



OSCE ODIHR ANTI-TRAFFICKING UNIT

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ODIHR'S ANTI-TRAFFICKING INITIATIVES

Informal presentation to OSCE delegations

Vienna, 5 July 2001

The ODIHR's anti-trafficking initiatives cover a wide range of thematic issues and also a wide geographic area. These priority areas of activity include: information gathering and exchange, increased co-ordination and co-operation, institution building and NGO capacity building.

Information Gathering and Exchange

In the field of information gathering and exchange, we are constantly collecting information on the situation of trafficking in the OSCE region and have supported several research projects over the past two years. This is a priority for our work because in order to raise awareness of the risks of trafficking and to develop comprehensive national action plans to combat trafficking and assist its victims, we require more detailed and reliable information about the root causes and current trends of trafficking. The ODIHR, in co-operation with IOM and local non-governmental organisations, has supported research on trafficking in human beings in several OSCE countries including a study on trafficking to, through and from the Balkans region, as well as studies in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. These research studies define the problem in a given country or region and provide the foundation for future co-operative anti-trafficking efforts in the fields of awareness raising, legislative reform and capacity building.

The second essential component of information exchange is developing and implementing awareness raising programs. The ODIHR is currently implementing awareness raising campaigns in co-operation with local NGOs in Ukraine, Belarus, Poland and the Russian Federation. Furthermore, OSCE field missions and NGOs are continuing to use awareness raising materials designed in co-operation with the ODIHR in on-going initiatives in Albania and Kazakhstan. Awareness raising campaigns supported by the ODIHR target at-risk groups, relevant professionals and governmental authorities. In many cases, the awareness raising campaigns promote increasing co-ordination among different actors.

Co-ordination and Co-operation

Efforts of co-ordination and co-operation are integral to our approach to developing projects and strategies to combat trafficking. As you are aware, within the OSCE, the ODIHR regularly exchanges information with OSCE participating States and OSCE field personnel. This has resulted in many progressive steps both on the policy and programmatic levels.

Furthermore, the ODIHR co-ordinates its anti-trafficking activities with other relevant international agencies. These efforts to promote co-operation often result in joint project initiatives and a common, strategic approach to working with governmental partners, as well as strategies for sustaining support for valuable NGO partners.

In this regard, the ODIHR is in a unique position, not only to develop projects with state authorities, but also to encourage a constructive dialogue between relevant NGO and government actors. Within the past two years, in co-operation with host governments, OSCE field offices, and NGO experts, the ODIHR has supported and facilitated NGO-government round tables on the trafficking issue in Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, the Russian Federation and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Again, these round table discussions served to raise awareness and to create momentum for the establishment of a national plan of action to combat trafficking and to assist its victims in the respective country.

Institution Building

Institution building is required in order to effectively prosecute traffickers and to provide services, protection and access to justice for trafficking victims. For this reason, the ODIHR has launched a substantial project on legislative review and reform within the Stability Pact framework that will provide tools for legal analysis and legislative reform for future projects throughout the OSCE region. The ODIHR is also currently engaged in legislative review and reform projects in Ukraine and Moldova. Again, these projects are closely co-ordinated with the host governments, OSCE field offices and other active international organisations in the region such as the International Organization for Migration and the American Bar Association's Central and East European Law Initiative.

Yet, legislative reform is not enough to ensure successful implementation of the law and progressive policies. Training of relevant professionals including law enforcement, border guards, social workers, judges and prosecutors on trafficking issues should increasingly be made a priority for OSCE countries. This is also an area where the ODIHR is developing its expertise and beginning to design projects with the assistance of relevant professionals and experts. The ODIHR is currently supporting anti-trafficking training projects in co-operation with OSCE field missions in Albania, Kazakhstan, and Kosovo. Other training initiatives are also under consideration by OSCE field missions and the ODIHR. For instance, the ODIHR also hopes to co-operate with the Polish Border Guards and La Strada Poland with the enhancement and development of specific training materials for border guards.

NGO Capacity Building

Non-governmental organizations such as La Strada are valuable partners in our fight against trafficking. In addition to promoting their dialogue with state authorities on this issue and highlighting their good work to potential donors, the ODIHR is strongly committed to building NGO capacity in this area. We support NGOs who provide direct services to victims and work strategically with them, governmental authorities and other international organizations to establish effective response and referral mechanisms.

Take for example the case of Ukraine where there is very successful co-operation in this field. Currently, the ODIHR is supporting a network of grassroots NGOs who provide hotline services providing information and counselling to at-risk persons, trafficking victims and their families, as well as referring victims to other NGOs or state agencies which can address their medical, legal and psychological needs. We have designed a training and reporting regime

with La Strada Ukraine and other experts to build the capacity of local NGOs to prevent and respond to trafficking cases. But this network does not operate in a vacuum --- we have strategically linked it to other anti-trafficking initiatives in Ukraine. For example, if a woman is voluntarily repatriated by IOM to Kyiv, she is now referred to a local NGO who would monitor her case and reintegration process. Furthermore, if a victim returns home independently and approaches a local NGO for assistance, the local NGO can report on their case to IOM-Kyiv and La Strada Ukraine and may potentially receive a small grant from IOM-Kyiv to assist the victim. Setting up such a referral network dividing labour and responsibility requires close co-operation, trust, adequate funding and agreement on standard reporting and operating procedures. We hope in the future to be able to support the development of similar response mechanisms in co-operation with host governments, IOM, NGOs and other relevant actors.

Future priorities

Looking towards the future, the ODIHR shall continue working in these areas with a particular focus on building the capacity of grassroots NGOs to prevent and respond to trafficking cases. In particular, we look forward to the development of grassroots initiatives in Belarus and Romania where we have already established contact with regional NGOs and governmental authorities.

However, in addition to our efforts in countries of origin and transit, it is necessary for the OSCE to examine and respond to the situation in countries of destination as well. In co-operation with France and Germany, the ODIHR is organising a two-day conference in Berlin in mid-October to raise awareness about the situation in countries of destination and to discuss possible strategies to combat trafficking, taking into account recent developments such as the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children, supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, as well as the EU Council Framework Decision on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.

In this context, the ODIHR will most likely become more engaged in legislative review and reform efforts in follow-up to the Stability Pact legislative review project and in response to increasing requests from Governments and OSCE missions in the field.

Also as a result of the establishment of the Anti-Trafficking Project Fund, the ODIHR is consulting more closely with OSCE field missions on the design and implementation of a variety of anti-trafficking initiatives including legislative review and reform projects. OSCE field missions have responded strongly to the prospect of co-operating more closely with the ODIHR on anti-trafficking issues and are eager to develop projects in co-operation with local partners. Furthermore, in consultations with the field missions on the design and implementation plans for their project proposals, the ODIHR is becoming more engaged in anti-trafficking activities in countries where we have not yet had projects such as in Uzbekistan or in Azerbaijan.

In the future, we are confident that the ODIHR's co-operation with OSCE field missions, Governments, relevant NGOs and international organisations will intensify to meet our joint aims of combating trafficking and assisting its victims.