

Trafficking in Women in Roma communities

The final report from the project of Rights in Practice– Prevention of Trafficking in Women in Roma communities project

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INTRODUCTION

Thanks to support of OSF/ OSI Budapest La Strada ČR realized the project of Human Rights in Practice - Prevention of Trafficking in Women in Roma communities in the period from March 2003 through to March 2004. We decided to realize the specific-focused project for two reasons: repeated presence of female Romany clients among La Strada clients and accumulation of risk factors for trafficking in persons (TIP) in socially excluded locations inhabited by the Roma in majority.

One of the project objectives was to seek and test further possible effective ways of providing information on trafficking risks and possibilities of assisting victims with focus on this target group. The project was also directed by the effort to respect cultural and social specificity of Roma communities up to the maximal extent.

In trafficking in persons we primarily focused on the situation of women.

The project was implemented in three regions on a pilot basis – Ostrava region, Ústí nad Labem region and Prague.

In the frameworks of the project we obtained information concerning risk factors and cases of trafficking in Roma women, on the basis of which this report has been written. It is namely information obtained within the survey of the situation in individual locations; this information has been supplemented with analysis of the case of La Strada female Romany clients and with data from other sources.

In addition to rendering social services to victims of trafficking and prevention of this phenomenon, the message of La Strada ČR, o.p.s. is to disseminate information on the TIP issue and open discussion aiming at a social change. Within these objectives we would like to draw both professional and non-professional public's attention to the existence and risks of trafficking in persons, the victims of which are Roma women as well. It is necessary to bear in mind the fact that trafficking in persons is a serious breach of human rights.

TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

After 1989 trafficking in persons, the victims of which were women from Central and Eastern Europe, distinctively increased. At present we know, that the Czech Republic has become both the country of the victims' origin and the target and transit country. It is difficult to establish precise official statistics recording the situation of trafficking in women in the CR. One of the reasons is the fact that trafficking in persons is carried on illegally. According to information from the police sources and from field programme workers we may assume that only a small proportion of the trafficked women get in contact with the police or a support organization.

(We have to emphasize that trafficking in women cannot be only identified with prostitution, illegal migration into sexual industry or transfer of persons in general.)

La Strada uses the definition of trafficking in women according to Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime:

“Trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. (OSN, Palermo, 2000)

We consider trafficking in persons a serious breach of human rights.

However, the Czech legal code does not regulate trafficking in persons as a whole. The basic document of the Czech law concerning trafficking in persons is **the Constitution**, especially **Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms**. Trafficking in persons is especially regulated by provisions contained in the second Chapter "Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms" This Chapter defines e.g. "personal freedom", "freedom of movement", "ban on torture or cruel treatment", "right to maintain human dignity".

The only legal rule to explicitly speak about trafficking in persons is **the Criminal Code** in

- Section 246 Trafficking in Persons
- Section 216 Trafficking in Children

The Criminal Code also contains other provisions that may concern trafficking in persons:

- Section 204 Procuring (Prostitution),
- Section 231 Restriction of Personal Freedom,
- Section 332 Deprivation of Personal Freedom,
- Section 233 Abduction to a Foreign Country.

SITUATION IN ROMA COMMUNITIES IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

According to the 2001 census approximately 11 000 Roma live in the Czech Republic. However, within activities to support and work with the Roma community we work with estimations of actual number of members of this ethnic. The most often 250 –300 thousand Romany are mentioned.¹

The historical development, especially since the Second World War up to now, has created the specificity of Romany residential structures, i.e. local concentration of Romany in enclaves surrounded by the majority population.² In particular, tendencies of some local governments to push Roma communities from the centres to their peripheries or in some cases even outside the cities have grown recently.

At present not only the fact that **the residential segregation** has ethical dimension is discussed; especially the fact, that Romany enclaves, characterized by social homogeneity, are becoming ghettos, is considered dangerous.³ **Ghettos**, whose common feature is social exclusion of their population, social problems increase, increased occurrence of social and pathologic phenomena, and especially their gradual isolation from the surrounding world and deepening resignation of the inhabitants towards the possibility to change this situation.

- **In Roma ghettos and locations with high concentration of Romany risk factors are accumulating, while significantly increasing threat to Roma women of trafficking.** With regard to the social and economic situation it is mostly unemployment, difficult employability, poverty, low education, acceptability of unprotected employment or drug and alcohol addiction. These **risk factors** are followed by next ones, related to **ethnic and cultural pertinence of women to the Roma community** – a different attitude to women's rights, orientation to the present, growing number of emigrating Romany and, last but not least, exoticism of the Roma women for potential purchasers. Also general **ignorance**, in socially excluded locations and Roma communities, of women concerning trafficking, even deeper due to the fact that the community inhabitants are **difficult to inform**, is a serious risk factor.

Accumulation of Risk Factors for Trafficking in Persons in Roma Community

The most important target group to La Strada prevention is endangered women and girls. There is no doubt that Roma women and girls from the above-stated regions are among this group, especially on the basis of occurrence of several factors being identifiable risks for trafficking in women:

- **Unemployment** – Unemployment as one of the risk factors of trafficking in women is present twice in the target group. Two of the selected locations (Ostrava and Teplice regions) show a high rate of unemployment in the region. Also employability as the necessary condition for applicability at the labour market is much lower with the members of the Roma community than with the majority members.⁴

¹Kalibová, K.: Romové z pohledu statistiky a demografie. In Romové v České republice. Socioklub Praha 1999, p.98

²Baršová, A.: Problémy bydlení etnických menšin a trendy k rezidenční segregaci v České republice. In: Romové ve městě, Socioklub Praha 2002, p. 9

³ ibid. p. 27

⁴ Kaplan, P.: Romové a zaměstnanost neboli zaměstnatelnost Romů v České republice. In Romové v České republice. Socioklub, Praha 1999. p.366

- **Education** – Women with lower education become clients of La Strada more often. The fact is that members of the Roma community complete the elementary education the most often ⁵.
- **Poverty** – In general we may say that the social level of the Romany population is still lower than the social level of the remaining population. However, there are locations – especially Roma ghettos - where it must be pointed out that their members live under conditions beyond compare worse than other citizens'.⁶
- **Unprotected work** – Due to the high rate of unemployment in the Roma community many Romany solve their difficult social situation by various occasional seasonal jobs. These are either jobs contracted through a contract for work or illicit work. Earnings obtained in this way have become a standard in some Roma communities. Considering the fact that many women become victims of trafficking in persons due to acceptance of a job offer without employment contract, it is obvious that Roma women are clearly a threatened group. Also due to the fact that women working in the sexual industry (including Roma women as well) are not protected in work by any legal regulations, the risk that they will become victims of trafficking increases.
- **Ignorance** – We speak about ignorance as the risk factor at several levels. In general we may say that the women, who have become victims of trafficking, did not have information of the fundamental human rights and the legal system in the CR. These women also lacked information of possible risks of work abroad and methods of avoiding risky situations. For the target group it is necessary to point out that inhabitants of socially excluded locations have a lower possibility to access information. For some Roma communities also their distrust in information, whose bearers come from the majority society, is characteristic.
- **Family background** – The family background, where a potential victim of trafficking grows up, is an important factor. The data of Stichting tegen Vroewenhandel (The Fund Against Trafficking in Women) and La Strada experience show that women coming from problematic families become the victims of trafficking more often. The life in a ghetto is mostly the cause for decline of the traditional family values. Romany ghettos are no exception in this respect.
- **Age** - La Strada experience shows, that still younger women become the victims of trafficking. A young girl with no factual life experience becomes a victim of trafficking more easily than a mature woman. Romany girls grow up physically earlier than girls from the majority society and they look visually older already at a very young age.
- **Drug and alcohol addiction** - Addiction to drugs, alcohol or slot machines is financially very exhausting for the addicted person. The drug addiction itself is often the cause for why young girls (and boys) start their prostitution "career". In some cases the parents' addiction drives their daughter into prostitution. In the recent years the workers of organizations dealing with prevention and treatment of drug addictions state the growth in the number of drug users in the Roma community. Also the life in desperation of Romany ghettos is one of the factors contributing to drug addictions increase.

Roma women carry other more risk factors relating to trafficking in their life, based on reality of the social and cultural background, where they grow up and live:

- **Attitude to women's rights** – The Roma community is traditionally patriarchal, women, perhaps except "phuri daj" – the grand mother – have not been much respected in the community. This attitude to women has survived till present (and it is still worsening with deterioration of the social situation of communities); not only the male part of the community bears such attitude; most women accept this fact as well and consider it a rule. The dominant position of the man, who needs to demonstrate his power, may result in domestic violence centred on his wife, and very often children witness it, too. The study called "Situation of Roma Women in Europe" even declares that domestic violence in Roma communities may be either the result of cultural customs or consequence of a bad social or economic situation⁷ This statement is also supported by the *poverty culture*⁸, at present often applied in the situation of Roma communities.
- **Orientation to the present** – Time perceiving may become a risk factor for trafficking in women. The Roma, to who often applies the fact that they live just for this day, often decide upon their immediate state of mind, immediate need. Thus they e.g. likely accept the offer of a profitable job abroad, however, without trying to identify the rate of risk.

⁵ Kaplan states the elementary education with up to 80-85 % at any age. Kaplan, P.: Romové a zaměstnanost neboli zaměstnatelnost Romů v České republice. In Romové v České republice. Socioklub, Praha 1999. s.359

⁶ Kepková, M., Vášek, P.: Romové v systémech sociální ochrany. In Romové v České republice. Socioklub, Praha 1999. s.383

⁷ Bitu, N.: Report The Situation of Roma/Gypsy Women in Europe. Roma Center for social Intervention and Studies. <http://www.romawomwn.org/network/reports.php> 8.11.2002

⁸ by Oscar Lewis

- **Roma emigration** - The present Roma emigration increases probability of the fact that a girl or woman will travel abroad. Whatever the reasons for the Roma emigration are – economic or fear of race discrimination - the Roma women and girls may find themselves in foreign surroundings abroad.
- **Exoticism** - In connection with trafficking in persons the specialized study Situation of Roma Women in Europe refers to the fact that Roma women are becoming more often „exotic trafficking material“.⁹

It is necessary to state some more facts related to the CR situation in addition to the stated risk factors, important with respect of the Roma community.

- **Geographic location** – Advantageous geographic location is the cause for why the CR is at the same time the country of origin, transit country and the target country for trafficking in women.
- **Economic situation of the state** – The economic situation of the state is the next factor influencing trafficking.
- **Differences between the wages of men and women** - The difference between the wages still survives especially in less qualified jobs (the wage of women represents 75% of the wage received by men in a comparable job) and is one of the reasons for increasing unemployment of women.
- **High profit from trafficking in women and small risks** – Trafficking in women is a kind of organized crime, bringing high profit. By estimations the profits are even four times higher than profits from trafficking in drugs.¹⁰

PROJECT REPORT

In the course of a year-duration of the project Human Rights in Practice - Prevention of Trafficking in Women in Roma Communities we specifically tried to obtain concrete information from the field, which would help to open a professional discussion on this problem. Opening the issue for the general professional public, possibility of La Strada cooperation and individual subjects from regions and targeted dissemination of information is the mean of reducing risks of trafficking in persons and making accessible assistance to victims living in or coming from the socially excluded locations.

Within the project we specifically visited locations in three regions, where prevailingly Romany live – the Ostrava region, Ústí nad Labem region and Prague.

We aimed at the survey of the specifics of the individual regions and disseminate prevention information to the communities. The survey was carried out namely through half-controlled interviews in meetings with workers of institutions and organizations, who know the situation in individual locations and provide social services there.¹¹ In obtaining information 3 female advisors cooperated directly from the regions. Within the project the advisors also held half-controlled interviews on the issue especially with Roma women. The data obtained from the fieldwork have been completed with analysis of the cases of Roma women – clients, who have used services of La Strada, with information obtained during prevention meetings in individual locations, and observations, experience and opinions of Romany students from RSSS (Roma Secondary Social School) in Kolín.

In the course of the project work we did not try to contact women working in prostitution personally, or enter the environment of erotic clubs or street prostitution.¹² Information from this environment was mediated for us by organizations providing services to women in prostitution, and the police staff.

Possibilities and Limits of Obtaining Information on Trafficking in Persons

⁹ Bitu, N.: Report The Situation of Roma/Gypsy Women in Europe. Roma Center for social Intervention and Studies. <http://www.romawomwn.org/network/reports.php> 8.11.2002

¹⁰ Obchod se ženami. Bratislava 2001. The La Strada materials.

¹¹ During the field work 47 interviews were held with 74 persons altogether. They were namely workers providing social services in Roma communities (field social workers, Roma advisors, workers of authorities for social and legal protection of children, community center workers, persons organizing leisure or educational activities in the communities, streetwork organization staff, criminal police staff and UOOZ (Organized Crime Detection Division).

¹² Interviews or contacts directly in the prostitution environment would be dangerous both for La Strada workers and potential victims of trafficking.

Several factors influenced obtaining information on TIP in the locations especially from the workers working directly in Roma communities and women from the communities. Trafficking in women is often considered prostitution; many taboos relate to prostitution in Roma communities. Prostitution itself is not acceptable by the traditional values of Roma communities, and its practicing was unthinkable “shame” for the woman’s family and for herself. The taboos related to prostitution were more or less reflected in many interviews held; many interviewees reflected the same taboos as an obstacle to work on the TIP issue, or prostitution.

It was often possible to receive generalizing answers to direct questions concerning prostitution of Roma women, while in these answers prostitution was evaluated as growing and unprecedented problem in the past; however, in the “own location” the existence of prostituting women was often denied. However, it was apparent from the context and individual remarks that in some parts of the Ústí region prostitution was a “public secret”. (Chomutov, Most, Ústí n. Labem, Teplice, Krupka and others). The course of the interviews gradually showed that prostitution was a part of everyday life of some communities (almost everybody in this location knows someone in his/her surroundings, who is living or used to live on prostitution, however, this does not mean that all of them are prostitutes). Some interviews indicated that there were locations, where prostitution gradually became an acceptable standard (it is one of the few possible sources of funds for poor Romany families).

The traditional taboo concerning prostitution is also considered an obstacle especially to work of field social workers (FSW) and workers employed with anonymous facilities and Roma centres. They assume that there are likely to be more cases when women are forced into prostitution, than they are informed of – they shall never be informed of them also due to the existence of the taboo: concrete cases are not disposed of, women, who are likely to be forced into prostitution, do not ask for help namely in a situation, when they are abused by someone from their (extended) family). In some cases of the trafficked Roma women also the fact is important, that the women do not consider their situation abuse.

In obtaining information it was also important, that the majority of workers know the situation in their locations; however, they have only mediated information of the organized crime and prostitution (therefore also streetwork organisations, criminal police and ÚOOZ (Organized Crime Detection Division) were interviewed.)

The domestic violence issue seemed to be an interesting parallel to the TIP issue during the survey. Some responds clearly show that violence to women is often considered acceptable to a certain extent, in some cases ordinary. In case a woman is repeatedly exposed to violence from a man and considers her situation unbearable, traditional customs and taboos prevent her from asking for help.

The above-stated facts imply that obtaining information on TIP, while TIP in (not only) Roma communities in the CR has mostly the form of forced prostitution (i.e. combination of two tabooed issues – violence and prostitution), is influenced by traditional taboos related to these issues. These taboos are further reflected in the work of assisting jobs entering these locations.

Information on Trafficking in Persons

Terms “trafficking in persons” or “trafficking in women” themselves are not very well known. TIP is often confused with prostitution; in some cases the vision of trafficking process is connected with “tales” about girls kidnapped on hitchhike or way through a dark park; as a synonym for trafficking in women there also appeared „white slavery“.

To obtain further information the collocation “the woman has been sold” or “forced into prostitution” seemed clearer. After explaining the terms and the word content, the informants mostly turned out to have information on individual cases of TIP, in some cases including further details, e.g. process of hiring or transfer of a woman into a different location. A part of the informants knew La Strada organization.

Situation of Trafficking in Persons in Locations

The survey showed that the existence of TIP in socially excluded location is beyond any doubts. In majority of the visited locations the cases of trafficked women and girls or cases that most likely were trafficking were known both in the past and the present. In comparison with other problems (e.g. housing) TIP is considered rather a margin issue, because there are “only” individual cases. However, the interviews often contained assumption that the TIP occurrence may be, in a latent form, more frequent especially in the Ostrava and Ústí regions, however, it is not possible to obtain precise information.

In the individual visited regions the situation in TIP is different; while from the Ostrava region girls may be trafficked (sold or forced into prostitution) into other parts of the CR or abroad, in the Ústí region it is rather forced prostitution within the region or trafficking abroad. Also girls from the other parts including Slovakia are brought to the Ústí region. In Prague the situation is rather different, because the Prague girls and women – namely thanks to fantastic opportunities to obtain funds – are threatened with trafficking the least in comparison with Ostrava or Ústí women. Commercial abusing of the Roma children (boys), namely in the form of the boys' prostitution, appears to be much more serious there.

The Roma women and girls are mostly trafficked for prostitution. The trafficked Roma women (or women, who are likely to be abused in prostitution), about whom we have managed to obtain information, may be classified into approximately two groups: **The Roma women from the Czech Republic** trafficked within the CR or abroad and **The Roma women from Slovakia** trafficked to the CR.

The Roma Women from Slovakia

Situation in Locations

Especially Roma women from SR, who at present reside in or move to communities in towns and villages near the border with Germany, or those working in night erotic clubs, are trafficked and threatened with trafficking.

There are women among them, who have come to the Czech Republic to carry on prostitution voluntarily and later they were forced into prostitution by their pimps or they were not paid their earnings. Some women in Slovakia were offered jobs in the CR by their acquaintances or relatives or their mediation (in a bar, laundry, etc.), and after arrival in the CR they were forced into prostitution.

We have found out that especially in Ústí nad Labem or in surroundings of Teplice the women from Slovakia are usually accommodated or rather kept in flats directly in communities¹³. Occasionally the workers learned of women from Slovakia living in communities, however, they had no reason to meet them, or they assumed that it was difficult to get to those flats, where there were often many women. Although the interviewed workers mostly spoke about the women, who most likely practiced prostitution voluntarily, they pointed out the fact, that some of them could be or in the beginning were forced into prostitution. A few informants answered the question of why the police had not been contacted, that people from the communities did not trust the police or could be afraid of harming those women (they worked illegally, etc.).

Some erotic clubs and night bars near Teplice or in the borderland are in majority owned by the Romany from Ústí nad Labem or Chomutov. They bring both Roma women from Slovakia and the Czech Republic to them. In some of the clubs there were and most likely are women forced into prostitution.

In these clubs especially verbal violence (e.g. threats of shame in the community) is used against Roma women, however, also physical violence occurs. The pimps and the nightclub owners may easily abuse the fact that the women are semi-literal, they do not know where they are staying (e.g. they know that they are in the CR and they have gone through Prague), or the fact that the women come from completely different background (in some Roma settlements in Slovakia neither power nor water piping have been installed in the dwellings; in some locations flooring is often missing and the floor is covered with clay instead, etc.). The patriarchal organization of the communities contributes to obedience, lack of resistance, and acceptance of violence or unwillingness of Roma women to testify.

The Roma women from Slovakia are trafficked (or practice prostitution) in both the Czech Republic and abroad. Probably the most often journey of the Slovak Roma women leads via the CR to Germany.

La Strada Roma clients from Slovakia

In the period of August 2001 through December 2003 La Strada provided services to 5 Roma women from Slovakia.¹⁴

¹³ One of the co-workers stated that on initiation of her relative she put up one Roma girl from Slovakia for approximately two months, while this girl was probably living on prostitution. The girl's relatives then took the girl from the worker's flat away; the worker was no more interested in the girl's fate. She said such cases were „common“.

They were women trafficked into the CR or to Germany (1 case) for prostitution. All the women came from socially weak families, lived in poverty; some of them also mentioned strongly dysfunctional family background. The clients had achieved the same low education; none of them had information of the situation in the CR concerning opportunity to get a job, no information of risks of trafficking in persons. The next common feature was their low age (17 to 22 years old). All five clients came from villages or small towns. Four out of five women were trafficked to their relatives or "good friends"; in most cases they were Romany. The women accepted job offers in the CR, resp. Germany; it was either unspecified work or e.g. work in a laundry or a bar. Only one went to the CR with her pimp, knowing that she would live on prostitution. All the women travelled abroad to earn money.

At least in three cases in the Czech Republic someone from the local Roma community exploited their work, or accommodated them. On their own request three of the clients returned directly to their families, the background, where they had been trafficked from. Only one of the women, who after her return to Slovakia was kidnapped by a pimp again, then decided to accept accommodation in the asylum with a Slovak assisting organization. Three out of five women from the prostitution environment turned for help at the police, which identified them as victims of trafficking and mediated a contact with La Strada.

The Roma Women from the Czech Republic

Situation in Locations

During our survey in nearly each of the locations we recorded cases of girls, who had disappeared from the location and apparently become victims of trafficking. They were individual cases of which the informants knew by hearsay, or they worked on solution of the situation. The mentioned women were trafficked for providing sexual services within the country and abroad.

The trafficking mechanisms are similar to those with the mentioned Roma women from Slovakia. The girls are mostly addressed by their relatives or acquaintances to offer them work, in the case of the Ostrava region outside the location, in the case of the Ústí region in the surroundings or abroad. After leaving their home they are forced into prostitution. In some villages of the Ústí region there were recorded even individual cases, when the pimps sought women in difficult situations and offered them opportunity to earn money. Those women were then sold to another person and told that they had to earn money to pay their debt (costs of "purchase" or accommodation). Among the women earning their living by prostitution there are some women forced by their partner or family under threat. They exploit their work, too.

In the Most region we also came across the suspicion that the Roma women may be trafficked for the purpose of a marriage with Vietnamese. The practice of marriages with foreigners to be granted with the citizenship is quite frequent phenomenon in this location. The women are offered a financial sum for the realized marriage; however, these women have no information of the fact that after the marriage they will lose the chance to draw particular social benefits. There was also mentioned the case that the women wanted to withdraw from the marriage, however, she was disallowed to do that under threats of violence.

La Strada Roma clients from the CR

In the course of 2003 LS provided social service to 3 Roma clients with the Czech citizenship.¹⁵

They were women, who were mostly trafficked within the CR; in one case the client was trafficked to Germany, too. All women came from socially weak background – in some cases the clients grew up in a family unit, in two cases, as far as it is known, with adoptive parents or in a children's care home. The highest achieved education was secondary professional without the school-leaving examination, and one of the clients attended a special school. In their branch the clients worked for a short time or not at all. All came from a provincial town or a village. Their ages were from 19 to 28. All the clients were trafficked by a close person or a relative; in all cases they were Romany.

The trafficking ways were different in all three cases. In one case it was a dependent love affair between the client and the partner/trafficker, in the second case the client was offered a profitable job in Germany and in the third case the client lived on prostitution voluntarily in the beginning, later her pimp sold her to an Austrian citizen, who raped her permanently and trafficked on till she fled.

¹⁴In the monitored period La Strada provided assistance to 42 female clients, out of who eight women had the Slovak citizenship. Five of these women were Romany.

¹⁵ During the year La Strada provided services to 29 women- clients, 9 out of which had the Czech citizenship; 3 out of these nine women were Romany.

In all the cases someone from the Roma community exploited their work, in two cases they were Roma families. In two cases the clients lodged a complaint, in one case the client was put under probation for perjury. One of the clients moved to her friend's, who took her from the dangerous environment, the second client returned to her pimp, with whom she then had a baby, and another client was picked up by her family, she had contacted.

Two clients addressed LS via an assisting organization (an asylum house) and the police, one client contacted us via her friend – the saviour, who got the contact from a social worker from Prague known to him.

It is apparent from the above-mentioned facts, that Roma women with the Czech citizenship are mostly trafficked within the CR. Either family members or close friends are often the traffickers.

Relations to the Roma community complicate reintegration of these women in the majority society, even in case this community forces them into prostitution. These women mostly earn money to support their large families, but at the same time they are allowed to live in such community/family.

Considering the TIP situation in Roma communities we must mention that in the past year La Strada provided services to two non-Roma women, trafficked by the members of the Wallachian community. Many informants mentioned the fact that some Wallachian clans, known for e.g. their drug distribution, probably get earnings from trafficking in people, too.

Situations in Locations

Especially for prevention influence in the individual locations it is also important to consider risk factors, resp. circumstances related to or enabling trafficking in persons. In this respect especially prostitution, unemployment rate, labour migration, presence of groups of organized crime and possible connections to the procuring trade are interesting.

Prostitution Environment

The sex business is a risky environment, containing both women prostituting more or less voluntarily and women, who used to be trafficked or are forced to provide sexual services.

The situation in prostitution is different in the individual surveyed locations.

In the Ostrava region street prostitution of (not only) Roma women does not exist. Prostitution is practiced in several erotic clubs; however, we have not found out, whether the Roma women are present in this environment; in the clubs female foreigners work in majority. The Roma women occasionally provide sexual services in some lodging houses, where prevalingly foreign workers live.

The Roma women in Prague living on prostitution are rather an exception in communities, they are older women (appx. over 20), and younger women are mostly drug users. Relatively small frequency of the Roma women from Prague in the prostitution environment is probably caused by the fact that in Prague the Roma communities do not suffer from such poverty as in some, e.g. borderline areas. Prague also offers larger opportunities to get a job or earn extra money in addition to social benefits; in Prague there is also higher informedness of risks of social and pathologic phenomena. However, the boys' prostitution gradually becomes the standard, while this prostitution is commonly spoken of in the communities unlike the women's prostitution. In the Prague prostitution environment Roma women from other locations work, too – the qualified estimations of Roma women street prostitutions state appx. 30%.

Roma women, namely from SR, are characterized by the already-mentioned prostitution on lorry parking lots e.g. in the Prague surroundings. For example at the parking lot in Rudná u Prahy almost only Slovak Roma women and Roma pimps work. They are often women from the surroundings of the Slovak town of Michalovce. In some cases they have found out that their relatives are their pimps – both women and men. Girls are around 18 years old. They do not consider prostitution for pimps wrong, while they argue with the fact that "their pimps "feed them" or "buy presents for them". The girls often use drugs.

In the Ústí region some areas or municipalities are known for street prostitution.

The majority of Roma women, earning their funds in the sexual industry, work here in street prostitution. The most often reason for practicing prostitution is poverty or drug addiction. Among the women, who earn money in this way, we find those supporting the whole family (some of the women near the borderline have their permanent clients from Germany, who visit the whole family of the woman), young girls having decided to prostitute as the fastest and often the only way to earn money, or drug-addicted girls.

The ways of how the Roma women become prostitutes are different as well: offers of pimps, including promises of easy and high earnings on "recommendation" of a friend, who is already standing "on the road", pressure of the family or force into prostitution under threats and use of violence. In one of the borderline towns Romany clans operate, who mutually guard "their girls" from the window or "tour" their "routes" by car.

We have obtained information about erotic clubs owned by Romany, where Roma women are offered as well.

In the course of the survey we have found out cases of children's prostitution (including boys' prostitution); however, by the information we have managed to obtain, the number of children in prostitution is falling in the Ústí region.

For completion of the situation let us mention provable cases of trafficked Roma women or women carrying on prostitution, recorded in Spain, France, Denmark or in the Canary Islands.

Labour Migration

The background of migration within the CR or abroad is similar in the visited locations.

The whole families leave for foreign countries, however, it is not a mass phenomenon. The Roma emigrate in whole families or to someone's from their family, who has already left the country. The community does not consider migration something unknown or dangerous; nearly everybody knows someone, who has gone abroad, or returned from abroad.

Some Roma families migrate as a whole within the CR – this phenomenon may be caused by e.g. extremely low purchase prices of flats in some locations (e.g. Krupka). In specific cases some families, among others, decide to emigrate to "save" and take out their drug-addicted child from the risk environment.

In Roma communities it is not usual and nor the workers expect that women look for a job abroad voluntarily, e.g. as au pair, although in some cases the knowledge of language would enable this. However, the situation will possibly gradually change (see further).

There are known cases of women, who migrate within the CR from place to place for a short period. These women migrate to earn funds by prostitution (they are e.g. women from South Bohemia, Ostrava).

The Roma women from Slovakia, who also live on prostitution near the borderline, come to Roma communities and later also live there. This group of women was repeatedly mentioned as risky in relation to trafficking.¹⁶

Although the opinion that the Roma women do not migrate abroad by themselves is generally accepted, there were recorded cases of women living on prostitution in e.g. Germany, France, Spain or in the Canary Islands. This migration type is organized: it is not known, whether the women know before whether they will practice prostitution or not. In Chomutov there are individual cases of women, who got the chance to work outside the Republic through their acquaintances and relatives, mostly illegally and for a short time; it was mostly auxiliary work.

In relation to emigration, the marriages of Roma women with foreigners well known by hearsay have been mentioned.

Operation of Organized Crime Groups

Majority of the informants are not informed of operation of organized crime groups. Only some members of one of the Roma communities in Ústí are suspected of such activity. These persons deal with renting flats at excessively high rents and are known for rough practices in recovering such rent¹⁷. By unproved information, in

¹⁶ There is a risk that with growing poverty in Slovak Roma settlements a permanently higher number of girls shall migrate to the CR for prostitution purposes. It is also possible, that their earnings will be used to redeem debts of extorters, or that in the future Slovak extorters will traffic girls to the CR.

¹⁷ Similar cases have been recorded at other places as well, however the informants did not associate them with organized crime.

this community drug trafficking exists, too. By one of the workers, in the past the persons were said to deal with “white slavery”.

In the past a group operated in the Ostrava region exporting, among others, Roma women from the CR and from Slovakia abroad.

There are also cases known, when groups of pimps in the location obtained girls, whom then they forced into prostitution (e.g. Krupka).

The activity of organized groups has been only rarely proved (Ostrava, the Ústí region). In one case cooperation with persons from Roma communities in Slovakia was proved.

The Roma, resp. Roma women do not really trust in cooperation with the police, no matter if it is reporting a crime or true testimony in interrogation.

Domestic Violence

The domestic violence issue appeared to be an interesting parallel to trafficking in women, accompanied by unwillingness of women to cooperate, resp. solve their situation of a victim of violence. The workers, who knew cases of domestic violence committed towards women from Roma communities, repeatedly agreed on the fact that the women with such a problem would not turn to them with asking for help. They substantiate this experience by the fact, that for a woman it was a shame to complain of her husband or partner's behaviour to anybody outside the family, or that the women consider violence in various forms ordinary or acceptable. The interviewed workers even had the opinions that domestic violence was a common and ordinary part of the life in communities and they did not consider it a problem to be necessarily discussed. Frequent accepting domestic violence, its existence in communities or considering it an ordinary part of life have been confirmed both in interviews with Roma women and girls and in opinions of Roma male and female students.

Forced Labour

None of the informants knew a case of forced labour in this context, however they mentioned opportunities of seasonal work especially for Roma men, which may often end by unpaid wage, etc.

One of the informants remembered a case of Roma children from Slovakia, who begged in Ostrava streets. However, she was not able to respond, whether it was voluntary or involuntary money earning.

Extortion

One of the survey presumptions was that trafficking in persons might relate to extortion (illegal money lending at high interest). In locations where workers acknowledge the extortion problem existence, or it is known, no direct relation between practices of extorters and trafficking in persons has been identified.

However, some of the informants admit, that these phenomena may mutually relate indirectly. Their opinion in some cases is based on the fact, that the Slovak Roma women, whose cases they know, come to Bohemia, e.g. to the Teplice region to earn money by prostitution to pay extortion debts

Possibilities of Prevention and Information Dissemination

Prevention Meetings with Roma Women and Girls

In the course of the project of Human Rights in Practice – Prevention of Trafficking in Women in Roma communities La Strada held 14 prevention meetings especially directed for Roma girls of 12 years old and over. 234 girls attended the meetings altogether.

The objective of the prevention meetings is to inform girls of trafficking in women, risks related to travelling abroad and unprotected employment and possibilities of assistance in emergency situations. For this targeted group about a two-hour programme was made consisting of interactive educational methods together with specific prevention materials, fitting the group's needs.

The awareness of the girls attending the prevention meetings of existence or contents of the term of trafficking in women was different in individual locations – prostitution was prevailingly the first association. In some groups the girls had general awareness of this phenomenon.

During the prevention meetings we found out that nearly 3/4¹⁸ of the girls had thought about “taking their chance abroad”. This fact seems to be very dangerous especially regarding the fact that the groups we worked with were mostly very little informed of a possibility to enter into an employment contract (incl. information of the labour law in the CR), requirements of such contract or possibilities of verification of credibility of a potential employer. The girls (even the older participants) often have no information of the existence and operation of Czech consulates abroad. (Finding out the willingness of the girls to travel abroad confirmed by the following discussions during the meetings contrasts to statements of the informants within the survey, because these statements mostly incline to the opinion, that Roma women and girls would not seek any work abroad).

If the girls wanted or showed willingness to find information on potential employers or agencies offering jobs, majority of them would request no guarantees from their relatives, who would offer them jobs. In combination with the fact that two thirds of the girls agree with the statement saying that some of their relatives will help them to get a job and with the fact that majority of the female clients of the Roma origin had been trafficked by their relatives or acquaintances, it is alarming, too.

During the prevention meetings the fact that the target group had no necessary information to prevent TIP risks was confirmed. Many of the participants even have not the elementary information of how to act in labour and legal relations, also often acceptance of a job without any employment contract needs to be considered risky, namely if such work is mediated by someone known to the girls.

In the prevention meetings interactive methods proved useful, while they emphasize the girls’ activity and reflection of their own attitudes and knowledge. Together with the standard brochure, small pocket mirrors with a contact number, which are given to the girls as a present in conclusion, have proved useful as the prevention materials, as well.

Meeting the Assistance Job Staff

The male and female workers working directly in Roma communities are the irreplaceable element, which thanks to the knowledge of the background may be the first to identify a woman, resp. a victim in a critical situation and mediate relevant information for her.

In the course of the project survey of the situation in the communities we met workers providing social services in Roma communities (see above). Regarding the fact that the prostitution, resp. TIP issue, is not a standard part of this target group work and many taboos and stereotypes relate to it, it was very useful to hold personal meetings with these workers and discuss this issue. In opening cooperation it is necessary to take into account the fact that these people are often overloaded with their own agenda, therefore we cannot expect the TIP situation monitoring to be their priority.

In the personal meetings we could discuss everybody’s opinions and experience individually concerning the situation in a concrete location and working position. In the course of the personal meetings also information and prevention materials were disseminated. Information on TIP and prevention or assistance was also referred to at meetings of the Roma advisors and field social workers from the entire location held regularly at the regional or municipal level.

The personal meetings with this target group, whose primary intention was to obtain information relevant for TIP and seek possibilities of cooperation, proved to be one of the effective methods of dissemination of information on the issue.

On the basis of experience from the project work we may say that people working directly in Roma communities first of all need to obtain the sense of the TIP issue – know the general context of the issue, know TIP risk situations, be able to identify a possible TIP victim and mediate assistance for her.

Both Romany periodicals and minority radio broadcasting may be used for targeted information dissemination, too.

¹⁸ At the meeting the girls respond to 5 attitude questions in a test form, out of which some describe the most often mechanisms of the trafficking process. On the basis of the questions a discussion follows.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations:

With respect to the issue of trafficking in persons for providing sexual services there is the often-discussed question of determination resp. voluntary level of women working in prostitution. This question is relevant for the Roma women as well, among whom those working in prostitution support their partners or their whole families.

Regardless the desperate social situation and absence of real opportunities to get funds in a different way, we have to think about the fact why it is just women who support their family in that way and whether it is their choice? The situations looked upon by a person from a different environment (street organizations, the police) as restriction, pressure, abuse or force are considered by some Roma women usual, ordinary or obvious – to be sure, their pimp supports them, buys clothes and sometimes buys presents for them. If some Roma women consider home violence a standard and using home violence (mainly justifiable violence!) may be considered legitimate in some communities, there is a question of whether these women are able to reflect infringement of their rights.

*In prevention of trafficking in persons the **empowerment** principle is one of the basic sources focusing on extending and using own opportunities and rights. This attitude, applicable in education and social work, is combined with transferring information upon which persons are able to make enlightened decisions.*

In direct prevention work with girls and women La Strada uses interactive techniques, based on this principle itself; girls and women can reflect their own situation and seek their own limits.

Opportunity to make enlightened decisions of one's own life is linked with opportunity to obtain resp. to have access to information. The women living in socially excluded locations (in the CR and Slovakia) are handicapped in access to many information sources. Many Roma women living in excluded locations have achieved low education and some of them are not used to orientate in situations outside their communities.

*In prevention of trafficking and re trafficking **it is necessary to provide access to information** for this target group of women. .*

To prevent trafficking in Roma communities La Strada use the informing of workers operating in the communities and being able to transfer information to their clients, distribution of prevention materials out of which some have been made for this target group, and holding prevention meetings with the girls and women from these locations.

Poverty is one of the basic *push* factors related to trafficking in persons. The socially excluded locations especially due to high percentage of unemployment, poverty and social impenetrability are the ideal background for illegal activities such as procuring and trafficking in persons. Some women that have been trafficked decide to stay in prostitution and accept certain forms of violence committed to them, including those qualified as crimes; poverty of the background they have left and zero perspectives in obtaining a job are probably even more unacceptable for them with respect of a possible return. Among those women there are also Roma women from the CR, Slovakia and other countries.

***Goal-directed strategies to beat poverty and social exclusion** should become a part of struggle against trafficking, which should result in improving the situation and **equalizing opportunities at the labour market** for people living under the poverty line.*

Conclusion

On the basis of a yearly work on the project of Human Rights in Practice – Prevention of Trafficking in Women in Roma Communities we may say that Roma women are a group endangered by trafficking in persons. Regarding the fact that this group indicates cultural specifics and often lives in social exclusion, it is necessary to choose adequate prevention forms. The similarity in cases of trafficking in Roma women is based on the stated specifics – namely increased probability that they will be trafficked by someone they know. Regarding the nature of trafficking in persons linked to organized crime and consequence of so called glacier phenomenon¹⁹, we may

¹⁹ Imagine a glacier in the sea, while only the top of which is visible above the sea surface and a huge mass of ice is hidden under the water. The imaginary glacier top represents the cases of women, who have escaped from the trafficking environment or have been saved or identified by the police as victims of trafficking. Under the imaginary surface there still remains an incomparable bigger group of women, who succeeded to escape, but for many reasons have not used services of any assisting organization nor contacted the police. This category also includes women, who later stayed in prostitution

expect that the number of trafficked women from Roma communities is higher than we are able to determine. The problem of trafficking in persons cannot be compared with other social problems people from socially excluded locations have to face (unemployment, eviction, etc.) in terms of its extent and frequency, nevertheless we have to take into account its seriousness and we may definitely state that the issue of trafficking in persons is a relevant issue for professional discussion or, if you like, seeking other possibilities of prevention and assisting victims. Within this effort to minimize risks of trafficking in persons we must also reflect broader connections and social factors affecting the life situation of Roma women.

This report is not an output of a representative research; it is findings purposefully collected in the course of the year work on the project. The objective of La Strada is to transfer the found information and open discussion on the issue of trafficking in women in Roma communities. We also believe that this text may serve as the basis for larger and systematically structured research that would help to map this issue.

ENCLOSURES:

The selected cases of Roma clients, who have used La Strada services.

Case No. 1

M.P., born in 1984, grew up together with her 6 siblings and parents in a provincial town in Slovakia. Later the family moved to a village to the grandparents' house. The mother did not take care of the children much, did not send them to school, and perhaps in her fourth school term M.P. was put to a special school. She did not complete her special apprenticeship and instead of attending school she was forced by her father to do housework and work "in housekeeping".

In 2001 due to conflicts the client left her family and moved to her elderly brother and his wife. After a short time they had a visit from their relatives, who, as she learned later, allegedly paid CZK 10,000 and took her to Bohemia. In Bohemia she was supposed to help her aunt in a laundry. Together with other girls she was accommodated in a private flat in Teplice and she was forced, as well as the other girls, to carry on prostitution. After a few days she managed to escape and ask the police for help. The police contacted La Strada.

The client insisted on returning to her family in Slovakia, and La Strada mediated the return for her the following day.

Case No. 2

L.K., born in 1984, completed her elementary education. She grew up with her parents in the CR till she was 17, but she did not get on well with them. After completing the elementary school she worked in an animal production factory for a year.

After one argument with her mother she escaped to her friend in southern Bohemia, where she voluntarily started to earn her living by prostitution, which she carried on perhaps for 2 years. She lived in a Roma community for the entire period.

She got to La Strada a few days after her pimp sold her to an Austrian citizen, who raped her for a few days and forced to have sex with other men.

After her escape the client lodged a complaint of the man and the police hid her in a charity asylum house, whose staff contacted La Strada.

Before she got into the care of La Strada a probation officer tried to assist her for a long term.

In the beginning the client wished to find a long-term accommodation and a job in Prague. However, a few days later she contacted her biological family and finished her cooperation with the organization.

Case No. 3

N.S., born in 1975, grew up in a children's care home in the CR, she graduated from a two-year training specialization of weaver, in which branch she has never worked yet.

She was forced into prostitution by her partner in the CR first, later he took her to Germany a few times. Later he sold her to a Romany family in the north of Bohemia, where she met her present boyfriend. He helped her to get out of there and now wants to take care of her.

After she escaped the Romany family permanently contacted her and they tried to blackmail her, forcing her to return to them.

The client's boyfriend contacted La Strada, stating that he needed to hide her for some time. The client was provided with secret asylum accommodation and all social services. In the beginning she did not communicate much, which might have been caused by her low confidence in social institutions. The client was in a bad mental condition and because she had suicidal tendencies, she was placed in the crisis centre for a few days. During her stay in the crisis centre the staff managed to establish a more intensive relation with her. A few days after her arrival from the crisis centre she wanted to return to her boyfriend. For some time she was in touch with La Strada. She was equipped with all necessary documents and afterwards she established a permanent residence at her boyfriend's, where she is trying to find a job with no success.