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Session I: Identifying practical programming ideas for prevention and awareness raising

Panel Presentation:

Community-based programming to prevent trafficking of children

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Human trafficking is one of the problems our country faces today. The region of Elbasani is portrayed as one of the most affected areas. Another Vision has presented a program related to this challenge, whose goal is to rehabilitate and socially integrate juveniles that have been through trafficking, as well as to prevent the phenomenon through providing social services in the Prefecture of Elbasani.

The program that was presented to CAAHT — and which is currently being applied in Elbasani and Gramshi — is based on providing residential and daily services for children and their families. The project is being implemented by associations, Another Vision and CEFA, which are guided by a simple implementation strategy; “Providing necessary services for categories at risk, an indispensable condition for preventing trafficking”. The goal is to minimize the risk of children trafficking, because the planned and proposed activities aim at mitigating the problems and increasing capacities of children and their families.

In the town of Gramshi there is a daily center for children and their families, which provides a series of activities, such as school recovery, creative, educational and socializing activities, awareness-raising activities, and professional courses for teenaged girls. The project focuses on involving juveniles in social, cultural and educational activities in the town of Gramshi and surrounding villages. The participation and achieved outcomes are quite satisfactory. We would like to share them with you.

School recovery,

- 60 children that had been referred by public schools as children with noticeable backwardness in the studies and being at risk of dropping out of school, receive qualified assistance from social teachers, who support them every day. In addition, 15 formerly-illiterate adolescents now know how to read and write, while going to a literacy course.
- Canteen service for 30 children, which was a support activity for helping extremely poor children go to school.

The project’s goal is to provide the children with a complete educational program, integrating typical education, creative, cultural and socializing activities.

For this reason, the school recovery activity is complemented with a broad range of creative and educational activities.

- The numerous activities in the sports grounds and games room, creative and handicraft laboratories, for about 150 daily, complement the educational program. Also, the monthly parties for about 200 children and animation activities in the villages for about 150 children are very good socializing and entertainment tools, thus

transforming the daily center into a reference point not only for the children but also for the entire community.

- The summer camp for 150 children gave another pace to activities, and also proved how important such an activity is for the community.

The awareness-raising activity, for teenaged girls, takes on special importance for Gramshi, since this area is known to be affected by trafficking. So, awareness-raising meetings with young people have taken place at the dormitory of the town's secondary school, and with girls at 6 villages (called 'problematic villages') in the vicinity of Gramshi. Participation was quite satisfactory: about 800 people. Such awareness-raising meetings, with the participation of about 110 girls, were also organized at two dormitories of secondary schools in Elbasani. For a category of juvenile girls from families with acute social-economic problems and at high risk of trafficking vocational training courses were provided. 30 teenaged girls attended tailoring/sewing and cooking courses. Publication of a quarterly magazine for young people and a monthly newspaper for children, with a circulation of 300 copies, completes the broad range of activities and serve a very important for raising children's and community's awareness.

Cooperation with families remains key to reaching the objectives and achieving results. Project worker's continuous visits to families and meetings and seminars with them aim at reactivating families and their responsibility for their children.

Another Vision provides prevention and integration activities in the city of Elbasani, for children that are at risk of being trafficked, through residential centers, shelter community and three protected apartments, as well as awareness-raising activities at dormitories of Elbasani secondary schools.

The shelter community and the protected apartments play a very important role because they provide quiet and protected premises, accommodation, food, clothing, health care, psychological support and socializing and integrating activities, favoring a normal psycho-social growth of hosted juveniles.

The hosted children come from families with acute social and economic problems; they are either abandoned or at risk of being abandoned, thus becoming easy game for traffickers. Altogether, there are 33 hosted children, of which 13 girls. 9 of them were referred from the anti-trafficking office in Elbasani and from Terre des Hommes, with which Another Vision has a close cooperation relationship. Hosting them in the residential centers means getting them away from traffickers' hands. While staying at the residential services, juveniles are supported in two directions: personal problem recovery (education staff work) and family problem recovery (social assistants' work).

The ultimate goal is to return the children to their families or to foster families. If this is not possible, then the children are supported towards individual autonomy. The shelter community hosts 6-13-year-old children. So far 19 children have been hosted for various durations. After working with them and their families, 7 children have been reintegrated into their families, where they have been monitored, and 12 other children still need to stay in this structure.

The protected apartments — three proposed ones — host 14-18-year-old juveniles, and aim at taking them towards their individual autonomy and/or reintegration into their families. So far 14 juveniles have been hosted, of whom 2 have been returned to their families, while 12

others continue to receive the service. In addition to their schooling, this accompaniment towards their individual autonomy is complemented with vocational training and employment opportunities. 4 girls attended tailoring/sewing and cooking courses, 2 have been fully employed, while 5 others have done part-time jobs.

The philosophy that underlies the residential services and the daily ones is providing juveniles and their families with the necessary tools for coping with and preventing trafficking. The operation of such services is one more chance for children and their families, and a prevention of trafficking. For this reason, Another Vision pays a lot of attention to the coordination of joint anti-trafficking actions at local and national levels. Another Vision is an active participant in the local table against children trafficking in Elbasani, and together with all the potential actors in the jurisdiction is going to try to organize the local anti-trafficking network in the Region of Elbasani. The functioning of the “National Referral Mechanism for Victims of Trafficking”—part of which Another Vision is—will contribute to the enhancement of the anti-trafficking efforts and to the coordination of actions among all the actors.

Trafficking of human beings is a complex phenomenon affecting other countries, which are more developed than Albania, and it cannot be eradicated easily. It is crucial to take things to the end, so that the results that have been achieved so far are not wasted. The continuation of the fight against trafficking, through prevention programs, should be a priority for the government and all the national and international actors.

Trafficking cannot be combated in a day, a week, a month, or even a year. It should be combated by everyone every day...