



## Human Trafficking in Slovakia

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Young People Against Prostitution and Human Trafficking:

The Greatest Violence Against Human Beings

Casina Pio IV

Vatican City, 15-16 November 2014

### CARITAS SLOVAKIA

Caritas Slovakia is a non-governmental organization which provides charitable, social, healthcare and educational services to people in need, regardless of faith, race, cultural diversity, education and gender.

Caritas Slovakia has a long history of working with people who are vulnerable and marginalised all across the world. This also includes people who find themselves the victims of human trafficking. Anti-human trafficking work of Caritas Slovakia has been protecting and caring for vulnerable victims of human trafficking since 2008 when Stop Human Trafficking Project was established.

### CASE STUDY SLOVAKIA

A 20-year old Adriana, woman of Romani descent had come to the UK with her new so-called boyfriend on the promise of 'a good job'. She was expecting to work in a restaurant and have an income she could be sending back home to her family. She trusted her beloved to have a beautiful future ahead of them after they get back home. Instead, she was raped by two unknown men to whom her boyfriend had sold her right after they reached the country. They locked her in a basement and forced to work as a prostitute to pay off the debt she had allegedly incurred. She was receiving up to 20 clients a day. She was regularly raped and beaten to prevent her from escaping. She was saved during a police raid, referred to a safe house and send back to Slovakia.

### HUMAN TRAFFICKING SITUATION IN SLOVAKIA

Poverty and lack of economic opportunities in Slovakia, especially in the East region, make women, men and young people potential victims of traffickers associated with international criminal organizations. They are vulnerable to false promises of job opportunities in other countries. Many of those who accept these offers end up in misery of modern slavery. Their personal documents are taken from them, they or their families are threatened with harm or they are bonded by a debt that they have no chance of repaying.

Slovakia is primarily a **source and transit** country for men, women, and children subjected to sex trafficking and forced labour. Slovak men and women are subjected to forced labour in agriculture and construction in Western Europe, primarily in the UK.

The **majority** of Slovakian victims of trafficking are women subjected to sex trafficking in Germany, Austria, the UK, Ireland, Switzerland, Poland, and other European countries.

**Romani people** from marginalized communities are vulnerable to human trafficking, as they are often underemployed and undereducated. Traffickers are particularly prominent individuals in Romani communities. They find victims through family and village networks, preying on individuals with disabilities or large debts.

Slovak **women of Romani descent** are particularly vulnerable to sex trafficking. They are commonly transported to the UK by force or deception to facilitate benefit fraud and to marry third country nationals attempting to avoid deportation by marrying EU citizens. Many of these women then become victims of sex and labour trafficking.

Slovak **children of Romani descent** are subjected to forced criminal activities in the UK. Slovak **men**, women, and children of Romani descent are subjected to forced begging throughout Western Europe.

### Slovakia as a destination country

The latest 2014 Trafficking in Persons Report reveals that Ukrainian, Moldovan, Bulgarian, Romanian, and Vietnamese men and women are reportedly forced to work in the Slovak Republic. Eastern European women are also reportedly transported to and through the Slovak Republic and forced into prostitution within the country and throughout the Western Europe.

### **PORTRAIT OF THE TYPICAL SLOVAK VICTIM IN 2013**

In the course of 2013 there were 30 individuals who entered the Programme of support and protection and so were provided with complex assistance. Total number of female victims was **21**, of which **2** individuals were **younger than 18**. Total number of male victims was **9**.

Although the estimates are much higher (100s Slovakian people being trafficked only from Slovakia to the UK each year).

According to the law enforcement authorities has been observed that the typical victim in 2013 was woman around 23 years old, single, no kids, with a primary education, of a bad social background from the east of Slovakia. The majority of victims comes from this region of Slovakia which is the long-term trend as this region suffers from the lack of job opportunities resulting in massive relocation or finding job opportunities abroad.

The main purpose of the trafficking was sexual exploitation and the most often destination country was UK.

The most at-risk group consists of:

1. young women
2. young people leaving care facilities (children houses) lack sufficient support and are vulnerable to human trafficking
3. disabled people
4. undereducated and unemployed people
5. Romani people

### **PROGRAM OF SUPPORT AND PROTECTION**

#### **STOP HUMAN TRAFFICKING PROJECT**

Caritas Slovakia provides direct assistance to victims of human trafficking since 2008 when the **Stop Human Trafficking** project has been established. Complex assistance is provided within the Programme of Support and Protection of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings, stipulated by Regulation of Ministry of Interior.

The main aim of this project is direct help to trafficking victims by their reintegration into the society and providing comprehensive and long-term care adapted to their individual needs. Caritas Slovakia provides an individual plan (move on scheme) for each person. From 2008 to 2014 the Caritas Slovakia supported 52 victims to get their life back.

#### **WHAT DOES OUR VICTIM SUPPORT AND PROTECTION PROGRAMME DO?**

The Caritas Slovakia believes that victims of human trafficking need and deserve high-quality support to rehabilitate and gain back control over their own lives. The work of the Caritas Slovakia is also to enable victims to regain their dignity and self-esteem.

It is a long-term process because of the abuse that many victims have suffered. However, the provision of immediate and intensive support after they have been identified and rescued gives them the best possible chance of recovery.

As part of the National Referral Mechanism, we have eight weeks (60 days) to provide a rescued victim with immediate crisis support and assistance toward a new future. Depending on proceedings with each victim's case, the period of care may be extended.

We help victims by providing:

1. safe accommodation
2. medical care
3. legal advice
4. counselling
5. educational opportunities

6. help with moving into independent accommodation
7. help with finding a job.

Caritas Slovakia provides accommodation and support in 5 locations around Slovakia for persons who have been rescued from human trafficking. Each of the safe houses is running by the staff that consists of the trained administrator and social workers. Caritas selected 5 safe houses:

1. Shelter for mothers with children
2. Shelter for girls and women
3. Shelter for men
4. Shelter for drug and alcohol addicted
5. Shelter for ill and disabled

Victims are referred to Caritas Slovakia predominantly from:

- the helping organizations abroad,
- the Police or

- and through free National helpline for victims 0800 800 818. The main task of the **helpline** is provision of assistance and the first contact information for those who possibly could get into trafficking situation. In such cases the National helpline refer individuals to organizations providing assistance to victims. The helpline also aims at prevention and elimination of risks related to working abroad and the calling person is advised of danger of trafficking.

### **THE BENEFITS OF OUR PROJECT**

The victims of human trafficking are rescued and protected.

Victims feel safe enough to testify against the traffickers, resulting in more being convicted.

Victims receive counselling to help them find ways to recover from their trauma.

Victims receive medical assistance to help them overcome their health problems

Victims are able to rebuild their self-esteem and confidence because we give them back their human dignity.

Victims have access to education and training opportunities to improve their future prospects and prevent them from being exploited again.

Victims are given help to re-connect with family and friends

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Regarding the three recommendations I would wrap them up into one big recommendation called **PREVENTION**. Here I suggest three ways how we did it in Slovakia this year. Although our Stop Human Trafficking project focuses mainly on reintegration of victims, in 2014 we have decided to aim our attention more at prevention, which is a key to cut-down of the amount of victims.

All campaigns we launched in 2014 act as a powerful and accessible tool for prevention of trafficking as well as for increasing public awareness about this very complex and difficult subject.

We established partnership with several organizations from United Kingdom, such as STOP THE TRAFFIK, Unchosen and Eaves Housing, and started to work on prevention projects which I would like to introduce you in more details:

First one we did in cooperation with STOP THE TRAFFIK and UN.GIFT and had the following scenario:

Do you want to see the world and earn good money? This is a slogan of our campaign called GIFT box on which we cooperate with Stop The Traffik. Through the **Gift box campaign**, the Caritas Slovakia warns hundreds of potential victims about the dangers of trafficking. The promise of a better life, an education, a good job and a loving relationship are all enticing promises. But things aren't always what they seem.

GIFT box is a unique way to raise awareness about human trafficking. The Gift tags with promises and offers attracts your attention and invites you to enter inside, but once inside you are presented with a different reality. With real stories of real victims.

In the time that the GIFT box Slovakia campaign has been running, the GIFT box Slovakia has travelled across the country and have been displayed at schools, squares, shopping centres, airport, bus station, at youth summer festivals and many other locations. A team of 15 volunteers have reached visited 9 venues, spoken to over 3,600 people and handed out 4,300 leaflets. In December GIFT box is moving to areas that are notorious for having a high risk of human trafficking, making sure the word gets out to those who need it most. .

Caritas Slovakia has also organised a **film festival** called "Together against Human Trafficking on 17th of October which took place in the cinema in the capital of Slovakia.

Together Against Trafficking was a first-of-its-kind Film Event that aimed at **INSPIRING YOUNG PEOPLE AND WIDER PUBLIC TO TAKE ACTION AND MOBILISE THEIR COMMUNITIES AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING**. The festival also marked the European Day of Fight against Human Trafficking.

Human trafficking remains a threat both to Slovakia and the UK. It is a crime which is difficult to detect because of its hidden nature. Slovakia is among the top ten countries of origin of victims trafficked into the UK. In 2013 there 56 Slovakian men, women and children were identified as potential victims of trafficking within the UK national referral mechanism scheme. Whereas estimates are that there are 100s/1,000s Slovakian people being trafficked from Slovakia to the UK each year, as well as Slovak people being trafficked within the UK.

The victims were trafficked mainly for labour exploitation, sexual exploitation, organised begging and also organised criminal activities. Therefore it is important to take action in partnership to tackle both the supply and demand side.

The core of the festival was mostly foreign short films describing various forms of human trafficking. The films were alternate with topic introduction and panel discussion consisting of experts from Slovakia and abroad. Films and documentaries on the topic of human trafficking were screened in the morning for students and in the afternoon for wider public. 100 school students attended film festival during the morning session and more than 200 people came for the afternoon programme.

People who attended the festival were were encouraged to write us and order DVD with all the films to organize their own film event and this way to prevent and disrupt trafficking in their local community.

Third of the campaign we are about to launch is called **Two Little Girls** is a three minute animated film spearheading an anti sex-trafficking campaign which we aim to disseminate across the whole country of Slovakia. The film follows the stories of two young women who are cruelly deceived by people they know and trust, and then trafficked against their will into prostitution. The film depicts the tactics perpetrators use to lure and traffic girls and young women, the risks of trafficking.

The aim of the campaign is to

warn young people and specifically young women of the dangers of being persuaded to travel abroad with false promises of employment, only to find themselves sold into prostitution, consequently enduring years of untold cruelty.

improve networking between non governmental organizations working on anti trafficking and media coverage

Caritas Slovakia has developed education toolkit targeted at the youth preventing human trafficking, particularly in relation to sexual exploitation. In cooperation with the Ministry of Interior and other organizations TLG campaign will be disseminate amongst teachers, Roma mediators, social workers and youth workers. They will participate in a training to use the TLG film and materials in their work. The accompanying materials – booklets, posters and fliers describe what people can do to protect themselves and how people can get help. A website has been created where the film can be downloaded and used in suggested ways.

The film will be screened on LED TVs in buses across all Slovakia over 30 days. Knowing the number of passengers using the bus network in Slovakia, estimated number of people who will see the TLG film through this coverage is 700 000 over the course of 30 days. The film will also be broadcasted in slovak and romany languages in national and local TVs.

**Our vision is to help end modern slavery through implementation of innovative campaigns that equip people to make informed and empowered decisions. Let's act together and inspire change. Together, we can end modern slavery.**