

**Covenant House statement to Working Session No. 12 –  
Humanitarian issues and other commitments II  
OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting  
Warsaw, 25 September – 5 October 2007**

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Thank you esteemed moderator,

My aim in presenting to this respected body this morning is not to say that I am an expert in human trafficking; rather, I am here to present on behalf of Covenant House in order to share some of the successes that we have had with respect to concrete multi-lateral collaboration in the last year around the issue of human trafficking.

Covenant House, or Casa Alianza as it is known in many international spheres, works with more than 63,000 homeless, runaway, and throwaway youth each year, many of whom are victims of sexual exploitation, domestic abuse, and the many forms of human trafficking. Through 21 sites located in six countries, the daily work of our organization's 1,777 employees tackles issues from reaching out to homeless teens on some of the most dangerous streets of Latin America, to training local law enforcement officials on a victim-centered approach, to collaborating with UN bodies on international agendas for the treatment of street youth.

As I said, I am here today to share with you concrete measures that have proven to be successful in our own fight against human trafficking, which I will summarize in three key points:

First, though the spirit of fighting a crime on a broad scale is an honorable one, it can too often become a misguided one in that it focuses far too much on the *concept* of defining and thinking through the crime rather than the actual work to combat its existence on the ground. Through our work we have found that focusing on efforts with a true end-in-mind, and clear and concrete deliverables with a multi-agency approach, forces us to confront head-on the crime of human trafficking and to learn from our failed attempts far more than we have learned from theory-based talking groups. Therefore, our first measure is to focus our energies on collaborative efforts with clear deliverables from the start: there are hundreds of connections that we can make amongst ourselves here at this conference and in this room, but why make them if they are not helping us to serve more individuals better?

Our second concrete measure is the open share of resources. Ladies and gentlemen of honored State delegations, NGOs, multi-lateral bodies and individuals with a passion, we work far too hard at what we do to keep it to ourselves. Every day we produce training materials, research papers, statistical analyses and models of care for work with victims, and why shouldn't those materials see a wider audience? I think we are afraid of placing

ourselves out of the market, thinking that we must keep our mission as isolated within our organization as possible in order to compete for funds, but as I see it, the work of an NGO boiled down to its root meaning is to put itself out of business – the goal is to be *so* good at what you do, that you cause the problems against which you work to disappear, and every step towards that aim is an honorable, just, and intelligent one.

To that end, I will share with you the third and final concrete lesson learned. In February of this year, I contacted designated representatives at each one of our sites in the Americas to ask them what it was that they needed to pursue more heavily a human trafficking initiative in their local. The most common response was **MORE RESOURCES!** I am speaking of their need for resources that help them to know exactly *how* to work with victims. Just a few successful cases covering each demographic are all we should need to work with a majority of human trafficking victims, yet we still struggle for ways to interact with them, both young and old. Why? Because a lack of practical informational resources that reflect positive treatments and victim location still plagues us in our work. And why is *that*? That is because there is no means for the ground-level worker to share his or her successful intervention with those that have the potential to share the information on a broad scale.

Covenant House is in the fortunate position of housing both faculties – both the ground-level worker and the international administrator: we decided to confront this problem from both angles, incorporating all three of our lessons learned. We decided to create the Human Trafficking Resource Disc – a disc that will be made available to anyone and everyone, including both giant and tiny NGOs, both international administrators and local ground-level workers, lawyers, law enforcement professionals, politicians and diplomats. It is a tool that is the work of 35 separate NGOs, multilateral organizations, government agencies, universities, and expert individuals – a disc that currently has 126 training and resource documents for open distribution, ranging in topic from strategies for victim identification, to overview presentations for staff training, to breakdowns of legal provisions for government benefits and how to spur community involvement – 126 documents that are evidence of the commitment of the supporting agencies and individuals to fighting the crime of human trafficking in a concrete, victim-focused, experience-centered, results-oriented initiative that will take us one step closer to being able to shut down our human trafficking initiative. This is just one step towards taking theory and turning it into a concrete practice that will help us to serve more of our kids better. After all, that is the focus of Covenant House, and is that not the focus of all of our States and agencies – to serve more individuals, more constituents, better?

And best of all for us that are forced to be focused on a bottom line, public-sector collaboration costs a lot less than isolated production. This entire Disc from start to finish, including the production of 5,000 copies for distribution to all that wish to utilize it, will cost us just over US\$6,500, and can be copied freely.



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With that, I thank you for your listening ears, and encourage both member State delegations and fellow NGOs to contact myself or my organization in order to collaborate with us, and so that we may collaborate with you, in the fight against the crime of human trafficking.

Thank You.