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14<sup>th</sup> Alliance against  
Trafficking in Persons  
conference "Ethical issues  
in Preventing and  
Combating Human  
Trafficking"

Panel 3. Ethical treatment  
of trafficked persons

**Panelist: Nodira  
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*(Tashkent, Uzbekistan)*

*Date: November 5, 2014*

**Topic: Ethical measures to ensure the  
process of the return and repatriation of  
victims of trafficking (VoT).**

Time: 15 minutes

**Dear participants of the Conference, I  
would like to greet everyone and to  
express my gratitude to the OSCE for an  
opportunity to participate and to  
contribute by speaking at the panel. It is  
an honor for me!**

*The speech will be accompanied by video  
presentation.*

I would like to start from the history of  
development of Tashkent social-information center "ISTIQBOLLI AVLOD"  
(further- Organization).

Beginning in 2001, we established our organization, its mission was to work  
with youth, and meantime, by accident we encountered such a phenomenon  
as **trafficking in persons**. At that moment the organization had neither  
knowledge nor experience in this field.

Our first step in combating with human trafficking was an information  
campaign. We held actions, competitions and seminars among youth. We  
were excited and interested in conducting those events. We saw that young  
participants from colleges demonstrated their interest, actively discussed the  
issue and shared their opinions. Nevertheless, we noted that some  
participants had a negative attitude to those who faced trafficking, especially  
when we talked about sexual exploitation. But at the same time, we started  
getting questions from participants on how and to what extent any help could  
be provided for VoTs.

After some regular event, we were incredibly touched when a girl told a story of her mother who had left abroad and was willing to come back but could not for some reasons. To some extent it pushed our organization to think seriously about who was able to help in such cases.

The next step was opening "Hotline" with support of the International Organization for Migration. *The "Hotline" aimed to inform population about human trafficking, consequences of illegal migration, slavery. Consultations were free of charge and confidential, from that moment we began to receive receiving calls from relatives and friends of victims to help in their repatriation.*

*And then, finally, we decided it was necessary to learn about the mechanism of the VOTs' return, whom we could address and how to help. It appeared to be that the repatriation of VoTs was a new and unfamiliar issue for us.*

### **RETURN OF THE FIRST VICTIM FROM THAILAND**

I remember when unexpectedly the IOM mission in neighboring country addressed us with a request to help returning a woman from Thailand.

I must admit at that moment we had not enough information about what we needed to pay attention in the process of return, there was not enough knowledge and experience.

I reiterate that we had no clear idea who was the VoT, there was lack of knowledge and experience on that.

But we had one important thing which was a will to help! Memories about worrying on how I should behave are still vivid. There was hesitation whether to smile or not, what to tell and to ask a victim. Eventually, a woman arrived and I met her with flowers. Until now, I have not understood whether I needed to bring her flowers or not!

Only after some time we realized that we should ask ourselves and respond to the following questions:

- ✓ *Is the return voluntary or forced?*

- ✓ *Is the return safe?*
- ✓ *Are rights of the VoT protected?*
- ✓ *Will the prevention of punishment be ensured?*
- ✓ *Will the prevention of discrimination and stigma be ensured?*
- ✓ *Will the reintegration services possibly be provided to a victim?*
- ✓ *Is cooperation with inter-state bodies, international organizations and civil society established?*

*At that time, those were questions we had not any answers.*

Further over the years we participated in various educational events, seminars and international conferences and special training programs were held for us. Here I would like to express special acknowledgement to international organizations, particularly, the OSCE Project Coordinator's office in Uzbekistan, mission of the IOM in Kazakhstan, and some UN offices in Uzbekistan for a given opportunity to acquire up-to-date knowledge and skills.

## **PARTNERSHIP**

In cooperation with local Israeli organization more than 400 females were assisted in return from Israel between 2005 and 2007. At that time, we realized how important to have partners in countries of destination. Feminist organization from Haifa "Isha L'isha" (A woman for woman) became for us not only a partner but also, to some extent, a mentor on providing assistance to VoTs.

Swiss charity organization "VIVERE" has been contributing invaluable help to get us experience on returning Uzbek girls since 2004. With support of "VIVERE" we are able to travel the UAE twice a year and to visit prisons where we conduct interviews in person to identify victims and to assist them with returning.

I would like to highlight our partnership with NGOs in Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan that also participate in the Conference. Thank you for your precious help and support all the time!

## **NO STIGMA, NO DISCRIMINATION (3 minutes).**

As NGO we have understood that discrimination and stigma are not acceptable ways of treatment towards VoTs and their relatives. Nevertheless, VoTs have to meet with representatives of law enforcement bodies. Girls whom we had repatriated shared us that they used to derogatory words against them such as: "you are guilty yourself", "such must be punished", and "you dishonor the country" etc. Thus, we decided that we should organize educational programs for the representatives of different law enforcement bodies.

There were developed training modules with assistance of international organizations. So far, our trainers conduct seminars and trainings where participants discuss non-discrimination and non-stigma issues. Herein, to acknowledge we had disputes, active discussions and opinions that confronted. Nowadays, we can witness a lot of improvement on this dimension.

## **ENSURING NON-PUNISHMENT**

At different events we often hear that countries actively involved in combating human trafficking, a number of reports are published. Countries report about adopting various laws, signing conventions. Regrettably, we face some cases when instead of helping and protecting VoTs, they are arrested, imprisoned, deported and accused in violating immigration laws, prostitution, illegal work and counterfeiting identification documents.

Thus, what are we having nowadays? Most of victims are not identified as VoTs in countries of destination, that's why they do not get any help with returning or reintegration services.

All these lead to violation of rights, victims perceive themselves as criminals, they defend themselves from society, do not believe and want to get any help. But the worst part that they can embark on a criminal path.

Herein I would like to note the important role of cooperation between our organization and embassies, consulates of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of

Uzbekistan in countries of destination. Close partnership over many years allowed us to accelerate solving many issues related to the return of our citizens, among them: to obtain documents on repatriation, sometimes, to resolve on temporary placement of those who need a shelter, and some other issues.

### **PROVIDING WITH REINTEGRATION SERVICES FOR RETURNED VoTS (2 minutes)**

Today, we can proudly say that Uzbekistan adopted the Law "On combating human trafficking" which has clearly defined a chapter "On the protection of victims of trafficking and providing them help" No. 154 from April 17, 2008. Also, it should be noted that the State Republican rehabilitation center for victims of trafficking functions in Uzbekistan where a full package of free services are provided such as medical and psychological care, employment assistance.

With support of USAID, our center is implementing a project on the long-term reintegration services. This project pays attention on personal growth, enhancing self-esteem of VoTs, but the foremost is the training for new professions and skills.

**In conclusion,** I wish I could finish on a positive note, unfortunately, it is hardly possible. Over the years there have been conducted many interviews and talks, listening to the stories of those who suffered, yet each time we are more and more confirmed that this is an inhuman, heartless and cruel phenomenon behind which there stand fates of people.

I must admit that it will not pass and be forgotten. But we must give a hand in order to help to live on. All the time I think what else it is necessary to do on this matter!