



IOM International Organization for Migration
IOM Kansainvälinen siirtolaisuusjärjestö
IOM Internationella migrationsorganisationen

STETE Seminar on Human Trafficking

Sanomatalo Auditorium

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“IOM’s Operational Approach to Combat Trafficking and Provide Assistance to Victims”

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1. Introduction to IOM

Good afternoon, I’m Lucy Laitinen and I am representing the International Organization for Migration, or IOM, which is an intergovernmental organization established 1951. IOM is currently the leading international organization working on migration issues. Our membership consists of 120 states, including Finland, which joined in 1991. Our Headquarters is in Geneva and we have more than 300 offices worldwide and around 5400 staff members.

The office where I work IOM Helsinki, is a regional office that supports the IOM country offices in Norway, the Baltic States, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova. IOM Helsinki also carries out activities in Finland, Sweden, and Denmark.

2. Features of human trafficking

Before speaking about IOM’s operational approach to trafficking – which means the kind of projects and programmes we are implementing – I would like to give you a brief overview of IOM’s thinking on human trafficking, which is evolving as we gain a greater understanding of the problem.

Right now we’re seeing a major shift in demographics globally. While populations are ageing and birthrates are falling in many industrialized countries, in developing countries we see population growth

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and an oversupply of labour. New labour markets are opening as service industries and employment opportunities are established. In most cases, economic growth has not been matched by the evolution of migration policies that are able to facilitate and satisfy this demand. While trade barriers fall, allowing the freer movement of goods, services, and capital, which in their turn create employment opportunities, migration policies have generally become more restrictive and rigid. It is this tension between the intense demand for labour and services on the one hand, with too few legal migration channels on the other hand, that creates opportunities for exploitation. When there is demand for cheap labour and cheap services, there are opportunities for human traffickers. And human trafficking is obviously a business where money is to be made. Many experts say that human trafficking is the third largest money making business in the world after weapons and drug trafficking. It is more than ironic when you consider that slavery was supposedly abolished 150 years ago.

In April at a conference in New York organised as a part of the thematic informal debate of the General Assembly on gender equality and empowerment of women, IOM's Deputy Director General, Madame Ndiaye noted that the traditional response to human trafficking has been to look at source countries for the root causes. Root causes have been characterized as issues such as poverty; economic deprivation and lack of opportunities; gender discrimination; political upheaval or instability. But, Madame Ndiaye asked, are these really the roots of human trafficking? Are poverty and gender discrimination much more common today than ever before, causing massive growth in the trade in human beings? No – they're not.

Although poverty, gender discrimination, and political upheaval can create vulnerabilities in countries of origin, they are only important contributing factors, rather than root causes, of human trafficking today.

As Madame Ndiaye said in her speech, the kind of thinking that places emphasis on poverty and inequality as root causes has encouraged us for the last ten years to focus our counter-trafficking efforts disproportionately on the supply end of the human trafficking chain, or source countries. This is exactly like the focus in the fight against the international drug trade where millions of euros are poured into the eradication of poppies and the creation of income generation projects for farmers in Afghanistan and Colombia rather than focussing on the demand for drugs coming from the streets and nightclubs of New York and London. However, there is every indication that human trafficking is as widespread today as it was ten years ago. IOM believes that the time has come for us to stop focussing only on the supply end of the trafficking chain and to start looking at the demand for cheap labour and services in destination countries that is leading to the exploitation of migrants.

Up until now many destination countries have been hesitant to look at questions of demand, let alone do anything about it. And I suppose it is no wonder because the issue is very complex and involves the airing of a fair amount of dirty laundry. The issue touches on so many sensitive topics like the willingness of some employers in destination countries to pay for exploited labour, the willingness of members of the public to buy cheap tomatoes from Spain or cheap sex with foreign girls (this will only set you back £20 in London), and the unwillingness or incapacity of some governments to ensure that informal and unregulated work activities are brought within the protection of labour laws so that all workers enjoy the same labour rights.

Focusing on demand is of utmost importance. The fight against the slave trade over 150 years ago included the enactment and enforcement of legislation that prohibited the owning of slaves in Europe. When the demand for slaves collapsed, so did the transatlantic slave trade. Surely there are lessons for us.

The Nordic countries are to be commended for tackling this issue. Over the last ten years they have provided significant funding for anti-trafficking projects in source countries but in the last couple of years they have also really begun to look at their own roles as destination countries. Tomorrow I am attending a Nordic Expert Seminar on Trafficking for Forced Labour organized by the Swedish Government, the OSCE, ILO, and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime that will be specifically looking at demand reduction in the area of trafficking for labour exploitation.

3. IOM's operational approach to combating trafficking

Now I will turn, finally, to IOM's operational approach. The reason why I wanted to start off by talking about demand was not to say that it is the only thing we should be focusing on, but just to emphasize that to combat trafficking we need to follow what we at IOM love to call a "comprehensive approach" that combines actions and cooperation in countries of origin, transit, and destination.

IOM has been working against trafficking in persons since 1995. As of February 2007, IOM had implemented 212 Counter Trafficking (CT) projects in 84 countries around the world. We have provided direct assistance to over 10,000 trafficked women, men, girls, and boys.

IOM is concerned about MIGRANTS who are, or have been:

- deceived or coerced into situations of exploitation which unfold through forced labor, forced servitude, coercion, debt bondage, or other violations of their fundamental human rights connected with physical, sexual and psychological abuse.

IOM works against exploitation of migrants in all its forms, especially the severe human rights violations suffered by trafficked persons. We work with partners to:

- Provide protection to and empower trafficked women, men, girls, and boys
- Raise awareness/understanding of the issue
- Bring justice to trafficked persons.

Following on from Ms Biaudet's speech, I should also emphasize the importance of a human rights based approach that puts the victim first. We carry out a wide range of activities, hoping to have as comprehensive an approach as possible. I will briefly summarize them:

- In many countries IOM runs **shelters for trafficking victims** or works closely with NGOs or government agencies that provide shelters. For example, the IOM office in Ukraine runs rehabilitation centres, shelters, and even a hospital ward for trafficking victims. In the long-term our strategy is to build the capacity of governments, local authorities, and NGOs in order for them to take over this work, which we believe is the most sustainable solution.
- IOM provides **counselling** for trafficked victims in transit and destination countries. We help victims go through their options, for example whether they want to return home or not.
- We also provide **voluntary return assistance** for trafficking victims who want to return to their countries of origin, including shelter, medical assistance, psychological support, legal counseling, documentation, travel and transit support. Of course sometimes return is not in the best interests of the victim. Each case should be considered individually with the full participation and consent of the victim.
- In countries of origin IOM and partners provide **reintegration assistance** including medical and psychological assistance, social assistance, legal counseling and aid, vocational training, job referral, subsidized employment, self employment and micro credits. The aim of these programmes is to help victims recover from the trauma of their ordeal but also to prevent revictimization of trafficking victims by empowering and giving them new opportunities, for example through training or a new job. Our experience has shown that the potential for

revictimization is very high. Destination countries that support the reintegration of trafficking victims returning home should be commended.

- IOM carries out **awareness raising programmes and information campaigns** in countries of origin to warn potential victims of the dangers of trafficking. Awareness-raising activities target schools, vulnerable groups, and the general public. A variety of media are used and we spend a lot of time to ensure we reach our target. Last year we finished a large information campaign for youth in the Baltic States to raise awareness about the risks of working abroad, basically encouraging them to ask the right questions. The idea is not to stop them from going abroad, just to make sure they are smart about their decisions. Increasingly, IOM is also carrying out information campaigns in countries of destination, for example targeting users of sexual services.
- An important part of our work is **capacity building or training** for government authorities, law enforcement officials, NGOs, social service providers, and so on. For example in a couple of weeks' time IOM is holding a training seminar for police, border guards, and customs officers in Estonia. We will be covering identification of victims, interviewing techniques, relevant trafficking legislation, and how to build a good case that will lead to a prosecution.
- IOM also provides **technical assistance** to governments, for example by helping them develop legislation and action plans against TIP
- We also carry out a lot of **research and data collection**. Research is very important so we can understand the situation properly and know which kind of areas we should be targeting. Last year we published research on trafficking in the Kaliningrad region, funded by the Finnish Government. We also published research on the trafficking situation in Estonia last year. You can find these reports on our website www.iom.fi. Furthermore, IOM has set up a confidential database to record information about trafficking victims, which provides good material for analysis.
- And of course we are involved as much as possible in **seminars and policy development** related to trafficking to raise awareness of the issue.

Often we work with partners to provide this care.

It goes without saying that the activities that we carry out are dependent on many different things: the availability of funding from governments or external donors; political will; the level of understanding

and cooperation among key stakeholders, and so on. In an ideal world IOM and other organizations would be able to offer a full range of services in each and every country that is affected by trafficking but it simply does not work like that. Ironically enough because many source countries have received a lot of donor funding for this area, they are far ahead in their anti-trafficking efforts compared to destination countries, many of which are only just starting to work against trafficking at home.

The organizers wanted me to speak a little about what IOM is doing on trafficking in Finland. In 2005 we contributed to EU-funded research that outlined efforts on the investigation and prosecution of trafficking cases in Finland. In that project we were also able to send around nine law enforcement officials from Finland to European training on trafficking. In 2005 and 2006 we gave two short training sessions for police and border guards on the identification of victims. And last year we carried out a project looking at the illegal employment of third country nationals in Finland, Latvia, and North West Russia. During the research we identified some particularly vulnerable sectors for the exploitation of migrant workers, including the ethnic restaurant sector, so more needs to be done in this area. You can also find these reports on our website: www.iom.fi.

There is no easy solution for preventing trafficking in Finland – as for all complex issues, a comprehensive approach is required. We need to continue building the capacity of law enforcement to identify victims, deal with them appropriately, and build good cases that lead to prosecutions. There has already been success in this area in Finland and that should be applauded. We also need to continue training service providers so that they have the capacity to care for victims and counsel them well. And we need to think about the possibility of providing voluntary return to trafficking victims in the future. We must look at the exploitation of migrant workers more broadly and issues related to demand. We need to understand where the demand is coming from and stop it. And finally we need to think about opening more legal migration channels in order to balance the demand for labour and services with the supply.

By ensuring the rights of migrants, and enabling them to earn decent pay and enjoy decent working conditions, their productivity will contribute to Finland's economy as well as to their own country where they often send a part of their salary. It should and can be a win-win situation if we are prepared to face the facts and do something about it.