

CAAHT 2005 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

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Session IV: Anti-trafficking messages and standards for media professionals

Panel Presentation

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My presentation is not only about the radio soap opera, Pine Street, but also to incite a debate, which will be continued in the small group discussions, about this sensitive relationship between the media and the civil society in the area of combating human trafficking. There are two or three people in this room who were trained by the Pine Street Foundation. We had a long experience regarding the relationship that has been established in the framework of addressing the phenomenon of human trafficking on the media and the cooperation between the media and the civil society.

In brief, I would like to say a couple of things about this topic. Let us say that one of the biggest problems is the approach taken by the media to covering the phenomenon of human trafficking, while, on the other hand, we have a big demand from the civil society or all the actors. It will suffice to mention the awareness-raising campaigns of these activities on the media. We recognize that a good part of the civil society projects, particularly in the area of human trafficking, focuses on awareness-raising campaigns of various forms, from advertisements to television debates and documentaries. Hence, there is a great demand from the civil society for the media, and the problem is how to manage civil society's need for the media. What becomes evident is the way the media is used by the interested entities — in this case, all those actors involved in addressing human trafficking.

To give a very simple example, I would like to refer to the news stories yesterday about this conference — and I do not want to mention any names here, since we are talking about ethics. I do not know if you happened to watch the news yesterday, most of which focused on the fact that the US Ambassador had classified Albania in the group of second countries. Another medium, if I am not wrong, wrote that this was a direct attack against the Ministry of Justice, which had not done its job properly. So, that was all the news reported; nobody said anything about the fact that this was an international conference on developments in the area of combating human trafficking, and that all of us — the participants — are very important actors in combating human trafficking. Hence, that indicates that there is a lack of direct communication — the example shows that clearly — between the media and the civil society.

Related to the topic, I will bring up another example — the Pine Street. Pine Street is an imaginary neighborhood in Tirana — but it could be anywhere else. It is a fictional community of people, who, nevertheless, represent all categories of people. The characters are drawn from real people, whose names have been fictionalized in order to hide their identities. While this conference — and the CAAHT program — has attempted to make a coordination of joint actions against human trafficking, the Pine Street, this fictional neighborhood, does nothing else but collect information from all of you, who are actors in the area of combating human trafficking. Therefore, every success story of yours becomes a success story in the Pine Street. This is the best format to be used with the media.

I would also like to say that we should start a debate together with my colleagues that are present here today about observing journalists' codes of conduct with regard to human trafficking. This includes many elements, from the way of treating victims of trafficking to how the civil society informs journalists or the media about issues related to the phenomenon of trafficking.

Thank you.