

**UNITAR/UNFPA Workshop on International Trafficking in Human Beings,
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Disclaimer—my speech does not necessarily reflect the views of the USG.

I am delighted to be here at the UN with all of you on the 60th anniversary of the UN. These issues cannot be solved without cooperation between our countries. The role of the UN agencies and the instrument of the Palermo protocol are indispensable to the fight to end trafficking in persons. We all must thank Collen Thouez/UNITAR and all the organizers for organizing this important workshop in the Key Migration Issues series.

My talk will focus on what I see as the context for TIP in the Europe & Eurasia region, an overview of the complex issue of TIP, factors that need to be addressed and USAID responses. I will talk more about Eurasia than the Balkans since Sandra will be addressing this in her presentation after the break.

Trafficking in Persons (TIP) in Europe and Eurasia:

It is estimated that about a quarter of men, women and children (but predominantly women and children) trafficked for sexual exploitation globally are from the Europe and Eurasian region (E&E), from 175,000 to 500,000 persons annually according to various estimates. The ILO asserts that trafficking accounts for more than 75% of forced labor in industrialized and transition countries (Western Hemisphere and E&E) as opposed to under 20 percent in Asia, LA, and sub-Saharan Africa. In E&E the dominant form is forced labor for sexual exploitation. Still one quarter (23%) are forced laborers coerced into non-sexual exploitation (ILO asserts that twenty percent of an estimated four million labor migrants in exploitative situations in Russia may be trafficked). Women and children are primarily trafficked for purposes of sexual exploitation and men for forced and legally unprotected cheap labor.

Most countries in the region are countries of origin or transit, but several are to varying extents countries of destination (BiH, Croatia, Cyprus, Kazakhstan, Russia, SaM and Turkey). In addition, internal trafficking is increasing (Bulgaria for example). The largest known E&E source countries for Western Europe are Albania, Moldova, Ukraine, Romania and Russia. Within Eurasia, in Asia and the Mid-East there may be a large incidence of TIP from Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

Trafficking in persons (TIP) is a new phenomenon since the fall of the iron curtain. TIP exploded with the end of the Cold War and the opening of closed countries accompanied by an increasingly and visible gap between the poorer and the wealthier nations with restrictive migration regimes, and frequently regional conflicts. The improved transport and communications with rapid globalization, including long distance ties between people who can facilitate a supply to meet the demand for cheap and exploitative labor.

TIP adult victims in the E&E region differ on average from those in developing countries in the world in that they usually have secondary education or a high school degree. Also,

those who are vulnerable are not only the marginalized or minority populations, but probably the majority of the population of most of the E&E countries.

There are many push and pull factors driving trafficking, besides demand as an external factor, three main internal factors in E&E are:

1) **Socio-Economic dislocation**: high levels of unemployment or underemployment and poverty (especially Albania, Moldova, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan), and a widening gap between the haves and the have nots. The region has suffered from a large brain drain of qualified specialists, and has a large number of labor migrants. The majority of trafficking victims lack viable economic alternatives and are willing to go abroad to work. They are often entrepreneurial types who are willing to take some risk to meet the perceived gap between their expectations and opportunities.

2) **Rampant corruption and a breakdown in values**— TIP is profitable and it is widely believed that there is collusion between traffickers and corrupt officials, as well as inadequate or lax implementation of legislation. Victims are usually in fear of the very officials who are ostensibly there to protect their rights and to fight traffickers, who often act with impunity. TIP is more likely to be linked to organized crime in E&E and the Eurasian and Balkans organized crime groups are perhaps the most pernicious in the world. Values have become more materialistic and corrupt practices have become normalized as “everyone does it.” Honesty and trust are the casualties, and most victims of trafficking (VoT) are trafficked by people they know.

3) **Disenfranchisement** of the majority of the population; a lack of rule of law, of access to information and opportunities for participation; governments that are increasingly seen as lacking accountability and legitimacy; in some countries, human rights violations and an increase in arbitrary violence. There is a polarization of those who have power versus the vulnerable (youth, children, women, ethnic minorities, elderly—sometimes regional differences within countries too). There is an increase in social ills such as domestic violence, alcoholism, drug abuse and HIV/AIDs. In some places, there is a lack of hope in the future, a disbelief that things will be better in my lifetime or for my children.

Most trafficked women are heads of household, primary wage earners for family and have children and parents to care for, or have suffered abuse or neglect. Most end up in sex industry where women are seen as a "commodity". Women are also trafficked into domestic servitude, as kidnapped brides in rural areas of Kyrgyzstan or Georgia, or mail order brides via the internet. From 10-30% of trafficking victims are minors. The most vulnerable are orphans, street children and the Roma, who are trafficked for begging and stealing for example. Child soldiers allegedly served in the conflicts in the Balkans, Southern Russia and the Caucasus, and Tajikistan. Men are also victims of TIP and are trafficked for forced labor. Most are labor migrants who are exploited in slave like work conditions in construction, industry, agriculture, or debt bondage in their professions. Within and between some Eurasian countries (that were all one country before) it is difficult to move to another place and work legally because of the resident registration system (Soviet propiska system).

E&E countries have been forced to address a host of problems related to state building during the past 15 years. USAID and other international donors have assisted in the transition to more democratic societies and market economies.

Efforts in the E&E region have already resulted in many successes in combating trafficking in persons, perhaps partly due to pressure from the US State department's annual TIP reporting and Tier ranking with the threat of sanctions if countries are ranked on Tier 3. The South Eastern European (SEE) region in particular has become a leader in global anti-TIP efforts due to the incentive to join the EU and NATO, and efforts under the Stability Pact, the OSCE (inter-governmental and UN orgs- IOM, UNDP and ICMPD, SECI). The response to TIP in Eurasia has generally been slower and weaker, with destination countries to the East and the South less aware, cooperative and transparent than the destination countries in the West. Most E&E governments have now criminalized TIP in their national legislation, have established national action plans (NAP), and have increased NGO-government and cross-border cooperation for the prosecution of traffickers and protection of victims. In 2004, 1,274 traffickers were prosecuted and convicted in the E&E region (this is the most by region by far, though most are still small time folks, still few big figures). No E&E countries are on Tier 3 for the first time, but 5 are on the Tier 2 watch list (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan).

While impressive efforts have been undertaken, governments have uneven records in taking responsibility for combating TIP, in actually implementing new legislation, and in allocating adequate financial and human resources to sustain and effectively combat trafficking without donor assistance. Governments of the E&E region whether source, transit or destination increasingly acknowledge that they must take primary responsibility for anti-trafficking efforts both domestically and internationally and further improve regional cooperation.

USAID approaches trafficking in persons (TIP) from a development and human rights perspective. It's comparative advantage and primary focus is on the prevention of TIP, protection and assistance to victims, and reform and actual implementation of anti-TIP legislation. (Please see links for more information on the USAID anti-TIP strategy: http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/wid/pubs/pd-abx-358-final.pdf, http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/wid/pubs/trafficking_2005.pdf).

USAID E&E Bureau bilateral efforts have primarily focused on prevention efforts, while regional initiatives have focused on cross border protection requiring cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination. Collaboration between governmental and non-governmental anti-TIP actors, notably between NGOs and law enforcement agencies, across trafficking routes is essential to combat TIP, to identify victims in other countries, for case continuity across borders, and to investigate TIP crimes. Traffickers know no national or other boundaries, anti-TIP efforts need to be strengthened, governments must take primary responsibility, and other actors must cooperate to protect victims, and to create local ownership and more chances of sustainable efforts.

A preventative strategy is most cost-effective in the long run. USAID E&E

Trafficking Prevention Efforts: enable beneficiaries to protect themselves and gain more control over their life options; and aim to inform and equip with information and skills to prevent TIP, as ignorance or lack of will keep risks low for perpetrators. Here are illustrative USAID TIP prevention programs:

1) Awareness Raising and Education: is the most common anti-TIP program whose goal is first to inform the general population, but importantly also to increase political will, to increase understanding of the reality of TIP, to change attitudes and behavior (towards victims, and that contribute to TIP), to strengthen and galvanize those in contact with possible VoT, and to educate people on different forms and methods and root causes of TIP. One lesson learned is that scare tactics do not work. It is critical to make TIP real for possible victims, and to provide tools to safeguard against it.

The Media plays a vital role, whether positive or negative, and USG programs train journalists to cover TIP issues appropriately, to pressure governments to increase political will, and to investigate possible corrupt practices and TIP crimes, and to publish information about arrests and prosecutions of perpetrators. Another program is to assist NGOs working to integrate TIP and related issues into school curricula to educate youth about TIP and gender issues.

2) Economic Alternatives: to address the lack of viable economic opportunities USAID supports NGO programs that provide training in job skills that reflect market opportunities and victim's needs; entrepreneurship; and access to legal advice, mentoring and internships, and work with local governments to regulate employment and other agencies which may facilitate TIP.

3) Safe Migration: to provide information to help potential victims make more informed decisions, to access information on safe and legal migration on visas, contracts, agencies, legal rights, services available, etc. through local, national and international hotlines. This is important as high numbers of youth across the E&E region would be willing to emigrate or work temporarily abroad (it is estimated that about a quarter of Moldovans may be abroad, and Moldova has the second highest level of remittances in the world).

4) Empowerment programs: to empower potential victims to improve their home or community life. These include women's legal rights programs, summer camps; theatre; work with Roma families; life skills education for orphans; support for parent-teacher associations and peer groups that work to prevent TIP, fight corrupt practices and build trust; and work with faith based organizations. Many VoT have experienced violence before they were trafficked, and it is important to combat domestic violence as it erodes self-esteem, contributes to the acceptance of violence or control, and makes youth less likely to resist or escape traffickers, more likely to leave school and home early, and become substance abusers. It is important also to empower survivors of TIP and to assist in their reintegration, to prevent re-trafficking in addition to providing needed services.

5) Policy and legislation: support for the elaboration of anti-TIP policies, national action plans, and related legislation; and capacity building of government officials and NGOs.

6) Demand reduction: an important area USAID is only recently begun to work on. The goal is to **change behavior of employers and consumers of trafficked persons**, especially those who employ domestic workers, migrant workers, or those who pay for sex with prostituted women. Some programs work to assist countries to develop bi-lateral labor agreements and to better protect the rights of migrant workers, to create less restrictive migration policies (including residence registration), to train consular officials and to regulate agencies and businesses that may facilitate or engage in TIP (construction, transport, tourist, employment, and marriage agencies). It is critical to target young-men and boys with educational programs to reduce their acceptance of the use of prostitution (especially if they accept violence towards women and girls), as there is evidence that the younger the man at his first experience of prostitution, the more likely he will continue to frequent prostitutes. It is vital to train the military, especially contractors and international peacekeepers to understand and adhere to zero tolerance policies and not contribute to trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation.

Direct anti-TIP efforts are complemented by an array of other USAID development assistance programs which create conditions that reduce the vulnerability of youth, especially young women and children, to traffickers; and address the underlying factors which have given rise to TIP in this region. Some missions integrate TIP into appropriate existing projects across the democracy and governance, economic growth and social transition sectors as appropriate, as TIP cannot be solved in isolation from its root causes. In addition, since some key countries will face a phase out in funding, it is important for the sustainability of efforts.

Although prevention is the most cost-effective approach and addresses the root causes of TIP that are symptomatic of the overall state of health of societies, we have an ethical obligation to provide support to victims/survivors with due respect to human rights and dignity. It is wise to work with governments to encourage the political will to do more with "little resources", to make public declarations recognizing problem, to fight corruption within the government, to pass specific TIP legislation, to offer appropriate protections to victims and ensure smooth cooperation between law enforcement and NGOs. While the UN and agencies like USAID can assist, it is vital that each government takes responsibility whether a country of origin, transit, destination or a combination of two or more of these.

People are our most precious resource. Migration reflects the true or perceived state of affairs in all corners of our world, and people "vote with their feet" by migrating for better opportunity whether rural to urban or abroad. Tragically, today many still fall victim to the worst forms of forced migration, including trafficking. It's heartening and inspiring to know of the work of the UN and the anti-TIP actors presenting here today. We all can give the survivors and potential victims hope and opportunity, and the traffickers and those complicit, fear by our actions and dedication, and not indifference. We're interconnected and each one of us can make a difference. **Thank you.**