsibility for the “system”?
- *Accountability*: where lies the political responsibility, nationally and internationally?

Rationality

Let us for a last time return to Donetsk and to Liudmila Gorova, the head of “Women’s league”, the NGO that deals with rehabilitation of victims of trafficking. When she spoke about the problem with short term projects, with the complicated work applying for funding, and the constant stress of having to file reports, each donor having its special reporting system and demands, she echoed what had been said by all the other representatives of NGOs that I spoke to.

It is embarrassingly apparent that it is the donor's perspective that defines the working models in this area. This may lead to great advantages, since it for instance contributes new knowledge and new working methods to countries and areas in great need of this. NGOs and civil society organisations learn how to work on a project basis and how to set up tangible goals against which results can be measured. It guarantees a multitude of approaches that might be very productive for countries that have long worked with only one model for solving a problem. Consequently, this kind of pluralistic input and experience-sharing was never defined as a problem by anyone working with trafficking that I met.

The problem was in the administration. There exists a strong sense that international donor organisations lack an understanding of what it means for the recipient of funds depending on money from several donors that the forms of application for funding and then reporting back are totally defined by the donor organisations.

To give an impression of the complexity of the situation, I choose to present some figures concerning mainly the Ukraine, but the pattern goes for most countries involved in the international system of combating trafficking.

IOM the Ukraine is a central, possibly *the* central, part in connecting donors and recipients of funding for counter-trafficking projects and programmes in that country. The organisation as such is totally funded by organisations outside the Ukraine. On their official website they list the following 10 donors:

- Danish Red Cross
- European Union
- International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL)
- Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Royal Danish Ministry for Foreign Affairs
- Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)
- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
- United States Department of State
- World Childhood Foundation

IOM the Ukraine, then, presents the number of their local partners and their activities:

1. Prevention and Advocacy. Through a network of over 75 NGOs and Ukrainian government bodies, IOM coordinates a wide variety of prevention activities including informational campaigns, public service announcements, telephone hotlines, teachers' manuals for use in schools, training for journalists, etc.
2. Criminalization and Prosecution. IOM provides law enforcement officials with training and technical support, and funds networking visits to countries of destination to improve international cooperation for the prosecution of traffickers.
3. Protection and Reintegration. IOM Kyiv has provided reintegration assistance to more than 4,000 victims of human trafficking since 2000. IOM reintegration assistance includes safe return home, retrieval of lost documents, medical and psychological counselling, vocational training, reintegration grants, and legal assistance.

Already this seems to be a network of great complexity, but if we add the description of the activities of one of the donors concentrating its efforts in this field, World Childhood Foundation, the picture gets even more complicated.

World Childhood foundation is, according to its website, involved in about 100 projects in twelve countries, one of them being the Ukraine. This year the total sum for the funding of projects was USD 42 million. The Ukraine is not one of their prioritised countries; nevertheless World Childhood supports six Ukrainian organizations. One of them is "Womens convention of the Ukraine", which is an umbrella organization for more than 160 NGOs from all over the country.

So, in a system like this, apart from the extreme complexity that comes from the sheer quantity of actors, at least three levels on which there can be great confusion can be identified:

- the legal status of the organisation involved (national, international, public)
- working methods
- working ideology

There must be a point where pluralism merges into chaos, or at least the threat of chaos. The report mentioned earlier, on experiences of victims of trafficking in South-Eastern Europe, confirms that victims experience this complexity as a problem for the victims.¹² At the same time, the report states:

“The type and quality of interventions – from identification to assistance – were remarkably uneven not only between countries but also within countries. In addition, programme models and philosophies differ substantially from organisation to organisation. Victims themselves questioned some of the models of care being used (i.e. closed versus open shelters, residential vs non-residential programmes) as well as the rules and restrictions employed within many programmes. Tied intimately to this issue is the overall lack of monitoring and evaluating of these models of cares and professional interventions.”

There is, to put it mildly, a long way from, for instance, the biggest donor USAID to Liudmyla Gorova, who probably is one of the “smallest” recipients. And this is without mentioning all the intermediaries each with their own agendas and specific needs. It goes well beyond the task of this report to analyze this system, its structures and its efficiency further. There cannot be any doubt however, that such studies must be carried out. Not because of the fact that donors have a right to know where their money ends up and if it is used rationally – but first and foremost because of the vulnerability of the child victims and the dedicated work performed by the social workers in the field.

Sustainability

Dividing the amount of funding put into combating trafficking in a specific country, such as for instance the Ukraine, by the number of organisations receiving it,

¹² Rebecca Surtees: Listening to victims. International Centre for Migration Policy development 2007

and then dividing that by the number of projects the funding is meant to enable, the conclusion is that the spread of money is great and that implies that the general trend is that donors are not interested in long term projects that demand one-time commitments to disbursing larger sums of money. The reasons for this might be rational as it prevents investment in basic structures such as buildings and will minimise corruption. Short projects also make it easier for the donor to demonstrate how grants are used to those contributing to the funding organisation. Short term projects also provide for quick exit possibilities which may be important to funding organisations should a country, a topic, a region or an organisation be questioned.

These are all understandable motives behind the donor organisations' priorities but the donors must understand that this reasoning constitutes a direct threat to the possibility of shaping long time relationships with the victims these programmes are intended to assist. Long time relationships are crucial for two reasons. First, all psychologists I met said that it takes a long time to establish the kind of relationship with the victim that enables psychological healing. Second, little is actually known about how many of the victims end up in exploitative or violent contexts again after attempts at assistance. Some reports claim that the level of re-trafficking is high even in cases where victims have received professional assistance. The impression I get from talking to both victims and social workers is that given the slow economic development in some of the areas and countries involved, the risk is high that young victims of trafficking once more end up in prostitution or criminality. This demonstrates the imperative need for the building of a lasting and continuous relationship with the child victim.

The short time frames remain a, and perhaps even the most, serious threat to the sustainability in the work with child victims.

The present situation with a wide range of donor agencies on the one hand and an evolving civil society consisting of different NGOs on the other also generates a great deal of competition between local NGOs and big international organisations. This is especially evident when the coordination is weak or non-existing from the side of the government on national or local level. Talking to local NGOs working with street children in St Petersburg – a problem which the city itself has shown

little interest in solving – it becomes obvious that there is a tough competition between them for donors' money and interest. Every organisation is fighting for two things: the children they assist and the organisation's own survival.

The competition among NGOs receiving funding might have some rather strange side effects. One is that it results in a rather distorted image of the actual situation. During one day in St Petersburg I visited three different organisations with long experience in working with street children. I got three completely different descriptions of the situation from these organisations regarding the type as well as the seriousness of the problem.

The figures given to me demonstrating how many children there are living in the street ranged from 1,000 to 30,000, and at least one of the organisations openly said that they were aware of the big differences in how the situation was assessed. Given the fundamental uncertainty concerning data, decisions may be taken based on distorted information not only regarding the number of children living in the street in St Petersburg but also regarding the number of victims of child trafficking.

In addition, there were other interesting differences in their description of the situation regarding working methods and principles. A main question for those working with street children seems to be whether the children should be assisted "where they are" or taken away from the street. If taken to institutions the debate circles around whether these should be open or closed facilities. The dividing line here is between state institutions and NGOs. This is perfectly understandable in the context of the political background in countries with communist and/or strong authoritarian traditions, but the differences were visible also between the NGOs I visited. One NGO representative put it like this: "It is the daily assistance from the international organisations with food and clothes that help children remain in the street and thereby effectively block attempts from other organisations to get the children off the street." The material assistance in this case decreased the child's motivation to leave the street life. The child victims of trafficking I have met did not demonstrate a similar situation of choice. Going back to a life of violence and exploitation was not a free choice. Other victims of trafficking however may well face a similar dilemma. Some child victims exploited in criminal contexts, like

Fedra described above, will identify with the role of a criminal and not with the role of a victim of trafficking and may well be inclined to choose a life appearing to be less governed by adults.

The differences demonstrated by the organisations working with assisting children in the street may or may not reflect different ideologies and methodologies in the donor organisations. The competition between the organisations for funding shows that local NGOs have learned – because they must – what kind of methodology and problem definitions western donors are likely to respond to. As one social worker in a local NGO drastically put it: “We can raise money for street children, though they no longer are the most important issue, but not for helping HIV-infected drug addicts, which is our real issue at the moment.” For the purposes of this report the statement can be rephrased: We can raise money to assist child victims of international trafficking but not for assisting children trafficked and exploited within their own country.

A very special aspect in the work with assisting child victims concerns the possibilities for NGOs to operate freely.

It has been stated more than once in this report what a fundamental role the NGOs play in this “system”. Recent political developments in some of the countries in the CBSS network give specific reason to reflect on this.

In Russia and in Belarus, two countries with high numbers of victims of trafficking, the policy towards NGOs in general and internationally funded NGOs in particular, has changed in the last years, sometimes radically. In Russia this change is concentrated to NGOs working directly in the field of human rights which report that their working conditions have deteriorated. In Belarus a new law has been passed that mandates all previously recognised NGOs to renew their application. As a result only about one fifth out of the previously recognised NGOs were re-recognised. Since we know the crucial role the local NGOs play in alerting both their own society and the international community of the problems with trafficking as well as in taking care of the victims, a weakening of these NGOs will be fatal.

This is, of course, a special problem in relation to political accountability, but the same problem must arise, *mutatis mutandis*, in every country and in every political situation where an external organisation is responsible for carrying out tasks that must be regarded as fundamental for the society in question, such as taking care of its children and see to their well being. To put it plainly: where should a discontented Ukrainian citizen claim his or her rights when she feels badly treated by, say IOM?

The Frail Chain

*– Support for Child Victims of Trafficking
in the Baltic Sea Region*

by Svante Weyler

Responsibility and accountability

Given the extreme vulnerability of the child victims of trafficking, the limited resources allocated to them in many states, the political difficulties involved in international cooperation in this field and the complexity of the problem in itself, we owe Nadezjda, Klara, Fedra and their fellow victims clear answers to the questions of rationality and sustainability that were put in the beginning of this part of the report.

The international community, through different forms of organisations and initiatives, has played a vital role for the work with assisting child victims in this region and successfully contributed to establishing legal standards, working methods as well as to the development of institutions and institutional work. But this has also resulted in a very complex institutional and functional structure.

The only possible explanation for the complex construction of the present “system” is that perspectives follow the money: As the donors constitute a very diverse group the “system” diversifies in response. For better and worse. In most of the donor countries, it would not be accepted that pure coincidence decides if and in what form assistance is given to a child victim. This would not be in line with either the spirit of the law or the spirit of public opinion. Nevertheless, precisely this seems to be the reality for many of the victims.

Thus, these two, concluding questions must be put and answered:

- What political responsibility does the international community, in all its diversity, have for the “system” as a whole and, ultimately, for the individual child victims?

- What form of accountability is possible in such a “system”?

Trafficking in children “appeared” to the general public and the political leadership as a kind of “social catastrophe.” This explains much of the spontaneity and diversity displayed in the work to combat it, as this report has to some extent attempted to show. For each individual victim one can still speak of a “catastrophe”, but the general situation must be seen as a structural, social problem to be countered with other means than an acute crisis-mentality.

Far from resolved, the problem has nevertheless been recognised and put on the international political agenda. A change in perception is apparent, both on a political level and in the field. Institutions are, however slowly, developing and an exchange of methods and programming is taking place. There are, as I see it, clear signs that what might be called a first phase in the work against trafficking of children is over and a second phase is gradually taking shape.

This, and proper answers to the questions above, must lead to a general (re)evaluation of the respective roles played by IOs, NGOs and organisations like CBSS, active in this field. Once these issues have been taken into account, one could talk of a second phase, where all organisations involved see the need redefine their roles and responsibilities.

The Working Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk

The Working Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk, WGCC, is a group of senior officials from the ministries responsible for children's issues in the member countries to the CBSS and the European Commission. Member countries are: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden.

The WGCC identifies, supports and implements cooperation on children at risk between countries and organisations in the region. It also examines and reviews areas of concern with regard to children, as identified by its network of National Coordinators and experts. Based on these findings the WGCC adopts programmes and implements actions within areas of concern. Activities and programmes are carried out together with national authorities, agencies and organisations in cooperation with regional and international organisations.

Prioritised areas for the WGCC are:

- The protection of children from all forms of sexual exploitation, abuse and trafficking
- Unaccompanied and trafficked children
- Street children and children without families
- The rights of children in institutions and in other forms of protection
- Young offenders and self-destructive behaviour of children

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