



Report on the Findings from the CAAHT Technical Assistance Needs Assessment for Regional Committees in the Fight Against Trafficking

Introduction

A core component of the CAAHT program is its effort to encourage extensive and sustainable coordination of NGO activities with those of local government. Consistent with this intent, since 2004 the CAAHT program has convened key local government and NGO actors in Regional Cluster Groups. Participants in these forums have repeatedly emphasized the importance of establishing coordination bodies at the *qark* level that would bring together the same (and greater) mix of government authorities and civil society agencies to enable practical program decisions and cooperation at the *qark*, municipality, and commune levels. Based on this consultative process, earlier in 2006, the CAAHT program advised the new government that regional committees were needed to combat more effectively trafficking in humans in Albania. CAAHT produced an advisory paper with information and recommendations about the purpose and structure of these regional anti-trafficking committees, which were reflected in the Prime Minister order, No. 139, dated, 19.06.2006 for the establishment of the Regional Anti-trafficking Committees.

In July 2006, CAAHT staff provided technical and financial assistance to the office of the National Coordinator, to prepare and conduct three Regional Orientation Workshops for prefects and the members of their committees to orient them to their roles and responsibilities and assist them in beginning to organize their work together.

Purpose for the Report

USAID has tasked the CAAHT program over the coming three years to continue our efforts to assist government structures in their critical role as key partners in the fight against trafficking. This includes providing technical assistance to increase the capacity of local anti-trafficking structures and support the implementation of the Regional Anti-trafficking Committees.

To that purpose, CAAHT developed a Needs Assessment Questionnaire aiming to identify what types of technical assistance and support the CAAHT program could provide to the Regional Anti-trafficking Committees and Technical Working Tables to assist them to improve the quality, depth, and breadth of anti-trafficking work in Albania. The responses provided to the questionnaires revealed that the members of the Regional Committees and Technical Working Tables have only general impressions about the ways in which they can meet the responsibilities designated in the Administrative Order. Therefore, in this report the CAAHT program has also drawn upon the work with its governmental and civil society partners over the past three years to describe specific types of activities that Regional Anti-trafficking Committees could undertake in order to meet their responsibilities.

Methodology

The CAAHT program distributed a six-page questionnaire to 152 CAAHT governmental and non-governmental partners on December 5, 2006. Fifty-two responses were sent back to CAAHT office, including representatives from Technical Secretariats, Employment Offices, Education Offices, Social Services and Anti-trafficking Police, Prosecutor's Office and non-governmental organizations. Interviewees were selected based on participation in the Regional Orientations Workshops, CAAHT Annual Conferences, and other coordination activities.

The questionnaires were designed to collect information on the work of the Regional Anti-trafficking Committees in the following areas:

- mapping the trafficking situation in the *qark*;
- community awareness raising about trafficking in human beings;
- identification of vulnerable individuals, families and groups, and programs to reduce their vulnerability;
- assistance and reintegration of children and women who have become victims of trafficking; and
- monitoring and supporting investigation and prosecution of traffickers.

In addition to Needs Assessment Questionnaires, the CAAHT program organized a Focus Groups meeting, with the assistance of two key experts from Encompass - a Washington D.C. based consulting company - comprising a sample group of members of Regional Anti-trafficking Committees. The purpose of this meeting was to assist the CAAHT program in furthering the needs assessment process and to explore together how the CAAHT program can assist Regional Committees to fulfill more effectively their roles and responsibilities. The eleven participants were selected based on the qualitative and quantitative level of their responses, diversity of representation, and geographical distribution. Meeting participants included nine members of the Regional Committees, which included representatives from Technical Secretariats Anti-Trafficking Police, and the Departments of Education, Regional Social Services, and Health, as well as a municipality Child Protection Unit, two NPOs¹, and two members from the National Coordinator's Office and six CAAHT staff members. Participants were guide through a process of generating ideas and suggestion in areas related to their anti-trafficking work as members of the newly established committees: a) identification of the most important actions for the committees; b) what is their vision of the greatest contribution of the Regional AT Committees in five years, and c) identification of the needs for capacity building and training.

Overview of findings

While the administrative order of the Prime Minister provides the general layout under which the Regional Committees shall operate, the responses to the Needs Assessment Questionnaires demonstrate that it is not clear yet to Committee members how to accomplish their responsibilities. In 45% of returned questionnaires, governmental respondents for the most part replied to each open-ended question with only one or two sentences, generally asserting that his or her Committee is achieving the purpose for which it was created. The very fact that 42 governmental Committee members make the effort to respond signals their good intentions, but reveals that they have limited ideas about what they can actually do and achieve. On the other hand, the non-governmental organizations generally responded at more length and in more depth to the questions, expressing more precise expectations and visions for what the Committees can and should do. In particular, they call for a more

¹ NPO is the acronym for Not for Profit Organization. This is the Albanian legal term for what is commonly known internationally as NGO – non-governmental organization.

operational role for the Committees and claim that Regional Anti-trafficking Committees and Technical Working Tables are not making full use of their knowledge and expertise.

The responses show, and the Office of the National Anti-trafficking Coordinator (ONC) confirms, that the Regional Anti-trafficking Committees and Technical Working Tables are constituted in all 12 *qarqe*. The Committees have produced their first reports for the ONC. But these reports do not represent a comprehensive analysis of the trafficking situation; rather they comprise mainly information that is collected by the various departments/ministries represented on the Committee for the purposes of their own Ministries. There is little demonstration of use of this data to analyze the local conditions of trafficking in human beings nor recognition that other data may also be needed for this purpose.

Some respondents from government institutions do report specifically on anti-trafficking work conducted within the framework of their individual institutions such as awareness raising activities in schools, identification and referral of victims of trafficking by police, vocational training and employment assistance for at-risk cases and re-integrating victims of trafficking, etc. These are all important contributions to the fight against trafficking of women and children, which can be improved through the development of *qark*-level action plans that help link and integrate these individual ministry initiatives and build more collaboration with experienced actors in civil society to improve the programming.

In general, the responses and assessment indicate that there is a need for training and capacity building for local government structures in order to assist them to accomplish their tasks under the Prime Minister's order. While the structures are in place, more work needs to be done before the Committees are fully prepared to take leadership roles in ensuring coordination and cooperation among the main actors involved in the fight against trafficking in persons in the *qarqe* and in implementing effective programs on anti-trafficking.

The responses reveal that despite meetings and establishment of responsibilities and task, there is disconnection between structures in the Regional Anti-trafficking Committees. This is, also, confirmed by few respondents who advocate for the appointment of full time, dedicated anti-trafficking coordinators in each of the 12 *qarqe*, responsible for facilitating the work of his/her own Committee as well as improving connection and coordination among all the Regional Committees and Technical Working Tables. Both governmental and non-governmental respondents repeatedly emphasize that there are insufficient human and financial resources available to enable the Committees and Technical Working Tables to undertake their required tasks and responsibilities. The great need for capacity building to these same ends is also evident throughout the responses.

Ideas for practical work by Regional Committees and Technical Working Tables

During the first three years of the program, CAAHT staff has had the opportunity to meet with a wide variety of governmental and non-governmental actors, Albanian and international, who are interested in seeing Albania continue to improve its national and local capacity to effectively combat trafficking of women and children as well as better assist and reintegrate those Albanians who have become victim to this crime. This section of the report provides an extract of the ideas and recommendations that have been gathered through this on-going consultative process. These suggestions are directed specifically to Regional Committees and their Technical Working Tables to assist them in elaborating more precisely their individualized plans of action and programs that will most effectively address the phenomenon of trafficking as it manifests in their own *qark* area.

In addition, this report includes an annex/bibliography of some good models and practices from anti-trafficking programs implemented by international organizations and national non-

governmental organizations, including grantees of the CAAHT program, that offer practical tools for the Regional Committees to identify programming ideas in the areas of prevention and awareness raising, as well as victim assistance and reintegration. It should be recognized that each *qark* is different in terms of the trafficking vulnerability of its populations and their needs in shaping anti-trafficking responses, and not all models are equally appropriate in all parts of Albania. The CAAHT staff is available for consultation, if Regional Committees would like our assistance in considering which methods might be most effective in their locations.

- **Constitution of Regional Committees and Technical Working Tables**

Trafficking is a complex phenomenon that requires a complex and cross-sector response from all involved institutions. The Regional Anti-trafficking Committees should be a instrument through which different government agencies and institutions can gain a greater awareness and understanding of each other's function and how they can work together to be more effective in combating human trafficking. Hence, Regional Committees should ensure that all anti-trafficking stakeholders in their *qark* are identified and invited to be part of this coordination and implementation structure. Together, these stakeholders can best define and share roles and responsibilities for individual agencies and organizations within the framework of the Administrative Order.

In recent years non-governmental organizations have been at the forefront of a wide range of anti-trafficking activities. The knowledge and human as well as financial resources that they are able to mobilize provide government authorities unique opportunities to find partnerships through which they will be better positioned to meet their responsibilities. Partnership with and incorporation of non-governmental organizations, with statistical expertise and detailed local community knowledge, in the Regional Committees and Technical Working Tables, will help the latter to improve knowledge of vulnerable communities/groups, as well as actual and potential trafficking situations in their areas including numerical and statistical data about identified and assisted victims. At the same time, they are well placed to advise in the formulation and targeting of public awareness efforts towards at-risk communities, and on the development of regional action plans.

Most of the questionnaire respondents pointed out the lack of human and financial resources at local levels. This is a serious concern that needs to be more thoroughly considered and addressed by both central and local governmental institutions. However, it is also true that considerable local expertise and knowledge exists within both governmental and non-governmental actors in the *qarqe*. The challenge is to channel these resources into concrete plans of action that maximize coordination and collaboration to most effectively use the available resources. In addition, better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each institutions and increased coordination among stakeholders would improve allocation and use of available resources. Regional Committees that demonstrate the ability of *qark*-level actors to make effective use of their resources are likely to build confidence in their Committee and attract more support from outside public and private institutions.

- **Mapping the trafficking situation in the *qarqe***

In a first attempt to conduct a mapping of the trafficking situation in the respective *qarqe*, the Committees have analyzed the information provided from individual members. But through insights gained by CAAHT staff in discussions with some Prefects and Committee members, the staff of ONC, and from the questionnaire responses, it is not evident how this information has been used, or how this information differs from what these structures provide to the ministries. Gathering of information should go beyond the current reporting structures in order to adequately map and monitor the trafficking situation in the *qark*.

Consolidation of relevant data at the *qark* level has two purposes: 1) providing disaggregated and comparable data to the ONC in order to create a credible and comprehensive view of the

state of trafficking of women and children in the country and the efforts to prevent the phenomenon; 2) providing key leaders in each *qark* local information that enables them to make better decisions and choices to ensure that sufficient local programs and mechanisms are in place to combat trafficking in humans through prevention, prosecution, protection and assistance to victims. In addition, it will help Regional Anti-trafficking Committees better define roles and responsibilities of the different governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.

A thorough analysis of the current anti-trafficking situation in the *qark* is important in order to develop effective and well-targeted measures on trafficking in human beings and will also provide relevant baseline data for future assessment of the accomplished tasks. This analysis should contain an overview of the situation in the *qark* which realistically describes the extent and nature of the problem. It is important to understand the particularities of recruitment and forms of trafficking in the *qark* and how/where trafficking is prevented. Groups or communities which are particularly vulnerable to trafficking should be brought to the attention of the Committee, without violating the confidentiality of individuals.²

In addition, the analysis should examine the social and economic context of trafficking; identify the problems accompanying the spread of this crime, and also an analysis of the existing anti-trafficking measures and resources in the *qark* aiming at identifying accomplishments and gaps of current work. It is also important for all parties to engage in an open dialogue to reach agreement about how to appropriately apply definitions related to anti-trafficking, such as classification of vulnerable or at-risk groups/communities, identification of victims and prevention activities, etc.

A comprehensive understanding of anti-trafficking situation in *qark* will facilitate the process of developing concrete programs to combat trafficking in humans in the areas of prevention, prosecution, protection and assistance to victims and will help Regional Anti-trafficking Committees to define roles and responsibilities of the different governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.

Effective mapping and analysis is best achieved through a participatory process, including all potential stakeholders in the *qark* who are either directly involved with anti-trafficking related issues or have knowledge about trafficking in persons. In addition to the existing data from the local governmental structures, a lot of information can be obtained through inclusion and membership of experienced NPOs in each *qark*, who have accumulated the necessary information and expertise through working with vulnerable groups and communities. International inter-governmental organizations and NPOs³ which have a variety of expertise related to trafficking of women and children and may provide direct support to local organizations implementing anti-trafficking programs and activities. Annex I of this report provides a bibliography of key anti-trafficking reports, publications and websites which may assist Committees to identify targeted materials relevant to their concerns.

Because the nature of trafficking in persons is secretive, special effort must be made to reach out to a wide variety of community leaders and actors in order to build a more comprehensive understanding of where trafficking may be occurring in the *qark*. Conducting a survey could be a very good instrument to this purpose, since it can be shaped according to the specifics of each *qark* and it reaches out a larger audience. In all cases, a specific group of experts, consisting of representatives from governmental and non-governmental structures, should be tasked to take the lead in this data gathering process and to prepare

² In order to protect the rights and confidentiality of citizens, the names of specific individuals or families who are considered vulnerable to trafficking, have been identified as victims of trafficking and/or are suspected of being involved in trafficking should never be reported or discussed in Regional Committees. Such personal identifiers should only be revealed on a specific "need to know" basis for direct reasons of case management, service provision and/or criminal investigation, as established in rules of conduct by the Technical Working Table.

³ See annex for a list of international inter-governmental organizations and NPOs which can provide more detailed anti-trafficking resources.

the overall findings and conclusions. In order to prepare a comprehensive document, it is recommended that the findings are shared with all respondents or participants (sources of information) to consolidate them and get any additional feedback.

Some questions to consider in mapping the trafficking situation at the *qark* level include:

- ✓ Which communes and neighborhoods of municipalities have the highest rates of migration? Is it seasonal migration? Do families migrate together? What proportion of these migrants are adult and adolescent females? What proportion are children (boys and girls)? Who enabled the migration? Are “tutors” involved?
- ✓ When girls, women and children are away from their families for periods of time for work or study (in Albania or abroad), are they in regular contact with their families? Are their family and friends confident that they are safe?
- ✓ How many children and adolescents (male and female) have abandoned school this year? Why? Where are they? What might help them return to school?
- ✓ Do women’s/children’s assistance groups, social workers, teachers, and/or school psychologists have indications of problems of domestic violence in certain families or communities? How do these compare to families and communities with high rates of female/ child migration and school abandonment?
- ✓ What do the police, educators, social workers, NPOs, and local community leaders report are the primary trafficking and migration recruitment techniques currently being used in *qark*? If the techniques reported by these sources are different from each other, how are they different and why?
- ✓ Which are the vulnerable or at-risk groups/communities?
- ✓ What is the level of the adult population’s awareness of trafficking related issues? What about adolescents? What about children? Are the levels of awareness different? Are they appropriate to the ages and the life choices they must face?
- ✓ How many adult and child victims of trafficking from the *qark* were identified in the current quarter? In 2006? In 2005? Do different institutions and organizations report significantly different figures? If so, why?
- ✓ What can be known about the profiles / backgrounds of these victims (without violating their confidentiality) that can help the Committee better understand the patterns of trafficking in the *qark*?
- ✓ What kinds of services/resources are available in the *qark*? Are programs for assistance and reintegration of victims of trafficking linked to national referral sources?
- ✓ What anti-trafficking projects have been implemented and by whom?
- ✓ What anti-trafficking projects are planned for the coming year and by whom?
- ✓ How many cases of trafficking in persons are under investigation in the *qark*? How many cases have been investigated in the past five years?
- ✓ Does police investigation indicate the trafficking in persons is linked to other areas of criminal activity in the *qark*? How can the efforts to combat these crimes best be combined? What type of support do the police need to improve their ability to investigate cases?

- ✓ How many cases of trafficking in persons are under prosecution in the *qark*? How many cases have been prosecuted in the past five years? What type of support do the prosecutors need to improve their ability to prosecute cases?

Mapping of the (anti-) trafficking situation in the *qark* is important not only to assist the newly established Committees in developing their regional action plans, but also to establish a data baseline against which to monitor and evaluate the accomplishment of the goals and objectives set out in the respective action plans. Data baselines and databases should be created in coordination with the national databases on trafficking in persons being established in the Office of the National Coordinator. Inclusion of non-governmental organizations in the design of the mapping and data baseline (and database) will help to establish greater consistency between anti-trafficking reports and analysis created by government offices and non-governmental organizations. Given the ever-changing nature of trafficking in persons, it is especially important that this data be frequently updated with the activities/actions of the members of the Regional Committees and Technical Working Tables, and also with information from other stakeholders related to anti-trafficking issues. All actors should agree on a mechanism to enable exchange of this data and information, through which the Committees will be able to monitor performance, identify accomplishments, needs and gaps, and most important, continue to set goals and objectives for future action.

- **Community awareness raising about trafficking in human beings**

Awareness raising activities aim to educate to the Albanian population at large, as well as particularly vulnerable or at-risk groups (e.g. impoverished minority groups, adolescent and young adult females, school leavers, etc.) about the causes, mechanisms and consequences of human trafficking. An important part of awareness raising is to improve people's understanding of the experience of the victim of trafficking and to de-stigmatize them and their experiences. Many victims of trafficking, especially girls and women who have been sexually exploited, are reluctant to return to their families and communities. They have reasonable fears that they will be rejected and punished rather than welcomed home and helped to return to normal, healthy, happy lives. Three major purposes for anti-trafficking awareness raising are to:

- 1.) generate community attitudes of "zero tolerance" to trafficking that will help create an environment in which traffickers find it hard to conduct their business;
- 2.) build the skills of individuals and families to better protect themselves from trafficking and make better life choices/decisions; and
- 3.) encourage attitudes of understanding and acceptance for victims of trafficking that will increase their ability to return to their communities and will decrease their re-trafficking.

Anti-trafficking information and messages can be conveyed through many channels such as media (print, television and radio), community meetings, training and educational/information sessions with at-risk populations, dissemination of brochures, leaflets or posters, and house-to-house outreach. In addition to the public at-large, awareness raising activities should target all actors that deal directly with victims, such as police, prosecutors, judges, social workers, psychologists, teachers, especially to prevent re-victimization and stigmatization of victims.

Types of awareness raising activities that may be useful in each *qark* include:

- Information campaigns to more effectively inform and educate the population, especially women, schoolchildren and high-risk groups, about the dangers and contributory causes of trafficking, and suggest viable alternatives for safe migration.
- Production and dissemination of awareness raising materials for the general public, such as posters, leaflets, brochures, etc., with anti-trafficking messages;

- Age-appropriate tailored educational/informative sessions with students and teachers;
- Campaigns in the local media on awareness raising for the general public (round-tables, debates, press coverage of the anti-trafficking activities in the *qark*, etc);
- House-to-house outreach in vulnerable communities;
- Development of public awareness programs to educate the population on the consequences of trafficking for the victims, the traffickers, and society as a whole, including health issues (STDs, HIV/AIDS);
- Encourage religious leaders to speak out publicly against trafficking and address the myths of trafficking and trafficking victims (including social stigma, blame, and gender stereotypes); and
- Ensure publication of reliable official information to the media on trafficking arrests and convictions.

In order to develop a comprehensive awareness raising program it is important to identify the vulnerable / at-risk communities, review previous activities, identify best practices and models, and have clear understanding of the trafficking phenomena and its consequences. Many NPOs have years of experience conducting outreach programs for various types of awareness raising, sometimes including anti-trafficking. They offer substantial human and knowledge resources for conducting this work. Care should be taken to ensure that awareness raising information and techniques are shaped appropriate for the particular audience. Additional skills building and professional information should be provided for front-line workers such as police, social workers, teachers, psychologist, community mediators and journalists. Youth and student government groups are important partners, with the special potential to increase message dissemination and retention through peer-to-peer work.

Anti-trafficking awareness raising has been underway in many parts of Albania for several years now. A growing body of useful resources – books, pamphlets, posters, training modules, etc. – have been produced by governmental and non-governmental institutions. See the bibliography in Annex I for more information about how to locate this information. Thanks to these efforts as well as the increasing attention of the Albanian media to this urgent issue, the awareness and knowledge of the population has improved. However, continued awareness raising programs are needed to maintain public vigilance as well as to keep people attuned to the changing nature of the trafficking techniques. Hence, it is important that Regional Committees review previous awareness raising activities in their respective regions and use this analysis to develop more effective and targeted outreach programs for the large community and specific groups.

- **Identification of vulnerable individuals, families and groups and prevention interventions to reduce their vulnerability**

One of the purposes for the mapping of the trafficking situation in the *qark* should be the identification of the vulnerable individuals and groups, which will help to determine the level of vulnerability to trafficking of different areas, communities and individuals within the *qark*. More precise recognition of vulnerably locations and people enables improved targeting and effectiveness of social services delivery as well as other awareness raising and prevention techniques. It is widely recognized that women and children represent the most high-risk/vulnerable groups for trafficking in human beings. But gender and age alone are not the main indicators. Identification of a more complex set of indicators will enable anti-trafficking actors to better target who within the *qark* may be more at-risk of being trafficked.

Amongst adolescent girls and women, the most vulnerable people (to either being trafficked or possibly enticed into cooperating with the trafficking of their children) include poorly educated young women without stable income sources, mothers with a large number of children, single mothers (regardless of family size), victims of domestic violence, young women living in problematic families, girls who are married against their wish at a young age through arranged marriages, etc. In the case of children, the most vulnerable may include those from families in crises (for example, divorced parents, homeless or impoverished families, single-parent families, parents with drug or alcohol addiction, etc.), orphaned children without care, neglected children, school abandoners, and especially children who do not have birth registration and consequently do not have legal identity. In families with strong traditional, "old fashioned" (from the perspective of the young) roles and expectation, children may feel trapped and react by taking rash decisions to seek their "freedom" that can make them especially vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation.

Local government structures, especially the police and the departments of social services, employment, and education, carry many responsibilities to identify and assist many of the individuals with the types of problems described in the previous paragraph. While much is known through these offices about the needs of and opportunities for these people, often government officials express concern that they lack sufficient infrastructure and resources to assist these people in finding long-term solutions to resolve their vulnerability. In many communities, local government, NPOs and local community leaders have established strong relationships of cooperation that combine their knowledge, services and resources to provide a more comprehensive approach to supporting and protecting people, families and communities who are most vulnerable to the crime of trafficking.

Vulnerability to trafficking is best reduced through interventions that address the underlying causes of the social, economic and psychological factors creating the at-risk situation. Different measures and activities are appropriate depending of the nature of the characteristics of the at-risk individual, family or community. The following list offers suggestions for programs and actions to decrease vulnerability to trafficking and to improve the living opportunities and chances for social inclusion for at-risk groups and individuals.

- ✓ Develop economic empowerment and employment programs by providing vocational training and ensuring adequate access to the labour market,
- ✓ Enforce legislation on obligatory education and take relevant measures to improve children's access to educational opportunities. Increase the level of school attendance, especially for girls. Some NPOs provide after-school or other complementary education and study programs to support underachievers in schools.
- ✓ Provide remedial education/vocational training for male and female school dropouts and adults who may never have had sufficient access to schooling. (Second Chance classes).
- ✓ Ensure provision of appropriate legal documentation for birth.
- ✓ Develop awareness raising activities against domestic violence and promoting gender equality.
- ✓ Develop programs that provide education and support for family development and against domestic violence.
- ✓ Enable appropriate use of government programs on poverty reduction, social assistance; employment, and children's rights, giving priority access to those most vulnerable to trafficking or other forms of exploitation/abuse.

- ✓ Ensure adequate dissemination of information with regard to employment opportunities.
 - ✓ Mainstream anti-trafficking curricula and programs in schools for pupils and students of all ages.
 - ✓ Conduct awareness raising activities directed specifically to “at-risk” people and groups in order to inform them of the dangers associated with trafficking. Recognize, encourage, and support their own abilities to take preventive measures to lower their risk of being trafficked and protect others in their families and communities.
- **Assistance and reintegration of children and women who have become victims of trafficking**

Regional anti-trafficking responses should include comprehensive measures for the protection, assistance and reintegration of victims of trafficking, based on human rights principles and ensuring that victims have access to adequate programs and services. The identification of trafficked persons is a prerequisite for their recognition as victims. Most victims of trafficking are identified through a formal process of interviews conducted by police and prosecutors, often with the assistance of trained NPO social workers. Some victims of trafficking are identified more informally by family, friends, or themselves. This may be identification through reports or information provided by the individual her/himself, family, friends, or other caring people to police, social services or educators as well as NPOs such as anti-trafficking shelters, community centers, women and children groups, religious organizations, etc.

Upon identification as a victim of trafficking, the person's access to social support, assistance and protection must become a primary consideration, irrespective of their willingness to cooperate with law enforcement authorities. Such programs should be tailored to the specific needs of the individual victim of trafficking. At minimum, these should include safe accommodation, psychosocial counseling and support, health and medical care, and may also require legal assistance, education and vocational training and employment opportunities. In addition, in the cases when victims of trafficking have children, municipalities and communes need to ensure that they have access to affordable and permanent housing, which may need to include direct government payment/subsidy for a period of time. Accomplishment of the above represents a government responsibility to its citizens and to meet international standards. Meeting these obligations to the victims often also best serves the interests of authorities responsible for investigation and prosecution of criminals because well-supported victims may be more willing and able to cooperate with the justice system.

Effective and comprehensive support for reintegrating victims of trafficking must include a wide range of actors, such as local government structures, police, social workers, experienced NPOs, health and medical staff, labor and education officials, and local community leaders. Regional Committees should ensure that various combinations of these actors focus on the following measures:

Equipping qark leaders to identify and assist victims of trafficking

- ✓ Ensure cooperation and regular sharing of information between relevant government structures, NPOs and other actors who may get in touch with victims.
- ✓ Conduct trainings with relevant structures and actors to prepare them to identify and refer victims of trafficking.
- ✓ Conduct awareness raising campaigns throughout the community in order to educate citizens about the profiles of traffickers and people vulnerable to trafficking in order to

enable communities to be more alert to potential criminals profiting from human trafficking/exploitation, and to promote understanding and compassion for those who suffer consequential pain and stigmatization in addition to the crime(s) already committed against them..

Initial assistance for identified victims of trafficking

- ✓ Ensure that NPOs and social workers have adequate access to victims.
- ✓ Ensure that safe accommodation is available for victims, even in the first hours and days of identification.
- ✓ Ensure that cooperation of victims of trafficking with the police is entirely voluntary, and in no way linked to their right and opportunity to receive appropriate and sufficient assistance and services.
- ✓ Ensure that qualified social workers conduct individual needs assessments for and with each victim in order to maximize her/his access to appropriate and adequate services.
- ✓ Ensure that victims are informed promptly about their rights and available services.
- ✓ Ensure that victims identified in the *qark* are fully informed of the services available at the specialized nationwide shelters, that they have been given sufficient opportunity to make use of these and other services, and that they are fully involved in determining which services and service providers or other related services to which they are referred.

Longer-term support and re-integration of victims of trafficking

- ✓ Ensure that victims identified in the *qark* are fully informed of the services available at the specialized nationwide shelters, that they have been given sufficient opportunity to make use of these and other services, and that they are fully involved in determining which services and service providers to which they are referred.
- ✓ Ensure that service providers cooperate and coordinate to develop tailor-made support programs in accordance to the specific needs and age of victims.
- ✓ Ensure that sufficient social and health services as well as social and psychological counseling are provided for victims.
- ✓ Facilitate mediation and reconciliation between individual victims and their families and/or communities.
- ✓ Ensure that educational services and vocation training are available for victims.
- ✓ Ensure inclusion of victims in social assistance and employment programs/job placement.
- ✓ Promote cooperation among government entities, NPOs, community leaders, religious communities, business associations, etc., to ensure social inclusion of victims in the community life.
- ✓ Ensure legal support, physical security, and personal data protection for victims.

Conclusions

Although the establishment of the Regional Anti-trafficking Committees and the Technical Working Tables is an important step forward, these *qark*-based structures have a long way to go in order to accomplish what is envisaged in the Prime Minister's order. While political will is crucial to ensure success of anti-trafficking efforts in each *qark*, it must be associated with concrete plans and actions. This is essential to ensure that anti-trafficking policies, programs and services will impact vulnerable individuals, families and communities.

In order to move forward in the most positive and effective direction with *qark* anti-trafficking initiatives, it is important to recognize that every actor can have only limited impact if their actions are taken in isolation or fail to coordinate with broader regional/national objectives and programs. Only sustainable and institutionalized responses will succeed in combating trafficking in persons in Albania through a multi-sector, multifaceted approach to this issue. While the role of the local government structures is primary, there are significant skills and experiences within civil society that are indispensable to enhance capacities in these efforts. NPOs, with their particular competencies, are key partners in these efforts – especially in the areas of assistance and prevention.

In the last three years the CAAHT program has supported and coordinated with a large number of NPOs in Albania involved in a wide-ranging set of anti-trafficking programs that span from awareness raising and other prevention programs to cooperation with law enforcement officers for immediate assistance when they identify victims of trafficking and continuing on to the complex and challenging process of successful reintegration of children and women victims into their families and communities. Thus, we are well-positioned to identify some good models and practices that we can share with members of the Regional Anti-trafficking Committees.

The CAAHT program has great respect for the efforts made to date in the creation of the Regional Committees and Technical Working Tables. This report is offered as a further contribution towards the full achievements of the goals and objectives of these Committees. We look forward to continuing partnership with the Office of the National Coordinator and the leaders and members of these important new entities in Albania's ongoing fight to end trafficking of women and children in the country. For further information about how the CAAHT program may support the work of the Regional Committees and/or Technical Working Tables, please contact Mr. Dolor Tozaj, CAAHT Local Program Coordinator by email at DTozaj@al.caii.com or he office address noted at the bottom of the first page of this document.