



August 31, 2009

Trafficking in persons is an egregious violation of human rights that reduces human beings to the status of commodities to be bought and sold. The U.S. Department of State estimates that 800,000 women, children and men are trafficked across national borders each year, mostly for sexual exploitation and forced labor. In my capacity as the USAID Mission Director to Albania, I have had the opportunity to meet and talk with some of the victims of this horrible crime. They are women and girls that have suffered cruel manipulations and violence.

"You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, 'I have lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along.'"

Eleanor Roosevelt

The U.S. Government has been at the forefront of efforts to stop trafficking in persons throughout the world. Since 2001, the United States has provided \$528 million in anti-trafficking assistance overseas. In October 2003, USAID/Albania launched the first and largest anti-trafficking program in the Balkan region. The Albanian Initiative: Coordinated Action Against Human Trafficking (CAAHT) program, implemented by Creative Associates International, Inc. has worked for the six years to reduce the number of trafficked persons in Albania and increase the number of victims successfully reintegrated into their communities. Through this program, USAID has helped Albanian civil society and government institutions establish a nationwide "community of cooperation" to combat trafficking of persons.

It is our hope that this unique ant-trafficking network will continue their coordinated efforts to further prevent trafficking of Albanian women and children and assist and reintegrate victims. This *"Toolkit of Best Practices to Combat Human Trafficking"* is intended for all Albanian stakeholders—community leaders, non-profit organizations, and officials at all levels of government—to combat the incidence and effects of trafficking until the day it is no longer a reality in Albania or the region.

No man, woman, or child should live the horrors of enslavement. It is the role of society, of government, and individuals to ensure the rights, freedoms, and dignity of all people are protected and championed so that the hopes and dreams of those women and girls I have met can someday be realized.

Sincerely,

Roberta Mahoney
USAID/Albania