

La Strada
European Network Against Trafficking in Women
Facts & Practices

La Strada, European Network Against Trafficking in Women

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Text: Marjan Wijers
Design cover: DAVstudio Fenna Westerdiep (BNO)
Lay out and printing: Sander Pinkse Boekproducties

Foreword

This book reflects the 10 years of experience of La Strada. Without our donors, our affiliates and all those other individuals who refuse to accept the slavery-like exploitation of human beings, La Strada would not have existed. We want to thank them all.

'La Strada, European Network Against Trafficking in Women is written for a wide audience. It describes the knowledge and experience we have gained, the problems and dilemmas we face, the achievements and the obstacles. We hope this book helps to give you a better idea of what La Strada is: a network of anti-trafficking NGOs, a shared philosophy and a shared dedication to defend the human rights of trafficked persons, a common strategy, a joint action programme and an international association.

Most of all we hope that this book and our experiences will be of use to others and will facilitate and encourage further cooperation between La Strada and other non-governmental organisations, as well as cooperation with international, inter-governmental and government agencies.

We dedicate this book to the women who have taught us how to help them.

La Strada

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This book is written to inform current and future cooperation partners, donors and other interested persons and agencies about the La Strada Network and its member organisations. It describes the organisation, aims, working methods and activities of La Strada as well as the principles on which all La Strada programmes rest. Moreover, it aims to give insight into some of the dilemmas and problems La Strada encounters in supporting trafficked persons and advocating their rights.

The book starts with a short overview of the present key problems and trends of the trafficking of human beings in Europe (chapter 2). Following this overview, a general description of the La Strada Network is given: why and when was it set up, how is it organised, who is part of the Network, what do all its members have in common and what do they have to offer (chapter 3). It then continues to describe the La Strada work in more detail: the general principles that all La Strada members share in their work (chapter 4) and the different areas the member organisations address: Assistance & Support (chapter 5), Information & Lobbying (chapter 6) and Prevention & Education (chapter 7). This book will predominantly speak about women and girls trafficked for the sex industry since this is the area in which La Strada has historically had most experience.

Throughout the book, key information and examples of cases, good practices and dilemmas La Strada faces in its work are shown in separate boxes. For the interested reader, the appendixes contain more information on the contact details of the La Strada member organisations (Appendix 1), their activities and the specific services they offer (Appendix 2), as well as an overview of countries of origin, transit and destination for the trafficking of women (Appendix 3). Throughout the book a number of

references is made to other documents: you will find them listed in Appendix 4.

Chapter 2

Trafficking in Europe: key problems, root causes and trends

The majority of trafficked persons La Strada has supported over the last ten years, are young women between the ages of 18 and 30 who were trafficked into the sex industry. Many of them are single mothers, belong to minority groups, or come from a problematic family background.

Almost all of them struggled with low income jobs or unemployment and hoped to find better opportunities abroad. Some of them made their own decision to work in prostitution but were deceived about the slavery-like or forced labour conditions in which they would end up. Others had never even imagined working as prostitutes and were forced into it. What they all share is the experience of deceit, violence, coercion and abuse and of being subjected to slavery-like conditions with little or no personal freedom and constant fear.

However, trafficking does not only concern women, and neither does it only occur in the sex industry. Over recent years other manifestations of trafficking and forced labour have become apparent, such as trafficking for domestic work, sweatshops, construction work or agricultural labour. La Strada Moldova, for example, faced a number of cases of men trafficked for construction and agricultural work, and in Ukraine cases of the trafficking of women for forced labour as seamstresses came to light. La Strada Poland faced a number of cases of Moldavian women forced into begging in Poland.

Iryna had trained as a seamstress in Ukraine but could not find a job. A friend put her in contact with a Polish man who offered her a job in Poland. Instead, he took Iryna to his house in the Czech Republic, where he took her passport away. There she was locked up together with two other Ukrainian women and forced to work as a seamstress. They had to work twelve hours a day, seven days a week, for a minimal reward. When they resisted or protested, they were denied food or threatened with sale to a night club. For a long time Iryna even didn't know she was in the Czech Republic. After two months the three women managed to escape. They went to the police for help. To their shock the police did not offer them any assistance. They were just issued with orders to leave the country and

then sent back onto the street again. For two nights they slept in parks. Then they managed to contact La Strada through a Ukrainian travel agency. La Strada provided the women with accommodation, clothes, food and toiletries until their departure. The Ukrainian embassy issued them with replacement passports and facilitated their journey back through the earlier mentioned travel agency.

This development is reflected in the definition of trafficking in the 2000 UN Trafficking Protocol, which covers all forms of trafficking for forced labour and slavery-like practices.

Definition of trafficking

Art. 3(a) of the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime¹ defines trafficking as:

‘The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.’

In the case of children an element of coercion or abuse is not required.

All La Strada countries have signed the UN Trafficking Protocol. Seven of them have also ratified the Protocol (date: May 2005).

Moreover, the Protocol makes a clear distinction between sex work and trafficking and between trafficking and smuggling.

Difference between trafficking and smuggling

Smuggling concerns facilitating illegal stay or entry, while the aim of trafficking is the exploitation of human beings under forced labour or slavery-like conditions. Trafficking does not always involve the illegal crossing of borders. It can also happen within a country and without crossing any national borders.

Moreover, in many cases trafficked persons enter a country legally, for example as tourists, spouses, students, domestic workers or au pairs. Sometimes they only become illegal when they remove themselves from the power of their exploiters, e.g. in the case of au pairs or women who are forced into prostitution by their husband. Trafficking is a crime against the person, while smuggling is primarily a crime against the State, infringing upon its borders.

¹ Available on-line at http://www.uncjin.org/Documents/Conventions/dcatoc/final_documents_2/convention_20traff_eng.pdf.

Key problems

In many cases, trafficked persons cannot fall back on the support of the State because they have no legal status or because their identity papers have been taken away. Moreover, they risk being detained, deported, prosecuted or punished themselves for the illegality of their entry or stay, for having been involved in prostitution or other illegal activities, such as begging, or for other offences that are a direct consequence of their situation as trafficked persons, for example the use of false papers. In particular, women who are trafficked into the sex industry are faced with triple marginalisation: as women, as migrants and as prostitutes. Even if women do not face all of the problems above, they are still confronted with a lack of support services because they are simply not offered or because no adequate support structures exist.

Although trafficking is widely recognised as a serious human rights violation, most States do not provide adequate aid for victims, such as assistance, protection and compensation. Even if short term assistance and protection is offered, long term solutions, such as access to the labour market and long-term residence permits if a trafficked person cannot or does not want to return to her or his home country, are lacking. In general, State policies tend to concentrate on measures in the area of crime control and migration policies and much less on the assistance and protection of the human rights of trafficked persons.

Along with fear of reprisals, the stigma of prostitution and feelings of shame or guilt, the absence of adequate assistance and protection prevent many trafficked persons from reporting to the authorities, pressing charges and/or acting as witnesses. It is estimated that only a small fraction of trafficked persons are actually identified. Additionally, only a small percentage of the identified trafficked persons decide to press charges or to act as a witness. Moreover, one of the most persistent misunderstandings about trafficking is that women who have worked or are willing to work in

the sex industry under self-controlled conditions cannot become a victim of trafficking. Underpinning this myth is the moral stigmatisation of prostitutes, based on the social taboo on prostitution and the double moral standards towards women and sexuality: prostitutes are viewed as immoral or 'fallen' women who have forfeited their right to protection against violence and abuse, it is considered to be 'their own fault'. This attitude acts as a serious barrier to women against seeking help or may even result in their rejection by the police or other authorities if they do so.

In addition, a number of countries lack adequate legislation, in particular with regard to internal trafficking and trafficking into other industries than the sex industry. In Ukraine, for example, internal trafficking is not included in the article on trafficking in the criminal code. In other cases, legislation exists but is flawed or not properly implemented. Another structural problem is corruption.

All these factors mean that, in practice, cases of trafficking are still rarely brought to prosecution. Many cases are dismissed and traffickers are seldom sentenced.

Root causes

Nearly all La Strada countries have to deal with an unstable political, social and economic situation and high unemployment figures. Moreover, a number of La Strada countries are affected by the aftermath of the conflicts in the Balkans. Macedonia, for example, has to deal with large numbers of Albanian and Romany gypsy refugees which impacts on the country's capacity for economic development. In Bosnia Herzegovina, criminal groups sometimes seem to be better organised and economically more powerful than the State in the aftermath of the war.

Poverty, the absence of viable employment opportunities, and discrimination are among the main reasons for women to seek employment opportunities abroad. This situation does not seem to have improved over recent years. In some regions in Poland, for example,

unemployment figures are around 20 %, of which 60 % are estimated to be women.² According to the World Bank, 60 % of the young people in Bosnia Herzegovina are unemployed with little prospect of change; 60 % of them are women.³ In Macedonia the official unemployment statistic is 38 %, of which 90 % are women.⁴

Whereas this process of 'feminisation of poverty' is one of the factors which leads women to seek employment abroad to find the means to support their families or to improve their career opportunities, yet another factor is the desire of many women to escape traditional gender and family constraints or to just 'discover the world'.

However, other factors contribute to the feminisation of migration. Due to increasingly restrictive immigration policies in Western countries, the opportunity for men to migrate through legal channels for work in the regulated sector have significantly decreased. At the same time, there is a demand for work in the so-called informal and unregulated sectors, such as domestic labour, childcare and the entertainment and sex industries. Women have thus filled the gap that is created by the combination of fewer opportunities for legal migration for men and an increasing demand for labour in the traditionally female designated sectors of the labour market. It is exactly these sectors which are not traditionally considered as work and which are not - or only to a very limited extent - protected by labour laws. The lack of legal migration opportunities in these sectors, combined with the lack of legal protection, exposes women to a considerable risk of abuse. Moreover, where demand and need cannot legally meet, dubious middlemen and criminal organisations step in.

The restrictive immigration policies of Western European countries affect the work of La Strada in a number of ways, for example because governments tend to treat trafficked persons primarily as unwanted economic migrants who are to be deported right away.

² Interim report La Strada Poland 2004.

³ Interim report La Strada Bosnia Herzegovina 2004.

⁴ Interim report La Strada Macedonia 2004.

Another factor which, in particular, influences trafficking for the sex industry is the increasing call for repressive measures against prostitution, such as criminalising clients. This adds to the marginalisation and stigmatisation of sex workers and increases their dependency on the services of third parties, thus making them more vulnerable to abuse. In Ukraine, for example, according to law enforcement agencies, the willingness of trafficked women to report to the police decreased after a law was adopted which criminalised prostitution, as women were afraid to be punished for their involvement. According to a Dutch police officer - The Netherlands is one of the 'receiving' countries for Ukrainian women - it also decreased their willingness to get support from NGOs or in general to be identified as trafficked persons.

Moreover, despite the fact that, according to the UN Protocol definition, consent is irrelevant if any of the coercive or deceptive means listed in the definition are used, government agencies still tend not to regard trafficked women who work in prostitution or were aware they would do so beforehand, as victims of trafficking. This effectively leaves women in prostitution without any legal protection against violence, abuse and deceit.

Tatiana comes from Moldova. She was 18 years old when she was offered a job in Turkey. She travelled with a number of girls. On arrival they were forced to work as prostitutes in a hotel. A week later the hotel was raided and the girls were deported home. On arrival at the airport the police officer in charge took Tatiana's documents and returned her to the man who had recruited her. Later it turned out that he was his brother. She was beaten until she agreed to go back to Turkey to work off her debts. There she again was found by the police. This time they put her on a ship to Odessa (Ukraine), together with 24 other Moldovan women. When the ship arrived in Odessa, her recruiter was waiting to pick her up. From there he sent her to Cairo where she was sold on to Libya and Israel. By that time her 'debt' had gone up from the original \$800 to over \$3,500. At one point, when she refused to work any longer, she was thrown into a deep pit in the middle of the desert without food and water for three days. In Israel she again was found by the police and deported. The same police officer at the airport now brought her to a flat where she was told to think about what would happen to her if she tried to escape yet another time. Another girl in the flat told her that after she had tried to escape they had kidnapped her younger sister. She now would have to pay \$10,000 to get her sister back, otherwise they would kill her mother. A few days later, Tatiana was sent to Cyprus. There she told the police

that she had lost her passport and was deported back to Moldova. This time her recruiter told her that he was going to sell her to a European 'civilized' country where she could easily earn money, repay him her debts, and come back soon. With a tourist visa she travelled via Hungary and Croatia to Italy and Switzerland, where she escaped through the help of an Albanian client. They went to the police and told them her whole story. Without her consent, the police contacted the Moldavian Ministry of Interior who informed the police in her home town. The local police contacted her parents and told them that their daughter was a 'desperate prostitute' who had worked in at least 6 countries. Her parents were totally shocked. When she called them from Switzerland they did not want to speak to her. In early 2003 she returned to Moldova once more.

Trends

Over recent years many of the La Strada countries have changed from being exclusively countries of origin to being countries of transit and destination as well as origin. The Czech Republic, for example, has become a country of transit and destination for women from Ukraine, Slovakia and Moldova, but also from Vietnam and China. Bosnia Herzegovina functions as a destination country for Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, Russia and Yugoslavia (FRY). In Belarus cases of trafficking to the Russian Federation are increasing, particularly of minors for sexual exploitation, and Bulgaria has become a country of transit and destination for Romanian women and women from the countries of the former Soviet Union.

A second trend is the increase of cases of internal trafficking in the majority of the La Strada countries, not only for the sex industry but also for other industries. An example is the case of Ukrainian deaf and mute women who were forced to work in a sewing factory without payment and without being allowed contact with the outside world.

With regard to trafficking and forced labour in the sex industry, it is noted by a number of La Strada members, for example in Bosnia Herzegovina, that trafficking victims tend to be increasingly exploited in more private environments such as private houses or flats in suburban areas, instead of in public establishments like brothels and nightclubs. Moreover, particularly in the former Soviet countries, the number of minors exploited

in the sex industry seems to be increasing. In general, the trafficking of children (that is persons below the age of 18) appears to be growing in a number of La Strada countries, for example in Macedonia and Bulgaria.

Lastly, the Balkans appear to become more and more a transit region, while new countries of destination for dancers, waitresses, domestic workers and sex workers develop, such as Japan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, Pakistan and Egypt. At the same time trafficking becomes more visible in the former Soviet Union countries, especially in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, but also in Central Asian countries such as Uzbekistan and Tadjikistan, and in the Caucasus countries which become more well-known as countries of origin. In particular, Russia seems to be increasing in importance as a country of origin, transit and destination.

In general, trends can be said to change rapidly and to depend on factors such as legislation adopted, economic developments and, in particular in post-war and conflict areas, the presence of international troops.

Expansion of the EU

In May 2004, Poland and the Czech Republic acceded to the EU. Bulgaria will probably accede in 2007. This might influence migratory and trafficking patterns considerably. It is expected that these countries will become more and more countries of transit and destination rather than origin. Access to reliable information about job opportunities within the EU, along with the gradual opening of the EU labour market will create more legal migration channels and decrease the risk of trafficking and related abuses. However, the most marginalised and vulnerable groups, such as Romany gypsies, will probably remain a target for traffickers, both across and within borders. Furthermore, the need to find work abroad will not disappear since accession to the EU will not mean an immediate solution to such problems as poverty, unemployment and discrimination. A factor that may facilitate trafficking is the fact that it is easy to cross borders and travel within the EU. At this moment, Romania and Bulgaria,

for example, are still scoring high as countries of origin in receiving countries like the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany, even though visa restrictions have been lifted.

However, in Poland and the Czech Republic a shift from country of origin to destination is already slightly visible. A new group are, for instance, Asian women trafficked into the Czech Republic. This development makes it imperative for La Strada members to also focus on the situation of migrants trafficked into their countries and to develop support systems for these groups, along with providing assistance to domestic trafficking victims returning home from other countries, as well as to victims of internal trafficking. It is also expected that the number of migrants trafficked into other labour sectors, such as agricultural or factory work, will increase. However, until now little research has been done on trafficking for other purposes than the sex industry. This is a serious shortcoming that needs to be addressed.

Another consequence of the accession to the EU might be an increase of illegal cross-border activities by organised criminal groups at the outer borders of the new EU member States, resulting from the tightening of visa requirements for citizens from the former Soviet Union and other communist countries which are not part of the EU. Because of stricter border controls, it will become more difficult for, for example, citizens of Belarus, to enter Poland or Lithuania, while at the same time there is a long tradition of trade and travelling between these countries. Being unable to travel legally, people will need to make use of mediators. This might push trafficking even more underground and make it more difficult to reach the women concerned. In addition, La Strada Belarus, for example, expects Belarus to increasingly become a country of destination since Poland has become a full member of the EU. There have already been a number of cases of Moldavian minors trafficked to Belarus for begging and for prostitution.

Moreover, accession to the EU leads the newly acceded States to adopt more restrictive immigration policies and a stronger focus on combating illegal migration. As a result, the human rights of migrants become increasingly under pressure. This development makes it even more important for independent NGOs like La Strada to advocate the human rights of migrants and to lobby for adequate protection and assistance of trafficked persons.

Although some things can be said about the (expected) impact of the accession to the EU, much has to be seen in the (near) future. Most of the developments described above are tentative, given the short period since the accession. However, it is clear that more research is needed in this area. La Strada will follow the developments closely and continue to contribute to research based upon their own observation and experience.

Chapter 3

How did La Strada start, how is it organised and why is it unique?

The foundation of La Strada

In 1987, the Dutch Foundation Against Trafficking in Women (STV) was established. At that time most of its clients came from South East Asia and Latin America. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 this changed rapidly. The collapse of the Soviet Union gradually opened borders that had previously been closed and led to radical social, political and economical changes in the former communist countries. The breakdown of national economic and political systems precipitated the hitherto unknown phenomenon of unemployment, which affected women first and foremost. Women were among the first to lose their jobs, while at the same time social services, education and medical care ceased to be free. In addition, women increasingly bore responsibility for the sustenance and care of dependent family members. Many women thus found themselves in the situation of being responsible for the family income whilst neither having access to the same employment opportunities that men have, nor to equal opportunities for legal labour migration.

Moreover, the social changes and the opening of borders offered women opportunities to escape from traditional gender and family constraints and to take their lives in their own hands. Along with images of the independence and emancipation that awaited them, these developments led many young women to go and search for work, a better life and opportunities to support their families in Western European countries. Some did well, others became trapped in abusive situations due to the lack of legal migration channels and a labour market divided along gender lines, in Western societies just as in their home countries. Owing to the nature of the work and the forms of migration open to them, many female migrants were and still are compelled to make use of the services of dubious agencies and middlemen.

One of the motives that a number of Eastern European clients of the Foundation Against Trafficking in Women (STV) in the beginning of the 1990s cited as to why they wanted to go to the Netherlands was that the Netherlands had a queen. For this reason they expected the Netherlands to be more women-friendly than other countries and women in the Netherlands to be freer and have more opportunities.

As a consequence of these developments the Dutch Foundation Against Trafficking in Women (STV) had to deal with a rapidly growing number of clients from Central and Eastern Europe. At that time there was hardly any knowledge of the situation in these countries and the background of these new groups of clients, whereas – correspondingly - in Central and Eastern European countries there was hardly any knowledge about trafficking, the labour situation in Europe in general, and the abuses migrating women risked. There were no organisations addressing this issue and women who returned to their home countries had nowhere to go. Equally, there was little tradition of independent non-governmental organisations, since during the communist regime these were not allowed.

From project to programme to Association

Against this background the Dutch Foundation Against Trafficking in Women (STV), the Polish Feminist Association (PSF), the Polish Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and the Central European Consulting Centre for Women's Projects in the Czech Republic (PROFEM), together with the Dutch Foundation Church and World, took the initiative to organise a joint training seminar in 1994. The aims were twofold: on one hand, the mutual exchange of information, knowledge and experience, at the other hand the development of preventative activities and support services for women who returned home, either because they wanted to go back or because they were deported from Western Europe. This seminar led to the first La Strada Project 'Prevention of the Trafficking of Women in Central and Eastern Europe', which started in September 1995 and was financed under the Phare Programme of the European Commission.

From this first project the wider La Strada Programme developed, consisting of three components: Prevention & Education, Assistance & Support and

Information & Lobbying. In 1997 and 1998, new partners in Ukraine and Bulgaria joined the programme, followed in 2001 by Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Moldova and Macedonia. In order to ensure a gradual expansion of the network without overstretching its capacity, each new member was nominated by an old member according to a number of criteria: the new member had to be established in a neighbouring country, a joint pilot project had been successfully carried out, there had to be an existing NGO that was able and willing to carry out the La Strada Programme and there had to be an urgent need for such a programme in the country. The latter is the reason why, for example, Bosnia Herzegovina was selected by La Strada Czech Republic, despite the fact that it is not a neighbouring country.

After having functioned for nine years as a joint programme and network, in October 2004, La Strada was officially established as an independent international association, currently consisting of nine member organisations.

La Strada receives MTV Europe Award

On 18th October 2004, La Strada received the MTV Europe 'Free Your Mind Award'. The award is based upon MTV's global Free Your Mind campaign which aims to encourage freedom from all kinds of intolerance and prejudice. The Free Your Mind Award is awarded to an individual or organisation that exemplifies these ideals.

As noted by the President of MTV Networks Europe: 'Highlighting issues facing Europe's youth is at the core of what MTV is about. La Strada's vitally important work ensures the issue of trafficking is kept in the public eye – and that the women and girls affected gain access to vital help and information. In addition to the presentation of the Free Your Mind Award to La Strada, sex trafficking will be the focus of a year-long awareness campaign, entitled EXIT, that is set to run across MTV Networks Europe. We hope that, by putting MTV's full network-wide weight behind this issue, we will help to make a real difference.'

Underlying philosophy

La Strada started from the idea that strengthening non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is crucial to tackling a controversial and sensitive issue like trafficking in women. Because of their independent status, organisations at the grass roots level can win the confidence of women who consider

migration to the West and provide them with reliable information on the risks involved and how to protect themselves against those risks. They can provide counselling to victims of trafficking, encourage and support them if they want to report to the police and advocate their rights. Due to their direct contacts with victims and potential victims, they can collect information at the source. They can provide government agencies and the media with accurate information on the situation of trafficking in women in their countries, stimulate public debate and activate governments to develop adequate policies against trafficking. This philosophy is still guiding the present La Strada Association and its members.

Aims and target groups

Consistent with its origins, La Strada works at two levels. First, it aims to raise awareness of trafficking as a violation of human rights, to inform women and girls about the risks of trafficking and how to protect themselves, to provide short and long term assistance to women and girls who have become victims of trafficking and to defend and advocate their rights. To achieve these aims La Strada cooperates with both non-government and government agencies.

Secondly, it aims to build up strong and independent NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe. Capacity building makes up a central element of the programme. This not only implies the establishment of strong, independent and specialised La Strada organisations, but includes providing support as trainers, advisors or coaches to other NGOs dealing with trafficking and trafficked persons by sharing knowledge and experience. These can be local or foreign NGOs. La Strada Ukraine, for example, conducted training programmes for NGOs in Russia, Estonia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Serbia, Georgia, Armenia and Uzbekistan. By transferring expertise and exchanging information, good practices and experience a ‘multiplier’ effect is achieved.

Dilemmas

In some instances in this book the term 'victim' is used as it is a widely accepted term. However, La Strada shares concerns about the use of the term 'victim' because of its emphasis on powerlessness, passivity and vulnerability, thus denying the power, courage, ambitions and choices of the women concerned. Many women feel they have become victim of a crime, but oppose the idea of their identity being reduced to that of being a 'victim' since they feel this does not recognise their agency and individual personality. Therefore, the term 'victim' is only used when directly referring to the status of trafficked persons as victims of crime and serious human rights abuse. In other instances the more general term 'trafficked person' or 'trafficked woman' is used.

The three pillars of the La Strada programme are Assistance & Support, Information & Lobbying and Prevention & Education. All la Strada members offer this basic programme. Although the basic programme is the same, the exact services which are offered can vary, depending on the local situation.

All La Strada members also fulfil a monitoring function in their own countries. La Strada Poland, for example, released a report 'Why women do not testify' after having closely followed a number of trials and the treatment of victims. This report is used as a tool in the training of law enforcement agencies.

The direct beneficiaries of the La Strada programme are trafficked persons and potential victims of trafficking. Apart from the direct beneficiaries, La Strada addresses the following target groups:

- Relatives and friends of (possibly) trafficked persons;
- Potential risk groups: students at secondary schools and universities, young unemployed persons, persons with low-paid jobs, young divorced women who take care of small children, girls in orphanages, sex workers, homeless youngsters
- Government representatives: Members of Parliament, political parties, consulates and embassies, border agencies, labour agencies and the law enforcement (police, public prosecutors and lawyers);
- NGO representatives: human rights groups and (women's) NGOs working on trafficking;

- Professionals: social workers, psychologists, job trainers and teachers;
- Media representatives;
- The general public;
- La Strada staff itself, including volunteers.

Responding to changing trends and actors

During its first years of existence, La Strada predominantly focused on trafficking and forced labour in the sex industry and, consequently, worked mostly with women and girls.⁵ However, over the years, new manifestations of trafficking have become visible, such as the trade in domestic workers. This development is reflected in the most recent definition as contained in the UN Protocol on trafficking in persons, which covers trafficking into all forms of forced labour and slavery-like practices, be it in the sex industry, domestic labour, construction, agricultural labour or other sectors.

As a consequence La Strada is gradually enlarging its working area. This is particularly reflected in the field of prevention which now addresses a wider group, though the majority of clients are still women trafficked into the sex industry. However, this is subject to change. Most La Strada members already work with women who are trafficked for domestic work, marriage or the garment industry or who are forced into begging, be they at present only a small percentage of their clients. Some La Strada members also offer counselling to male victims of trafficking and/or to irregular migrants (male and female). The strategic choices which are required as a response to the changing trends in trafficking and in order to relate to new actors at national and international level are the subject of ongoing discussion.

Dilemmas

⁵ Most, but not all, La Strada members also work with minors (that is persons below 18). At present minors represent 2 to 20 % of the number of victims identified and assisted, dependent on the specific La Strada member.

When La Strada started, the political focus was exclusively on the trafficking of women for the sex industry. There was no attention for nor knowledge of trafficking for other industries and the trafficking of men. This has changed over the last years as reflected in the UN Protocol. While recognising that trafficking can and does occur for other forms of forced labour and that also men can be victim, La Strada also recognises that trafficking is not a gender neutral phenomenon. Wherever women go, they find themselves restricted in their work options: unskilled labour, cleaning, cooking and caring work either in private houses or in restaurants and hotels, entertainment or prostitution. Moreover, whereas the demand for women's labour is all pervasive, it is rarely recognised as work. Women in such informal sectors have no or very few legal channels for migration, no backing for worker rights, often work in isolated conditions and may be criminalised themselves. In particular when they end up in the sex industry, they not only face criminalisation but also the stigma attached to prostitution. This makes women particularly vulnerable to trafficking practices and has a major impact on the forms of abuse they suffer and the consequences thereof. The specific impact of the trafficking of women raises the question of whether La Strada should actively expand its work to include the trafficking of men or whether it should maintain its gender focus.

Members of the La Strada Network

Currently the La Strada Network consists of nine independent NGOs all working in the area of women's rights. In many countries La Strada was the first counter-trafficking initiative. Starting as a small project the La Strada organisations developed into well-established and broadly recognised NGOs with a strong position in the field both at national and international level.

Most member organisations focus exclusively on trafficking, in two cases the La Strada programme and team make up part of a larger organisation addressing a wider range of issues. La Strada Bulgaria makes up part of the Animus Association Foundation, an NGO working in the field of domestic violence and trafficking, and La Strada Belarus is the local alliance of the larger YWCA Network. The YWCA works in the areas of women's leadership development, the promotion of women's human rights and the repression of gender based violence, including trafficking. All La Strada partners have their own national websites (see box).

In which countries does La Strada work?

Poland

La Strada Foundation Poland

Czech Republic	www.free.ngo.pl/lastrada La Strada Czech Republic, o.p.s. www.strada.cz
Ukraine	International Women's Rights Center 'La Strada Ukraine' www.lastrada.org.ua
Bulgaria	Animus Association Foundation/ La Strada Bulgaria www.animusassociation.org
Belarus	Young Women Christian Association of Belarus/La Strada Belarus www.lastrada.by
Bosnia Herzegovina	Foundation 'La Strada BiH' www.cob.net.ba/lastrada
Moldova	International Women's Rights Protection and Promotion Centre 'La Strada' www.lastrada.md
Macedonia	Open Gate – La Strada Macedonia www.lastrada.org.mk
The Netherlands	Dutch Foundation Against Trafficking in Women www.fo-stvkennisnet.nl
La Strada International Association : www.lastradainternational.org	

All La Strada members are registered as independent legal bodies under the domestic law of their respective countries. They share the same mission and principles and carry out the same basic programme. At the same time, each partner completes this shared framework in its own way depending on the specific conditions in the various countries, the background of the organisation and its history.

Each La Strada member is responsible for the national implementation of the three pillars of the La Strada programme: Assistance & Support, Information & Lobbying and Prevention & Education. All La Strada teams consist of at least one national coordinator, responsible for the overall implementation of the programme and the Information & Lobbying campaign, as well as two or three project managers responsible for the two other campaigns. In addition to the paid staff, all La Strada members work with volunteers.

Similarities and differences between the La Strada members

All La Strada members share their aims, structure, programmes, principles, working methods and views as described here. However, differences may exist between the various La Strada members in the organisation of their work, e.g. the number of employees, the extent of services provided, whether or not they dispose of their own shelter or transit house and the specific target groups (see for more information Appendix 2).

Moreover, the obstacles that the La Strada members have to deal with can vary per country. Problems that La Strada members face include the attitude of the State towards civil society, the perception of NGOs as anti-government organisations, the lack of institutional relationships between government and non-government agencies, the absence of national structures addressing women's rights and the general lack of social infrastructures. An additional obstacle in many La Strada countries is the frequent reform of government structures which leads to changes in personnel, the redirection of tasks, etc.

Some La Strada members have longstanding experience in the field, others have just started to develop, having joined La Strada at a later point. However, all La Strada members aim to develop into national centres of expertise, able to provide counselling, training and consultation to government and non-government agencies.

La Strada International Association

Over the years, La Strada has gone through a number of transitions. Starting from a cooperation project between the Netherlands, Poland and the Czech Republic it developed into an international association, acting as a network (currently) comprising nine countries. From the beginning, STV the Netherlands functioned as the general coordination office and main applicant for subsidies, including the overall financial responsibility for the programme. However, as the network and its member organisations developed, this structure didn't fit the changed reality. Following intensive discussions about possible future structures, it was decided to transform La

Strada into an independent international association, with its own international staff and secretariat. On 26 October 2004, the International La Strada Association was established, uniting nine national La Strada organisations in Poland, Belarus, Czech Republic, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Ukraine, Moldova, Bulgaria, Macedonia and the Netherlands. Along with the establishment of the international association, the role of STV changed. It is now a regular member and no longer the coordinating body.

Under the new structure, 'La Strada International' is responsible for the organisation and coordination of the network and the common La Strada programme, as well as for strategy development, advocacy and lobbying at European and international level and fundraising for the international work, whereas the individual member organisations are responsible for their national fundraising and the implementation of their national programmes.

The tasks of the international secretariat include supporting members in the areas of information, documentation and training, facilitating communication and cooperation between members, keeping them informed about European and international activities, facilitating and coordinating international lobbying, representation and public relations, assisting in and coordinating joint fundraising and providing international feedback to donors when required.

The international secretariat is responsible for international networking, lobbying and public relations on behalf of the entire La Strada network, as well as for coordination and harmonisation of the national campaigns and capacity building. In doing so, it aims to expand La Strada's relations with national and international government (EU and UN) structures and international organisations. It will also provide training to other NGOs and offer a forum for the NGO community on the issue of trafficking.

The international secretariat is managed and supervised by the Board of the international La Strada Association. The board is chosen from the members of the General Assembly. The General Assembly consists of one

representative of each of the La Strada members and functions as a supervising and governing body.

How do La Strada members cooperate?

The various national La Strada teams are in steady contact and consult with each other on a regular basis. They cooperate in assisting clients and in the implementation of the various campaigns, exchange information on particular themes and work together in joint projects. La Strada Ukraine and Belarus, for example, jointly produced a manual for police officers on the treatment of trafficked persons; and the educational video for schools made by La Strada Ukraine was translated, copied and distributed by La Strada Belarus.

Best practices

In 2004, La Strada Czech Republic, La Strada Poland and the Alliance of Women in Slovakia developed a joint prevention project in Slovakia, specifically focusing on women from Romany communities. By working together, La Strada Czech Republic and Poland transferred their expertise and best practices in providing assistance to trafficked persons, prevention and lobbying to their Slovak counterparts. The cooperation will continue in 2005 and is financially supported by the Daphne Programme of the European Commission.

La Strada Poland, Ukraine and Belarus implemented a joint project 'BRAMA' ('The Gate') on harmonisation of trans-border cooperation. Part of the project was the development of an awareness raising training for law enforcement agencies in four border areas (2003-2004). La Strada Poland and Bosnia Herzegovina worked together in implementing a training for law enforcement officers in Bosnia Herzegovina (September 2004).

Referral and assistance

One of the important areas of cooperation between La Strada members is the referral and assistance of trafficked persons, for example to organise their safe return, to provide them with immediate support or to set up a long term assistance programme.

Bulgarian Nadia was 17 when she was promised a job in a hotel abroad. Instead she was sold into prostitution, first in France and then in the Netherlands. She got into contact with STV in the Netherlands through a social worker of the shelter

where she was staying after being abused by a boyfriend. At that time she had already been staying in the Netherlands for one and a half years on a temporary residence permit, after pressing charges against her traffickers. During this period she had been threatened several times by people from the criminal network that had trafficked her. In the shelter she discovered that she was pregnant by her ex-boyfriend. She decided she wanted to go back to Bulgaria as soon as possible to give birth there. Moreover, her temporary residence permit would expire within a few months. STV was asked to arrange for her return and find a safe place for her in Bulgaria. They contacted Animus-La Strada Bulgaria and, with the help of other organisations, arranged for travel documents, health insurance and financial support, including money to cover her travel costs. When the doctors gave Nadia permission to travel (her physical condition did not allow her to do so instantly), she left for Bulgaria where she was received by Animus-La Strada. They found her a place in a crisis shelter where she received medical aid and psychological support.

Registration, data collection and confidentiality

La Strada aims to develop a joint database covering prevention and lobbying activities, the number of calls to the hotline and the type of questions posed, the number of clients assisted, their background, the way they were trafficked, the problems they face, policy gaps, etc. This information is published in annual reports and used to improve assistance services and prevention activities, for lobby purposes and for research. Naturally anything that La Strada publishes contains only depersonalised information: all personal data regarding clients is treated as strictly confidential.

Meetings

Members of the La Strada teams meet regularly. As well as meeting each other at international events, the national coordinators meet annually at the Assembly Meeting. During this meeting the internal and external cooperation, the harmonisation of the different campaigns, funding issues and long term strategies are discussed, experiences and best practices are exchanged and joint methods of working and positions are further developed. In addition, once a year there is a larger international meeting where different representatives of the La Strada offices meet to discuss

specific themes, elaborate the contents of the work and work on further teambuilding.

Capacity building

Up until 2004, each new member joining the Network after the original partners (Poland, Czech Republic and The Netherlands) was ‘coupled’ with the neighbouring member organisation that had nominated it for membership. Apart from the annual Assembly Meeting and Thematic Meeting, in which all national La Strada teams participate, partner countries have organised bilateral training seminars and meetings. Alongside these meetings, the ‘old’ member organisations functioned as resource and support centres for the new ones. Through this form of capacity building, newer member organisations have been coached and supported by the older ones, while at the same time both benefited from the mutual sharing of knowledge and expertise.

In the future capacity building will remain important. However, as the level of the organisations has become more equal, this will not be done in the same way as the former formalised partnerships. La Strada members now choose to invite other members for cooperation and set up partnerships or organise bilateral meetings dependent on specific themes or projects. In addition, La Strada aims to train and cooperate more intensively with other NGOs outside the network. In order to promote and facilitate such cooperation, an annual La Strada NGO platform will be organised. However, within the new structure, capacity building at national and international level remains important. To this aim several activities take place, varying from study courses, evaluation and consultation sessions to common training programmes.

Joint Mission Statement and Code of Conduct

The cooperation between La Strada partners is based on a shared Mission Statement. The Mission Statement lays down the philosophy, working

methods, basic principles and structure of La Strada, as well as the aims and activities of the different campaigns. In addition a joint Code of Conduct was developed which describes in more detail the general, internal and working principles on which the cooperation between the La Strada partners rests.

What makes La Strada unique?

- Partnership: An East-East and West-East partnership between independent NGOs, based on the sharing of knowledge and expertise so that all members learn from each other;
- Unity and variety: All members share the same principles, mission and campaigns - Assistance & Support, Information & Lobbying, Prevention & Education - but each member implements this joint framework tailored to the specific situation in its own country;
- A referral system: La Strada has a communication and referral system through which individual clients can easily be referred between countries;
- A holistic, multi-disciplinary and multi-level approach: Rather than working on one specific aspect, La Strada aims to address the issue of trafficking in the widest sense possible;
- 'Bottom-up': The basis of all activities is the direct contact with trafficked persons;
- Trafficked persons at the centre: The concerns, needs and views of trafficked persons act as a continuum throughout all La Strada work and are decisive for any future action;
- Long term results: La Strada works to raise awareness of trafficking as a human rights violation, informs women about risks and how to protect themselves, offers long term assistance, works for social inclusion of trafficked persons both in countries of origin and destination and advocates their rights as victims of a serious human rights abuse;
- Capacity building: La Strada is committed to capacity building of NGOs as it believes that the active involvement of NGOs and other relevant sectors of civil society is crucial to effectively addressing trafficking.

Joining the La Strada Network

New NGOs can join the La Strada International Association based on membership criteria. As in the past, the first step for a new organisation to become a full member, is a (successfully carried out) joint pilot project with one or more of the existing member organisations. In addition the organisation has to recognise the Statute of the La Strada International Association and subscribe to the Mission Statement, Code of Conduct and core principles of La Strada. Moreover, it must be committed to actively participating in the network and contributing to its further development

and be able and willing to bear financial responsibility for common projects. Though new members are welcome, in the near future La Strada does not plan a large expansion of its members.

Quality control: monitoring and evaluation

Two aspects can be discerned in relation to monitoring and evaluation. Firstly, accountability and transparency about the activities of La Strada to the public in general, donors, governments, international organisations, and other La Strada members; secondly, monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the work of La Strada. Unless La Strada can somehow monitor what effects its activities have, it is not possible to judge the efficiency of its approach, the quality of its work, the impact on the audience it wishes to address, et cetera. At the same time, numerous factors contribute to changes in the field of human behaviour, politics and trends in trafficking and make it difficult to establish a direct causality between La Strada's work and those changes. In the coming period La Strada aims to develop indicators that will allow more insight into the effects of its work. One way to do this is research among the target groups of La Strada on the impact of its activities.

Up until 2004, monitoring and reporting predominantly concentrated on the first aspect: the activities of the member organisations and the overall implementation of the La Strada programme. Every six months the national teams send in reports on the progress of their activities and these are distributed to all La Strada members. On the basis of these reports interim reports are compiled for the donors every half year. Common reports describing the activities of all La Strada members are compiled every year. In the future these will probably be replaced by reports by country in combination with a more general assessment of La Strada's work without describing all activities in detail.

Apart from the activity reports, the annual accountant reports and the year plans and budget of each member organisations are public.

At the various annual international and bilateral meetings, the programme, the progress of the activities and the internal and external cooperation are evaluated and where necessary re-adjusted. Along with the joint evaluation of the national programmes, each member organisation carries out an annual internal evaluation with the support of a trainer/evaluator. This joint monitoring and evaluation system allows for transparency for all partners, while at the same time giving space for re-adjustments, the identification of best practices and the development of new strategies.

Finally, as mentioned before, each member concludes an Agreement of Cooperation in which it commits itself to the implementation of the programme, and subscribes to the Mission Statement which lays down La Strada's philosophy and basic principles, and the Code of Conduct, governing the internal cooperation.

Selection of staff

National staff members are recruited and selected through the national teams. However, they can ask another La Strada member to become part of the selection committee. In the case of selecting a new coordinator this is common practice, in the case of managers or other staff, this happens incidentally. There is a preference for female staff in light of the target groups of the La Strada programme, although a small number of males are employed. Job descriptions and requirements for the international staff are discussed and agreed upon by the joint members. With regard to the selection of international staff (employees of the La Strada International Secretariat) the final decision lies with the board.

Internal and external evaluation

In 2002, La Strada started an internal evaluation process, followed by an external evaluation in 2004.⁶ The main objectives were to gain insight into

⁶ The full evaluation report is available from the international secretariat.

the results of the work of La Strada and to collect views, opinions and suggestions from both ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ which would help La Strada to define future plans and strategies with an eye to the establishment of an independent international La Strada association. For the external evaluation, La Strada teams/staff members were interviewed as well as international organisations, the embassies of a number of countries, donor agencies/partners, government representatives and NGOs involved in related fields.

External evaluation

As well as offering a variety of critical and useful comments, each external participant in the evaluation approved the move for La Strada to initiate a self-evaluation rather than one demanded by a donor agency. This was seen as a willingness to reflect, to learn from strengths and weaknesses, to not be scared and as a sign of a learning organisation. However, everyone also asked: what will come next? How will La Strada use the findings? Can they be shared to help others to learn and to improve?

From these evaluations a wide range of issues arose, in particular the need to develop a more pro-active approach to new trends and developments in trafficking and to make strategic choices rather than trying to ‘do everything’. The need to strengthen cooperation with other NGOs, international organisations and governments was also noted as well as involving more NGOs in destination countries and expanding international lobbying, prioritising and specialising, and, last but not least, the need to develop better instruments to monitor and evaluate the actual impact of activities.

It also raised questions as to the future organisational structure of La Strada: what kind of network does La Strada want to be? Does it want to further expand its membership and how much room for differences is there among members? So far La Strada has operated as a common, centrally monitored, financed and administered programme, the same in each country. However, though trafficking needs an international response due to its cross border character, at the same time the circumstances, setting,

problems and responses are different in each country and can best be addressed by local NGOs who can respond to such different settings. One of the current discussions is whether or not La Strada should leave its 'one-size-fits-all' model, and evolve into a network of local autonomous NGOs which join the network for the common purpose of fighting trafficking, each in their own way, on the basis of agreed non-negotiable principles and objectives which also function as guidelines for quality control. Such a structure would allow for more differentiation and specialisation and would offer more flexibility to deal with different circumstances, while upholding common agreed upon principles and a common quality of work.

In the coming years this and other questions need to be answered and the new structure needs to be further elaborated. Part of this is revising and improving the basic rules and principles that help each member to operate in accordance with the principles of democracy, respect and transparency which underlie the La Strada principles of work, and adapting the rules for network decision-making to the new situation.

Funding

The first La Strada programme (1995-1996) was developed with the financial support of the Dutch Ministry of Justice and the EU Phare Programme. In the following years mainly Dutch and international donors took over the funding.⁷

In the long term, however, the aim is that the various national La Strada programmes would be funded by their local governments and local donors. However, up until now this has not proved to be a realistic scenario since most governments in the countries concerned suffer serious financial problems and do not have a tradition in funding NGOs.

⁷ La Strada II and III were financed through the European Union (Phare & Tacis Democracy Programme), Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Matra Programme), the Dutch Ministry of Justice and private funds. La Strada IV (2001-2004) is financed through the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the MATRA program, the Dutch Ministry of Justice and the Dutch donor organizations NOVIB, ICCO, Church in Action and the Foundation DOEN.

Currently, only a few La Strada members, including La Strada Poland and La Strada Czech Republic, receive a small government grant for the general La Strada programme (apart from STV in The Netherlands which is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Justice). The various projects of La Strada members at the national level are funded by a variety of State and private donors.⁸ The international structure, that is the costs of the network and its secretariat, is funded by Dutch and EU donors.

Dilemmas

One of the dilemmas surrounding funding is finding a balance between the donors wishes and the organisations view of what is needed. The ability to secure funding is a basic condition for all La Strada members, but at the same time there is a risk that activities are developed to respond to the donors' priorities and areas of interest instead of focusing on those issues that are found most pressing based on the day-to-day experiences 'on the work floor'. In this situation it is difficult to pursue a long-term strategy because the organisation might need to refocus to comply with the donors' priorities in order to secure the economic survival of the organisation.

⁸ E.g. embassies, ODIHR/OSCE, USAID, UNHCR, UNDP, UNICEF, EU programs, IOM, the US Department of State/ IREX, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mama Cash, the Global Fund for Women, Stefan Batory Foundation, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Education for Democracy Foundation, OAK Philantropy Ltd..

Chapter 4

How does La Strada work?

General principles

All La Strada members share the following general principles which represent the philosophical basis for both the everyday work and the aims they strive to achieve.

- **Integration of a human rights perspective:** Trafficking is viewed as a serious human rights violation for which States can be held accountable. States are obliged to uphold human rights, including social, economic and political rights, and implement those rights in the mainstream. Essential elements of a human rights-based approach are compliance with human rights norms and the principle of non-discrimination, the recognition of trafficked persons as victims of serious human rights abuses and as holders of rights, participation of the individuals and groups affected, empowerment, social inclusion and the integration of a gender and ethnic perspective.
- **Adherence to the principle of non-discrimination:** Non-discrimination means the right of all people to equality before the law and protection against discrimination. Anti-trafficking measures must not be used to directly or indirectly discriminate against women or other groups or adversely affect their rights, such as the right to freedom of movement, the right to privacy or the right to leave one's country. Protections for trafficked persons must be applied without discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity, immigration status or the person having been trafficked or having been engaged in the sex industry.
- **Trafficked persons have a right to adequate remedies and support:** Under international human rights law States have a duty to not only prevent, investigate and prosecute trafficking, but also to provide victims with adequate remedies, including assistance, protection and compensation.

- The need for a professional, holistic and multidisciplinary approach:
To effectively tackle trafficking, integrated action is needed on different levels and in different fields: prevention, assistance and protection of trafficked persons, prosecution of the traffickers, information and lobbying for adequate policies and legislation. Moreover, multi-disciplinary cooperation is needed between all involved actors and stakeholders, including law enforcement, the judiciary, border guards, local authorities, labour unions, self organisations, NGOs, international organisations and other relevant civil society actors.

General principles

- Integration of a human rights perspective: human rights must be at the core of any anti-trafficking strategy;
- Adherence to the principle of non-discrimination;
- Trafficked persons have a right to adequate remedies, including assistance, protection and compensation;
- The need for a professional, integrated, holistic and multidisciplinary approach.

Based on these principles La Strada integrates a human rights approach into its work. A human rights-based approach allows the root causes of trafficking, such as gender and ethnic discrimination to be addressed by empowering potential victims. This is more effective than purely repressive strategies, as it makes high risk groups less vulnerable to trafficking. It addresses the consequences of trafficking by promoting respect for and protection of the human rights of trafficked persons and by opposing the use of trafficked persons solely as instruments for the prosecution. Assistance and support of trafficked persons allows them to regain control over their lives and reduces the risk of re-trafficking. It also contributes to an effective prosecution of traffickers. The absence of adequate assistance and support may prevent trafficked persons from reporting to the authorities and may subject them to further trauma and re-victimization. Both recognition and protection of the rights of trafficked persons, on the other hand, act as an important incentive to report to the authorities and give testimony.

Finally, a human rights-based approach opposes anti-trafficking measures which adversely affect or infringe upon the human rights of trafficked persons or other affected groups.

Elements of this approach are:

- Respect for the right of all persons to make decisions about all aspects of their life, including the decision to work in the sex industry;
- The rights, interests and needs of trafficked persons are imperative in all areas of work;
- Empowerment and participation of trafficked persons and groups at risk, especially women and minorities, is crucial to enhance their ability to exercise and protect their rights. Essential elements for the ability of a person to make informed decisions about her or his life is access to information and an understanding of her or his own potential. Important elements of participation are access to decision and policy making processes, information, resources and redress mechanisms;
- Education in human rights and women's rights is an integral part of the work;
- All contacts with trafficked persons and persons at risk are based on confidentiality, safety, non-victimization and non-discrimination;
- Lobby for the adoption of the Human Rights Standards for the Treatment of Trafficked Persons as jointly developed by the Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Persons, the International Human Rights Law Group and the Foundation Against Trafficking in Women.⁹ Another important instrument is the Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights;¹⁰

⁹ *Human Rights Standards for the Treatment of Trafficked Persons*, Foundation Against Trafficking in Women (STV), International Human Rights Law Group (IHLG) and Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Persons (GAATW), Bangkok 1999; can be found at www.gaatw.org.

¹⁰ *Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking*, UNHCHR, New York/Geneva 2002; can be found at <http://www.ohchr.org/english/about/publications/docs/trafficking.doc>.

Elements of a human rights-based approach

- Respect for individual decisions;
- The rights, interests and needs of trafficked persons are central;
- Empowerment and participation;
- Education in human rights and women's rights;
- Confidentiality, safety, non-victimization and non-discrimination;
- Lobby for the implementation of human rights standards for the treatment of trafficked persons;
- Direct contact with trafficked persons is the basis for all campaigns and advocacy work.

A last aspect relates to professionalism. All La Strada members are committed to providing an equal professional standard of services.

Instruments to achieve this standard are regular training and (individual or group) supervision of staff members and volunteers, regular (internal and external) evaluation of activities, a joint monitoring and evaluation system based on transparency and accountability and compliance with the general principles of work as described above. Moreover, staff members regularly participate in external courses, for example, in management skills, fund raising, psychology and social work.

The attention that is paid to teambuilding and to the improvement of the professional skills of the team members has proved to be an important means not only to enhance and maintain the quality of the work, but also to motivate and recognise team members, to improve communication, to deal with the workload and to prevent team members from getting burned out.

Internal principles

Core values of the partnership between the La Strada members include mutual understanding and support, accountability, trust, transparency, commitment and openness. All La Strada members have equal rights and responsibilities, equal access to information and an equal voice in decision making procedures.

Moreover, all La Strada members are committed to exchanging any relevant information with each other. In particular this relates to information about new materials developed, publications, contacts, activities, services available for trafficked persons, initiatives for new projects and information about new trends in trafficking, including statistics and changes in policies or legislation.

In addition, La Strada members exchange information on international events and developments, events to be carried out by La Strada members and international funding possibilities.

Both the general principles of work and the internal principles of cooperation are laid down in a joint Code of Conduct.

Position on trafficking and sex work¹¹

The trafficking of women reflects the poor social and legal position of women in many countries, a position which encourages deceit, abuse, violence, debt-bondage, blackmail and deprivation of human rights. Trafficking of women currently flourishes in particular in the sex sector, the domestic labour market, and the commercial marriage market. It is a complex problem, related to different fields and interests: migration, organised crime, sex work, human rights, labour rights, violence against women, the feminisation of poverty, the gender division of the international labour market and unequal international economic relationships. Strategies therefore necessarily need to be multi-faceted. However, precisely because the trafficking of women is related to so many other areas and (State) interests, any analysis and its matching solutions must be carefully questioned in terms of the interests that are served, whose problems are addressed and whether or not the 'solution' might produce more problems for the women concerned rather than solving them.

¹¹ See for a more extensive analysis of the different strategies on trafficking in women *Trafficking in Women, Forced Labour and Slavery-like Practices in Marriage, Domestic Labour and Prostitution*, Marjan Wijers & Lin Lap-Chew, STV/GAATW, 1999.

The traditional approach to the trafficking of women is what could be called the 'moral approach', rooted in the moral condemnation of prostitution. Within this approach the trafficking of women is restricted to the sex industry and is considered to be part and parcel of prostitution, without any regard for conditions of consent or coercion. In this view, prostitution and trafficking are practically identical. However, over recent years new approaches have been developed, broadening the definition of trafficking and beginning from the point of view of the women involved, thus moving the focus from moral positions to working conditions and workers' rights. Essential questions within this approach are: how do the women (and men) concerned define the problem? What are *their* problems, motives and needs, from what do *they* want to be protected?

La Strada shares this approach. From the perspective of the women (and men) concerned, the need and right to work with fair compensation under proper conditions, whether in their own country or in a country with a demand for their labour, is primary. The key priority of La Strada is the improvement of the position of women and the promotion of their rights, including the right to migrate, to work abroad and to be protected from violence and abuse. To do so requires dialogue. Instead of excluding prostitutes from the debate - as has been the practice for centuries - their participation is viewed an essential condition.

The La Strada programme is based on a human rights approach. Female migrants, domestic workers and sex workers must have their human rights protected. States are accountable for violations of human rights, including forced labour and practices akin to slavery. Trafficking occurs in countries where sex work is legal and in countries where it is not legalised. La Strada does not advocate the abolition of prostitution. It is convinced that focusing the debate on the abolishment of sex work will not lead to the protection of the human rights of the women concerned. This approach is in line with the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Human Beings, which makes a clear distinction between

trafficking and sex work. It is also in line with recommendations of various European conferences and meetings, like the 1997 The Hague Ministerial Declaration on European Guidelines for effective measures to prevent and combat trafficking in women for the purpose of sexual exploitation,¹² the Brussels Declaration on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings¹³, the Report of the Experts Group on Trafficking in Human Beings established by the European Commission,¹⁴ the OSCE Action Plan on Trafficking in Human Beings¹⁵ and the EU Council Framework Decision of July 19th, 2002 on combating trafficking in human beings.¹⁶

Dilemmas

La Strada respects the right of persons to make their own individual decisions, including the decision to undertake sex work, but finds it difficult to allow their clients staying in the shelter to continue to do so. There are good reasons for this, in particular the connection of the sex industry in many countries with criminal elements which might jeopardise the safety of the woman concerned and other clients in the shelter. On the flipside, requiring from the woman that she stops working means that she loses her income and becomes totally dependent on others. It is also at odds with the principle that she is a free person who can decide for herself.

¹² Ministerial Conference under the Presidency of the European Union, The Hague, 24-26 April 1997.

¹³ To be found at http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/news/forum_crimen/2002/workshop/brussels_decl_en.htm#b1.

¹⁴ The report can be downloaded from the Commission's website: http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/doc_centre/crime/trafficking/doc/report_expert_group_1204_en.pdf.

¹⁵ OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, Decision no. 557 (July 2003). See the website of the OSCE <http://www.osce.org/odihr/?page=democratization&div=antitrafficking>.

¹⁶ OJ L 203, 1.8.2002, p. 1; to be found at http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/pri/en/oj/dat/2002/l_203/l_20320020801en00010004.pdf.

Chapter 5

Assistance & Support

Aims

Assistance & Support is the core activity within the La Strada programme and the main reason for La Strada's existence. The aim is to provide trafficked women and girls with the support and assistance they need to regain their freedom and to take back control over their lives. Their needs, views and concerns form the basis of the assistance provided and underlie all other work. Direct contact with the women concerned gives the different La Strada teams insight into the experiences of trafficked women. It is their rights and interests that La Strada aims to defend.

Within the La Strada programme, local, national, regional and international networks have been created to assist trafficked persons, to ensure their safe return and to support them in regaining control over their lives. Assistance includes social, psychological and emotional assistance, health care, support in court cases, legal aid, housing and individual advocacy.¹⁷ Programmes aim for the empowerment and social inclusion of trafficked persons either in the country of destination or in their home country. Important elements of social inclusion are access to employment, housing, social protection, health care and education. Not being entitled to a residence permit, not having access to the labour market or to social protection, not speaking the language and/or having low education and/or skills, on the other hand, act as factors that seriously impede trafficked persons from leaving an abusive situation.¹⁸ Working towards legal changes and social inclusion is therefore crucial to encourage and enable trafficked persons to leave a trafficking situation, to prevent them from being re-trafficked and – in general – to prevent people from ending up in

¹⁷ See for the exact services that the different La Strada members offer Appendix 2.

¹⁸ Currently access of trafficked persons to the mentioned provisions differs per country dependent on national laws and treaties.

a trafficking situation. Direct support of trafficked persons is combined with lobbying for the rights of trafficked persons.

Target groups

Target groups are the women and girls concerned, family members, children, friends and other persons who might get in contact with trafficked women, such as clients. The Assistance & Support programme also targets professionals who work with trafficked persons and/or their families or who might get in contact with them: social workers, health workers, psychologists, cultural mediators, interpreters, lawyers and police officers.

Hotlines

All La Strada organisations have a hotline, some of which are free of charge and open 24 hours a day. The hotlines are an important tool in getting in touch with women who have been trafficked and are in need of advice or assistance. Also, family members, friends or clients of (possible) victims can call the hotlines for information and advice or to enlist help. If they wish, callers can remain anonymous and this keeps the threshold as low as possible. The hotline consultants can provide information on destination countries and useful telephone numbers. They can give safety tips and can offer help if needed. They can organise practical, psychological, medical and legal support, refer victims to shelters, assist in restoring personal documents, make contact with the family of a victim if she wishes so, and conduct crisis intervention. If a woman who is currently in a situation of trafficking calls, the consultant can give her emotional support, discuss the options, support her in making a plan of action or help her in making up her mind whether to try to escape, with all risks attached, or try to survive in another way.

Identification of trafficked persons

Women contact La Strada directly, for example through the hotlines, or are referred to La Strada by other agencies, such as other NGOs, the police or international organisations.

In addition, La Strada cooperates with other agencies who might be in touch with trafficked women, for example, street workers. Some La Strada members work together with peer educators, sex workers who do prevention work among colleague sex workers and provide them with information and advice.

Maria was 19 years old when she was referred to La Strada Bulgaria/Animus by the police who found her during a police operation. She had explained to the police officers that she had been forced into prostitution, but had no relatives to support her and no place to go to. In the crisis centre of La Strada, Maria told how she was raised by her grandmother and aunt after her parents were deprived of their parental rights because of consistent neglect. Her grandmother and aunt took good care of her, but when they died their heirs expelled her from the house. When she was 18, Maria found herself alone on the streets with a suitcase, a few clothes and 5 lev.¹⁹ As she had nowhere to go, she moved in with a male friend who forced her to work as a prostitute and then sold her to somebody else. From that moment on she was sold and resold to different pimps, first in Bulgaria and then abroad in the Netherlands and in Belgium. In Belgium she was arrested by the local police and deported. Back in Bulgaria she was out on the streets again. Homeless once more, she soon fell into the same circle of forced prostitution and abuse. By the time the police found her, Maria was afraid that she was going to be sold abroad again and sought protection with the police. In the shelter there was a serious risk that she would be found and kidnapped since her exploiters lived in the same town. Maria had no money and no relatives to support her. She had a certificate from high school but her pimps had taken that away from her. She had never had a job before. In addition, she had serious health problems. Maria wanted to press charges and was brought into contact with the police. The social worker of La Strada organised a new graduation certificate and a short vocational course. She also negotiated with the Social Support Agency to initiate an urgent procedure to find Maria temporary accommodation. A counselling programme was started. Maria was self-destructive and had serious difficulties adapting to her new situation. After two months at the crisis centre she went out one day and never came back. There is no information what has happened to her.

Trafficked persons may also be identified by law enforcement agencies, such as police, border guards and prosecutors. In order to ensure the adequate identification and referral of victims, all La Strada members seek to establish cooperative links with these agencies. They also organise

¹⁹ Appr. 2.5 EUR.

training courses for the police in order to enhance adequate identification and referral of trafficked persons.

Some La Strada organisations have a public address and are directly accessible for clients and other individuals and agencies concerned. La Strada Moldova, for example, operates a drop-in centre. Other La Strada organisations work with a secret address and can only be contacted by telephone.

How do trafficked women contact La Strada?

- On their own initiative, mostly through the hotline;
- Through other La Strada member organisations;
- Through other local or foreign NGOs;
- Through state agencies, such as the police, consulates and embassies, state social services or medical services;
- Through international organisations, such as the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

It is a common characteristic of trafficked persons that for a number of different reasons they tend not to look for help themselves. These reasons include trauma resulting from the abuse, depression, feelings of guilt and shame, fear of reprisals or deportation, stigma, loss of faith and lack of hope for a better future. Therefore most women are referred to La Strada through other agencies.

Assistance & Support services

The assistance that is provided depends on the individual situation and the specific needs of the woman concerned as well as on the available services and resources. At the beginning of each contact an individual needs assessment is conducted.

Support services vary from crisis intervention to the organisation of short or long term assistance programmes. They include arranging for a safe return home, meeting women at the airport, the railway or coach station,

addressing immediate needs such as clothing, food and other basic necessities, facilitating contacts with consulates to obtain new identity and/or travel documents, assistance in getting in touch with family members, arranging a safe shelter, providing emotional support, counselling, organising psychological aid, providing healthcare and/or legal aid, support during court cases and assistance in organising education and/or in finding a job. La Strada can also help by contacting other agencies, such as the police or the local authorities, and representing and advocating the interests of the women concerned. Some La Strada organisations have services for clients with specific needs, such as mothers with children, drug-dependent women or women with psychiatric problems. The majority of La Strada members also provides assistance in searching for missing persons.

Alina comes from Moldova. She had no job and wanted to go abroad to earn some money. A friend introduced her to a girl who could help her to take care of her passport and all the necessary documents. That took about a month. Via Romania and Yugoslavia she and the other girl travelled to Bosnia Herzegovina, where they were taken to a bar together with three more girls. As soon as the owner had arranged all documents they started to work. By then Alina had a debt of 5,000 KM (= appr. 2,500 Euro): 2,000 for the visa and 3,000 for herself, the money that the bar owner had paid for her. Alina worked in the bar, drank with the clients, and also worked 'rooms'. She did not get paid since she first had to work off her debt. In addition, she had to pay for her clothes, her food and even the drinks which she had in the bar. They were working until the police raided the bar. It then transpired that her documents were false. The girls were put in prison for two months. When the case came to trial, Alina and her friend gave a false testimony. Alina was too embarrassed to have to go back home with no money and without even her clothes with her. All the girls told the judge that they wished to go back to the bar owner. When Alina was free again she returned to the bar and continued to work in the hope that she would earn some money to take home. All the time, the owner told her that he would give her her money, but that it would be safer if he kept it for her. When she learned that her mother was ill and needed money, she told the owner that she wanted her money to send it to her mother. He started yelling at her and told her that he had no money for her. She then decided to go back on her own. With the help of a client she met in the bar and who had given her his telephone number in case she needed help, she managed to leave. For months she tried to get her passport back and to arrange for documents to be able to go home, but without success. That was when she contacted La Strada, who helped her to return to Moldova. She never received a penny for her work.

Along with the individual needs of specific clients, the exact services that are available depend on the stage of development of the particular La

Strada member and the situation in the country concerned. Some member organisations joined the programme at a later stage and are still in the process of developing their Assistance & Support programme, while others already have a fully developed system of assistance services. La Strada aims to achieve a uniform standard of services, including compliance with national standards for social work.

What assistance services does La Strada provide? ²⁰

- Organisation of a safe return home;
- Meeting women at the airport, the railway or coach station;
- Addressing immediate needs such as a safe shelter, clothing, food and other basic necessities;
- Counselling, emotional support, organisation of psychological care, health care and/or legal aid;
- Facilitating contacts with consulates to obtain new identity and/or travel documents;
- Assistance in getting in touch with family members;
- Assistance in contacts with other agencies, such as the police or municipalities, to represent and advocate the interests of the women concerned;
- Short or long term assistance programmes, including assistance in organising education or finding a job;
- Assistance in searching for missing persons.

Some La Strada members have specific programmes for trafficked children who are rejected by their family or cannot return to their families. Children are particularly vulnerable as they are more dependent on adults and have fewer possibilities to escape an exploitative relationship. In general they have a more limited capacity to fully understand the consequences of their situation. Some of them have run away from home to escape domestic violence or sexual abuse. They cannot ‘simply’ be returned home.

In all La Strada countries, shelters exist to which women can be referred. In 2004, six of the nine La Strada members had their own shelters which in particular were used for the reception of returning women. The period a

²⁰ Please see Appendix 2 for the exact services that the different La Strada members provide.

woman can stay in these shelters varies from a week to a number of months.

Networking & Cooperation

One of the important areas of cooperation between La Strada members is the referral and assistance of trafficked persons ,for example, to arrange for papers, to organise the safe return of the person concerned or to provide her with immediate or long term support.

Support services for victims are provided in cooperation with local NGOs, social workers, doctors, et cetera. Moreover, local, national, regional and international networks are developed with other NGOs, government agencies such as the police, and international organisations. Special assistance and return programmes are, for example, set up with the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) which finances or co-finances voluntary return and re-integration programmes.

National Model for Victim Support

In 2003, the Government of the Czech Republic adopted a National Strategy against the Trafficking of Persons, part of which is a Model for the Protection and Support of Victims. Under this programme, victims are offered a delay of 30 days in which to decide whether or not they want to cooperate with the authorities in the prosecution of the traffickers. In the case of a victim deciding to cooperate, she is offered a visa for three months that can be repeatedly extended. If she does not wish to cooperate with law enforcement, she can participate in a voluntary return programme. Victims who cooperate are also offered this possibility after completion of the criminal proceedings. In exceptional cases a victim may be granted a permanent residence permit for humanitarian grounds.

The Model is based on the cooperation of three organisations: La Strada Czech Republic, Catholic Charity and IOM. La Strada Czech functions as reception centre and provides victim assistance during the initial period of one to three months. After this period, the Catholic Charity provides follow-up assistance aimed at reintegration if the residence status of the victim allows for this. Voluntary return programmes to ensure the safe return of victims to their home country are managed by IOM.

In 2003, the model was tested as a pilot project in cooperation with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. A similar model was implemented in Poland. Following its adoption, the Czech government took the initiative to start cooperation with Moldova to introduce the same Model there, supported by La Strada Czech and La Strada Moldova.

Whereas all La Strada members started with providing most services themselves - since there was nobody else - by now in most countries some infrastructure for the support of trafficked persons has been developed. This means that a number of La Strada members are changing their focus from providing services themselves to the adequate referral of clients to other services, training of professionals and managing of volunteers.

Activities of the Assistance & Support Campaign

- Operation of hotlines which provide (anonymous) consultancy, advice and assistance to trafficked persons, their families and friends;
- Establishment of and participation in local, national, regional and international networks to ensure the adequate identification, referral and assistance of trafficked persons and to ensure their safe return;
- Cooperation with government and non-government agencies who might come into contact with trafficked persons or who are relevant in the process of assistance to trafficked persons;
- Development of short and long term assistance programmes, including housing, medical care, legal aid, social, psychological and emotional support and vocational training;
- Advocating the rights of victims of trafficking and lobby for the implementation of the Human Rights Standards for the Treatment of Trafficked Persons.

Cooperation with the police

La Strada attaches great value to cooperation with the police, to ensure the adequate identification and referral of trafficked persons for example. However, it is important to recognise and respect the different roles that the police and NGOs have. The police focus on the detection, investigation and prosecution of crimes, whereas the primary focus of La Strada is on the protection of the rights and interests of the victims. Cooperation can be advantageous for the successful completion of both tasks.

A critical component in the effective detection and prosecution of traffickers is the willingness of victims to press charges and act as witnesses. Adequate assistance and support of trafficked persons can encourage them to give testimony and prevent them from being re-traumatised during criminal proceedings.

Based on the principle of confidentiality and consent La Strada does not contact the police or provide information to the police without the consent of the trafficked person. In practice this is sometimes difficult for the police to accept. To avoid such tensions La Strada aims for cooperation based on a mutual agreement or memorandum of understanding which clearly defines the tasks, rights and responsibilities of both parties while recognising their different roles.

Dilemmas

Cooperation with the border police enables La Strada to pick up returning women at the airport before customs. However, in some cases, the police will use this information to intercept the woman and interrogate her immediately after arrival. This might lead to her being forced to testify against her will. In such cases La Strada will advise the woman that they will wait outside customs for her if she does not want to talk to the police.

In other countries, La Strada is obliged to register all their clients with the police. This seriously compromises the confidentiality of the relationship between the client and La Strada and makes it impossible to maintain complete confidentiality. It might also act as a serious barrier for women to contact La Strada or to enlist La Strada to help them safely return. For La Strada it poses the question of how to protect the privacy of clients while maintaining cooperation and good relations with the police.

Moreover, La Strada does not get involved in criminal investigations and does not file criminal information. The latter measure is meant to both protect the safety of the trafficked person and the safety of the La Strada team. It should be clear that La Strada is not a law enforcement agency. The focus of La Strada is to support the women involved and to defend their interests. It is their decision whether or not they want to inform the police.

La Strada does not

- Provide information on specific cases of trafficking to the police without the consent of the woman involved;
- Refer trafficked persons to the police unless they wish so themselves;
- Get involved in criminal investigations;
- File or provide information on the criminal aspects of a case.

Working principles

All assistance provided by La Strada rests on the following principles:

- voluntary basis
- confidentiality
- safety
- respect for choices and decisions
- empowerment
- no victimisation or stigmatisation
- no judgements
- the needs, views and concerns of the trafficked person are central.

Voluntary basis

All assistance is provided on a voluntary basis. The woman herself decides whether or not she wants to make use of the services La Strada offers and she can terminate the contact any moment she wants. Moreover, it is important that what she wants and what La Strada can offer is clear. In some cases this is laid down in an agreement between the client and La Strada.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality and the protection of privacy and personal data are fundamental conditions for any work with trafficked persons. Many women fear rejection by their families or repercussions from the authorities if their situation becomes known. If they have worked in the sex industry, they are afraid of the stigma attached to prostitution and the ensuing marginalisation. Often, they feel guilty or ashamed of what happened to them. Furthermore, they are afraid of reprisals against themselves, their families or their children. They must be absolutely sure that everything they share remains strictly confidential. This means that La Strada does not give information to third parties without the consent of the woman concerned.

However, in a number of situations the principle of confidentiality can be breached, either for legal reasons or because of the protection of the health and safety of the client or the La Strada workers. This is the case when the client is a child (under 18), when there is a serious risk of suicide, when the client is in contact with the traffickers or when there is a danger to the life of the client.

Different countries have different laws on working with minors. In general the law requires the permission of the parents. However, in a number of cases contacting the parents could be harmful to the child, in particular when the child was abused, sold or abandoned by her or his parents. In these cases, the responsible child protection authorities are contacted. Other reasons for involving the authorities are when the client puts the safety of other clients or La Strada workers at risk by contacting the traffickers or when there is reason to believe that there is a serious threat to the life of the client. In every case the client will be informed about the breach of confidentiality.

Safety

Many of the women and girls who manage to escape their traffickers take great risks. For a longer or shorter period they have lived in a situation of total insecurity and extreme dependency on the persons who controlled them. Many have been subjected to serious physical, emotional and psychological violence. These experiences destroy the basic feeling of safety and security every human being needs. Regaining a basic feeling of security is the first step in the process of recovery. The safety of the women La Strada works with is therefore of paramount concern. Regaining a feeling of safety also requires that a number of basic necessities are arranged, such as a safe place to stay and money to live on.

Respect for choices and decisions

During the trafficking situation women had no control over their lives. Resuming their independence and taking back control over their lives is directly related to the possibility of making their own choices and decisions. In order to be able to do this, they need reliable information and a clear picture of the possibilities and options available. La Strada offers support and partnership in taking decisions and making plans for the future.

Dilemmas

Some countries offer residence permits on humanitarian grounds if women for various reasons cannot or do not want to return to their home countries. Other countries do not offer this opportunity. But even in countries that do have this possibility, women are only rarely granted a permanent residence permit. Often this means that the only choice women have is either to return to a bad and dangerous situation or to try to survive illegally in the country they are in. This poses the question of whether La Strada is willing to continue to support the woman if she decides to stay illegally, in particular in countries where facilitating illegal stay of a foreigner is against the law. It also poses the question whether or not La Strada should cooperate in returning the woman to her home country, knowing that they cannot guarantee her safety and that she does not return voluntarily and out of her own free will.

Empowerment

Empowerment refers to the process through which people develop their ability to live independently, make their own decisions and show control over their life. One of the consequences of being trafficked is a loss of self confidence and the feeling of being valuable as an individual and human being. In particular if women are deceived by people they trusted they might have lost confidence in their own judgement. La Strada supports women in regaining their self confidence and faith in their own competences by helping them to (re)discover their strong points and qualities: they have shown the capacity to survive in extremely difficult circumstances and deserve full respect.

Principles of the La Strada Assistance & Support programme

- Respect for human rights
- Voluntary basis

- Confidentiality
- Safety
- Respect for choices and decisions
- Empowerment
- No victimisation or stigmatisation
- No judgements
- The needs, views and concerns of the trafficked person are central.

No victimisation or stigmatisation

‘Blame the victim’ is a very common and widespread mechanism with which trafficked persons are all too often confronted. Common opinion holds that they were looking for it, are stupid and naïve, were looking for ‘easy’ money, knew they were going to work as prostitutes (meaning that they deserved to be abused), did nothing to escape, et cetera. This attitude effectively silences victims. La Strada stresses that trafficking is a crime and that the only ones responsible for that crime are the perpetrators and not the victims.

Moreover, in reality many victims of trafficking are strong willed, and enterprising women, who had the courage to migrate in search for a better life for themselves, their families or their children. All characteristics that, if they had been men, would have been judged positively.

No judgements

The needs, views and concerns of the women concerned are central in any contact. They know what is best for them. La Strada considers the treatment of trafficked persons in a respectful, non-judgemental and non-moralizing or patronizing way as a basic condition.

Method of working

Referrals through other organisations

If clients are referred to La Strada through other organisations or persons, certain procedures are followed to ensure the safety of both the clients and the members of the La Strada teams.

In particular when women are referred to La Strada to organise their safe return, the following procedures are followed:

- If possible, a consultant of La Strada speaks directly (by phone) with the woman concerned in order to find out her specific needs and concerns. This direct contact also aims to establish a feeling of trust between the La Strada consultant and the woman concerned so that she can feel safer and assured of help.
- The referring organisation is asked to provide as much information as possible about her situation. This information is necessary to arrange for the woman to be met on her return, to find her accommodation, organise any other assistance needed and take the necessary safety measures. Information includes the personal data of the woman concerned, how she got into contact with the referring organisation, her trafficking history, her physical and emotional condition, her wishes and plans, whether she wishes to make contact with her family, whether there is any place she can go, whether she or her family have been threatened, whether it is dangerous for her to come back, the exact time and place of her arrival and any other relevant information.

Individual needs assessment and plan of action

At the beginning of each new contact an individual needs assessment is made by the La Strada social worker together with the woman concerned. The aim of this initial interview is to assess the specific needs of the woman concerned and to inform her about the possibilities of the La Strada assistance programme. Topics that are discussed include the safety of the woman, her emotional state, her physical condition, the experiences she went through, (immediate) needs such as accommodation, healthcare, food, clothing, financial support or legal aid, relationships with family and friends, her future plans and any other problems that need to be solved, for

example getting new identity papers or finding a job. However, the decision on what she wants to tell or not lies with the woman herself. On the basis of this interview an individual plan of action is developed.

In the first phase emphasis is mostly on arranging for the necessary practical aid, such accommodation, food, clothing and healthcare. Further to that, social and legal counselling and psychological care is offered. In the later stages the emphasis shifts to supporting the activities of the client in finding solutions to the problems she faces. The final aim is to support women in rebuilding their feeling of safety and confidence, finding ways to cope with their situation and regaining control over their lives.

Referrals to other organisations

If it is necessary to enlist other organisations or professionals, for example a lawyer or a doctor, the social worker will take care of the referral.

Referrals are by preference made to services, organisations and persons who are knowledgeable about trafficking and with whom procedures for cooperation have been established. If necessary, La Strada accompanies the client.

Unrealistic expectations

One of the problems NGOs in countries of origin face is that sometimes representatives of government agencies or NGOs in countries of destination make unrealistic promises to trafficked women about the possibilities for assistance in their home country. On their return women are then confronted with an unkind reality and a feeling of being deceived again.

Case manager

In each case a case manager who is responsible for the direct work with the client and the communication with other service organisations is appointed. In some cases, particularly when minors are involved, the case manager will organise a multi-disciplinary team consisting of representatives of the different service agencies involved. The case

manager is responsible for the exchange of information and the coordination of services. However, information to third persons will only be given with the consent of the client. This includes the fact that the woman has been victim of trafficking. Throughout the process, the case manager maintains intensive contact with the woman concerned.

The case manager is supported by a team of other staff members and volunteers with whom she discusses the plan of action, the steps that need to be taken, problems faced and the necessary safety measures. Team work is also required to prevent social workers from burn outs.

Emotional support

Emotional support makes up an important element of any assistance process. Most trafficked persons have to cope with a range of intense and sometimes conflicting feelings: fear, guilt, anger, shame, , lack of trust, feelings of betrayal, helplessness and despair, shock and a sense of disorientation. At the same time there are very few people with whom they can share their feelings and experiences, in particular if they have worked as a prostitute due to the stigma attached to prostitution and safety risks.

Fear is often an overriding emotion in the victim: fear that the traffickers will find and punish her, fear that she can be prosecuted and punished by the authorities for illegal entry or stay or for having been involved in prostitution, fear that her family won't accept her anymore and that she will be ostracized by her community, fear that nobody will believe her and understand what she has been going through, fear that she has caught AIDS or another disease, fear that her family is in danger because of her, fear that she is completely alone and will not be able to cope with the future.

Many trafficked women feel guilty or ashamed themselves that they were so 'stupid' as to trust others, that they have not met the expectations of their family, that they have failed to financially support their families or

that they have worked as a prostitute. At the same time they have to deal with feelings of anger: anger at oneself, at the ones who abused them, the people they asked for help and who did not defend them, the society and the authorities who did not protect them, and everyone who did not go through the same horror as they did.

Kasia comes from Poland. She is 22 and a qualified cook. From the age of 14 she lived in a variety of childcare centres after her family broke down. When she left the children's home she went to stay with a female friend. Neither of them had any income and it was impossible for them to find a job. M., the fiancé of a neighbour offered them a job in Austria. He also offered to pay for the journey and the clothes they would need at work. He told them their job would be to accompany gentlemen and to sleep with them, but only if they wanted to and that in that case they would be additionally paid. When Kasia's social worker learned about this proposal, she became suspicious. She contacted La Strada and together they worked out a programme to support Kasia. The social worker also found out that M. had a criminal record. However, she did not succeed in convincing Kasia not to go. Together with her friend, Kasia left for Austria, taking with her the prevention info-kit. She hoped that meeting nice men would enable her to earn real money. Two days later, she sent a 'password' – a message signalling that she needed help – to her social worker, together with her address in Austria. An Austrian organization was informed and they passed on the information to the police. It turned out that the girls had landed in a club where they had to work to repay their 'debt', meaning the money the club owner had paid M. for arranging their travel to Austria. They were threatened and not allowed to refuse clients. The police raided the club and released Kasia and her friend. They both received help from Austrian NGOs and returned to Warsaw. Kasia's friend could not believe that her neighbour's fiancé had been knowing what was waiting for them in Austria. She returned to her home town, but soon left again. Nobody knows where she is now. Kasia stayed in Warsaw. She made friends in the La Strada shelter and started looking for a job, which she finally found. She agreed to talk to the police, but refused to testify. She feels it is her own fault, she knew what might happen.

Working with families

Often families or friends of women and girls who might have become victims of trafficking contact La Strada. The principles and methods of works described in this chapter apply to these contacts as well. In case of missing women and girls, La Strada can follow two strategies. Some of the La Strada offices will take in the information of the relatives and contact the police. Other offices choose not to get involved in police investigations and will refer family direct to the relevant police department.

Families and friends of women and girls who have gone missing go through a range of feelings. They are confused, do not know where to look for help or have lost confidence in institutions. They can have mixed feelings about their daughters, sisters, wives or friends (possibly) being involved in sex work. On the one hand they are worried and want to do everything to get them back safely, on the other hand they are ashamed and angry at the woman concerned. La Strada can offer emotional support in dealing with these feelings and if necessary refer them to other agencies.

Registration

Each La Strada office keeps its own records on clients in accordance with the legal requirements of the country. All La Strada members take great care to protect the confidentiality of personal data. To this aim several measures are taken, for instance records are kept locked away in a safe place, they never leave the office and only qualified staff of La Strada has access to them. Some La Strada members, like La Strada Poland, do not keep full records because it is legally impossible to keep them confidential.

Responsibilities and safety of staff

All assistance services are provided by trained professionals and volunteers. Team members have to be over eighteen, to be educated in violence against women and must have an open, non-discriminatory and non-judgemental attitude. In addition, they have to guarantee the confidentiality of their contacts with clients, they must not themselves be in a situation of violence, dependency of or abuse by a partner or another third party, they must not be in a relationship (intimate, political or religious) with persons who can jeopardise the safety of clients or the organisation and they must be able to fully take the side of the clients.

The Assistance & Support project manager is responsible for the coordination of services and service providers, the compliance with the

standards, principles and procedures of work, the training of the team members and the communication with other La Strada members in specific cases.

Safety does not only concern the clients, but also the La Strada social workers themselves. Apart from the procedures described above, some La Strada offices take additional measures, such as a secret address or the protection of the anonymity of their workers. The latter means that members of the La Strada team do not act in public (e.g. in the media) and use pseudonyms in their external contacts.

Help the helpers

Working with trafficked persons can be emotionally difficult and exhausting. Workers may feel helpless in their desire to help, overestimate their own power or feel over-responsible. To help them cope with these feelings and to improve the quality of their work, a number of methods are used, such as debriefing after emotionally burdening sessions with clients and regular individual or group supervision with an external supervisor. This is also one of the reasons why it is important to work in a team. Other techniques to avoid burn-out include good planning, being realistic about what you can achieve, and not joining in with every activity of others (none of which is easy).

Chapter 6

Information & Lobbying

Aims

The Information & Lobbying campaign aims to put and keep trafficking in persons firmly on the political agenda, to raise public awareness, to stimulate public debate on the issue and to monitor the implementation of counter trafficking measures.

The first step is to get trafficking recognised as a violation of human rights, both by the public in general and by the authorities. Lobbying activities focus on the implementation of the Human Rights Standards for the Treatment of Trafficked Persons, the implementation of the UN Trafficking Protocol and the effective prosecution of the perpetrators, the development of national action plans, the establishment of National Rapporteurs and the recognition of the role of NGOs and other relevant civil society actors.

La Strada lobbies for²¹

- **Observance of the principle of non-discrimination:** States shall not discriminate against trafficked persons in substantive or procedural law;
- **Safety and fair treatment:** States shall recognise that trafficked persons are victims of serious human rights abuses, protect their rights independent of any irregular immigration status, and protect them from reprisal and harm;
- **Access to justice:** The police, prosecutors and courts shall ensure that their efforts to punish traffickers are implemented within a system that respects and safeguards the rights of the victims to privacy, dignity and safety;
- **Access to private actions and reparations:** States must ensure that trafficked persons have a legal right to seek reparations from traffickers as well as assistance in bringing such actions, if necessary;
- **Resident status:** States shall provide trafficked persons with temporary residence visas (including the right to work) during the pendency of any criminal, civil or other legal actions and shall provide trafficked persons with the right to seek asylum and have the risk of retaliation considered in any deportation proceedings;

²¹ Taken from: *Human Rights Standards for the Treatment of Trafficked Persons*, Foundation Against Trafficking, International Human Rights Law Group, Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women, Bangkok 1999, Summary.

- **Health and other services:** States shall provide trafficked persons with adequate health and other social services during the period of temporary residence;
- **Repatriation and reintegration:** States shall ensure that trafficked persons are able to return home safely, if they so wish, and when they are able to;
- **Recovery:** States shall provide trafficked persons with medical and psychological care as well as legal and social services to ensure their well-being;
- **State cooperation:** States must work cooperatively to ensure full implementation of these Standards.

Target groups

The main target groups are local and national policy makers, including members of Parliament and other government institutions, the media and the general public. However, some lobbying activities take place on an international level. The Foundation Against Trafficking in Women in the Netherlands (STV) and La Strada Poland, for example, were actively involved in the lobby around the development of the UN Trafficking Protocol as members of the Human Rights Caucus, a broad alliance of NGOs in the area of trafficking, human rights and sex workers' rights.

La Strada aims to provide both policy makers and the media with accurate information. It advocates the rights of trafficked persons and the development of effective counter trafficking strategies, while ensuring that counter trafficking measures do not undermine the human rights of trafficked persons or other groups affected, such as migrants, asylum seekers, minority groups or sex workers.

Best practices

From the moment the UN Trafficking Protocol was adopted in 2000, La Strada Czech Republic has systematically lobbied for harmonisation of the Criminal Code with the Protocol. In October 2004, the Criminal Code was amended to bring the definition of trafficking in line with the Protocol. Also in 2004, La Strada Czech Republic published a booklet in Czech and English with recommendations directed at the Czech Government. The booklet aims to offer inspiration and assistance for the drafting of policies to prevent trafficking of persons and to help focus attention on the protection of the human rights of trafficked persons. The booklet has been widely distributed and is used and referred to by other national institutions as well.

Activities, networking and cooperation

To achieve these aims information is distributed to specific target groups, media contacts are established, press releases are issued, interviews are given, articles are written and requests for information are answered. An important component of the lobbying and advocacy work is the development and maintenance of local, national, regional and international contacts and networks. This includes contacts with members of Parliament, ministries, law enforcement agencies, public prosecutors, local authorities, consulates and other relevant State institutions.

Moreover, specific seminars and trainings for journalists are developed to encourage an accurate and non-sensational covering of the issue and to introduce codes of conducts to ensure that the media do not publish personal data of trafficking victims and harm their safety.

Dilemmas

One of the problems in contact with the press is that they persistently want to talk to 'victims'. Although La Strada understands the interests of journalists, at the same time it wants to protect its clients and their privacy and safety. Most women have good reasons for not wanting to speak to the press and La Strada does not want to put any pressure on them. Moreover, La Strada wants to avoid sensational stories about victims as this does not do justice to the women and does not necessarily help to improve their rights.

La Strada partners provide expertise to government and non-government agencies. They organise seminars, conferences and workshops, take part in the development, implementation and monitoring of national action plans, participate in advisory groups and government committees, formulate recommendations on particular issues, speak at government events and join national and international meetings and debates. In a number of countries La Strada is also involved in the drafting of new legislation on trafficking. Contacts are strengthened through the organisation of round-tables and seminars for NGOs and government agencies.

At the same time cooperation is sought with local, foreign and international NGOs for the exchange of information, to develop common projects and influence local, national and international policy makers and policies on the trafficking of human beings. Allied partners on an international level include the Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW), Anti-Slavery International (ASI), Amnesty International, ECPAT International and Global Rights (previously: International Human Rights Law Group).

Best practices

La Strada Ukraine participates in a UNIFEM project aimed at the creation of a trafficking information and training centre for NGOs in the Newly Independent States (NIS), together with NGOs in Russia, Armenia, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. The project focuses on increasing cooperation between NGOs on the one hand, and between NGOs, international organisations, law enforcement agencies, migration agencies and the mass media on the other hand, on dissemination of best practices and on lobbying for the ratification and implementation of the UN Trafficking Protocol. At the national level, La Strada Ukraine set up a 10-month project, in cooperation with the Ministry of Family, Children and Youth Affairs and with support of the Council of Europe, to organise a series of regional experts meetings. The meetings aimed to exchange information and to improve coordination and cooperation among government and non government agencies at a regional level. After the project was finished, participants decided to continue to hold regular meetings.

One of the major aims is the improvement of the treatment of trafficked persons. In this context La Strada monitors trials and works on a model for victim/witness protection. One of the instruments used to advocate the human rights of trafficked persons is the Human Rights Standards for the Treatment of Trafficked Persons.²²

Data collection

Relevant information is systematically collected and documented. This may concern information on trends, legislation in the different countries of origin, destination and transit or organisations that can provide assistance. The sources vary: clients, family members and other contacts, newspapers,

²² The Human Rights Standards for the Treatment of Trafficked Persons can be found at the website of GAATW: www.gaatw.org.

other NGOs, internet, mailing lists, government reports, international organisations, books and other publications.

The information thus collected is used for lobbying, prevention, education and research activities and is published in fact sheets and annual reports. Some La Strada members conduct research and studies themselves. La Strada Ukraine, for example, carried out research on the role of government and non-government agencies in national referral mechanisms to ensure the proper assistance of trafficked persons. On the basis of the research, recommendations were formulated for improvements. They also researched on the hotlines. The study looked into the experiences relating to the hotlines, the process of organising telephone counselling, the problems faced and possible ways to improve their functioning. Sometimes research is carried out with other partners. La Strada Czech Republic, for example, conducted a joint investigation with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine on the health risks connected with trafficking. Currently they are partners in a survey focusing on the prevalence of trafficking for other purposes than the sex industry. In addition, La Strada members regularly participate in research carried out by others. La Strada Poland, La Strada Ukraine and the Foundation Against Trafficking in Women in the Netherlands (STV), for example, took part in a comparative research on victim assistance and witness protection in ten countries, conducted by Anti Slavery International.²³ La Strada Belarus participated in an East-West study on the trafficking of children for sexual purposes in Europe, undertaken by the ECPAT Europe Law Enforcement Group Programme against Trafficking in Children for sexual purposes in Europe. La Strada Czech Republic participated in a research of the UNHCR on female asylum seekers and trafficking.

Activities of the Information & Lobbying campaign

- Establishing and maintaining media contacts, giving interviews, writing articles, training of journalists;
- Education and awareness raising of professionals, decision-makers and the general public;

²³ Published as 'Human Traffic, Human Rights: Redefining victim protection', Elaine Pearson, London, Anti Slavery International, 2002.

- Establishing and maintaining contacts with Members of Parliament and other government bodies;
- Organisation of seminars, conferences and workshops for NGOs and government agencies;
- Collection and documentation of information on the situation of trafficking, including national laws on trafficking and prostitution;
- Lobbying for and monitoring the implementation of international human rights standards;
- Developing, participating in and monitoring the implementation of National Action Plans

Working principles and methods of work

In line with the general principles of La Strada, information, lobbying and advocacy activities are based on a human rights and migrants' rights approach and a non-discriminatory attitude towards sex workers.

Moreover, they are based on direct contact with trafficked persons and the problems they face.

The active inclusion of the target groups, including trafficked persons, but also, for instance, social workers and others who work with trafficked persons, is seen as an important way to bring about changes.

Part of the Information & Lobbying campaign is to carefully monitor trends and developments in the field of trafficking so that accurate information can be provided and strategies can be adjusted.

Working methods include a clear definition of the problem to be addressed, the aims, the corresponding target groups and the strategies to be used.

Dilemmas

La Strada lobbies for the establishment of adequate legislation and national actions plans to address trafficking. One of the recurring points of debate is, however, the fact that many States want to create a database of trafficked persons as a tool for prosecution. La Strada opposes such registration. Registration of trafficked persons violates the right to privacy of trafficked persons. Registration can have far-reaching consequences for their future opportunities, for example their right to migrate legally, and treats trafficked persons as if they were criminals. Moreover, States cannot guarantee the confidentiality and protection of personal data. This is the more serious in the light of corruption being a

consistent feature of trafficking and a major problem in many of the La Strada countries.

Experience shows that the best lobbying strategies are based on establishing direct contact with politicians, including members of Parliament, judicial authorities and other decision-makers. A good way of practical lobbying is the organisation of round-table discussions, seminars and training programmes for relevant authorities and professionals. La Strada Bosnia Herzegovina, for example, has organised training seminars for public prosecutors, judges, lawyers, social welfare officials and public health agencies. La Strada Bulgaria also organised training seminars for government agencies in order to help them gain a better understanding of the problem and develop common views on how to address it. Other lobby strategies include being part of advisory and lobby groups, attending hearings and meetings, writing press releases, sending comments on plans and measures and reacting to policy developments. La Strada also followed the negotiations on a new Convention on Trafficking in the framework of the Council of Europe, sent in comments and participated in a number of meetings of the drafting Committee.

Lobbying for national action plans

In 2003, Poland adopted for the first time a National Action Programme to Prevent and Combat Trafficking. The first lobby efforts started in 1998. Initially, personal contacts were established with some representatives of ministries and other State institutions. After some time, the Ombudsman for Civil Rights became involved in the process and started to play a supportive role in the process. Gradually cooperation on a personal level changed into institutionally based, more formal cooperation. As a member of the working group on the implementation of the National Action Programme to Prevent and Combat Trafficking in Persons in Poland, La Strada is now treated as an equal partner and most of the activities are based upon formal (often written) agreements with particular government bodies. The entire process from individual contacts to an institutional level of cooperation took more than five years. The National Action Programme is one of the most visible results of La Strada Poland's lobbying activities.

Similar National Action Plans were adopted earlier in Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova. All La Strada countries by now have National Action Plans. Activities of La Strada concentrate on monitoring their implementation and effects.

Experience also shows that changes occur little by little and that results are only visible after a long period of time. It appears to be extremely difficult

to break down stereotypes about trafficked persons and sex workers. Furthermore, in general there is a great resistance to face the problems of migrants. Another problem that is extremely difficult to tackle is corruption.

Chapter 7

Prevention & Education

Aims

The Prevention & Education campaign aims to empower potential (female) migrants to make independent and informed decisions. In addition to directly working with groups 'at risk', the campaign targets the social environment of risk groups by educating professionals who might come into contact with (potential) victims. These professionals include teachers, school advisors and psychologists, street workers, peer educators, but also police and border authorities.

In line with the general principles of La Strada, prevention activities do not aim to deter women from migration, but rather to promote safe migration by ensuring that potential migrants have the information they need to make an informed decision, that they are aware of the risks and know how to protect themselves against these and that they know where they can get help if needed. At the same time they aim to break down taboos and the stigmatisation of trafficked women and sex workers.

For professionals it is important that they have the information and knowledge necessary to support potential migrants in making informed decisions, but also that they know what to do and how to act if they come into contact with trafficked persons.

Prevention activities are thus carried out at three levels. Firstly, they aim to lower the risk of trafficking by increasing general awareness of the issue of trafficking, targeting the public at large, media and schools. Secondly, they aim to lower the risk among specific 'risk' groups, targeting potential victims (particularly young women and girls), callers of the hot line and professionals who are in touch with potential risk groups. And thirdly, they aim to reduce the damage in cases where trafficking already took place

and to prevent further damage, targeting trafficked persons and professionals who are likely to come into contact with them. The latter requires close cooperation between the prevention and the assistance & support teams.

The concrete aims of the Prevention & Education campaign are:

- To increase awareness of and sensitivity to the issue of trafficking among the general public and professionals;
- To prevent, in particular, women from becoming victims of trafficking;
- To provide information about the risks connected with going abroad for work or other purposes and how to protect oneself against these risks;
- To empower women to be able to make informed decisions;
- To educate professionals to be able to provide information and assistance;
- To provide information and crisis intervention through the hotline;
- To provide information in electronic form (website, email).

In order to streamline prevention activities and methods, a manual has been developed by La Strada Czech Republic in cooperation with La Strada Bosnia Herzegovina. The manual covers the principles, tools and practices of prevention activities and of operating a hotline.

Target groups

Target groups can be divided into five categories:

- Groups who run a specific risk of becoming victims of trafficking, such as young people, unemployed women, sex workers, street children, orphans, mentally handicapped people and minorities like Romany gypsies;
- Professionals who might come into contact with (potential) victims of trafficking;

- Other NGOs and service providers who want to develop counter-trafficking activities;
- Trafficked persons, their families and friends;
- The public at large.

In general it can be said that marginalised, socially excluded and stigmatised groups, such as sex workers and Romany gypsies, are particularly vulnerable to trafficking and the related abuses. Prevention & Education activities therefore explicitly target these groups.

Information material

Within the La Strada programme, a range of Prevention & Education materials and methods have been developed by the national teams, directed at the specific groups to be reached. These vary from leaflets, travel guides with information on, among others, legislation in countries of destination, to notebooks, booklets, video clips, calendars, bookmarks, postcards, stickers, posters, T-shirts, buttons, a theatre play and computer games as well as handbooks and manuals for specific groups of professionals.

Some information material gives specific information on migration and trafficking, other material aims predominantly at advertising the numbers of the hotlines. In the countries that recently acceded to the EU (Poland and the Czech Republic) information material has been developed covering the new legislation concerning labour migration to other EU countries.

Best practices

La Strada Belarus developed a special booklet together with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare about the legal aspects of working abroad, conditions for a safe departure, telephone numbers and addresses of Belarusian embassies and information about the NGOs that assist trafficked persons abroad. The booklet is distributed through the employment services of the Ministry.

In Bulgaria local employment agencies have started to provide consultations on the legitimacy of companies offering jobs abroad and the contracts they use. At the same time, a booklet ‘Travel and work in Bulgaria’ has been developed, which is distributed by La Strada in Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, the main countries for which Bulgaria is a country of destination.

La Strada Ukraine developed booklets and posters to distribute among foreign embassies in Ukraine. They include safety tips, the number of the hotline and telephone numbers and addresses of Ukrainian Embassies abroad. They also developed posters to display in international trains and leaflets to distribute at points of departure and arrival, both for migrants who are going abroad and for those who are returning home.

Future plans include the production of a manual for trafficked women about victim and witness protection and the possibility to download prevention material from the website.

Hotlines & Internet

The hotlines play an important role not only as a way of getting in touch with possible victims of trafficking (see chapter 5) but also as a way to inform women and their relatives about safe migration and the risks of trafficking so to enable potential migrants to make an informed decision. Callers can discuss their motives for seeking a job abroad and the questions or doubts they have. The hot line consultant can provide information on migration, labour and marriage laws in the country of destination, on contracts, on how to go and study abroad in a safe way, on how to reduce potential risks and how to get help in case of problems.

Best practices

To ensure accurate information La Strada Ukraine regularly invites specialists from the State Employment Service to provide hot-line counsellors with information on employment issues, for example information about the status of overseas employment agencies, employment possibilities for Ukrainian citizens abroad, procedures, etc.

Apart from via the hotlines La Strada can be contacted by email for questions and advice. Information can also be found on the websites of the La Strada members. The website of La Strada Ukraine, for example,

includes an electronic database with information on trafficking, international and national legislation, case studies, statistics, frequently asked questions and tips on staying safe.

Activities in relation to the major target groups

Groups 'at risk'

To reach groups 'at risk', La Strada teams visit schools, universities and other places where they can meet with risk groups to distribute information material, organise workshops and give lectures. During these lectures participants are given information on the definition of trafficking, on the ways people are recruited, the risks attached to going abroad for a job or other purposes, and how to protect themselves against these risks. Some La Strada members use lecturer groups, that is groups of trained volunteers, and peer groups, to reach local communities in particular. In a number of countries, La Strada also lobbies to get the issue of violence against women and trafficking included in the regular school curriculum.

Case studies used by La Strada Czech Republic at seminars for Romany students and workers

When Romany girl, Mercedes, is 8 years old, her parents chose a husband for her. When she is 16, his family pays money for Mercedes and takes her with them...

Lucka (18), Majka (18) and Nina (19) come from a very poor Romany community nearby Michalovce in Slovakia. There is neither water supply nor sewerage in their village. Lucka lives in a house without floor with 12 other people. A neighbour has family in the Czech Republic. She offers the girls a good job in Prague as cleaners in a department store. The neighbour gets 10,000 SKC for her mediation and for taking the girls to the Czech Republic. In reality, the girls work as prostitutes in one of the brothels in Northern Bohemia. They are dressed nicely and their pimps buy them presents from time to time. But the girls don't get any money for their work and they don't have many opportunities to leave the brothel. During a police raid, they are offered the opportunity to return home and to make use of the help of a support organisation. But the girls refuse...

Questions that are posed in discussing these cases include whether or not the students consider these to be a case of trafficking, what kind of information they would give to the women, what kind of information they would disseminate in the villages where the women come from, whether one should respect cultural patterns such as, for example, arranged marriages, what kind of cultural taboos

could play a role (for example the traditional taboo on prostitution) and how they should deal with them.

Prevention material is also distributed through employment offices, nightclubs, marriage registration offices, visa application offices, transit centres for illegal migrants, churches, other NGOs which work with risk groups, and at conferences and seminars. Another way of distributing information is via stickers and leaflets on public transport, shopping centres, post offices, cinemas, cafés and other public institutions as well as at big events attended by large numbers of young people. Which methods are used and where material is distributed depends upon the situation in the particular country and whether it is predominantly a country of origin, transit or destination.

As sex workers constitute a major group ‘at risk’, La Strada aims to work together with organisations that work with sex workers, for example street workers. Some La Strada projects work together with peer educators, sex workers who provide colleague sex workers with information about trafficking and the ways they can protect themselves. Whether or not such cooperation is possible depends upon the situation and possibilities in the country concerned.

Prevention projects targeted at Eastern European sex workers

There is a huge lack of information among (potential) sex workers with regard to actual working conditions and risks connected to working in the sex industry abroad. On one hand, there is a lack of available information due to the stigmatisation of prostitution; on the other hand women who consider migrating for sex work will not easily ask for information. La Strada receives, for example, very few calls from women who ask for information on working as a sex worker abroad. Therefore it is important to carry out information campaigns specifically aimed at this target group, both in countries of origin and of destination. In the Netherlands, the Dutch sex workers’ rights organisation ‘the Red Thread’, in collaboration with STV, launched an information campaign aimed at (potential) victims of trafficking from Central and Eastern Europe to prevent trafficking in the Dutch sex industry. In Eastern Europe, La Strada Poland has been a partner in a two-year project which included the distribution of information materials combined with a peer-educators training for sex workers. Animus/La Strada Bulgaria has trained health and social organisations which do street work on prevention of trafficking among sex workers. La Strada Czech Republic cooperates with six street workers’ organisations that distribute prevention

materials in work places and toilets. Nevertheless, some street workers' organisations, in particular those operating near the border area in the Czech Republic, are in danger if they openly cooperate with La Strada because prostitution in these areas is highly controlled by criminal groups.. One of the major problems in most La Strada countries when carrying out prevention projects among sex workers is the legal framework which criminalises or prohibits prostitution. This makes it difficult to reach sex workers as they are pushed underground. In Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, for example, prostitution is prohibited. This makes it extremely difficult to work with sex workers as they are under high pressure due to the fear that they will be caught by the police. Another problem is that, even when it is possible to reach them, sex workers remain a marginalised group that is generally denied attention on moral or other grounds or because they are considered to be too difficult a target group.

Another group at risk are Romany gypsies, due to their marginalised position in many Central and Eastern European countries. In some countries, for example the Czech Republic and Macedonia, La Strada runs special prevention programmes aimed at the Romany community. In Bosnia and Bulgaria, Romany gypsies are a special target group as well.

Some La Strada members, like La Strada Bulgaria and Poland, organise training programmes for young women concentrating on job skills and how to find a job, in cooperation with other agencies. In Poland this includes an internship with different employers. La Strada Bulgaria also organises training programmes for, in particular, adolescents in orphanages.

Activities of the Prevention & Education Campaign

- Mapping risk groups and getting information about their specific needs;
- Production and distribution of tailor-made information material for different target groups, such as young women at schools, universities and orphanages, unemployed women, women with low incomes, women from minority groups and sex workers;
- Lectures at schools, universities and other institutions;
- Cooperation with different NGOs to distribute information and material;
- Education and training of agencies that play a role in the prevention of trafficking, such as labour agencies, street workers, embassies, teachers, police officers and border authorities;
- Development and dissemination of methodological materials, for instance for teachers;
- Hotlines to inform potential migrants about the risks involved, the ways they can protect themselves, where they can find help if needed and possible alternatives.

Professionals

A second target group are professionals who might get in contact with (potential) trafficked persons. Professionals include teachers, psychologists, social workers, probation officers, medical staff, employees of shelters for asylum seekers and other agencies dealing with refugees and migrants, but also consulate personnel, police, border guards, prosecutors and judges. Specific materials, training seminars, handbooks and manuals are developed for different groups of professionals. For example, La Strada Ukraine and Moldova have developed a manual for police officers. La Strada Bulgaria trained social workers from the child protection departments and developed a manual for them. A special manual for teachers at secondary schools and vocational training institutions was developed by Belarus in cooperation with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). A similar manual was developed by La Strada Ukraine and Moldova.

La Strada aims not only to reach professionals in the course of their work but also to have information about trafficking included in the existing education of relevant groups of professionals. La Strada Poland, for example, developed curricula for police and border guard academies, whereas La Strada Bulgaria developed a training scheme for the supervisors of social workers from the child protection agencies.

Materials developed for professionals include information on how to assist trafficked persons and how to prevent their re-trafficking. The latter information is also used during individual contact with clients.

Other NGOs

A third group are other local or foreign NGOs who want to develop counter-trafficking activities. La Strada Czech Republic, for example, organised training on the operation of a hotline for NGOs in Slovakia.

Trafficked persons, their families and friends

Information for trafficked persons is available in various languages in the different La Strada countries. La Strada Czech Republic, for example, developed posters, leaflets, stickers and special ‘business cards’ in a number of languages, including Czech, Russian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Chinese and Vietnamese. The ‘business cards’ are particularly successful thanks to their format: a small card can be easily hidden by the women without anyone noticing it and can be easily handed over, for example by a street workers, during a handshake. La Strada Ukraine developed a leaflet for dissemination at international airports and seaports with information on where to get assistance if needed and the number of the hotline. La Strada Bulgaria prepared a leaflet for Bulgarian women staying in shelters abroad ‘Coming back to Bulgaria’ with information on their services and what women can and cannot expect from them.

The public at large

The general public is reached through interviews with the media, television programmes and articles in newspapers, but also through stickers and posters in public places.

Monitoring job advertisements

Prevention activities include the monitoring of job advertisements in newspapers and advertisements for au-pair agencies, and checking their credibility. The information thus gathered is used for counselling through the hotlines and email, and also for education activities.

Legal obstacles

In 2003, the government of Belarus, within the framework of anti-trafficking policies, adopted a ruling which limits the possibilities of private organisations in providing information about employment abroad. Meant to control the activities of overseas job agencies, the Migration Department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare gained the exclusive right to inform citizens about companies

with a licence to recruit citizens for work abroad. In practice this means that La Strada can only refer persons who call its hotline for this kind of information to the Migration Department. However, the Ministry has not enough resources to provide quick responses to people's requests and, moreover, charges its services. This seriously limits access to information about safe travel and work abroad, particularly in small towns and rural areas.

Networking and cooperation

In all cases cooperation is sought with other non-governmental organisations, for example NGOs working in the area of human rights, violence against women or family planning, government agencies, for example the Ministries of Interior, Education, Health, Labour, Social Affairs and Foreign Affairs, and educational institutions, such as police schools, schools for social workers, and international agencies, such as the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

Working principles and methods of work

The Prevention & Education campaign rests on the following working principles and methods:

- Interactivity
- Partnership and cooperation
- Systematic approach & target-oriented
- Tailor-made
- Information, support and empowerment
- Non-judgemental
- Confidentiality
- Expertise
- Flexibility
- Multiplier effect

Interactivity

Methods of working aim to actively involve the target groups in the activities by using interactive methods, such as role plays. Ideally, each prevention activity combines a theoretical part with practical activities.

Partnership and cooperation

Campaigns are set up in cooperation with other agents and are fine tuned with the other La Strada campaigns. Cooperation with other agents is sought in order to achieve the best possible quality of the activities. Partnership also means that the opinions and cultural specific wishes of the target groups are respected.

Systematic approach & target oriented

Activities are based on the identification of concrete problems (definition of the problem), the groups affected by the problem (target groups), their needs and the best way to respond to these needs (objectives). An analysis of the needs of the target group includes an assessment of their level of knowledge, their level of skills, their attitude towards the problem and their present behaviour. Based on this analysis, the best way of reaching the target group (the means) is defined. After completion, activities are evaluated on the basis of feedback from the target groups concerned.

Tailor-made

Information materials and methods are tailor-made for specific target groups. On a basic level, information material contains general information about trafficking, safety tips (practical information before going abroad), important telephone numbers and information on where to seek help. For specific target groups this information is made more specific.

The methods used depend on the target group in question. They vary from the distribution of printed materials, stickers, and T-shirts, to the giving of

lectures, the use of role plays and the organisation of debates to the development of manuals, as well as the organisation of seminars, training programmes and curricula for specific groups of professionals and the provision of individual advice and counselling. At the same time, new methods are developed such as theatre plays and computer games. In addition, the mass media are used, for example through press releases and press conferences, advertisements and interviews for newspapers, television and radio.

Non-judgemental

All activities are based on a non-judgemental attitude and respect for the cultural and social specificities of the particular target groups and communities.

Information, support and empowerment

The campaign aims to help and support women in making an independent and informed decision and to enhance their self-confidence and ability to make their own decisions about their life by providing them with honest, reliable and accurate information and useful skills.

Confidentiality

Any information acquired through the hotlines or other contacts with groups at risk or trafficked persons is confidential and is only shared with others with the consent of the person concerned.

Expertise and a focus on the acquisition of new knowledge and skills

Available data, information, studies, interviews and research are gathered to ensure that the information used is accurate and up to date. In addition, prevention workers regularly attend training sessions and workshops on trafficking, prevention methods in general and public relations and keep themselves informed through relevant literature.

Flexibility

Prevention workers remain informed about new trends and developments and adjust their activities accordingly. Information is regularly updated.

Principles of the Prevention & Education campaign

- Interactivity
- Partnership and cooperation
- Systematic approach
- Target oriented
- Tailor-made
- Information, support and empowerment
- Non-judgemental
- Confidentiality
- Expertise
- Flexibility
- Multiplier effect

Multiplier effect

Much of the prevention work is based on the ‘train the trainers’ principle: for example, volunteers, teachers and peers are trained to deliver lectures on prevention, using the methods and materials developed by La Strada. Although this is proved to be a very effective method of working, the disadvantage of this method is that it is difficult to effectively monitor the final results.

Manual for prevention activities

To streamline prevention activities and methods, a manual has been developed by La Strada Czech Republic in cooperation with La Strada Bosnia Herzegovina covering the principles, tools and practices of prevention activities and of operating a hotline.

La Strada Ukraine developed manuals on ‘How to set up activities to prevent trafficking’ and ‘How to start a hotline’ which have been distributed among national NGOs and government bodies. They give practical information and tips for organisations which carry out or plan to

start carrying out anti-trafficking activities.

Appendix 1

Contact information for La Strada international and La Strada member organisations

La Strada International

International La Strada Association

Visiting address: Regentesselaan 31, Amersfoort, the Netherlands

Postal address: Johan van Oldenbarneveltlaan 34-36

3818 HB Amersfoort

The Netherlands

phone + 31 33 461 50 29

fax + 31 33 461 80 64

e-mail info@lastradainternational.org

website www.lastradainternational.org

La Strada the Netherlands

Dutch Foundation against Trafficking in Women (STV)

Visiting address: Regentesselaan 31, Amersfoort, the Netherlands

Postal address: Johan van Oldenbarneveltlaan 34-36

3818 HB Amersfoort

The Netherlands

hotline + 31 33 448 11 86

phone (office) + 31 33 461 50 29

fax + 31 33 461 80 64

e-mail lastrada@opvang.nl

website www.fo-stvkennisnet.nl

La Strada Belarus

Young Women Christian Association of Belarus

P.O. Box 74

Minsk 220088

Belarus

hotline 8 801 100 8 801 (free of charge for calls in Belarus)

+ 375 17 295 31 67 (for calls from abroad)

(open 9 AM till 9 PM daily)

phone/fax + 375 17 296 37 45/ + 375 17 253 28 17

e-mail lastrada@infonet.by

website www.lastrada.by

La Strada Bosnia Herzegovina

Women's Development Centre 'La Strada BiH'

Bulevar Revolucije 35

88000 Mostar

Bosnia & Herzegovina

hotline + 387 36 557 190

+ 387 1261

phone/fax + 387 36 557 191

+ 387 36 557 192

e-mail lastrada@cob.net.ba

website www.cob.net.ba/lastrada

La Strada Bulgaria

Animus Association Foundation/La Strada Bulgaria

P.O. Box 97

1408 Sofia

Bulgaria

hotline + 359 2 981 76 86 (open 24 hours)

phone + 359 2 981 67 40; 98 731 98; 981 05 70

fax + 359 2 981 67 40

e-mail animus@animusassociation.org

website www.animusassociation.org

La Strada Czech Republic

La Strada Czech Republic, o.p.s.

P.O. Box 305

111 21 Praha 1

Czech Republic

hotline + 420 2 22 71 71 71

phone/fax + 420 2 22 72 18 10

e-mail Lastrada@strada.cz

website www.strada.cz

La Strada Moldova

International Women Rights Protection and Promotion Centre 'La Strada'

P.O. Box 259

Chisinau

Moldova 2012

hotline 0 800 77777 (free of charge for calls in Moldova)

+ 373 2 2 23 33 09 (phone calls from Moldova and abroad)

phone + 373 2 2 23 49 06

fax + 373 2 2 23 49 07

e-mail office@lastrada.md

website www.lastrada.md

La Strada Macedonia

Open Gate – La Strada Macedonia

P.O. Box 110

1000 Skopje

Macedonia

Hotline 0800 11111 (free of charge for calls in Macedonia)

+ 389 2 2777 070

phone + 389 2 2700 107

fax + 389 2 2700 367

e-mail lastrada@on.net.mk

website www.lastrada.org.mk

La Strada Poland

La Strada Foundation Against Trafficking in Women

P.O. Box 5

00-956 Warsaw 10
Poland
hot line +48 22 628 9999
phone/fax +48 22 622 19 85
e-mail strada@pol.pl
website <http://free.ngo.pl/lastrada>

La Strada Ukraine

International Women's Rights Centre 'La Strada Ukraine'

P.O. Box 26

03113 Kyiv

Ukraine

hotline 8-800 500 22 50 (free of charge for calls in Ukraine)
+ 380 44 205 36 94
+ 380 44 205 37 36 (for people who live in Kiev and
from abroad)

telephone/fax +38 044 205 36 95

e-mail lastrada@ukrpack.net/ lastrada@list.ru

website www.lastrada.org.ua

Appendix 4

Further reading

Human Rights Standards for the Treatment of Trafficked Persons, Foundation Against Trafficking in Human Beings, International Human Rights Law Group & Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women, Bangkok 1999 (www.gaatw.org).

Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), New York and Geneva 2002 (www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/2848af408d01ec0ac1256609004e770b/caf3deb2b05d4f35c1256bf30051a003?OpenDocument&Highlight=2,principles,trafficking).

The Annotated Guide to the Complete UN Trafficking Protocol, Ann Jordan, International Human Rights Law Group (www.globalrights.org/site/DocServer/Traff_AnnoProtocol.pdf?docID=203).

Trafficking in women, forced Labour and Slavery like Practices in Marriage, Domestic Labour and Prostitution, Marjan Wijers & Lin Lap-Chew, STV/GAATW, Utrecht/Bangkok 1999.

National Referral Mechanisms, Joining Efforts to Protect the Rights of Trafficked Persons, a Practical Handbook, Theda Kroger, Jasna Malkoc & Barbel Heide Uhl, OSCE/ODIHR 2004.

Report of the Experts Group on Trafficking in Human Beings, European Experts Group on Trafficking in Human Beings, 22 December 2004, Brussels (http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/doc_centre/crime/trafficking/doc/report_expert_group_1204_en.pdf).

For the most recent overview of publications of the various La Strada members: see their respective websites.