

**THE VIENNA FORUM TO FIGHT HUMAN TRAFFICKING
13-15 February 2008**

Vienna, Austria

AIDE MEMOIRE

Workshop: The Role of the Media

BACKGROUND

The Vienna Forum to Fight Human Trafficking to be held at United Nations Headquarters in Vienna from 13 to 15 February 2008 will focus on the three overriding themes of vulnerability, impact and action. It will offer plenary sessions and a series of panels and workshops on different aspects of the three themes.

This event is part of the United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT). The Global Initiative aims to mobilize state and non-state actors to eradicate human trafficking by i) reducing the vulnerability of potential victims and the demand for exploitation in all its forms; ii) ensuring adequate protection and support to those who do fall victim, and iii) supporting the efficient prosecution of the criminals involved, while respecting the fundamental human rights of all persons.

UN.GIFT is part of a wide partnership by the UN-System and other international and regional organizations (ILO, IOM, OSCE, OHCHR, UNICEF, UNODC). These organizations, which form part of UN.GIFT Steering Committee, are responsible for the organization of the panels and workshops of The Vienna Forum.

The workshop The Role of Media in Building Images is organized by the Advocacy Section of UNODC.

CONTEXT

The media is an important vehicle through which information can be obtained and exchanged. Indeed nowadays public knowledge about foreign events, including war and international crisis, relies heavily on mass media. As the so-called 'fourth pillar', the media is also a powerful ally in influencing public opinion and in raising awareness about an issue. With such power, however, comes also the responsibility to provide accurate information to the public on a given issue and at the same time ensure the protection of individual sources from any harm as a result of disclosure.

The workshop aims to look closer at the representation of human trafficking and its victims in the media. The media is often a place where stereotypical and negative images about people are created or reinforced.

In the context of human trafficking, moreover, when journalists wish to tell a story and put a face to a victim, they run the danger – albeit often inadvertently – of victimizing them further. Victims are often depicted as naïve, and socio-economic problems are reduced to a personal trauma. Victims might be further presented in an overly compassionate manner, confusing sympathy (pity) with real empathy (understanding) for the context and reality of their experiences.

Media content is manufactured through a process in which a variety of factors play a role, ranging from the practical considerations of getting to difficult to reach sources and returning stories to editors on time, to pressures of writing stories that would conform to editorial guidelines and professional norms and values.

How do all these factors impact in decisions made by journalists about the discovery, selection, and reporting of stories, particularly in the context of human trafficking? What challenges do journalists face when interviewing victims, writing and illustrating the topic?

Journalists often stress occupational norms and values, such as objectivity, impartiality, accuracy and truthfulness, which serve to assist and even guarantee their autonomy in investigating and processing a news story. In the context of human trafficking – an illicit activity where reliable information is difficult to access, where sources are dubious at times and even dangerous to approach, and where victims have stories to tell of a very sensitive nature – upholding ethical standards might prove a challenge. Furthermore the pressure to get ‘exclusives’ might tempt journalists to use stories that morally-driven caution might have persuaded him/her otherwise. In this context, ‘peer’ and editorial pressure, as well as professional competition, might play an important role and impact on outcomes.

OBJECTIVES

The workshop aims to look closer at the questions raised above on the representation of human trafficking and its victims in the media. It will strive to generate a deeper understanding of the factors that impact on decisions made by journalists when covering the topic, and to come up with guidelines for a fair and balanced media coverage of the issue, particularly its victims, in order to avoid them being re-victimized and suffer any undue hardship arising from media interventions in the future. The discussion will address best media practices.

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

The workshop will strive to come to a consensus on a set of basic guidelines for media practitioners when dealing with the issue of human trafficking and for interviewing and telling the stories of victims. The guidelines could then form the basis for a more elaborate ‘code of

conduct' on addressing the issue of human trafficking to be distributed to media practitioners dealing with issue.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

The workshop will take place on 14 February 2008, from 11 to 12:30 (1.5 hours), in Room N, Austria Centre Vienna (ACV).

The discussion will include a maximum of 5 participants (1 photo-journalist, 1 print journalist, 1 representative of a civil society organization dealing with human trafficking with experience in media training, and will be moderated by a media representative. 2-3 themes will be selected to guide the discussion.

In order to allow for a highly participatory and dynamic session in order to add value to the anti-human trafficking efforts, ample time will be devoted to discussions.

THEMES

During workshop 3 general themes (with further guiding questions below) will be addressed:

1. UNCOVERING HUMAN TRAFFICKING STORIES

- What are the practical constraints faced by journalists when trying to find a story about a human trafficking victim?
- Can the journalist – and should he/she – remain a detached observer, upholding the highest ethical standards?

2. TOWARDS A MORE BALANCED AND FAIR REPRESENTATION OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

- What can be done to help generate a full understanding and fair reporting of the issue in the media?
- How to avoid clichés and stereotypical representation of human trafficking in the media?

3. SENSITIVITY AND RESPONSIBILITY WHEN INTERVIEWING VICTIMS

- How can journalists ensure that victims and the full context of their situation are truly understood?
- How can a human trafficking story be empowering?
- How can this be applied to photographic accounts of human trafficking?

PARTICIPANTS

Participants will include civil society, academia, international organizations and journalists.

MODERATOR

Sangita Myska, BBC Television News Correspondent, UK

SPEAKERS

Alessandro Scotti, Photojournalist, Italy

Ana Paula Brasil, Editor, Jornal Nacional, TV Globo, Brazil

Marija Andelkovic, NGO ASTRA, Serbia

Sangita Myska, BBC Television News Correspondent, UK

RAPPORTEUR

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WORKING LANGUAGE

English

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