

Trafficking of women:

Exploring effective policies and mechanisms to prevent it through education

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Table of contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION **5**

**INTRODUCTORY SPEECH BY H.E. ROBERT ZELDENRUST, AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND
PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS PERMANENT DELEGATE TO UNESCO** **5**

WELCOME REMARKS BY Ms IRINA BOKOVA, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF UNESCO **5**

PANEL PRESENTATIONS **5**

PRESENTATION BY Ms CORINNE DETTMEIJER-VERMEULEN 5

PRESENTATION BY Ms MARIA GRAZIA GIAMMARINARO 7

PRESENTATION BY Ms MYRIA VASSILIADOU 8

TESTIMONIES FROM BULGARIA AND NIGERIA **9**

PRESENTATION BY Ms ANTOANETA VASSILEVA 9

PRESENTATION BY H.E. MARYAM KATAGUM 10

DISCUSSION **10**

CONCLUSION **11**

Executive Summary:

The conference “Trafficking of women: exploring effective policies and mechanisms to prevent it through education” was organized in the context of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, by the Delegation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to UNESCO and coordinated by the Division for Gender Equality on behalf of UNESCO.

The Conference was opened by **H.E. Robert Zeldenrust, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to UNESCO and Irina Bokova, Director General of UNESCO**. It featured **presentations** by Corinne Dettmeijer-Vermeulen (Dutch National Rapporteur on Trafficking Of Human Beings) Maria Grazia Giammarinaro (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings) and Myria Vassiliadou (European Union Anti-Trafficking Coordinator) as well as **testimonies** by Antoaneta Vassileva (Secretary General of the National Commission for Combating Human Trafficking in Bulgaria) and H.E. Maryam Katagum (Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to UNESCO) followed by a **discussion** with the participants that included representatives of UNESCO’s member states, members of the UNESCO secretariat and representatives from the civil society.

Key facts, findings and recommendations included the following:

Trafficking is equivalent to modern day slavery. It affects millions of victims every year, a disproportionate proportion of whom are women. For example, women make up 79% of the overall number of victims of trafficking in the European Union. Trafficking is therefore a gendered phenomenon, tied to patriarchal norms and gender-based discrimination, and gender analysis must be applied to develop effective strategies for its eradication.

Education and awareness raising, as cost-effective preventive measures, can help combat the issue at its roots. Prevention through education must start as early as possible, and target young boys and girls in schools not only as potential victims but as potential future consumers as well, in order to act on the demand for trafficked victims. Awareness raising strategies should tackle economic and educational inequalities, while also acting on socially accepted or constructed aspirations for both sexes and their interrelations with gender-based violence.

In order to achieve success in fighting against the trafficking of human beings, the following recommendations have been highlighted:

- Both qualitative and quantitative data concerning this phenomenon, its causes and consequences, needs to be increased.
- Partnerships and coordination among all actors dealing with human trafficking – both governmental and non-governmental – should be strengthened, in particular involving the civil society and the media.

It was further noted that UNESCO has a specific expertise in designing and carrying out awareness raising campaigns and can therefore be a valuable ally for governments and other multilateral organizations to help disseminate good practices in awareness raising and prevention through education.

1. INTRODUCTION

In his introductory remarks, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to UNESCO, **Mr Robert Zeldenrust**, emphasized that the topic of the conference was at the heart of UNESCO's core mission: education is a key vehicle that teaches values and skills to young girls and boys, enabling them to lead decent lives. It is therefore crucial to bring education into the debate on the trafficking of women because it has the potential to create important impacts.

In light of UNESCO's debate on its core mission, and the necessity to focus its work, it is important to consider the agency's potential role in this area, and this conference should help shed light on this question.

Ms Irina Bokova, Director General of UNESCO, welcomed the participants to this event at UNESCO headquarters and recalled that the main pillar of the Education First initiative is education for human dignity and human rights. Trafficking of women is a crime against humanity. Though the data on trafficking varies with the methodology and scope of enquiries, the scale of the problem rings alarm bells, since figures show that at least 2.5 million women are trafficked every year. The combat against trafficking will be a major challenge for the 21st century. In this respect, the position of UNESCO is clear: education will be on the frontlines of the combat against trafficking, helping women and men to better protect themselves as well as sensitizing those who could potentially take advantage of this crime as consumers.

2. VIDEO PROJECTION

Video projection of a short film featuring Emma Thompson:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UhRlcu1QdTk&noredirect=1>

3. PANEL PRESENTATIONS

- a. Presentation by Ms **Corinne Dettmeijer-Vermeulen**, Dutch National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings

In the first part of her presentation, the Dutch National Rapporteur focused on her experience as a judge, using examples to illustrate the variety and complexity of this issue. According to Ms Dettmeijer-Vermeulen, trafficking takes many forms, including, for example, debt-bondage, false jobs, or forced surrogacy¹. Irrespective of the form it takes, human trafficking is about exploiting people, using them as disposable goods, and as less than humans.

¹ Commercial surrogacy involves a contract in which a woman agrees to carry a child for another couple or person, to whom she will relinquish this child once he/she is born. There is a risk with commercial surrogacy that women aren't acting of their own free will, are forced to become surrogates and exploited. Social determinants such as debt, poverty, a vulnerable social position and illiteracy can force a woman into becoming a surrogate, in situations where furthermore the surrogate mother bears the majority of financial and health risks. (National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings (2012). *Human trafficking for the purpose of the removal of organs and forced commercial surrogacy*. The Hague : BNRM)

An essential step in the combat against trafficking is to create awareness among all women and men. Trafficking exploits desperation, offering tempting proposals to people in vulnerable situations. Although trafficked victims wish to break away from the trap they fall victim to, without economic means, appropriate legal status, or support, this is near impossible. Trafficking is an issue of modern slavery, and it seems inconceivable that such violations continue to take place around the globe, including in the countries of the European Union. For many, this on-going slavery is an inconvenient truth. However, the battle against trafficking must continue but we must also understand that governments will not be able to succeed alone.

In the Netherlands, over 1200 victims of internal trafficking were identified in 2011. However, this number could easily be higher. About one third of the known victims are young Dutch women and girls and 40% of these victims are minors. These numbers are increasing. The victims are getting younger teenage girls, as young as 14 are especially vulnerable, and thus a prey for traffickers, regardless of their socio-economic status.

In many countries, it is difficult to get the problem of internal trafficking recognized, let alone getting these cases convicted.

To be effective, we must leave the moral debate on the legality of the sex-work sector aside and focus on awareness-raising. Too many people in the Netherlands hold a romantic view of prostitution, and believe that it is primarily the independently working Dutch women that populate the red-light district. However, many of the women working as prostitutes are being forced, and there is nothing romantic about that. The population of prostitutes in Western Europe has changed dramatically over the last ten years, as has the profile of traffickers, yet we tend to ignore these changes.

Ms Dettmeijer noted that it is easier to look the other way, because it suits us. We are easily outraged by child labour in China, yet do not think twice about cheap products in our own supermarkets or restaurants, also the fruit of exploitation in our own backyards.

Governments must mobilize the general public, creating awareness about the situation. For example, the exhibit "Journey" in The Hague was a powerful awareness-raising tool, engaging all the senses of the participants (olfactory, vision, etc.).

Fighting against trafficking also requires changing the way we see victims. They are firstly human beings, and not only workers or prostitutes. A young woman forced into prostitution asks herself: "how can I get people to see that I was a victim of oppression and violence and that I'm not a whore?"

Including education in the fight against trafficking means integrating human trafficking in the school curriculum, in order to raise awareness with young boys and girls as early as possible.

Ms Dettmeijer-Vermeulen concluded her presentation by recommending that awareness raising about the dangers of trafficking must start with young boys and girls, who should be targeted both as possible victims and possible future consumers. She stressed that slavery should not only be a subject for history lessons.

- b. Presentation by **Maria Grazia Giammarinaro**, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Special Representative and Coordinator for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings

Ms Giammarinaro began her intervention with a reminder of the scale of the human rights violations linked to human trafficking, citing the 2012 ILO estimates. These estimates find a massive situation of labour exploitation – 21 million women and men are subjected to forced labour each year, with women representing 40% of the victims. ILO also estimates that women are 55% of the total number of victims of trafficking globally.

Currently, the OSCE is conducting research on cases of sexual exploitation and/or domestic servitude interpreted as cases of torture. In many cases of trafficking for sexual exploitation or domestic servitude, victims show the same symptoms as those of victims of torture.

There are multiple ways to manipulate girls and women into trafficking-related activities. Poverty plays an important role, where the “feminization of poverty” is increasingly becoming a key factor. This is exacerbated by the current economic crisis, given that women are employed mostly in the informal economy which is affected more quickly and seriously. The lack of economic and educational opportunities can serve as powerful factors of vulnerability, but, overall, victims are characterized by a shared aspiration for a better life. This aspiration is the driving factor of this phenomenon.

Ms Giammarinaro emphasized the role of gender discrimination in increasing vulnerability to trafficking. Gender-based discriminations are still on-going in many societies where social norms attribute a higher value to men’s role in society. Patriarchal norms drive the control over the female body, and are the very basis of trafficking of women for sexual exploitation. The Alliance against Trafficking in Persons, a platform for cooperation between UN agencies and other NGOs working in the field of trafficking, held a conference on the links between trafficking and discrimination. Discrimination is not only a root cause, but also a driving factor and a multiplier of social vulnerability. Migrant men and women are kept in vulnerable situations by an environment of discrimination, which they face at work and in their daily lives.

It is important to keep this in mind while efforts are made to help those most vulnerable. Women and migrant workers face intersecting factors of discrimination, and we must not forget the hidden racist patterns where “otherness” attributes a low social standing. Women in prostitution are systematically stigmatized. Efforts to address discrimination and trafficking must encourage women and men to see and find possibilities in their counties, in their own social environments, without delegitimizing their aspirations.

Governments have an obligation to fight against this crime, to help victims and to develop prevention tools for potential victims as well. As we seek tailor-made preventive responses to this issue, it is important to target internal trafficking as well. The mandate of the OSCE is rooted between security and the promotion of human rights.

In concluding her presentation, Ms Giammarinaro noted that a successful action plan to combat trafficking must have four components: prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership. Education is a key element in this plan, as it is a basic need for all women and men who want to have options in life. Ms Giammarinaro gave examples of three OSCE anti-trafficking projects in Moldova, Albania and Ukraine where education is a strong component, either by offering skills training for vulnerable boys and girls or

educational opportunities for survivors of trafficking. In Ukraine in particular, the project concentrates on female victims, aiming at creating job opportunities for them through networks of women in business.

c. Presentation by **Myria Vassiliadou**, European Union Anti-Trafficking Coordinator

The EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator echoed her fellow panellists by reminding the audience that we cannot afford to turn a blind eye to human trafficking. Human trafficking is a severe form of organized crime, which generates over 2.5 billion euros of illegal earnings annually in Europe alone. This is an incentive for the criminals, but it should also serve as an incentive for public authorities to act on this issue.

Trafficking for sexual exploitation of women, though not the only form of trafficking, is the most pervasive one. Although this crime takes on multiple facets, trafficking is, at its heart, an inability to have a say over one's life. Trafficked persons are forced, coerced, and kept in situation of grave exploitation despite their will.

This situation cannot only be the domain of Ministries of Interior or law enforcement and security forces. Collaborative solutions are needed to fight against trafficking, and prevention will play a key role in tackling this complex phenomenon. This is a problem that must be stopped at its roots instead of just dealing with the crimes as they happen.

In the European Union today, there are 880 000 victims of trafficking, and of these trafficking victims, 76% are victims of sexual exploitation, and 79% of overall victims are women and girls. There is a clear link between violence against women and trafficking in human beings. Gender equality considerations matter to understand these issues at many levels. In particular, a gender perspective better allows us to understand vulnerability, which is linked to the lack of educational and employment opportunities, and cultures of violence.

Trafficking used to be a predominantly male crime, but increasingly women are getting involved, either as accomplices or as perpetrators. This must be acknowledged, because for some women the only way out of exploitation is to become exploiters themselves. Ms Vassiliadou argued for the systematic integration of a gender perspective in anti-trafficking measures, as this perspective highlights how the vulnerability of potential targets is linked to gender-based violence as well as the lack of opportunities. The approach to eradicate human trafficking must be gender-focused because the phenomenon is gendered.

In this framework, the EU has three functions: legislation, policies and funding. The role of the EU coordinator is to gather all stakeholders and to try to mainstream trafficking across various policies areas. With regard to EU legislation, there is a new directive, in which Member States are encouraged to focus on reducing demand, and to take measures to criminalize the use of services that are the object of exploitation.

In terms of policy, the new strategy for the eradication of trafficking is organized around 5 goals:

- Protection and assistance to victims
- Prevention
- Prosecution
- Coordination

- Increasing knowledge in areas where there is little information

The EU will launch a study to better understand the gender dimensions of this issue and to more effectively inform a gendered strategy to fight trafficking. Ms Vassiliadou linked her recommendations to UNESCO's role on a global scale. She suggested that UNESCO could be involved in the EU's studies and awareness raising campaign exercises. She argued that the costs of preventive actions – such as, in particular, awareness raising - is lower than the cost of prosecution or care of victims, which should prompt renewed action at a time of financial crisis.

To bring the education component into play, it is also important to train women and men who come into contact with victims, so they can disseminate key information and help the victims of trafficking become aware of their inalienable rights. The European Union has acknowledged that it has a legal and moral obligation to act, faced with an issue of both internal and external trafficking. Currently, there are more people in vulnerable positions than in the last 30 years. The time to act is now. This is a question of putting an end to modern on-going slavery.

Ms **Vassiliadou** ended her presentation by noting that some believe the eradication of trafficking is too ambitious a goal. Although she acknowledges that the process of eradication can only be a slow one, working in any manner other than an ambitious one in addressing this crime would be insulting to its victims as well as to those seeking to help them.

4. TESTIMONIES FROM BULGARIA AND NIGERIA

- a. Presentation by **Antoaneta Vassileva**, Secretary General for the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in Bulgaria.

Bulgaria is mostly a country of origin for trafficking, where poverty, lack of education, and dysfunctional families are key factors of vulnerability. However, there are also victims with high levels of education, which illustrates that the main commonality among victims is the manipulation of their dreams.

Because of this manipulation, education and prevention are crucial to help not only current victims but also potential victims of trafficking. In order to protect young boys and girls, many efforts have been deployed on how to recognize the signs and risks of trafficking. In 2009, Bulgaria developed a handbook for teachers in order to help them deal with this issue in the classroom using interactive methods. This has allowed teachers to educate over 75 000 children on how to recognize the risks of trafficking.

There has been encouraging success in working with peer-to-peer approaches, organizing awareness raising campaigns that target specific groups with key messages, addressing, for example, the specific risks for the Roma community. This has led to prioritizing vulnerable groups such as young boys and girls, the Roma community and the disabled. As a follow-up to these efforts, a project was launched focusing on ethnic minorities to reduce the number of victims of Roma origin through education. This pilot project aims at reducing the number of victims through sexual health and family planning education, by decreasing the number of early pregnancies among Roma women.

Ms Vassileva noted that education is not only important for potential targets. It is also helpful for professionals involved in this sector, and in particular journalists, who, after receiving training, can become partners of the government's efforts to end human trafficking.

b. Presentation by H.E **Mariam Katagum**, Permanent Delegate and Ambassador of Nigeria to UNESCO

Nigeria faces a growing issue of internal trafficking, in particular linked to forced labour and begging. Recently, two new dimensions have been brought to light: organ harvesting and surrogate motherhood.

For trafficking, Nigeria is a source country: most of the female victims are trafficked into Europe, Asia or the Americas. Some remain in the transit countries.

In the Nigerian context, there are many factors of vulnerability, and it is important to note the impact of regional disparities in economic and educational opportunities. Unequal access to education plays an important part.

The regions with the highest trafficking rates are those permeated by a culture of violence, and where the perceived societal role of men is highly elevated. In this culture, domestic violence is common, and abusers are protected by the elders of the community. Young women in these contexts do not want to experience the same lives as their mothers, and seek to find better opportunities for themselves. However, women face discrimination in access to employment opportunities, and this makes them vulnerable to offers made by traffickers. In addition, it is important to consider traditional practices to understand the Nigerian context such as women sworn into bondage under spiritual oaths. It is important to examine how this negative cultural practice should be addressed in efforts to deal with issues related to trafficking.

Traffickers work across all sectors of society, in all religious groups communities. H.E Katagum referred to certain incidents where fake jobs were advertised within religious ceremonies. NGOs - WOTCLEF for example - have played an important role in bringing this matter to national attention. With their work, a national taskforce was set up to monitor trafficking, as well as a trust fund for victims of trafficking.

Regarding education, Nigeria has passed a law making education compulsory, but many issues remain unresolved for effective implementation. The next challenge is to make education relevant, and bridge the urban and rural gap by giving young boys and girls useful skills they can use locally. Women and girls need resources so that they can practice the skills they have been taught. They also need better access to legal help and information about their rights. Raising public awareness through media and television campaigns is an on-going effort in Nigeria.

H.E Katagum finished her presentation by expressing concern on the way repatriated victims were treated.

5. DISCUSSION

The discussion session began with an intervention by H.E. the Ambassador of Nicaragua to UNESCO. His remarks focused on the importance of using legislative tools to increase penalties for traffickers. Furthermore, he drew attention to the powerful mafia traffickers constitute in Central America, and the importance of raising awareness of trafficking as organized crime.

H.E. the Ambassador of **El Salvador** joined this plea on the importance of illegal mafia networks in perpetuating human trafficking, and noted how traffickers prey on the desire of victims to leave an

environment imbued with drug trafficking. Governments in Central America are trying to coordinate efforts, but the mafias are extremely powerful.

A representative from **Gambia** found the introductory short video very effective in conveying a powerful message. She argued in favour of UNESCO using visual media and mobile phones to target youth.

The representative from **Saint Lucia** also commended the short video, and agreed with Ms Dettmeijer that prevention in education must start as early as possible, and focus also on boys as potential future consumers. However, legislation efforts must accompany education programmes, since awareness will not be enough if not integrated into broader action.

For H.E. Ambassador of **Gabon**, it is important to place this conference and UNESCO's work in a larger context, referencing the debate on transnational crime at the UN, as well as ILO's work and civil society initiatives. Fighting against human trafficking requires reinforced coordination work.

According to H.E. the Ambassador of the **Republic of Serbia**, trafficking concerns social differences and not cultural differences. She expressed concern about finding effective strategies to combating trafficking within the Roma population.

Angela Melo, Director of the Division for Social Inclusion and Youth (SHS), agreed that a gender-based approach for this issue is needed. She advocated for further inclusion of labels into the international arena, in particular that of violation of human rights and torture. The stigmatisation and disdain for discovered victims of trafficking are unacceptable, and urgent work must be done to resolve this issue.

Alton Grizzle from the Communication and Information (CI) sector of UNESCO, affirmed the importance of Member States' focus on this issue, as they decide the orientation of the Secretariat's work. The CI sector is fully aware that trafficking is an important problem, and will continue efforts to work with the Division for Gender Equality at UNESCO to mobilize extra funds and to support proposals regarding media and gender-based violence.

The panellists then had the opportunity to respond to some of the comments and questions. Ms Dettmeijer agreed that the mafia in Central America is indeed very powerful, but cautioned that it is only one of many trafficking agents, and others should not be dismissed. Ms Vassiliadou went over the work led by the EU with external countries. Much of the work is in planning and cooperation, though there are bilateral agreements where necessary on a case-by-case basis. Ms Giammarinaro explained that anti-trafficking should not have its own legislative dimension, disconnected from other areas, but that it should be better linked to migration policy in particular.

6. CONCLUSION

The Director of the Division for Gender Equality of UNESCO, **Ms Saniye Gülser Corat**, took the floor to thank all participants and noted that trafficking is a worldwide problem, and it indiscriminately affects women and men in all positions.

Women discovered by police or judicial authorities in destination countries are often victimized all over again, and this must be dealt with. The role of security forces, border patrols, police officers, etc., must be explored as their silence can contribute to maintaining the status quo.

H.E. Ambassador Zeldenrust closed the session, continuing the reflexion on UNESCO's mission in the fight against trafficking. Prevention of human trafficking is complex, and many aspects have been identified during this conference. Information, awareness raising, education, along with a better use of media, are important factors in a successful combat against trafficking. UNESCO must look at using channels and facilities that are already in place in order to contribute to this global effort.