

## **Victims and traffickers, new relationship and gender roles**

Gulnara Shahinian  
“Democracy Today”, NGO, Armenia

Development of effective counter trafficking policies requires study and analysis of the social, economic and political context in which the process takes place, as well as research on psychological profiles and driving incentives of the actors involved in the process. In recent years there have been data collected by police and service providers on victims of trafficking and number of researches on victims has tendency to grow whereas not much is known on those who commit that terrible crime - traffickers, their profiles, mosaic of factors that had influence on their involvement in trafficking, cultural and political context. That knowledge and understanding these factors will allow to develop efficient legal responses and measures that will have strong deterring effect on traffickers, that would allow to manage better crime reduction and forecast future developments in anti trafficking industry. Another phenomena that has become recently subject to discussions is involvement of victims of trafficking in criminal activities in various stages of process, as well as becoming traffickers.

My presentation is based on my interviews with traffickers and victims of trafficking collected during field studies and work on counter trafficking, available materials: analysis of documents of court hearings, interviews with law enforcement and media materials in Armenia, as well as analysis of media and police reports in some selected countries of Black Sea region<sup>1</sup>.

### **Who are traffickers ?**

According to report from Prosecutor General's office in Armenia in 2006 29 criminal cases have been investigated in the court of the first instance, in

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<sup>1</sup> . This information was collected in result of research on counter trafficking situation in Armenia, as some of these countries are transit and destination for Armenian victims, as well as in result of on assessment on counter trafficking responses in countries of Black Sea region for UNODC.

result 39 persons have been convicted , out of which were 32 women and 7 men . From these 29 convictions 10 cases ( 13 persons convicted ) were convicted with 132 trafficking article in Criminal Code of Armenia , 18 cases ( 26 persons ) with Article 262 ( pimping) , 24 persons were imprisoned, from which 19 were women and 5 were men. <sup>2</sup>

Analysis of gender roles in this crime shows important gender distribution of roles : women are predominately involved in sexual exploitation of women and girls and the ones who lead this business . This can be assumed from analysis of court cases, though it has to be metioned here that not always investigation is carried out though the complete process of trafficking crime and it may be that top level organisers are not the ones that have been convicted.<sup>3</sup> Men play secondary roles in that area : in some cases men act as recruiters recruiting women under false marriage or as temporary husbands for women traffickers in Arab countries , acting as guarantor of official invitations that are send to women to travel to there , meeting and transporting to the place of destination, doctors and other supporting roles. <sup>4</sup> Age of women traffickers is between 25-50 years old.

Men are mostly involved and playing leading role in recruiting and trafficking other men for labor exploitation: known and registered cases are related predominantly to labour exploitation to Russia for construction work. In Georgia according to report of head of Georgian police unit irrespective of the bigger variety of manifestation of trafficking in humans in 2007 and first month of 2008 there have been 18 cases of traffickinng in humans registered , out of which 14 cases were cases of trafficking for forced prostitution. Analysis also demostrates that in predominat majority of cases women are the ones who accompany the victim into Turkey and hand them over to the pimp women, who takes the victim's papers, locks her up, and forces her to do sex work. <sup>5</sup> It has been also mentioned that women ar eat the top of crime business.

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<sup>2</sup> Report of Prosecutor General's office , 2007

<sup>3</sup> This is due to transnational nature of crime and insufficient cooperation between law enforcement

<sup>4</sup> Interviews with victims

<sup>5</sup> Helsingin Sanomat , sat 9,2 2008 Police in Georgia accuse Turkey of indifference toward human trafficking

Another data , about 100 prostitution-related court hearings were held in Azerbaijan in 2003. Some 75 per cent of the convicted people were women directly involved in organisation of prostitution.<sup>6</sup>

Irrespective of incidence in countries of Caucasus other forms of trafficking such as labor exploitation , forced begging , trafficking for adoption media and reports mostly present the information related to sexual exploitation with exception of two cases in Azerbaijani media<sup>7</sup>, according to which organizers of illegal adoption of children were also women. Taking into consideration the limited information on main actors in other forms of trafficking I will limit my presentation solely to trafficking for sexual exploitation.

### **Who are women traffickers?**

“How can you do this, sell children for sex? The question I asked to women trafficker whom I met in Dubai airport, when she was seeing off one of her girl slaves, who was deported by police. Cruelty of this woman was well known and police had sufficient facts that herself and her family were recruiting underage orphan children and selling them to Dubai for prostitution. Married to Arab she legalized her stay in Dubai and could easily send visas to children recruited by her family members.

Another woman in a small town of Vanadzor( small city in Armenia), who was prostitute was recruited for sexual exploitation to UAE, after short period could establish connection with Arab man and return as trafficker to recruit other girls from her community

Another woman trafficker in prison in Armenia, was thinking that she was doing great favor to girls while recruiting them and sending abroad to earn money.

Interviews with victims, police and traffickers in Armenia and analysis of materials in the region provide with insight on the factors that had impact of these women becoming traffickers. I will be presenting just some, but this list is far from being exhaustive:

- Majority of the women in their young age have been subjected to violence, some of them come from problematic families

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<sup>6</sup> US TIP Report 2007

<sup>7</sup> Gender Information on South Caucasus , GINSC .Net

- Economic problems and survival strategies chosen by women in transitional economies and burden of ethnically determined social roles
- erosion of social cohesion

Victims and women traffickers themselves were telling the story of hard life experience: domestic violence, problematic family environment, one of the traffickers was telling that her mother was pimp and they had always girls prostitutes living in their house, one day a man who came to one of the girls raped her when she was 15.

Police officers that work with traffickers mentioned that majority of women traffickers have been convicted before for pimping, for violating law of trade, had administrative charges for prostitution.

Georgian researcher Georgi Glonti in his article “Trafficking in women from Georgia and CIS”<sup>8</sup> mentions another factors and provides with socio psychological explanation for that. He describes new survival strategies that women have taken after disintegration of Former Soviet Union to make their families survive by starting “shuttle trade” – buying in Turkey cheap goods and selling them in their countries. Majority of them have never done such kind of business and soon have been trapped by complex problems of their endeavor. Side by side with that market of illegal labor and sexual services was growing. New hotels have been build in many parts of Turkey and new small factories. However in 1992 – 1995 shuttle market became to shrink and number of buyers decreased, the hotels turned into brothels and many women who at once worked in shuttle business became prostitutes and lived in the hotels and bars.

Another important factor is erosion of social cohesion and social support and connections. In the Caucasus people used to live in very small family type communities. Rapid changes of last decade, vast migration brought to brake and erosion of social relationship which had high price for women. Couple of years ago in Georgian society was shocked with a story, when women neighbor sold to prostitution young daughter of her close neighbor while

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<sup>8</sup> Glonti Georgi «Trafficking in women from Georgia and CIS» Trass, 1998

their mother asked to take care of her daughters, when she left for two days trip on business <sup>9</sup>. Similar stories have been recorded in other counties of Caicacus.

### **Victims or traffickers ?**

On January 29, 2008 Herald Tribune published an article on “Sex traffickers in Greece” that have found a way to increase their illegal trade while avoiding detention: They are using their female victims as predators to find new recruits in the Balkans, Russia and former Soviet states. According to police officer more and more victims turn into perpetrators. The female suspects are almost exclusively former prostitutes and chiefly from Russia, Bulgaria and Ukraine.<sup>10</sup>

Interview with Armenian police officers shows increase in former victims becoming traffickers have been also detected. The same tendency have been mentioned by police officials and service provider NGO's in Turkey , Russia and some other countries of Black Sea region.

Recent research “Trafficking and traffickers in Southern and Eastern Europe. Considering the other side of Human trafficking “by Rebecca Surtees also supports this observation .

### **Why it happens and how we lose this battle?**

Analysis of reasons based on interviews with victims and service providers in shelter in Armenia <sup>11</sup> and analysis of related researches provide with complex system of factors that potentially impact on victim's decision to be engaged in crime of trafficking :

- Pressure and manipulation from trafficker
- «Debt bondage»-constantly increasing debts to traffickers and get eventually some money to send back home

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<sup>9</sup> Nazarova Nana” Trafficking in women from Georgia “, 2001

<sup>10</sup> Niki Kitsantonis “In Greece, female sex victims become recruiters” Jan 29,2008 , International Herald Tribune , Europe

<sup>11</sup> Interviews were conducted at United Methodist Church for Relief , that runs shelter for victims of trafficking

- Getting higher in hierarchy to get more money and be less humiliated
- Fear for the family and keens, societal stigma , fear from the police and punishment at home
- Feeling of being less vulnerable on returning home, by having support of trafficker
- Feeling of revenge for the sufferings she has passed through
- So called Stockholm Syndrome with a growing sympathy towards perpetrator , indebtedness

In research conducted by Fiorina Vlad “Merchants of living souls. Trafficking in humans in Romania “ she provides with incentives of becoming traffickers for both women and men : obtaining high profits, sexual abuse of victims , psychological raping , fear and as it was mentioned above “ illicit pain on other humans beings , as revenge for the sufferings <sup>12</sup> There have been mentioned other reasons that complement the observations presented above .

Some of the presented above ideas are also supported by recent article of Rebecca Surtees “ Traffickers and Trafficking in South Eastern Europe : Considering the other side of human trafficking “<sup>13</sup> She writes “ Other female recruiters were former or current trafficking victims who were obliged by their traffickers to return home and to recruit other women , often under the scrutiny of people working for the traffickers to ensure compliance and prevent escape.... It is often used as mechanism of control by traffickers

### **Some final thoughts .**

Trafficking in human beings have come into mainstream in the region I come from during last 8 to 10 years. Through these years we have witnessed it’s dynamic nature and quick reaction to the counter actions developed by states, civil society and Intentional community. Involvement of victims and acting

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<sup>12</sup> Vlad Fiorina “ Merchants of living souls “ Trafficking in human beings in Romania “ May 2006

<sup>13</sup> Surtees Rebecca “ Trafficking and traffickers in Southern and Eastern Europe : Considering the other side of Human trafficking “ European Journal of Criminology 2008 : 5, 39 . <http://euc.sage pub.com/cgi/content/abstract/5/1/39>

of victims as traffickers is another manifestation of its changing nature and signals to us that the crime of trafficking multiplies, involving in its criminal camp more and more people, turning victims into perpetrators. It also signals that the policies developed before have to be rethought and new innovative approaches have to be developed.

I will conclude with some thoughts and stemming from experience I had in the area, which mostly relate to countries of origin, as situation there and state and behavior of victims there has its own specifics.

1. Conducting thorough research and systematic analysis of data on those who commit crime of trafficking, their networks, system of operations, profiles of criminals, etc. As it was stated above researches on traffickers, their modes of work, organizational structures have been very limited in Armenia and the Caucasus almost not existing.

Research and systematic updating of data and analysis would much invest in developing very well targeted actions, considering not only global tendencies, but country specific reaction mechanisms, as this crime exploits very specific to each country vulnerabilities. Research will also help to develop early warning systems on the directions and transformations taking place in our counties and regions. This will become good tool for policy developers, lawyers and police.

2. Enhancing and widening prevention programs

Prevention programs should be rethought to reach not only vulnerable population, but also returned victims, especially in the countries of origin. Alongside with empowering programs oriented to vulnerable population, these programs have to speak on special programs addressing needs of returned victims, they should bring success stories and speak about legal remedies, such as non punishment clause on Art 26 of COE Convention.

3. Governments in cooperation with NGO should invest more in long term reintegration programs, making them sustained, case managed and continuous.

4. Multitrack cooperation programs between countries of origin and destination should be enhanced to extend the policies and laws of origin countries to victims in countries in destination through service provider NGO's there, police.

5. Governments should enhance their efforts in developing programs aimed at building cohesion in vulnerable communities. People should feel safe, protected and in harmony with the social environment they live and again they have to do in close cooperation with civil society.

6. Effective models of cooperation and information sharing between police on operative, urgent issues should be developed to make actions between countries in fight against trafficking effective. There have been many complaints from police officers, that irrespective of cooperation agreements signed between the countries, cooperation leaves much to be desired. Enhancing professional capacities of law enforcement and developing flexible communication and information exchange models between them.