



Report on victims statements Plovdiv, 22 May 2015

1. Reporting **period**: September 2014 – April 2015

2. Number of **victims** interviewed: 19

- Women: 19
- Men:
- Transgenders:
- Children (pls indicate ages):

3. Number of **cases** victims are involved in: 7

- Trafficking for prostitution: 7
- Trafficking for other purposes (pls indicate which purpose):
- If applicable: related offences (pls specify):
- At investigation stage (penal cases): 1¹
- Pending penal cases: 5 (4 at first instance and 1 – at second instance)²
- Finalized penal cases:
- Civil cases: 1 (pending at first instance)³

4. **Problems shared during investigation period:**

- Interrogation methods
 The front police officers hold thousands of initial conversations with victims. Often the initial conversations take on a larger scope that involve police officers extracting from the victim's information about the traffickers, the traffickers' whereabouts, their methods of recruitment and transportation, the other participants in the trafficking ring etc. Thus, the authorities in fact perform a classic interrogation aimed at collecting data about the perpetrators and the crime, despite the fact that these "statements" cannot be used as evidence, thus troubling the victims with no positive results neither for the proceedings nor for the victims themselves.
- Number of interrogations
 A natural continuation of the inability of the police to recognize in the trafficked person the victim and not the witness is their absolute insensitivity towards the number of interrogations. Thus, the authorities summon the victim for additional interrogation, whenever they consider that some information is lacking. The additional interrogations sometimes include confrontations with the accused. During the trial, the victim is summoned again for an open hearing in the courtroom where s/he has to tell the same story before the judge.
- Information
 After the identification of the victim, the authorities are under an obligation, according to the Action against Human Trafficking Act, to inform the victims of their basic rights, such as the

¹ Plovdiv

² Three cases in Plovdiv and two cases in Petrich

³ Varna

right to a reflection period, the right to free legal aid and the procedure to receive it, the right to compensation and the competent authorities to which to turn to, etc. This is very rarely done in practice and the victims learn about their basic rights often from other victims and sometimes from social workers or do not learn about them at all.

5. Problems shared during judicial proceedings:

- Length of criminal proceedings
Another problem, which the victim faces, is the excessive length of the pre-trial and/or court proceedings. Some cases last for years.
- Victim status
 1. Rights of “identified” victim in the meaning of the National Referral Mechanism.
 2. Right to state-funded compensation for material damages.
 3. Rights of a “victim” and “witness” in the meaning of the Criminal Procedure Code.
 4. Right to claim compensation for material and non-material damages from the trafficker.Most of the victims are not recognized as such and do not receive a “victim status”.

6. Problems with the victims’ rights:

Usually, the victims are not informed about their rights, do not receive legal aid, are not informed about their right not to cooperate with the authorities, the reflection period is not observed, their right to privacy and safety is not observed, their physical integrity is not ensured, they are not protected as witnesses, they are not treated with dignity and respect, they do not receive compensation.

7. Barriers for reintegration:

- Lack of initial support such as arrival assistance, immediate and comprehensive medical/psychological examination and treatment, short-term housing and help with various other social, legal and economic needs of the victim.
- Lack of long term Government reintegration support such as medical/psychological examination and treatment/counseling to victims of trafficking in their place of residence; family mediation/counseling; monitoring of the reintegration process in the victim's place of residence; monitoring accommodation and care arrangements for child victims of trafficking; assistance with school reinsertion; development of vocational programmes; vocational counseling and training for victims; job placement and employment counseling; grants for resettlement and for vocational training for victims; assistance for the retrieval of lost documents, such as IDs and passports; legal assistance regarding civil issues (divorce, retrieval of property, civil liability); legal consultation and representation for victims acting as witnesses in criminal case; maintaining emergency and informational telephone hotlines; ensuring the security of the victim by maintaining regular contact; accompanying victims for emotional support as well as assisting them in accessing needed services and ensuring their rights are respected; providing safe transportation.
- Lack of longer NGO support to the victims such as family mediation/reunification; medical/health; financial (reinstallation grants, family or dependant support grants); legal; education/vocational training/apprenticeship; income-generating activities; security.

The present report was prepared within the project “THB: from exit to insertion, barriers and leverage” (HOME/2013/ISEC/AG/THB/4000005340), implemented in France and Bulgaria by Amicale du Nid and Gender Alternatives.Foundation.

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