



Winrock International

**PREVENTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING
IN KYRGYZSTAN PROJECT**

BASELINE ASSESSMENT

December 2003 – January 2004

Final Report

Submitted March 5, 2004

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background Information

In September 2003 Winrock International was awarded support from USAID/CAR to implement the **Predotvrasheniye Torgovli Lyudmi** (Preventing Human Trafficking) Project (hereafter PTL Project) in the Central Asian republic of Kyrgyzstan. Through the PTL Project, Winrock will provide financial and technical support to Kyrgyz NGOs to empower them to conduct prevention and protection activities in local communities, focusing on rural communities and southern Kyrgyzstan.

According to estimates of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as many as 200,000 persons (mostly women and girls) are trafficked annually from Eastern Europe and Central Asia under conditions amounting to slavery. Human trafficking has a profound effect on individuals, families, and communities, as well as on national prospects for democratic growth. It is a transnational crime, generating revenues second only to the illegal trade of narcotics and weapons.

Over the past five years, Central Asia has become both a major source and transit region for the illegal trade in humans. Central Asia's geographic location between Europe and the Middle East and South Asia makes it a primary route for the illicit drug trade, managed by an organized crime network more than willing to add the lucrative trade in humans to its unlawful activities. Prime destinations for people trafficked from Kyrgyzstan are NIS countries, United Arab Emirates, Turkey, China, and Germany, and victims are primarily taken for purposes of sexual exploitation. Forced laborers (primarily male) also are trafficked from Kyrgyzstan to Kazakhstan and Russia. In addition, due to conflicts in regions close to the Uzbekistan and Tajikistan borders, increased internal migration from rural to urban areas also contributes to the growing number of trafficked women and girls.

1.2 Project Goal

The goal of the PTL Project is:

To increase the ability of individuals and institutions in Kyrgyzstan to combat and prevent human trafficking.

The PTL Project has the following objectives:

Objective 1: To contribute to the **prevention** of human trafficking by strengthening the capacity of local NGOs both to conduct public outreach and to provide relevant training on legitimate alternatives to offers of work abroad.

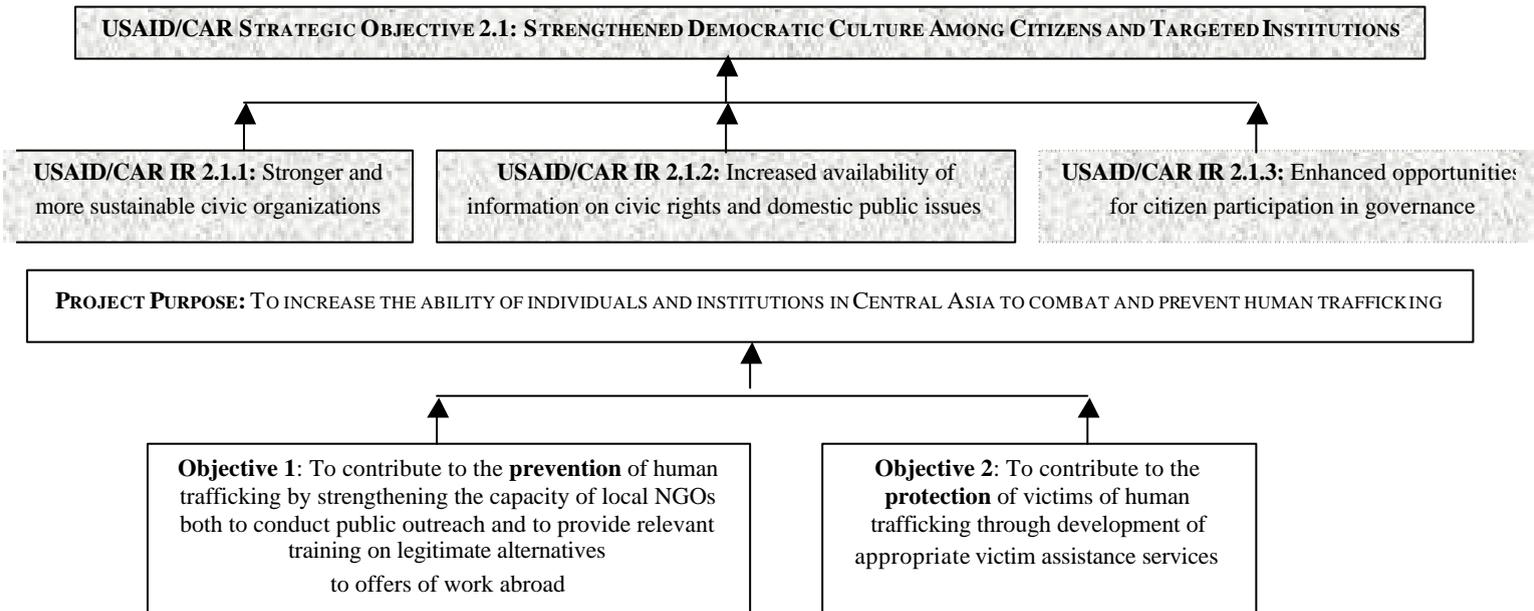
Objective 2: To contribute to the **protection** of victims of human trafficking through development of appropriate victim assistance services.

In order to achieve these objectives, the PTL Project will implement the following activities: grants programs for local NGOs; training; expert volunteer technical assistance; information dissemination; and networking. These components of Winrock's model are mutually reinforcing. Each contributes to raising awareness of trafficking as a human rights abuse affecting women, men and youth; creating national capacity to prevent trafficking as well as better serve its victims; and developing linkages between nongovernmental organizations and government agencies to ensure coordination and cooperation.

1.3 Project Anticipated Results

Winrock has designed its project purpose and objectives to contribute directly to the achievement of USAID/CAR's Strategic Objective 2.1, strengthening democratic culture among citizens and targeted

institutions. The proposed program fits USAID's Results Framework by affecting Intermediate Results 2.1.1, 2.1.2, and 2.1.3.



1.4 Baseline Assessment Goals and Task Structure

The baseline assessment for this project will gauge the following:

- capacity of local NGOs to carry out prevention and protection activities and technical assistance needs
- local government attitudes toward trafficking issues and level of support of local government for proposed interventions
- needs of victims for protection and reintegration services

This assessment builds upon the research conducted by IOM in 2001, taking into consideration what public awareness and service activities have already been carried out by donor-funded projects. The results from this assessment will be used in the design of the Grants Program and the development of a monitoring and evaluation process to ensure that those at greatest risk are being reached by this project and those local NGOs are capable of providing the needed prevention and protection activities and services.

This report is divided into four parts. The first covers the results from a survey conducted with over 30 NGOs in Kyrgyzstan to gauge their level of capacity for undertaken activities related to prevention of human trafficking. The second section reports on the results from roundtables and meetings with government officials that were conducted throughout Kyrgyzstan. The third section provides information from two focus groups, which were held with victims of human trafficking, and identifies the types of services that these individuals need when they return to Kyrgyzstan. Finally, the last section covers conclusions resulting from the baseline assessment components.

II. NGO CAPACITY SURVEY

In order to gauge the capacity of the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan to engage in prevention and protection service provision as envisioned by this project, Winrock undertook a survey of Kyrgyz NGOs. The survey captured the level of awareness and attitudes among NGOs toward the problem of human trafficking in Kyrgyzstan and determined the current technical capacity of Kyrgyz NGOs to conduct prevention and protection activities. Winrock designed the questionnaire for this NGO survey based on a model developed

by IOM-Moscow used for a similar assessment of the NGO sector in Russia.¹ The questionnaires were distributed during a series of roundtables held in November-December 2003 (see Section III), and also were sent out through the list serve of the Civil Society Support Centers. Targeted NGOs included not just women's NGOs but also youth, human rights, health, legal, migration and other organizations. To assist Winrock with the analysis of the completed questionnaires, Galina Gorborkova, a senior instructor of Sociology Department at American University in Central Asia, was hired to review the questionnaires and provide a report on the results, which is included below.

General Information on NGOs

Questionnaires in the regions were distributed in the following manner:

Bishkek and Chuy region	7
Naryn city, Naryn region	7
Djalal-Abad city, Djalal-Abad region	5
Talas city, Talas region	4
Osh city, Osh region	6
Karakol city, Issyk-Kul region	5
Batken city, Batken region	2
Total:	36 questionnaires

The aims of all organizations are quite similar. Generally they focus on protection of rights, freedoms and legal interests of citizens, and providing assistance in those spheres. The majority work with vulnerable population groups – teenagers, children from non-self-sufficient families, children of commercial sex workers and so on. These organizations implement their activities predominantly in the regions where their offices are located. The organizations surveyed indicate that they have anywhere from 6 to 70 people working in the organization, including staff and volunteers. The NGOs reported having staff members who were lawyers, social workers, psychologists, economists and trainers.

Remarkably, the majority of these organizations report that they have expanded their activities over the last three years, which indicates that the general public is aware of the work of NGOs and is in need of the type of services these organizations provide. Such a trend is evidence of an increasing number of appeals for various help, since 1998. Legal consultations on human rights protection, psychological help, and consultations on implementing activities (like organizing seminars and trainings on human rights) were mentioned as the most frequent assistance provided by these NGOs. All services provided by these NGOs are free of charge.

The main funding sources for all the organizations surveyed are grants and sponsorships by international organizations. Forty percent of organizations also mentioned assistance from Kyrgyzstan foundations, although none specified a particular Kyrgyz foundation. Many NGOs consider organizations like the Soros Foundation to be a Kyrgyz foundation, while in actuality it is an international organization. The statistic on Kyrgyz foundations may just reflect a lack of distinction between international and national foundations. Other funding sources included financial investments and/or donations from foreign and Kyrgyz private individuals.

The main challenges these organizations face in their activities are instability of financial resources, weak technical base (meaning inadequate office equipment, communication resources, and means of transportation), and insufficient human resources. NGOs find it hard to attract highly qualified specialists with advanced degrees for low paying jobs. Organizations in Batken and Talas regions mentioned undeveloped telecommunications in the regions and limited access to necessary information because of their remoteness as additional challenges. All respondents agreed that problems of Kyrgyz NGOs could be

¹ The Russian language version of this questionnaire was included as an attachment to the First Quarterly Report for the Preventing Human Trafficking Project, submitted January 31, 2004.

resolved with more assistance from international organizations, local government administrations and donor organizations.

Professional expertise and potential opportunities for activities on the problem of human trafficking

Every organization noted the necessity and importance of combating human trafficking. Also many highlighted the negative impact that the “pendulum” or seasonal migration and unemployment have in all regions of Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, the NGOs noted that firms engaged in human trafficking have a very organized structure in comparison to the government, which makes them more effective at plying their trade than the government in combating this crime. At the same time, the general public lacks sufficient information about the issue, even access to what information is available is a problem. According to the majority of the NGOs surveyed, the general public lacks knowledge about legal migration procedures, and has a very low level of legal literacy. As a result, the NGOs surveyed commented that there has been an increase in the prevalence of human trafficking cases over the past few years. Thus, in their estimation, the problem is extremely important and urgent.

Almost half of the 36 NGOs surveyed (47, 2 %) said that they had undertaken some anti-trafficking activities within the framework of their on-going activities. Another 38, 8 % of the NGOs had not undertaken any anti-trafficking activities, but they expressed their interest in doing so. And 14% of the NGOs are currently engaged in conducting certain anti-trafficking activities, such as disseminating informational materials to “risk groups” and specialists, campaigning in the mass media, legal and psychological aid to victims. Some of the specifically mentioned anti-trafficking activities included:

- the information campaign “Stop Human Trafficking” and dissemination of associated publications (NDI Information Center, Djalal-Abad)
- conducting focus-groups with sex workers to gain information about their experiences working abroad (NGO “Tais-Plus”, Bishkek),
- showing of the film “Victim” with the aim to increase the general public’s knowledge about human trafficking (Youth NGO “Golden Goal”, Osh)
- a campaign held in schools, “Say No to Servitude” (NGO “Leylek Ayalzaty”, Isfana city)
- hotlines like “Stop Human Trafficking”
- temporary shelters, psychological and social aid for victims (Crisis center for women and families “Sezim”, Bishkek)
- the project “Kyrgyz NGO on combating human trafficking” which included seminars for students and a debate clubs with government authorities (Public fund “Podruga”, Osh city)

Sixteen percent of respondents stated that they can work with all groups of the population, while 83, 4 % of respondents favored focusing their work on specific groups. The risk groups that were identified by the NGOs were the unemployed, homeless, children, merchants in the shuttle trade, young women who want to marry a foreigner, women and men migrating in search of employment. Forty-one percent of all respondents consider that the main criteria to determine risk groups is factual (but not official) criteria for poverty level among the population, high unemployment rates, and whether or not a certain group is already involved in the migration process. Thirteen percent added lack of legal literacy among the population as another contributing risk factor. Twenty percent mentioned that more often women who strive to marry a foreigner fall into the group of risk, as well as clients of many illegal firms that offer high salaries in foreign countries. There is a lack of reliable information about these firms – both marriage agencies and employment firms. However, 25% of all respondents found it hard to single out a certain clear criteria for defining risk.

Fifty percent of respondents found it difficult to define the amount of time that they dedicate to working with victims of human trafficking. In most cases victims on their own find the organization they need through hotlines or with the help of social workers. Forty percent of respondents pointed out that approximately 10% of their time is dedicated to work with men and up to 50% of their time is spent working with women. The assistance that is needed above all, according to respondents, is opening of consultative, informative legal centers; providing psychological aid to victims of human trafficking; and assistance with economic issues, like employment.

And the most effective, according to the opinions of many respondents, will be educational and preventive projects, conducting seminars and trainings, informational campaigns, projects on providing psychological aid and shelters for victims. Additionally, the NGOs believe that government should cooperate with NGOs in developing and conducting information and educational campaigns on prevention of human trafficking.

Twenty-seven percent of organizations received funds through international or Kyrgyz funds for their anti-trafficking activities. Almost seventy percent of all surveyed organizations could not raise any funds for projects, which serves as evidence of the lack of attention from both local government and foreign organizations to this issue. Only one organization, the NGO Initiative Youth “Zeonis”(Tokmak, Chuy region), managed to raise funds from various resources for realization of an anti-trafficking project. They are currently conducting a project on youth labor exchange and within this project they provide consultations about trafficking issues for youth who are seeking jobs abroad. Majority of respondents (36, 1%) consider grants from international organizations as the only way to receive funding for the realization of projects on human trafficking prevention, while 22, 2% of respondents indicated that both government and international donor assistance is what is needed. And 11, 1 % said that the main financial support should be provided by government structures.

NGO representatives are poorly informed about programs or projects on human trafficking prevention in Kyrgyzstan – 55, 5% of respondents could not indicate a single project or program. A number of respondents named the same organizations repeatedly – IOM, UNHCR “Human trafficking” project, Public Fund “Podruga”, Crisis Center “Sezim”, Crisis Center through the Women’s Support Center “Ayalzat”.

When asked about the methods of human trafficking in Kyrgyzstan, respondents listed firms involved in job placement abroad and marriage agencies as the main channels of human trafficking. In second place were modeling agencies and tourist firms. The mass media, evidence of victims and official sources (police, government structures, etc.) were indicated as being the main sources of information and opinions distribution on above-listed organizations’ activities.

Opinions of respondents turned out to be similar in defining the reasons for the human trafficking problem. The majority indicated complicated socio-economic situation in Kyrgyzstan and its consequences as high unemployment rate and low living conditions of population as fundamental reasons for human trafficking. Other reasons for human trafficking were: legal illiteracy of general public, no means for individual self-actualization or development, lack of effective protection systems for victims, lack of appropriate punishment for criminals, inefficacy and complexity of legal procedure and law enforcement mechanisms. Respondents pointed out that there wasn’t just a single reason but that the problem is due to a complex array of problems. As to whether or not the NGOs think the problem of human trafficking is increasing, the majority (70, 0%) noted that in the nearest future it would increase in Kyrgyzstan. Only 16, 4% of respondents said that the problem would remain at its current level, and 13, 6% said that it was difficult to make any predictions.

Extremely low knowledge about the law “On combating smuggling of and trafficking in persons” among NGOs was observed. Only 44,4 % of all surveyed NGOs could name legislative acts, decrees and proceedings such as the program “On combating smuggling of and trafficking in persons” ? 94, law of Kyrgyz Republic (KR) “? n joining of KR to convention on combating trafficking in persons” as of 26.07.1996, separate conventions on children’s rights, elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, elimination of forced labor, etc. Additionally, knowledge about concrete criminal cases under criminal code articles pertaining to human trafficking is very low. Only 8, 3 % of respondents mentioned knowing about human trafficking criminal cases. This may indicate not only a lack of awareness among NGOs about legal issues, but also speak to the secretive and nontransparent work of law enforcement bodies when it comes to investigating these crimes.

Suggestions on enhancing legislation against human trafficking were legalization of the labor market, increasing the obligations of employers, strengthening control over hiring practices, and outlawing of child labor. NGOs said that it is necessary to inform the public about the existence of legislative acts through the

mass media and informational centers. Thirty percent of respondents learned about the problem of human trafficking on their own or were taught by their colleagues who had attended seminars and trainings on the topic. Respondents mentioned participating in seminars on prevention of human trafficking (IOM, Bishkek), training on the preparation of hotline operators (IOM, Bishkek), seminar for consultants who work with victims of trafficking (IOM, “Sezim”, Bishkek). Besides, 36,1 % of respondents were trained on discrimination of women through the “Gender rights of women” project (UNICEF), “Women in social development” project (Tokmak, Chuy region), “Gender and development” programs (UNDP).

Respondents mentioned the usefulness and necessity of all educational seminars and trainings, but often seminars conducted by IOM were accentuated since they allow use of knowledge received and acquired skills in everyday activities. Many of the NGOs mentioned that they have the human resources for providing consultations and trainings on the issues of human trafficking. But at the same time they agree on the need for additional educational programs on human trafficking prevention, labor migration, and gender issues.

Cooperation with government structures

Thirty-six percent of organizations have experience in cooperation with central and local councils, with central and local executive bodies, including joint work with departments of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Experience in cooperation with government authorities consists of holding the following activities:

- participation in drafting the law “On combating family violence and measures on socio-legal protection of victims of violence” (Crisis Center “Tendesh” Naryn, Public Fund “Ayalzat” Talas)
- Public Fund “Omur Bulagy” (Batken) joined with Internal Affairs Department to conduct seminars in ayil okmotus (village councils) for chief justices-aksakals, chief of village councils, and groups of mutual support
- NGO “Tepliy Dom” (Karakol) conducted a survey among officials of the Ministry of Internal Affairs on the problem of human trafficking

Other organizations held informational and educational activities like seminars or distributed their publications work.

Only 44, 4% of respondents took part in implementation of government programs and projects, such as: programs KOR, “Araket”, agricultural land reform, “Ayalzat” - 2000, “Modern project on teenagers’ and youth employment”, “Jetkinchek” – supporting children from poor families. Twenty-five percent were informed of the activities of the National Committee (under the President of KR) on smuggling of and trafficking in persons. Many expressed a low opinion about the effectiveness of these government agencies and that state mechanisms were not developed enough to implement such projects.

Considerable number of organizations (77, 7 %) expressed the need to cooperate with all government structures but participation of local authorities in the work of NGOs and effectiveness of such cooperation is evaluated as extremely low. Many respondents noted that government structures see the problem of human trafficking but consider it secondary, or less serious than other problems.

Cooperation with other NGOs on the issues of human trafficking

As a whole, inter-organizational cooperation among NGOs on the issue of human trafficking prevention was rated quite high. The most active are Osh NGOs; the second are organizations in Bishkek, Talas and Djalal-Abad. Cooperation is mainly on the basis of information exchange, joint participation in trainings, and interaction in conducting research and educational seminars. Among international NGOs involved in human trafficking prevention, the following organizations were often mentioned IOM, Winrock International, La Strada-Ukraine, Eurasia Foundation, USAID, UNDP, “Sezim” (Bishkek), and UNHCR. As for improving cooperation, respondents suggested holding joint trainings, seminars, conferences; implementing joint projects; establishing an NGO responsible for coordination; and creating a website on prevention of human trafficking. Overall, joint work of NGOs was defined as insufficiently coordinated and not on a large enough scale.

Cooperation with other organizations

Many organizations (61, 1 %) have considerable expertise in collaboration with educational institutions, 27, 7 % evaluate it as not considerable, and 11,2 % have no such expertise. Generally this cooperation includes conducting lectures, seminars and trainings in educational intuitions for students and teachers. Expertise in cooperation with medical establishments is much less – only 38, 8 % described such cooperation and the same (38, 8 %) did not rank this cooperation at a high level. The type of cooperation is generally referring clients to medical institutions for treatment as well as holding seminars with medical personnel on topics like HIV/AIDS prevention.

Cooperation with the Mass Media

A majority of NGOs (72,2 %) said that they have a close working relationship with the mass media. Mainly this involves information exchange with mass media outlets, issuing printed, audio or video materials and participation in TV or radio programs. Often priority aims of cooperation are information dissemination about the NGO and attempt to educate the general public in the region. Direct cooperation with mass media on issues related to prevention of human trafficking was indicated by several NGOs:

- NGO “Tepliy Dom” Karakol city – interview on human trafficking for “Antenn-TV”, May, 2003
- “Golden Goal” Osh city – articles on websites www.vb.kg, www.youthosh.to.kg, www.oshmedia.kg
- “Sezim” Bishkek – newspaper “Agym”, material on human trafficking in Kazakhstan; newspaper “Bishkek times” material on trafficking of women; newspaper “Vecherniy Bishkek” article on trafficking of Kyrgyz citizens in Ukraine
- Center “Tendesh” Naryn city – advertisement on radio “Tezir-Too”, “Almaz”, “Azattyk”; advertisement on TV studio “Shankai”; news on the website www.akipress.kg
- Center “ApNaz” Talas city – TV programs on the local TV, radio “Azattyk”, newspaper articles “Talas Trumushu”, “Kyrgyz Ruhu”, “Erkin –Too”

On the whole, the role of the mass media in addressing the problem of human trafficking is considered to be not active enough, in other words the press draws the attention of society and government to the issue but there is no serious analysis presented, information is often fragmented, and what is presented reflects a one-sided opinion.

To the question of the role of the Internet in dissemination of information on human trafficking, the majority (44, 4 %) couldn’t answer; 22, 2 % answered that the Internet contributes to information dissemination, but only 13, 8 % thought that use of the Internet is one of the ways to combat trafficking in persons. Such an ambiguous reaction to the Internet as a resource can possibly be explained by insufficient access of remote rayons to this technology and a lack of skills for using this medium.

Assessment of the status of women in Kyrgyzstan

Ranking the problems which women face in everyday reality, the following picture developed. The most urgent problems are insufficient earnings, both of men and women, and unemployment. Other “significant” problems were forms of sexual exploitation, insufficient social allowances and benefits not being received, difficulty completing (higher) education. Hardships with housing problems and psychological violence in the family were also identified as issues concerning women. Domestic violence was ranked last as a pressing problem faced by Kyrgyz women. As for their forecast regarding the status of women in the future, respondents were divided – 27, 7 % thought that the status of women will improve, but 22, 2 % thought that women’s status will actual worsen. The remaining abstained from given their opinion.

Conclusions

A considerable number of NGOs assess the problem of human trafficking in Kyrgyzstan as being complex, urgent and not developed yet regarding the appropriate protection mechanisms. NGOs note that government structures neither have regulated mechanisms on effectiveness of legislation nor ways to identify victims of trafficking and direct them to certain organizations for assistance. NGOs involved in this problem also report limited cooperation with local police and prosecutors in investigation of those few cases on which an investigation is brought.

On the basis of the collected data analysis, activities of a few NGOs are directed toward resolving the problem of human trafficking. It is possible to mention the following organizations, which demonstrated a high level of knowledge and active participation in this field: NGO “Sezim” (Bishkek), Youth NG? “Golden Goal” (Osh), Public Fund “Podruga” (Osh), NGO of Initiative Youth “Zeoniz” (Tokmak), Women Initiative Center “Ayalzat” (Talas), Informational Crisis Center “EpNaz” (Talas), Public Fund “Eje Ayim” (Djalal-Abad), NGO “Zanatost” (Naryn), Crisis center “Tendesh” (Naryn).

III. ROUNDTABLES WITH NGOS & MEETINGS WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

Winrock International, in collaboration with Counterpart’s Civil Society Centers and the Soros Foundation-Kyrgyzstan Resource Center, held a series of NGO roundtables in regional cities and the capital. The purpose of these roundtables was twofold – first, to inform NGOs about the PTL project, and secondly to hold discussions with NGOs about the issue of human trafficking in Kyrgyzstan and to identify what is currently being done to address this problem and where there is room for improvement.

Roundtables were held in Bishkek, Osh, Djalal-Abad, Talas, Naryn, Chuy and Karakol. The Program Manager of the PTL project facilitated the roundtables. In total, 88 NGO representatives participated in these roundtables. Special emphasis was placed on bringing together a diverse group of NGOs at each of these roundtables. Participants included NGO representatives not only from these oblast centers but also from remote rayons of each oblast. Various organizations such as NGOs working on human rights, women’s rights, labor migration, programs for youth and the elderly, education, social mobilization and citizen activism attended these roundtables.

It is worth mentioning that some NGOs refused to participate in roundtables, explaining that their organizations work with very specific issues and they felt it was too difficult to draw connections between their work and the problem of human trafficking. Two NGOs also claimed that the government should be engaged in combating human trafficking, not NGOs. Even during the roundtables, there was considerable debate about the various roles of government and NGOs in combating human trafficking, and specifically the extent to which NGOs should be involved. This illustrates the weak understanding among NGOs about the problem of human trafficking and the role that NGOs could and should play in combating this problem. Additionally, since the roundtables took place in December some NGOs from remote rayons that agreed to participate couldn’t attend because of bad weather and dangerous road conditions. Winrock will continue to engage these organizations in future project activities, particularly the grant and technical assistance components.

Besides roundtable meetings, separate meetings were held with select NGOs with extensive experience in the field of prevention of human trafficking and rehabilitation of trafficking victims (“Podruga” in Osh and Sezim in Bishkek), or those NGOs from rayons where mass labor migration is a particularly acute problem (CSSC of Nookat rayon, Osh region).

In each city where NGO roundtables were held, the Program Manager also held meetings with local government officials. Winrock decided not to hold joint meetings with NGOs and government representatives because of the potential reluctance on the part of NGOs to be open and honest about government anti-trafficking efforts in the presence of government officials. We also anticipated that in private meetings government officials might be more forthcoming with information than they would be in a public setting like a roundtable. Meetings were held with the representatives of the Oblast’s Governor’s Office, General Prosecutor’s Office, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Migration Department, Ministry of Labor and Social Security, Border Services, and City Administrations.

OSH REGION

Roundtable with NGO representatives

The roundtable on December 17, 2003 was organized with the cooperation of CSSC – Osh International Center “Interbilim” in the office of that organization. In attendance at the roundtable were NGO

representatives from Osh city, from Nookat and Alay rayons of Osh region, and from Batken region. Below is a list of participants:

- B. Sulaomanova, Director of the Association “Union for the Protection of Consumers’ Rights EIYU”, Osh city
- T. Abdyraimov, Deputy Director of “Podruga”, Osh city
- ?. Boenov, Director of the Association “Osh Region Lawyers”, Osh city
- ?. Mamajanov, Director of the Youth Association “Golden Goal”, Osh city
- Michelle Seltzer, USA Peace Corps Volunteer working at the Youth Association “Golden Goal”, Osh city
- T. Abdullaev, Director of the Foundation to Support Legal and Economic Reforms in Kyrgyzstan, Osh city
- ?. Mambetova, Director of the PF “? mur Bulagy”, Crisis Center of Batken Region, Batken city
- B. Djunosov, Interbilim Coordinator, CSSC of Osh Region, Osh city
- K. Soltonov, Director of the Association “Young Generation of Lawyers of Kyrgyzstan”, Kyzyl-Kia city, Batken region
- B. Mustafaev, Association “Leilek Ayalzaty”, Isfana city, Batken region
- N. Eshtaeva, Director of the Women’s Initiatives Center “Ayalzat”, Crisis Center “Aruulan”, Osh city
- L. Ismanova, Director of the Crisis Center “Me’erban”, Osh city
- O. Abdylzaeva, Director of the Association “Ene Nazary”, Crisis Center, Alay rayon, Osh region
- A. Khudaiberdyev, Director of “CSSC Nookat”, Nookat rayon, Osh region
- J. Arzymatov, member of the “Center for Human Rights and Democracy”, Osh city

Discussion in the course of the roundtable showed that all participants were concerned about the scale of labor migration from the Osh region. During the discussion a number of facts and anecdotal evidence about the impact of labor migration from the Osh region was given. Residents of the Osh region because of the difficult economic situation, lack of plots of arable land, and very high unemployment are forced to go in search of work outside the region. Often they go to agricultural rayons of Kazakhstan on the tobacco plantations and to industrial rayons of Russia to work in the construction sector. In regional rayons such as Uzgen, Kara-Suu and Nookat, where they traditionally grow tobacco, the scale of labor migration accounts for 80-90% of able-bodied male population.

Labor migration is very organized. For example, every day during the spring months in the markets of Uzgen, Kara-Suu and Nookat rayons 2 to 3 busloads of jobseekers go to Kazakhstan and Russia. As a rule, these people do not have the means to pay for their travel expenses (the sum of which is nearly \$1,000 or more), so they immediately incur a debt with the bus drivers or recruiters loaning them this money and taking their passports as collateral. Upon arrival to the destination point, the driver and/or recruiter receive money from the employer or another mediator, handing over the passports and transferring the debt owed by each migrant.

According to the opinion of the roundtable participants, labor migration does have a favorable effect on the economic situation of the region since it helps citizens survive in the present conditions. But at the same time participants noted well-known facts when the rights of labor migrants were abused both by employers and different law enforcement bodies (police, border officials or customs service agents) in the destination country as well as in Kyrgyzstan. The living conditions of labor migrants in the destination countries are quite poor, oftentimes nothing more than a barn. Participants acknowledged that as a rule labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan do not receive their full promised remuneration. After calculating travel expenses, accommodation, food, medical care or fees for equipment breakage, the amount remaining is generally not even enough to return to Kyrgyzstan. For this reason, many labor migrants are forced to stay in the destination country for the next season.

If migrants travel with their families, their children do not attend schools. Instead they help their parents in the fields or work in local markets. This interruption of education for Kyrgyz children has significant long-term implications for the literacy and productivity of these citizens, as they grow older. This issue was raised by A. Khudaiberdyev a representative of the CSSC of Nookat Rayon.

Representatives of Batken region said that labor migration from rayons and villages of that region is common but perhaps on a smaller scale than in Osh region. As a rule, able-bodied men leave in search of jobs in cities of Russia. The problems they face there are similar with other migrants from Kyrgyzstan.

Among participants at the roundtable were representatives from organizations that are already implementing projects on prevention of human trafficking. They told of their experience in this sphere, so it was an opportunity for those with less experience to learn about what can and is being done. Representatives from "Podruga" described the "Stop Trafficking Hotline" project and the educational project on the problem of trafficking conducted jointly with the youth organization "Golden Goal" with financial support from the Democracy Commission of the United States Embassy. Operators at the "Podruga" hotline give consultations to the population on issues of labor migration. Also if victims of trafficking or their relatives appeal to the hotline requesting assistance, they are referred to the IOM office in Osh. Members of "Podruga" and "Golden Goal" have held a series of seminars, roundtables and other informative meetings with the aim of raising awareness about individual legal rights and the risks associated with labor migration and human trafficking among vulnerable groups in the region.

In addition to the discussion about labor migration, representatives of "Podruga" also talked about the existence of human trafficking schemes that target women and girls for work in the sex industries of the United Arab Emirates, Turkey and China. Recruitment is generally among women already involved in prostitution and young women from rural areas who are forced by hard economic conditions to seek jobs in urban areas. Women from neighboring Uzbekistan are involved in the sex industry in Osh region, and are in actuality victims of sex trafficking with Kyrgyzstan as the country of destination.

Participants also mentioned that although human trafficking prevention was not a specific activity of their organization, it appeared to be an urgent issue for the southern region as a whole. Several participants, particularly those from the crisis centers, reported that they increasingly have to conduct outreach work on this issue among their target groups as well as provide aid to victims.

The issue of the government's role in preventing human trafficking and cooperation with NGOs raised significant discussion among participants. The general consensus was that even though the government's role should be considerable, in reality it is far from that, and that government agencies are unwilling to cooperate with NGOs.

In conclusion, participants noted that undoubtedly there is a need for NGOs to regularly conduct informational work on human trafficking preventing and defense of labor migrants' rights. And with this aim it is necessary to hold large-scale information campaigns, embracing not only cities but also villages as well. Additionally, closer cooperation between NGOs and corresponding government agencies needs to be a priority. Participants also saw a role for NGOs to lobby on behalf of labor migrants for regulation of labor migration with neighboring countries.

Meetings with Government Officials

The PTL Program Manager held meeting with the following government representatives:

- Svetlana Bostonova, Osh Region Deputy Governor
- Valerian Vakhitov, Deputy Prosecutor of Osh Region Office of the Public Prosecutor
- Jamalbek Isaev, Deputy Prosecutor of Osh city
- Ravshan Abdukarimov, Deputy Head of Osh Region Law Enforcement Department
- Salima Ismailova, Head of South Regional Migration Department under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Jumadyl Isakov, Vice Mayor of Osh city
- Jamaldin Jamaldinov, representative of Ombudsman in Osh region

Results of the meetings with representatives of regional and city government bodies demonstrated that government structures are well aware of the existence of labor migration of Osh residents to neighbor countries. The labor migration process is monitored only by the Migration Department, which has authority to grant licenses to firms employing Kyrgyz citizens abroad. According to Salima Ismailova, in 2003, only

three firms had such licenses and they sent 1,902 people to work in Kazakhstan.² According to Kazakh migration services data 4,300 Kyrgyz citizens had the legal right to work in Kazakhstan and hold temporary residence. According to approximate data, a total of 7,000-8,000 residents from the southern region of Kyrgyzstan went to work in Kazakhstan. Members of the Migration Department decided to go to Kazakhstan to monitor the situation of Kyrgyz labor migrants.³ The Migration Department found no abuse of labor migrants' rights during their visit. Following this trip to Kazakhstan, the Migration Department offered recommendations on the proposed Law on Labor Migration Process in Kazakhstan.

The Regional State Administration ratified a Regional Resolution on implementing the President's Decree "On measures to combat smuggling of and trafficking in persons".⁴ With the support of IOM and the cooperation of the Regional State Administration, roundtable meetings and seminars for members of government agencies and NGOs were held in 2001-2002 in the region. Because of limited funds, many of the planned activities in the resolution were not held. In 2004, according to Deputy of Governor Svetlana Bostova, the Regional State Administration is planning to open a special agency under the auspices of the Administration to coordinate and monitor labor migration and human trafficking processes.

Two meetings were held with representatives of Osh region and city Prosecutor's Office. Both representatives of the Prosecutor's Office showed a deep knowledge about human trafficking. Orders were given by the republic General Prosecutor's Office on implementation of the President's Decree "On measures to combat smuggling of and trafficking in persons" and methodological recommendations on involvement of prosecutors in the sphere of combating illegal migration and human trafficking were adopted. On the base of these two documents, the regional, rayon, and city prosecutor's offices are taking actions on human trafficking cases, including investigating and controlling firms engaged in employment of Kyrgyz citizens abroad. According to Valerian Vakhitov, Deputy Prosecutor of Osh Region Office of the Public Prosecutor, in 2002-2003 several cases of firms and individuals illegally engaging Kyrgyz citizens in work abroad were investigated.

Regional Internal Affairs Department has worked to educate its members about the Presidential Decree "On measures to combat smuggling of and trafficking in persons". The south regional office of IOM has played a significant role in this by holding seminars for law enforcement officials, explaining the peculiarities of the problem of human trafficking. Law enforcement bodies had investigated only a number of cases classified as human trafficking, since there were few written requests from victims. Several cases were stopped when victims withdrew their previous statements. According to Ravshan Abdukarimov, Deputy Head of Osh Region Law Enforcement Department, cases were mainly related to recruitment of citizens to work in Kazakhstan. Data of passport-visa services were provided by Mr. Abdukarimov, which showed that in 2003 residents of the region registered documents mainly for travel to the United Arab Emirates and Russia. Also in 2003 mostly residents of Alay, Kara-Suu and Nookat rayons left for Russia and Kazakhstan to work. Internal Affairs Department staff does not have the opportunity to focus their work solely on preventing human trafficking, since this crime is one of many that are within the purview of the Internal Affairs Department. In this regard, Mr. Abdukarimov expressed the opinion that creation of a special anti-trafficking department under the Ministry of Internal Affairs is necessary in order to effectively combat this crime.

² There is conflicting data on the number of Kyrgyz laborers working in Kazakhstan, some estimates place the number closer to 50,000.

³ From the Department of Migration Service report, provided by Hakimov Zafar Haitbaevich, representative of Migration Service Department: from August 10-11, 2003, the Head of South Regional Administration of Migration Service Department, Ismailova S., visited Emgekshikazakhstan and Djambyl rayons of Almaty region to investigate the working conditions and regimes, wages, production-technical conditions, living conditions, implementation of a treaty by employer and migrant-employee from Kyrgyzstan. During her stay in Kazakhstan she visited 67 farms and private entrepreneurships and met with 668 citizens of Kyrgyz Republic. As of results of the visit, recommendations on further regulation of tobacco producers' labor needs were drawn up.

⁴ During the meetings with government officials conducted as part of this assessment, only a few regional administrations allowed the PTL Program Manager to actually see a copy of the resolution. Most simply said that a resolution had been developed but gave no additional information.

The City Administration of Osh is aware of the wide scale labor migration, but does not take specific actions in this sphere. Jumadyl Isakov said that the City Administration is seriously concerned about the problems of internal labor migration from rayons of the region to Osh city. In 2003, the official population of the city was 242,000 people, yet unofficially the figure was closer to 450,000 residents. There is a significant shortage of housing allotments in the city and its outskirts, which means there is not enough land for construction of internal migrants' houses. There is also a high rate of unemployment among city residents because of the closure of several large state-run factories. Mr. Isakov estimated that 50% of the city's population lives in poverty.

The representative office of the Ombudsman of Osh region was opened in 2003. Since then, the office has not received any complaints from citizens regarding human trafficking. The majority of complaints are related to land issues and problems with law enforcement agencies. According to Jamaldin Jamaldinov, the Central Ombudsman Office has requested to monitor the activities of one firm engaged in employment of citizens abroad, which the Osh office is doing, although they do not have the legal authority to do more than this.

As a whole, the government agencies of the Osh region are informed about the scale and problems of labor migration of citizens. However, the same cannot be said for human trafficking. The officials interviewed in Osh denied that routes for sex trafficking existed in the Osh region, even saying that all women on the Osh-Dubai flights were simply entrepreneurs. The concern of Osh government officials is much more focused on labor migration than human trafficking. The Presidential Decree "On measures to combat smuggling and trafficking in persons" is being implemented, but only to the extent that it relates to labor migration. Certain work is being done by the Migration Department and law enforcement agencies, but results of this work indicate a disconnect between the real scale of illegal labor migration and crimes related to human trafficking and the number of cases being investigated with concrete assistance from government structures. There is some evidence that government agencies are involved in prevention efforts and prosecution of cases of human trafficking in the region. Yet, there is a persistent necessity to coordinate actions of different government agencies and engage in cooperation with NGOs.

In terms of government cooperation with NGOs, the officials interviewed in Osh indicated that they would be willing to cooperate with NGOs on projects related to combating human trafficking. Most said that they did not have previous experience working with NGOs. Interestingly, the Regional State Administration in Osh was suspicious of money for anti-trafficking efforts going only to NGOs and they wanted information on those organizations from Osh region that win grants through the PLT project.⁵ There seems to be a possibility for more effective cooperation between rayon and city level government agencies, than regional level government agencies.

DJALAL-ABAD REGION

Roundtable with NGO representatives

The roundtable meeting with NGO representatives of DjalaĀ-Abad region was organized on December 18, 2003 in the office of Civil Society Support Center (CSSC) of DjalaĀ-Abad region. Nine people attended the meeting, with representatives from NGOs in DjalaĀ-Abad, Suzak and Aksy rayons. Below is a list of participants:

- A. Kannazarova, Public Foundation "Healthy Generation", DjalaĀ-Abad city
- G. Abduvalieva, Crisis Center "Kaniet", Association of DjalaĀ-Abad Region Women Leaders, DjalaĀ-Abad city
- M. Kebekbaev, Public Foundation "Zheti-Ken-Kozhaiym", Suzak town, Suzak rayon
- Z. Borbiev, Democracy Support Information Center, NDI, DjalaĀ-Abad city
- A. Kushnazarov, Public Union "Aibek", CSSC of Kerben village, Aksyi rayon
- I. Abduhalilov, Foundation for Legal Education "Youth Group", DjalaĀ-Abad city
- G. Myrzamatova, Public Foundation "Ene-Aiym", DjalaĀ-Abad city
- V. Uleev, Human Rights Organization "Spravedlivost" (Justice), DjalaĀ-Abad city

⁵ The same was true with Regional State Administration officials in Naryn region.

- E. Mavlyanova, CSSC of Djajal-Abad region, Djajal-Abad city

All participants of the roundtable meeting actively participated in the discussion, which showed that a large scale of labor migration and human trafficking for sexual exploitation exists in the region. Participants expressed the opinion that almost every family in the region has relatives who went to work in cities of Russia. This process is incredibly disastrous for the region, without the control and oversight of government agencies. Often citizens appeal to NGOs with complaints of discrimination that they experienced in Russia. There were even several cases of murder of Kyrgyz citizens in Russia. The roundtable participants said that such facts encourage the increase of ethnic conflicts and the rise of Russophobia among the local population.

NGOs have no opportunities or funds to work in this area, while citizens do not trust law enforcement agencies. The recruitment systems for work in Russia are already very well organized. Usually a familiar person or someone from the same village offers men the opportunity to work in the construction sector in Russia. This person then becomes the mediator, with responsibility of getting the workers to the employer in Russia. Generally, migrants are met at the railway stations by traffickers or middle men and are then sent to workplaces. According to participants at the roundtable, migrants tell of poor living conditions, abnormal work hours and discrimination from the local population and law enforcement agencies. Nevertheless, few of them return due to fear of being unemployed in Kyrgyzstan.

Echoing sentiments from the Osh roundtable, participants raised the issue that labor migration also concerns children of migrants, since they often go with their parents and do not have the opportunity to continue their education. Veleriy Uleev from NGO "Spravedlivost" mentioned that at one session of the Regional Department of Education, this situation was considered to be very critical since there is a problem of massive non-attendance at school by children.

Representatives of NGOs working with vulnerable groups of women said that there also exists in the region a system of recruiting young women for work in foreign countries. As a rule, these women are forced to work in the sex industry in countries such as the United Arab Emirates and Turkey. There have also been cases of forced prostitution of under-aged girls through kidnapping. One such case was widely broadcast in the mass media.⁶ Approximately 300 women are working in the sex industry in the region, half of them are brought by pimps from neighboring rayons of Uzbekistan. The girls coming from Uzbekistan are very young and do not have passports. This group of young women is regularly offered work in the United Arab Emirates, with promises of high salaries. Representatives of NGOs from rayons bordering Uzbekistan also mentioned that there are many problems with labor migration between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Many citizens work in neighboring countries and they regularly are discriminated against by border guards and customs services of both countries. The NGOs at the roundtable are involved in educating the public about the risks of illegal labor migration.

Participants of the meeting mentioned that in the framework of their daily activities they are forced (since no organization within the region carries out such activities) to solve problems and assist people who wish to go abroad. They are also providing refuge for labor migrants and victims of trafficking. Their work also focuses on improving relations with law-enforcement bodies and enhancing the ability of lawyers to provide consultations on these issues. In addition, in the course of their seminars and roundtables on other topics, the NGOs are often asked to answer questions from citizens about emigration rules and procedures in neighboring countries and dangers of illegal migration abroad. The scale of the problem in the region makes it impossible for NGOs to not be working on these issues.

The NGO representatives agreed on the importance of active work of NGOs in conducting wide information campaigns, particularly about the rules for legal labor migration, registration procedures of migrants in Russia, their rights and responsibilities, as well as risks of being sold and exploited. Participants felt that on

⁶ "Hell from Aida", *Vecherniy Bishkek*, October 31, 2003, page 13. (Aida – Kyrgyz woman's name) In Bishkek, members of a family headed by Aida were arrested. Aida had organized a system of kidnapping under-aged girls from Djajal-Abad, forced them to be prostitutes, and prepared the documents to send them to the United Arab Emirates.

these issues, undoubtedly, government plays a huge role, but NGOs can cooperate with government agencies and play a considerable role in preventative activities.

Meetings with Government Officials

The PTL Program Manager held meetings with the following government representatives:

- Sadyrbek Satybaldiev, Deputy Head of Department of Social and Cultural Development of Djalal-Abad Regional State Administration
- Abdygapar Tuialiev, Head of Djalal-Abad Migration Service under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Parida Yuldasheva, Deputy Mayor of Djalal-Abad city
- Abibila Tazhibaev, Deputy Prosecutor of Djalal-Abad region
- Kulnara Mamytova, Leading Specialist of the Regional Education Department
- Kymbat Manasova, Deputy Head of the Regional Social Protection Department
- Oroz Tekinbaev, Head of the Criminal Investigation Department of Region's Internal Affairs Department

Regional State Administration of Djalal-Abad region gave an order to use Presidential Decree "On measures to combat smuggling of and trafficking in persons" at the regional level, also a work plan was confirmed in compliance with this order. According to the work plan Administration representatives appeared several times in the mass media, providing information on labor migration rules and prevention of human trafficking.⁷ The Regional Migration Service has developed recommendations for preventative activities on the problem of smuggling of and trafficking in persons for rayon and city administrations. Informational activity in schools was ordered to be held. There isn't any special funding for these activities, so just a few have been conducted.

According to Sadyrbek Satybaldiev, Deputy Head of Department of Social and Cultural Development of Djalal-Abad Regional State Administration, and Abdygapar Tuialiev, Head of Djalal-Abad Migration Service under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the situation of labor migration and human trafficking in the region has stabilized in the past year. Labor migration process was particular active in 2002-2002. Recruitment to work in Kazakhstan is done mainly in Kara-Kul rayon and Djalal-Abad region, where residents usually grow tobacco, in other rayons residents specialize in cotton production. Residents of Suzak rayon go to work in the construction sector in Russia. Many also go to work in the markets of Russia and Kazakhstan. Officially it is calculated that in 2002 nearly 3,000 Djalal-Abad residents went to work in neighbor countries.⁸

Representatives of the Ministry of Education were aware of the problem of human trafficking through a letter sent by the Minister. This letter also told regional officials of the need to hold preventative work with school children as specified in the Presidential Decree. Regional schools were appealed to hold special discussions with schoolchildren and prepare written materials on the topic. The Regional Education Department is not however monitoring the implementation of this request.

The Regional Prosecutor's office also was informed about the Presidential Decree through special orders from the General Prosecutor's Office. No appeals have been made to the Regional Prosecutor on cases related to illegal migration and human trafficking.

Representatives of the Regional Administration of Social Protection of Population were not informed of the Presidential Decree or actions taken by other government agencies in this sphere. General understanding of the problem was through information available in the mass media, according to Kymbat Manasova. According to data collected by the Regional Administration, the poverty rate within the region is 41, 9%, and this is one of the reason people are forced to earn money abroad.

Regional Internal Affairs Department had contradictory information on cases of civil rights abuses related to the problem of smuggling and trafficking in persons. The discussion during the meeting demonstrated that there was a weak understanding of the human trafficking problem by staff, although some staff of the

⁷ A total of 13 articles appeared in the local newspapers.

⁸ These are residents who have received Kyrgyz passports for travel abroad.

department took part in seminars organized by the Osh office of IOM. According to information provided by the Regional Administration, in the year 2000, several criminal cases related to recruitment of people to work in Kazakhstan were under examination. There were no other cases, although Oroz Tekinbaev said that people regularly file complaints about lost relatives, girls, who went abroad to work. When asked about information in the mass media regarding girls kidnapped from Djalal-Abad with the aim to take them to the United Arab Emirates for prostitution, Mr. Tekinbaev answered that the case was being examined by the Ministry in Bishkek. According to the information provided by the Internal Affairs staff, for the past year no case was brought, no investigation made into the allegation of involving under-aged children in prostitution.

There is no member of the Djalal-Abad city administration who is responsible for the situation of labor migration or human trafficking. The city administration does not monitor this process. City administration staff has experience in cooperation with city NGOs and Parida Yuldasheva expressed their readiness to support the work of NGOs.

Representatives of various government agencies of the Djalal-Abad region showed a general knowledge of labor migration problems and human trafficking. But at the same time it is necessary to note that the attention of government agencies to these issues is weak. There is also a lack of sufficient monitoring of the situation and coordination of activities among government agencies and NGOs.

NARYN REGION

Roundtable with NGO representatives

The roundtable meeting with NGO representatives of Naryn region was held in December 23, 2003 in Naryn Resource Center of the Soros Foundation-Kyrgyzstan. Seventeen NGO and independent mass media representatives from Naryn, Djungal and Kochkor rayons attended the meeting. Below is a list of participants:

- A. Okosheva, Public Union "Tynchtyk", Naryn city
- K. Usupov, "Radio Svoboda" correspondent, Naryn city
- A. Abdykerimov, Public Union "Zhak-?", Naryn city
- N. Isaev, Naryn branch of the Public Union "Young Lawyers of Kyrgyzstan", Naryn city
- Zh. Ibraeva, Radio "Almaz-Naryn" correspondent, Naryn city
- D. Mukanbaev, Public Union "New chance", Naryn city
- T. Omuralieva, Public Union "Ak Zhol Zhumgal", Zhumgal rayon
- A. Shorukov, Committee on Legal Support of National Defenders and Veterans of Military Forces, Naryn city
- O. Chondoev, Naryn Regional Public Union of Afganistan War Veterans, Naryn city
- B. Tursunbaev, Public Union "Employment", Naryn city
- S Sayakbaeva, Crisis Center "Tendesh", Naryn city
- E. Karypbai uulu, Civil Society Support Center (CSSC) of Naryn region, Naryn city
- V. Turdukulova, Public Union "Nauryz", Kochkorka village
- K. Kalykov, Ombudsman representative in Naryn region
- D. Kalykov, "Aki Press" information agency, Naryn city.
- N. Kaseeva, Naryn Resource Center Coordinator, Soros Foundation-Kyrgyzstan

Participants at this roundtable raised a particularly important issue for this region – the problem of Kyrgyz citizens held hostage in China as collateral in trade deals. This is a particularly urgent problem in Naryn region. Among participants there were contradictory views as to whether or not this qualified as human trafficking since those held hostage had agreed to stay in China as part of the trade deal. Many of the roundtable participants had their own small businesses, and were telling about their experiences. In the 1990s, the practice of going to neighboring countries developed as many Naryn residents began their enterprises, specifically importing various goods from Suar, China. Often because of a lack of working capital, the tradition of leaving a relative or friend as collateral for goods bought from Chinese businessmen developed. After paying back the debt, the person who was held hostage was freed. It was noted that this human collateral usually lived in fair conditions, but accommodation and food expenses were added to the

debt that the trader owed. Oftentimes, the passport of the person held was taken, thus restricting his or her mobility and prohibiting them from crossing the border and returning to Kyrgyzstan.

Not all entrepreneurs were successful in selling the goods that they had ‘purchased’ from the Chinese businessmen. Many went bankrupt, and as a result did not have the ability to pay back what they owed and free their human collateral. There are no exact figures on how many Kyrgyz citizens were used in schemes like this, or how many may still be left in China. Some of the participants estimated that at present there are probably 40 to 100 people held in China. These hostages are in a desperate situation, without much hope of returning to Kyrgyzstan. Some have escaped and tried to illegally cross the China-Kyrgyzstan border. Border guard services generally arrest them because they do not have passports, but usually after some investigation, they are released. Roundtable participants knew that government structures were making some efforts at the national and regional levels to resolve this problem, but according to participants the efforts were unsuccessful.

NGOs regularly receive appeals for help from relatives of those who have been left in China for a long time, but NGO representatives can barely conceive of how to work in this area, since hostages went to China voluntarily and this was a stipulation of the trade agreements. At present, the Naryn NGOs are involved only in the process of monitoring the situation with human hostages through conversations with relatives and friends of those being held.

As for other types of human trafficking such as people trafficked for sexual exploitation or forced labor in agricultural or industrial spheres, participants did not have specific information. Many participants stated that no evidence exists of open recruitment of citizens in the region, although no special survey or research on this topic was been done. Mainly Naryn residents migrate to Chuy valley, close to the capital, and from there they may be recruited to other countries.

The discussion during the meeting showed the urgency for the residents of Naryn region of the problem of humans held as collateral and a weak understanding among the NGOs of other forms of human trafficking that may exist in the region. The NGOs also lacked a solid understanding of human trafficking and how the human collateral issue falls within the definition of human trafficking.

Interestingly, this roundtable attracted the attention of a wide variety of NGOs, including several that work with war veterans. The veterans groups in the Naryn region are very active in the NGO sector. They have a good reputation among the local population, and are engaged in a number of social projects not just for veterans and families of veterans but also for teenagers.

Meetings with Government Officials

The PTL Program Manager held meetings with the following government representatives:

- Kamchybek Sultanaliev, Head of the Border Crossing Point “Torugart”
- Omurbek Suvanaliev, Head of Regional Internal Affairs Department
- Zholdoshibek Djakypov, Head of Regional State Administration
- Ainagul Chylabaeva, Deputy Governor of the Region
- Edil Musaev, Head of the Regional State Administration’s Social Development Department
- Mairambek Akmatallyev, Deputy Prosecutor of the Region
- Zamira Nazarbekova, Head of the Regional Department of Social Protection
- Shaken Mambetalieva, Deputy Head of the Regional Department of Education

During the meeting with Ainagul Chylabaeva, the Deputy Governor, she voiced the opinion that there is no regulated criminal system of illegal migration and human trafficking in the region at present. Illegal migration and human trafficking are primarily problems in Bishkek and southern regions of Kyrgyzstan. Migration of the able-bodied population is a result of the high poverty rate in the region (84, 2% of the population accounts for the extremely poor), but usually migration destination points are Bishkek and Chuy valley. The Regional State Administration ratified an order on fulfillment of the Presidential Decree in the fall of 2003 and worked out an action plan in accordance with this order.

Government agencies are implementing special programs on increasing welfare of citizens of the region, which gives hope that in the future migration flows can be reduced. One such program was described by Edil Musaev, Head of the Regional State Administration's Social Development Department. Through funds raised from private businesses and individuals, the Administration has set up a special microcredit fund for low-income families. The loans from this fund are easier to obtain than through a regular bank.

Representatives of Regional State Administration are informed about the problem of humans held as collateral in China. According to their data at present the flow of small business entrepreneurs/traders is decreasing as a result of a tighter visa regime with China. The Administration only knows of three people who are still in China as human collateral.

The representative of the Border Guard Service of Kyrgyzstan said that he is aware of the problem of human trafficking and smuggling, and of the Presidential Decree concerning this issue. The border post "Torugart" is the main crossing point for entrepreneurs trading with China. For instance, in 2002, 26,180 citizens of Kyrgyzstan and China passed through this checkpoint, in other words the flow back and forth is quite significant. The Border Guard Service knows about the situation with humans held as collateral in China. The majority of people attempting to cross the border illegally are Kyrgyz – escaping from China without passports or other identification documents. In 2002, there were 3 such violations, in 2003, only 2. The Border Guard Service arrests these individuals and sends them to representatives of the National Security Service, so that their identity can be verified and further facts of the case investigated.

Members of Regional Prosecutor's Office and Administration of Internal Affairs defined the situation of human trafficking in the region to be better than in the southern regions of Kyrgyzstan and in Bishkek. According to these officials, there is no regulated system of recruitment and migration for work in Russia or Kazakhstan in the region, or recruitment of women to work in the sex industry. Although, they admitted that there is a large migration flow to Chuy valley for employment. Law enforcement bodies did not have clear information and statistics on cases of human beings held as collateral in China, but estimates were made that nearly 40 people may be in China. As a result of the tightened visa regime this problem will gradually be eliminated. The Prosecutor's Office provided official data on 4 investigations of human collateral cases regarding individuals who were arrested for illegally crossing the border. Law enforcement structures expressed the need for more active participation in fulfillment of the Presidential Decree through cooperation with NGOs since NGOs have better experience in conducting educational and informational campaigns for the population.

Regional Administration of Education has extensive experience in cooperation with NGOs and international organizations. In 2002 with the participation of the Regional Administration and IOM support, seminars on the problem of human trafficking were held for schoolteachers. Shaken Mambetalieva expressed the necessity to continue such activities.

Although, as a whole, members of the Naryn regional and city government agencies were aware of government policy in regard to smuggling and trafficking of humans, there is no systematic preventive work with the population being done at this time. There is a belief that these problems have not reached Naryn region yet. In addition there is a need for more attentive monitoring by government agencies of the problem of human beings held as collateral in China and examination of this as a human rights violation.

ISSYK-KUL REGION

Roundtable with NGO representatives

The roundtable meeting with NGO representatives in Issyk-Kul region was held December 24, 2003 at the CSSC office in Issyk-Kul region, NGO "Leader". Twelve people participated in the meeting. Below is a list of participants:

- D. Asanbaeva, "Ayalzat – Women Initiative Development", Karakol
- J. Kydyralieva, Red Cross in Issyk-Kul, Karakol
- M. Emelyanova, Alliance on Reproductive Health in Kyrgyzstan, Issyk-Kul office, Karakol
- R. Arnold, CSSC Volunteer group, NGO "Leader", Karakol
- A. Kabylova, Public law consultation, NGO "Leader", Karakol

- A. Ivanova, NGO “Leader”, Karakol
- A. Ravdugina, NGO “Leader”, Karakol
- D. Nurmatova, Public Organization of Social Protection of the Population, Issyk-Kul office, Karakol
- Ch. Bakirova, NGO “Topliy dom”, Karakol
- M. Amashulova, “Committee on Cooperation”, Karakol
- Gulnaz Adylbek kyzy, Kyrgyz center office “Sezim” Karakol and Tyup village

Participants of the meeting were well informed about the situation of smuggling and trafficking in persons in Kyrgyzstan, some NGOs with the support of IOM and some independently monitored the situation in Issyk-Kul region. Before such research, NGOs had the opinion that there was no problem with human trafficking in the region. At present, new facts are appearing everyday illustrating that Issyk-Kul residents are also becoming victims of trafficking. According to participants, residents of the region are often becoming victims of human trafficking when they go to work in Bishkek, Russian cities or neighbor villages of Kazakhstan. There are cases of lost women who went to work in Bishkek and Turkey. Often relatives of these women appeal for help specifically to women’s organizations. The scale of labor migration is not as large as in other regions of Kyrgyzstan, but there are examples of small groups or individual citizens who leave to seek work elsewhere. Participants of the meeting mentioned that IOM held a small information campaign in the region; particularly unforgettable was the theater performance on the theme of trafficking of women. But the campaign was short-term and NGO representatives believe that more systematic and long-term campaigns among residents of remote rayons and youth are necessary.

Participants agreed that NGOs should work in this area more actively and in close cooperation with government agencies. They expressed their ideas on various types of preventative work on human trafficking that could be undertaken in the region, such as an NGO coalition in the region to hold a large-scale information campaign or trainings for social leaders in every village. Issyk-Kul NGOs have great potential in holding joint campaigns and organizing joint projects with government structures and private businesses.

Meetings with Government Officials

Program Manager held meetings and follow up interviews via telephone with the following government representatives:

- Baktybek Ilipov, Chief of Regional State Administration
- Mira Bektenova, Senior Specialist of Social and Cultural Development Department of Regional State Administration
- Jyldyz Ismailova, Executive Secretary of the Commission on Under-Aged Children under the Regional State Administration
- Moldokul Junushev and A. Dmitrienkov, representatives of Border Guards, Military unit 20/42
- Dinara Davlyatova, Deputy Chief of Regional Department of Education
- Kelgenbay Koomanov, Chief of Security Department under the Regional Internal Affairs Department
- Iman Asanbekov, Chief of Passport-Visa Service, Regional Internal Affairs Department
- Umut Konkubaeva, Senior Prosecutor, Human Rights Department, Regional Office of the Public Prosecutor

As of May 24, 2002 the Governor of Issyk-Kul region signed Decree ? 102 on implementation of the Presidential Decree. In compliance with this decree Regional Commission on Implementation of the Decree was established, with representatives of various government structures and NGOs. In December 2003, during the visit by PTL Program Manager, it was discovered that the majority of members of this Commission no longer hold office because of a cadre shift. The majority of representatives of the Regional State Administration are also new. Representatives of various Departments of Regional Administration said that they were informed about the problem of human trafficking in Kyrgyzstan mainly through the mass media. Regional State Administration officials expressed interest in cooperation and joint projects with NGOs.

The Commission on Under-Aged Children has expertise in organizing seminars for representatives of law enforcement bodies and other structures on issues related to children and teenagers. One of the most important issues examined in these seminars was the topic of human trafficking prevention.

Representatives of the Regional Department of Internal Affairs carried out planned work on prevention of human trafficking in compliance with orders from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic to fulfill the Presidential Decree. During this work, it was revealed that there have been attempts made by labor migrants to cross the borders between Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan in the Issyk-Kul region. Residents of Osh region and citizens of Tajikistan in large groups have tried to reach Kazakhstan via the Issyk-Kul region with no documents. These attempts were prevented and residents of Osh region were sent to their permanent place of residence and the Tajik citizens deported. Additionally there were cases of Kyrgyz citizens arrested for illegal border crossing, who in the course of the investigation stated that they couldn't endure slave-like work conditions and escaping from their 'owners' were trying to return home.

According to representatives of the Department of Internal Affairs, labor migration to Chuy region and Russia is more typical for the residents of this region. According to data from the passport and visa service, in 2003 residents generally registered documents to go to Russia (200 people), to Uzbekistan (30) and to the United Arab Emirates (26). Representatives of the Regional Department of Internal Affairs said that since a resort zone is situated in this region, the level of prostitution is high and there are cases of under-aged children involved in prostitution.

Representatives of the Regional Prosecutor's Office also carried out planned preventative work on human smuggling and trafficking on the base of requests and methodological recommendations from the General Prosecutor's Office. The activities of the passport services and law enforcement agencies were examined, and in the course of the examination it was discovered that no complaints or requests on the problem of human trafficking were received.

Representatives of the border post between Kyrgyzstan and China said that the territory of the border is very hard to cross, and that is why for the past five years, no cases of illegal border crossing were noticed and any attempts were prevented.

Regional Educational Department has experience conducting information activities on the problem of human trafficking, thanks to cooperation with IOM, which organized a seminar for members of the Regional Educational Department and provided materials to be distributed to schools. The Regional Educational Department said that there is a need for further work in this sphere and focused involvement of many schools.

From the meetings with government agencies of Issyk-Kul region, it is worth mentioning the negative influence the cadre shift had on systematic preventative work of the government programs. This personnel change really inhibited the progress made on addressing the problem of human trafficking in the region. Law enforcement bodies of the region – the Internal Affairs Department, the Prosecutor's Office, the Commission on Under-Aged Children – are the most active in carrying out regular actions on fulfilling the Presidential Decree, as compared to other government agencies in the region.

TALAS REGION

Roundtable with NGO representatives

The roundtable meeting with representatives of NGOs in Talas region was organized with support of the Talas Civil Society Support Center (CSSC), "Aikol", on December 10, 2003. Eleven people representing NGOs from Talas and other rayons took part in the meeting. Below is a list of participants:

- V. Milovatskij, "Soyuz Edineniya" (Solidarity union), Talas city
- T. Abdieva, Talas representative of UNDP local government support program, Talas city
- I. Ergesheva, "Hava", Kok-Oj village
- T. Isbasarova, Information Center of the National Democratic Institute (USAID project), Director of NGO "Elnaz"

- R. Toktosunova, “ZiOm-21”, Talas city
- L. Tantabaeva, Women’s Initiative Center “Ayalzat”, Crisis Center for women of Talas region, Talas city
- K. Shabdanbekova, NGO “Ledi-Shirin”, Chimkent village, Kara-Buurinski rayon
- M. Sharshenkulov, Resource Center Coordinator, Soros Foundation-Kyrgyzstan
- A. Momutaeva, Public Association “Coalition for democracy and civil society”, Talas city
- I. Karabetskij, CSSC coordinator in Talas region

In the course of the roundtable, it was immediately apparent that many organizations consider the problems of human trafficking and labor migration particularly urgent for the region, but only one organization had experience in holding seminars and an informative campaign of these issues. That was the NGO “Elnaz”. Members of this organization with the support of NDI (USAID project) organized two roundtable meetings on the problem of human trafficking for education officials and trade unions in the fall of 2003.

Participants explained that it is a common practice for residents of the region to search for permanent or seasonal work in neighboring rayons of Kazakhstan. Residents are often employed as agricultural laborers or involved in trade in Kazakh markets. The reasons Talas residents seek these jobs are high salaries in Kazakhstan and unemployment in Kyrgyzstan. Additionally participants stated the need for more government control of the labor migration process, to reduce violation of migrants’ rights and crimes in this region. Moreover lobbying on this issue with the regional administration is needed to ensure that agreements between two regions of neighboring states are regulated and to ease the reasons that encourage labor migration for employment.

L. Tantabaeva, representing Women’s Initiative Center “Ayalzat”, Crisis Center for women of Talas region, presented information about many cases of mistreatment of women, who became victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. Girls were lured to work in Kazakhstan and Bishkek. According to the data from Talas women’s organizations, a number of young women are working in Kazakhstan, having migrated from Talas and Osh regions of Kyrgyzstan because of promises of well-paid jobs. Several women’s NGOs have made attempts to monitor the situation together with law enforcement bodies, but they were unable to resolve the problem because of a lack of funds to travel to Kazakhstan to investigate these cases.

Participants of the roundtable came to the conclusion that there is a pressing need to inform the public about migration rules and the risks of human trafficking, including special programs to improve the legal literacy of young village girls and work to empower them to make safe life decisions. NGOs of Talas region have good experience conducting information campaigns, legal consultations for the public, and working collaboratively with the Regional State Administration and law enforcement agencies. An idea for the NGOs to join forces to conduct a coordinated information campaign on the problem of human trafficking was proposed at the roundtable. However, participants emphasized that they need to gain a deeper understanding of the issue of human trafficking in order to implement an effective campaign.

Meetings with Government Officials

Representatives of government agencies of the Talas region demonstrated a high level of interest during meetings with the PTL Program Manager and demonstrated a willingness to provide support to NGO projects on human trafficking prevention. The Program Manager held meetings with the following government representatives:

- Malik Malabaev, Advisor to the Governor of Talas region on Economic Issues and Chief of the Administration on Economic Development and Investments under the Regional State Administration
- Doolot Mambetov, Lead Specialist of the Security and Law Enforcement Department under the Regional State Administration
- Adyl Djeenaliev, Talas Region Public Prosecutor
- Aitybek Rysaliev, Deputy Head of Talas Region Internal Affairs Department
- Sarybek Baiymbetov, Chief State Inspector on Job Safety in Talas region, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection
- Asylbek uulu Shumkarbek, Deputy Head of the Regional Department on Employment, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection
- Batma Razahunova, Lead Specialist of Talas Regional Department of Education

Representatives of the Regional State Administration explained that after the Presidential Decree on smuggling and trafficking of persons was issued, the Governor signed the Decree and a commission was created to study the situation in the region. It was revealed that the level of migration in Talas region is insignificant and is consistently declining. This is because there are sufficient land resources and land allotments in the region which are larger than in southern regions of Kyrgyzstan. Since the Administration is also carrying out a policy on developing new agricultural structures and actively attracts investments in the region, the employment rate is higher among the population compared to other regions. No cases of attempted recruiting or kidnapping of Talas residents have been registered by law enforcement agencies.

Representatives of the Regional Prosecutor's Office and Department of Internal Affairs confirmed information from the Regional State Administration that no complaints related to human trafficking have been received and there are no current investigations into human trafficking cases in the region. The Prosecutor's Office has also not received any complaints or appeals on rights violations from Kyrgyz citizens who have worked in Kazakhstan. Adyl Djeenaliev, from the Prosecutor's Office, said that they have good relations with colleagues from neighboring regions of Kazakhstan. Aitybek Rysaliev of the Regional Department of Internal Affairs expressed the assumption that women of the Talas region may be recruited and taken away to foreign countries but it occurs through Bishkek since there are no organized crime groups in the Talas region. There have been cases of women from Talas selling Kyrgyz passports to citizens of Kazakhstan (because the Kyrgyz passports are easily forged), and it is assumed that these passports could have been used by women to leave the country. Representatives of law enforcement agencies showed a good level of knowledge about the problem of forced migration and human trafficking in Kyrgyzstan and of the President's Decree "On measures to combat smuggling of and trafficking in persons".

Regional representatives of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection noted that work had been done on reducing the number of unemployed in the region. Officially, the number of registered unemployed stands for 1,735 people as of the beginning of December 2003, while hidden unemployment accounts for approximately 4,000 people. This agency is also monitoring the situation in the unofficial labor market in Talas – keeping track of who is recruiting employees from these unofficial labor markets, where the jobs are, and deterring the employment of under-aged youth.

Representatives of the Regional Department of Education mentioned their successful work experience with NGO "Elnaz" on information action campaign with teachers to explain the problem and risks of human trafficking. They also emphasized the need for continuing similar projects.

? HUY REGION

Roundtable with NGO representatives

The roundtable meeting with NGO representatives of Tokmak and nearby rayons of Chuy region was organized with the support of the Public Union "Ayan-Delta" in Tokmak city, on December 5, 2003.

Thirteen representatives from NGOs and mass media were present:

- E. Sharshenalieva, NGO "Cholpon Kyz" and branch office of crisis center "Sezim", Tokmak
- M. Kazakbaeva, NGO "Cholpon Kyz", Tokmak
- M. Kuleshov, NGO "Mir – svet kulturny", Tokmak
- M. Ismailov, Volunteer Center, NGO "Mir – svet kulturny", Tokmak
- Z. Sardiev, Youth tourism, NGO "Mir – svet kulturny", Tokmak
- A. Linnik, reporter of the local newspaper "Delovoi Chuy – Tokmak", Tokmak
- O. Zatylnikov, reporter of the local newspaper "Delovoi Chuy Tokmak", Tokmak
- N. Shpak, Social rehabilitation center for under-aged children "Gorodskoy centr sotrudnichestva", Tokmak
- V. Chudaykin, NGO "Ayan – Delta", Tokmak
- M. Raimjanova, NGO "Ayan – Delta", Tokmak
- S. Ilyasova, NGO "Chuyskiy jenskiy centr", Tokmak
- A. Korkina, NGO "Zeonis", Tokmak
- A. Dunganaeva, NGO of village women "Alga", Jer-Kazar village, Issyk-Ata rayon

The discussion during the meeting was very active. It was evident that there is a certain level of urgency surrounding the issue of discrimination of Kyrgyz citizens in the process of labor migration. Participants were concerned by the growth of violence against residents of Tokmak and rayons, who are employed in seasonal work in neighboring rayons of Kazakhstan. The growth of such cases caused the regional government to introduce registration of the unofficial labor market. The government is monitoring the situation by having a staff person from the Employment Center registering people at places where recruiting and transporting of labor migrants generally occurs (like the monitoring that is being done in Talas). Participants admitted that this initiative was timely and necessary. There is an employment problem in the region. In Kazakhstan work on farms is better paid than in Kyrgyzstan, therefore a large number of Kyrgyz citizens are in search of work and will continue to do it in Kazakhstan. Thus, the roundtable participants felt that the question really is how to regulate the migration process and prevent discrimination against Kyrgyz citizens.

Representatives of women's NGOs said that recruitment of young women to work as dancers and waitresses abroad had become common practice in Tokmak and surrounding rayons. Many of the participants knew women who went to the United Arab Emirates, South Korea and China. These women were children of relatives and friends. Also, girls are recruited for the sex-industry in Bishkek. Only one of the roundtable participants took part in the seminar on combating human trafficking, which was organized by IOM. Other participants emphasized that there is a sharp need to raise awareness about this problem, since in the process of working with their focus groups they encounter complaints and issues concerning labor migration and work abroad.

With IOM support, a theater performance on the theme of trafficking of women was organized in Tokmak. However, participants agreed that these one-time events do not result in long-term impact. They felt that there should be a systematic information campaign to reach all layers of the public – with roundtables, seminars, individual consultations with lawyers and so on. A. Korkina, from the NGO “Zeonis” in Tokmak, mentioned that in the process of their activities they are trying to educate youth about the dangers of being deceived and sold abroad, but members of this organization themselves lack a sufficient level of knowledge about the problem which limits their ability to provide accurate information and guidance. Additionally, there is a need to draw attention to such large population groups in Chuy valley as refugees from Tajikistan, who as a result of hard financial circumstances and lack of legal protection are becoming targets for recruiters. Participants also expressed the need for close cooperation and involvement of government agencies in resolving problems of labor migrants and victims of human trafficking.

Meetings with Government Officials

The PTL Program Manager had meetings and interviews via telephone with the following representatives of government agencies of Tokmak and Chuy region:

- Marina Yartseva, Deputy Chief of the Headquarters of the Regional Internal Affairs Department
- Smar Karimov, Senior Prosecutor, Human Rights Department of the Regional Public Prosecutor's Office
- Beksultan Jarkynbaev, Vice-Mayor of Tokmak city

Representatives of government agencies of Chuy region were one of the few who did not show interest in meeting with the Program Manager. The majority of representatives, including the Regional State Administration, refused to meet or even discuss the issue over the phone.

As a result of the meetings that the Program Manager was able to arrange with representatives of the City Administration of Tokmak, the following picture was revealed. The population of Tokmak is 57,000 people officially, but unofficially it is approximately 70,000 people. There is a large flow of internal migrants coming from Naryn and other regions of Kyrgyzstan, as well as many refugees, ethnic Kyrgyz, from Tajikistan coming to the rayon. The poverty rate in Tokmak is 9,1% and the registered unemployment rate is 3,7%, which is low in comparison to other regions because many industrial plants are situated in the city which is geographically close to the capital city and Kazakhstan. This has a positive effect on employment in the region. Labor migration to Kazakhstan is increasing particularly for seasonal work on Kazakh farms. During that period of the year, nearly 1,000 people gather at spontaneous unofficial labor markets along the border. The city Employment Center has become involved in this process, aiming to monitor and control the

situation. Representatives of the City Administration did not have information on recruitment for sex trafficking in the rayon and city.

Representatives of law enforcement bodies were informed of the Presidential Decree “On measures to combat smuggling of and trafficking in persons”. The Regional Prosecutor’s Office has disseminated the orders and methodical recommendations of General Prosecutor’s Office concerning the issue of human trafficking to rayon and city prosecutor’s offices. Representatives of the Regional Internal Affairs Department and Prosecutor’s Office mentioned that no investigations regarding recruitment, kidnapping or human trafficking were initiated in the region in 2003.

BISHKEK

On November 28, 2003 the first roundtable with NGO representatives of Bishkek was organized. Present at the meeting were:

- V. Tupin, Social Protection and Youth Assistance Public Fund “OAZIS”, Bishkek
- Z. Salmorbekova, Institute for Regional Studies, Bishkek
- N. Omurbekova, International Center “Interbilim”, Bishkek
- L. Kurbanova, “Diamond” Association, Bishkek
- B. Ryskulova, Psychological Crisis Center for Women and Family “Sezim”, Bishkek
- M. Tilebalieva, Association of Crisis Centers of Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek
- R. Aytmatova, Women’s Support Center, Bishkek

Almost all organizations from the capital that have experience working on the issue of human trafficking participated in this meeting. Only representatives from the NGO “Tais-Plus” could not attend.

B. Ryskulova from the Crisis Center “Sezim” explained about their “hotline” activities for victims of trafficking. This is supported by IOM. Also the Center operates a shelter for victims of domestic violence and human trafficking, which is supported by the US Embassy. But this work is carried out mainly in Bishkek, and similar informational work and opening of shelters is needed in Osh and other regions of Kyrgyzstan.

R. Aytmatova of the Women’s Support Center described their cooperation with the Ombudsman Office, specifically a trip to neighboring rayons of Kazakhstan to investigate and monitor the situation of labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan. In the course of this monitoring visit many cases of violations of migrants’ rights were found, in particular the living and labor conditions of migrants were considered to be close to slavery-like conditions. Mainly these migrants were from Osh region of Kyrgyzstan. Currently, the Ombudsman Office is working to draw attention of government agencies to the problems faced by labor migrants in Kazakhstan, but R. Aytmatova felt that undoubtedly NGOs, particularly human rights organizations, should contribute in this work. Additionally, participants said that there is a need to develop partnerships with NGOs in the countries where migrants from Kyrgyzstan work.

Participants also discussed the problem of sex trafficking in Kyrgyzstan. Although IOM conducted research and presented a documentary film about sex trafficking from Kyrgyzstan to UAE, this crime still remains hidden and misunderstood by the general public. There is a notion supported by the mass media that victims of sex trafficking are only women already engaged in prostitution and that they always know what they will be doing in the foreign country. However, according to information collected by “Sezim”, victims are all kinds of women – all ages, levels of education, profession. Information campaigns targeting women should be directed to a variety of categories, such as young women, sex workers, and village women.

One participant of an organization working with sexual minorities mentioned that members of this organization and representatives of this target group also are potential victims of human trafficking because they mainly work in creative professions and are invited to work abroad as dancers and in other spheres of show business.

Participants held the general opinion that the problem of human trafficking is very real for Kyrgyzstan and can have deep negative consequences if preventative measures aren't undertaken. Also they drew attention to the fact that only a small number of NGOs are involved in preventative work in this area, although for the past 10 years NGOs have accumulated considerable experience particularly in education and wide-scale public information campaigns. Communities value the work of NGOs and often people whose rights have been abused or victims of violence appeal first to NGOs before going to government agencies. But taking into consideration the complexities of the problem of human trafficking, it is impossible to resolved this problem only through the work of NGOs. Everyone at the roundtable recognized the need for close cooperation with government agencies. It is vitally important to attract the attention of government structures to the problems of labor migrants and victims of trafficking, since some issues (interstate regulations of labor migrants' rights, interaction of law enforcement bodies, etc) is possible only at the state level.

Participants also drew attention to weak social activity of youth. Since youth is considered to be a group at risk for human trafficking, it is necessary to support projects of youth organizations to increase the effect of prevention projects and build the capacity of these organizations.

MEETINGS WITH NATIONAL-LEVEL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

As part of the assessment, PTL Program Manager interviewed representatives from the government agencies involved in implementation of the April 2002 Presidential Decree "On measures to combat smuggling of and trafficking in persons". The purpose of these interviews was twofold – to identify progress made on implementation of the decree and the national action plan, and to determine the level of willingness in these government agencies to actively engage in efforts to combat human trafficking.

Ministry of the National Security Service

Abdykadyrov, Kapar Muktarovich and Timur Sarybaev, representatives of an undisclosed department

Following the recommendation of Deputy Minister of the National Security Service Tokon Mamytov, the PTL Program Manager met with Mr. Abdykadyrov and Mr. Sarybaev at the National Security Service. Mr. Abdykadyrov said that there is no structure or special department in the Ministry that is responsible for anti-trafficking activities. To the question of what processes the NSS has for informing staff about human trafficking, Mr. Abdykadyrov answered that there are internal work plans of NSS departments where the human trafficking problem is included as a responsibility.

Mr. Abdykadyrov stated that jurisdiction for human trafficking cases falls under the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Although to some extent the National Security Service is involved in investigation of human trafficking, if it is related with organized crime. Although there also were exceptions when the Ministry of Internal Affairs refused to help in cases of individual complaints and the National Security Service was involved (an example of selling children was given).

Mr. Sarybaev confirmed that actions related to combating human trafficking are one area of the NSS operations. This work is done through investigations of individuals arrested for illegally crossing the country's borders. In 2003, there were approximately 40 cases of illegal border crossing but not all of these were interrelated with cases of human trafficking. Articles 350 of the Criminal Code (document forgery) and 346 (illegal border crossing) are often related to cases of human trafficking. But more often cases are brought on Article 124 (recruiting and trafficking of persons). In 2001 one criminal case was brought in compliance with Article 124, in 2002 – 2 cases. There were no reported cases for 2003.

The National Security Service also oversees passport-visa services and related matters in Kyrgyzstan. Mr. Sarybaev noted that there were several cases, investigated by NSS, when women were arrested while crossing the border (at the airport, primarily returning for UAE) with forged documents, saying that their documents were taken from them while they were abroad and that they were forced to work in the sex industry. In order to return home, they bought fake passports. But there were only two cases when women

immediately informed the border services of these facts and by doing so avoided criminal liability for document forgery. In such situations, the majority of women do not confess to having forged documents, and thus they can be charged with document forgery.

Also the NSS is involved in the investigation of firms that engage in facilitation of labor migration of Kyrgyz citizens to Kazakhstan. One such case was a suit brought against the firm “Jardam”. This case is still pending and no further information was provided.

Regarding the situation in Naryn region and cases of humans held as collateral, Mr. Sarybaev had worked in Naryn and he was aware of this problem. According to his data, 40 people have been held in China for several years, and at present the Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is concerned about them. Mr. Sarybaev said that the practice of human collateral is not being used any longer.

The National Security Service has the opportunity to work at the interstate level with NIS countries on the problem of human trafficking, since corresponding agreements exist between these countries. But with countries such as the United Arab Emirates, where Kyrgyz citizens are often trafficked, there is no agreement, which makes working with their UAE counterparts much harder.

General Prosecutor’s Office

Shagivaliev, Amir Kayumovich, Chief of the Department on Monitoring Citizens’ Rights and Freedoms
Djandaev, Emil Djoldoshevich, Prosecutor of the Department

Mr. Shagivaliev said that the General Prosecutor’s Office raised questions about the importance of the human trafficking problem more than two years ago. When the Presidential Decree was issued, the Prosecutor’s Office was named as one of the principal government agencies for implementing the action plan. The Prosecutor’s Office has designated for itself five priority directions in this sphere:

- 1) To improve the legislative base on combating smuggling in and trafficking of humans
- 2) To curb cases of smuggling and trafficking by conducting criminal investigations
- 3) To develop systematical management of prosecutor’s office officials, training of prosecutor’s office staff
- 4) To conduct educational activities with the general public
- 5) To engage international cooperation and coordination of actions

Both Mr. Shagivaliev and Mr. Djoldoshevich said that certain work has already been carried out on these five priority directions, but it is still not possible to say that all levels of the General Prosecutor’s Office has a clear, sufficient understanding of the importance and urgency of this problem, thus training of staff needs to be continued. In 2002, a project on opening a special course on the problem of violence against women at the Center of Advanced Qualification for members of the General Prosecutor’s Office was supported by the Soros Foundation-Kyrgyzstan Women’s Program. In the framework of this special course, the problem of human trafficking was additionally covered. Besides this educational component, systematical recommendations on activating the Prosecutor’s Offices’ monitoring role in the area of smuggling and trafficking of human have been developed. These have been distributed to all Prosecutors’ Offices of the country.

Concerning the component on enhancing the legislative base, the General Prosecutor’s Office actively participated in developing the amendments to existing legislation on smuggling of and trafficking in persons. Mr. Shagivaliev noted that during discussions on amendments in the Parliament many important commentaries were withheld. For instance, in the original version presented by the Prosecutor’s Office, there was an item on protecting the rights of victims. If a victim was cooperating with law enforcement bodies, then he or she might be exempt from criminal liability for violating such laws as illegal border crossing or forgery of documents. But since this commentary was not included in the amendment, it has resulted in a lower number of statements from victims. The General Prosecutor’s Office is continuing to work with legislators to make such amendments.

Concerning investigation and prosecution of cases, there have been only a few cases investigated by the Prosecutor’s Office. At present, there is an investigation of activities of a firm that was sending labor

migrants to Kazakhstan, and an investigation of a local newspaper “Blits-Info”, for regularly publishing suspicious announcements. Very few investigations are conducted by law enforcement bodies on the criminal code articles related to maintaining brothels or involving under-aged children into prostitution, although the Prosecutor’s Office considers these areas as interrelated with human trafficking. The General Prosecutor’s Office considers the opening of a Special Department on combating human trafficking under the Ministry of Internal Affairs as necessary to the government’s efforts to combat this crime.

In terms of educating the general public, the General Prosecutor’s Office encourages active cooperation of its officials with the mass media to explain various aspects of its work. On the priority of strengthening international cooperation and coordination, on September 4-5, 2003 a session of the General Prosecutors Coordination Counsel of NIS countries was held in Kyrgyzstan. Human trafficking was one of the most examined issues during this meeting, and a decision to develop an interstate program on the problem of human trafficking was taken.

Mr. Shagivaliev showed readiness for further cooperation on the issue of human trafficking prevention with Winrock and other NGOs.

Ombudsman Office

Tsoy, Aleksandr Vladimirovich, Head of Strategy and Information Department

Shaydullaeva, Topchugul Joldoshevna, Chief of Information-Publishing Department

Iskenderova, Emina Ibragimovna, Chief of Sector on Protection of the Rights of Ethnic Kyrgyz, Kyrgyz citizens abroad, foreigners and individuals without citizenship

The Ombudsman Office has several times received oral complaints from people regarding abuse of their rights while working in Kazakhstan. Only 12 complaints were confirmed in writing, mainly from residents of Osh and Djala-Abad regions. A letter from a Kazakh citizen was received requesting more attention to the issue, saying that he witnessed rights abuses of Kyrgyz citizens and their discrimination in Kazakhstan. Staff of the Ombudsman Office, Shaydullaeva and Iskenderova, discussed this situation with R. Aytmatova, representative of the National Council on combating smuggling of and trafficking in persons, and came to a decision that there is a need to investigate citizens’ complaints of abuse and exploitation in Kazakhstan. The Ombudsman, Mr. Tursunbay Bakir uulu, supported this initiative of staff and allotted funds for an investigative trip to Kazakhstan.

In November 2003, Shaydullaeva Iskenderova together with Aytmatova went to Chilik rayon of Kazakhstan. They knew only the addresses of three labor migrants, but by asking people they were able to meet with 100 Kyrgyz citizens. According to their accounts and written report, all Kyrgyz citizens whom they met had bad living conditions (they generally lived in barns); they were often deceived in terms of salary. They encountered several cases of pregnant women and children working on farms, which means these children did not attend schools. In this region of Kazakhstan, the private migration service is in compliance with the regional administration that works with migrants, having a partner firm “Egemnyar” in the south of Kazakhstan which recruits people. The Kazakh Migration Service registers them for a fee of 1500 tenge and allegedly holds medical examinations. Although following the medical examination, all migrants are deemed healthy, but in actuality 16 Kyrgyz citizens died in Kazakhstan during seasonal work in 2003. The delegation prepared reports on the results of the trip (copies were provided to Winrock), and after returning to Kyrgyzstan, a press conference was organized and a series of articles were published in the mass media to draw public and government attention to this problem. As of May 2002, there is a bilateral agreement between Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan to regulate labor migration and provide social protection of labor migrants involved in agricultural work in the border regions.

Additionally, members of the Ombudsman Office are coordinating efforts to address this problem together with various law enforcement bodies – reports on monitoring the rights of labor migrants were sent to Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Prosecutor’s Office, National Security Service, and the Migration Department under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Deputies of Parliament were also informed, encouraging them to take measures at the legislative level to regulate labor migration.

The work of the Ombudsman Office on the problem of labor migrants is becoming widely known by the general public, which is resulting in an increase of complaints. For instance, in his latest public address, Governor of Nookat rayon said that 40 residents of one village had gone to work in Kazakhstan and were missing, and he has sent a request for assistance to the Ombudsman Office.

Members of the Ombudsman Office underscored that unfortunately they lack the resources and authority to hold a wide scale information campaign. All three representatives were enthusiastic about the PTL project's support of NGOs to conduct information activities. The Ombudsman Office representatives expressed their willingness to work jointly with NGOs on these projects.

The Ombudsman Office also has a small project to monitor employment announcements placed in the mass media inviting citizens to work abroad. One Ombudsman Office employee went for an interview at a firm that was advertising in the press. She was offered work in Syria picking tangerines. The firm assured her that young women were needed for these jobs. Following this interview, the Ombudsman Office sent a letter to several mass media outlets that texts of such advertisements should be censored as a way to reduce the frequency of cases of human trafficking.

Ministry of Internal Affairs

Ismailov, Myrzabek Turusbekovich, Colonel of the City Administration Department of Criminal Investigation under the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic, Chief of the Department on Work with Foreigners

Mr. Ismailov presented statistical data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic on kidnapping and recruiting of people. In 2003, 23 crimes were registered, 16 of which were connected with kidnapping and 7 with recruiting of citizens. Eight criminal cases were brought in Bishkek, 6 in Chuy region, 9 in Osh. Thirteen criminal cases as a result of investigations were passed over to the courts; the remaining cases are still in the process of investigation. Statistics certainly are low, but this has to do with the hidden nature of this crime. The situation is complicated by few requests from citizens on articles of the criminal code concerning human trafficking. Requests can be accepted only from victims of a crime, but not from relatives. Thus if relatives are searching for their children who are missing abroad, the police classify this as a case of human trafficking but if it is discovered that the person voluntarily went abroad, for instance to the UAE, than the investigation is halted. Since according to criminal investigation procedures only the victim can state to law enforcement bodies that he or she was kidnapped, exploited and so on. According to Mr. Ismailov, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, like the Prosecutor's Office, is concerned about the lack of articles in the new legislation which would protect victims of human trafficking from being charged themselves with crimes linked to their actions while being trafficked. Mr. Ismailov says that the Ministry of Internal Affairs believes that the lack of such protections certainly influences the willingness of victims to cooperate with law enforcement structures and on the total number of discovered crimes of human trafficking.

Investigations connected with cases of kidnapping or migration to countries with which Kyrgyzstan has no bilateral agreement on cooperation of law enforcement bodies are very complicated (no such agreement is signed with UAE). Such agreements exist between NIS countries, thus it is possible to request support and cooperation in the investigation of cases of human trafficking only with NIS countries. Investigation of human trafficking cases are considered by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to be particularly complicated, since officials often have to go to places where the crime was committed (to Kazakhstan, Russia, UAE), and for this the Ministry of Internal Affairs has limited or no financial resources. According to Mr. Ismailov, officials within the Ministry of Internal Affairs support the creation of a special department or administration under the auspices of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to combat smuggling of and trafficking in persons. This would play a significant role in preventing and suppressing illegal recruitment or smuggling of Kyrgyz citizens in the territory of Kyrgyzstan before attempts are made to cross the border. Mr. Ismailov said that under the administration of the Ministry of Internal Affairs the possibility of opening a department on combating human trafficking is being examined at the present time. Work on combating human trafficking and smuggling is carried out by various bodies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, such as the Department of

Criminal Investigation, Department of Social Security, and General Headquarters of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (collecting information).

Ministry of Labor and Social Protection

Abdulaeva, Uktomhan Avazovna, First Deputy Minister

Mrs. Abdulaeva said that the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection is involved in the National Action Plan developed on the basis of the Presidential Decree. This Ministry regulates all issues related to poverty reduction and employment. Mrs. Abdulaeva stated that the Ministry is taking actions to reduce the rate of unemployment in the country. All these issues are linked with illegal labor migration and human trafficking. Mrs. Abdulaeva provided official data on the problem of unemployment in Kyrgyzstan. In 2003, the population of Kyrgyzstan was 5,036,400 people; the country's labor resources included 2,842,400 people, of these 1,976,600 people were economically active. The total employed population equaled 1,807,100 people (in organizations and plants – 626,000, on farms – 877,000, in private enterprises – 224,000). The total number of registered unemployed was 171,900 people. The strained situation in the labor market is particularly acute in Batken region (11% unemployment), Naryn (11%), Chuy (9, 5%) and Bishkek (11, 6%). Just over 53 % of the unemployed are women, 50 % are from rural regions, and 53 % are youth.

Mrs. Abdulaeva described a new nation-wide program that the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection is implementing. In the framework of this program, the economic situation of every family is monitored and social workers undertake activities to improve the welfare of these families. As an example, one family from Osh region, a single mother raising three children was forced to work as a prostitute. The social worker helped this family to receive a plot of arable land and a small loan, thus bettering the welfare of the family and helping the woman get out of prostitution.

At the present time, the Ministry has also started a program studying the situation of neglected children in Kyrgyzstan. According to available data, the number of neglected children was more than 10,000, with children under 14 years making up 16 % of the neglected children, and girls represent 41 %. The Ministry considers this group of neglected children a risk group for human trafficking and is developing a special program on child rehabilitation and protection. This program is currently in the research phase.

IV. REPORT ON FOCUS GROUPS WITH RETURNED TRAFFICKING VICTIMS

Winrock held two focus groups – one in Bishkek and one in Osh – with returned trafficking victims. These focus groups were conducted in partnership with Crisis Center for Women “Sezim”, a local NGO that has established credibility and trust among returned victims. In Osh city the focus group was organized with support of NGO “Podruga”. The purpose of these focus groups was to allow victims to express their opinions on the types of services that they need upon returning and reintegrating into Kyrgyzstan. The information from these focus groups will be used to design the protection services grants program. The material presented below is the information collected during the focus groups and from the participant surveys as analyzed by “Sezim”.

On January 15, 2003 a focus group was held in Osh, at the office of NGO “Podruga”. Eleven people participated (10 women, 1 man who accompanied the women and helped them return from Ukraine) – 5 of them were in servitude in Ukraine, 5 in Kazakhstan, 1 girl was returned from Arab Emirates, where she was exploited in sex industry. All of them were returned to Kyrgyzstan with the help of IOM, and six were living in the shelter run by “Sezim” receiving reintegration services. The focus group in Bishkek was held in the office of “Sezim”, on January 16, 2003. Six women took part in it, 2 of them were returned from Syria, 1 from turkey, 1 from Czech Republic, 1 from the United Arab Emirates, and 1 was in servitude in Kyrgyzstan.

According to available data and the experience of “Sezim”, questions for the focus groups were arranged to clarify reasons why people search for jobs in other countries; to determine their level of knowledge of laws, rights and possible risks associated with work abroad; to define the problems they encountered and their needs while they were abroad, during their return and after their arrival in Kyrgyzstan. The discussion was

recorded. Each participant also completed a questionnaire that was originally developed by La Strada-Ukraine and adapted for Kyrgyzstan by “Sezim” for use with focus groups.

The age of participants ranged from 17 to 35. Two participants had university degrees, while the others had completed secondary education. Only two participants had work in Kyrgyzstan before leaving the country. All participants said that unemployment, their poor financial position, and violence at home were the main reasons why they sought work abroad. Social and psychological factors also influenced their decision-making process – the crisis situation in the country has led to a weakening of self-preservation instincts and has contributed to a worsening of the status of women in the country. Following the principle “nothing can be worse than the present situation”, women agree to various adventurous offers, not thinking of the consequences it may entail.

When analyzing information provided by Kyrgyz women, who became victims of human trafficking and those who took part in the focus groups, it becomes evident that these women didn’t imagine their real status abroad, it was totally unexpected, and they only understood the situation when they were faced the facts once abroad. Each of them had their own reasons to leave Kyrgyzstan, primarily the rapid worsening of their socio-economic situation. They hoped to find a job in a short amount of time. However, nobody realized what could happen to them in foreign countries. Many weren’t aware of migration legislature. Moreover, well-known socio-psychological notion of unreal optimism – nothing bad will happen to me – which is typical for the majority of people and it contributes to their vulnerability. Thinking that all misfortune will pass around them, they don’t take wise precautionary measures.

All survey participants demonstrated a low level of knowledge of employment opportunities and living conditions abroad, as well as the consequences of illegal employment. The expectations and desires of these women were formed not on the basis of real knowledge of employment opportunities and working conditions abroad, but rather were influenced by an abstract knowledge and wish to find themselves in developed countries. The women faced considerable social and psychological problems as a result of being in the countries with language barriers, unknown laws, and unfamiliar traditions. Kyrgyz women practically have unrealizable dreams, which is evidence of their low knowledge level about real living conditions abroad. There is a significant need to disseminate information on this problem.

All participants in the survey mentioned the excessive and even aggressiveness of job announcements. Owing to existing psychological stereotypes, people are inclined to believe in what is “published in newspapers”. If the advertisement appears in newspapers or magazines, they suppose that it is therefore a guarantee of the legitimacy of the job and government approval. Two of the participants, before going abroad had called information hotlines, where they were provided with information on employment procedures abroad and at their request were given the contact number of the Migration Service Department under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which assured them that the firm had a license for employment abroad. However, that was not a guarantee of their safety. In the country of destination, they had an owner, and were sold several times from owner to owner. None of their ‘employers’ recognized the contract signed with the firm, all the terms of which were violated. The firm wasn’t liable for and didn’t assist people, who found themselves in servitude as a result of the actions of this firm. Naturally these women have legal grounds to make claims against the government agencies, which are responsible for control of the activities of firms like this, but which are failing to fulfill their duties.

On the question of what problems and needs these women had during their stay abroad, all participants noted a lack of responsiveness by Kyrgyz Consular staff abroad, as well as a lack of information about where to appeal in case of having a problem abroad.

As for needs and problems they had after return to Kyrgyzstan, respondents were in need of medical, psychological, and legal assistance, and the majority also needed temporary refuge. All women note that the most important is assistance in employment in their home country.

It is necessary to note one of the prevalent stereotypes being promulgated in previous and current prevention efforts – that human trafficking is only smuggling of young women into the sex industry. This narrow

perception of human trafficking ignores the larger scope of the problem. Human trafficking happens not only for organized prostitution but also for transplantation of human organs, forced pregnancies for adoption purposes, forced marriages, using people in armed conflicts, labor in illegal or shadow businesses, domestic servitude, etc. Therefore objects of trafficking can be women of any age, men and children. All these aspects should be reflected in information campaigns targeting all sectors of the population of the country.

The next myth about human trafficking is that it exists only abroad and one should be aware of protection measures in case one is in a foreign country. However preventive social work not only has to be oriented on individuals who are leaving the country to work or study abroad, but also on people simply living and working in Kyrgyzstan and not knowing about traps of human traffickers in this country. In practice there have been cases when children or adults became victims of trafficking in their own country.

An important form of social prevention and assistance to victims of trafficking are “hotlines”. Not only are hotlines an effective tool in implementing concentrated preventive work but also provide opportunities to give consultations and help people who need it. However, the work of hotlines requires special training and qualification of consultants, and having reliable information to provide to callers. These conditions are hard enough to fulfill, not only in rural areas but even in the outskirts of capital cities (Bishkek and Osh). In view of these reasons it would be expedient to examine the possibility of creating a national hotline, situated in Bishkek, with a three-digit phone number (similar to the telephone numbers for police and fire emergency services). This national hotline could be established on the base of an existing hotline, since they already have trained, experienced specialists, access to information and connection capacity with other services.

It is advisable that trained specialists delegate reintegration activities in the residence of victims of trafficking, since they know better local and private situation of victims, and can work with their families and close relatives. Such specialists can be found in NGOs or among partners who are already working on this issue together with NGOs. If there are no such specialists in a particular region, then there should be trainings held to ensure that a network of qualified specialists exist throughout the country to provide assistance to returned trafficking victims.

It is expedient to divide assistance procedure into two stages – the first while the victim is still in the destination country, and the second when the victim has returned to Kyrgyzstan. From those surveyed during the focus groups, as well as from “Sezim’s” experience, the most requested assistance while abroad is: release from captivity, preparation of documents for return home, temporary shelter in destination country, psychological, medical and legal assistance, and transportation back to Kyrgyzstan. In order to provide these types of assistance, it is vital that linkages be made between Kyrgyz NGOs and government agencies and their counterparts in destination countries.

After returning to Kyrgyzstan, women mentioned the following types of services needed – psychological, medical and legal assistance, protection and shelter during police investigations and court cases, short and long-term shelter upon returning to Kyrgyzstan and in the event that the victim is rejected by her family, skills training and assistance with employment.

Economic (financial) support at a reasonable amount and duration is undoubtedly necessary in order to meet immediate need but not to cultivate dependant behavior. Exactly for this reason it is advisable to involve organizations that are experienced in providing assistance in crisis situations. The experience of “Sezim” and other organizations shows that organization new to prevention and rehabilitation in this sphere find it hard to avoid wide spread mistakes, such as overprotection of clients, relations exclusively based on care giving with clients not empowered to take responsibility for their actions. Without proper training and experience, organizations can unintentionally cultivate enabling behavior and extreme dependency of clients on the organization. Skills to provide highly qualified and professional socio-psychological aid depends on the professional level and work experience of specialists working in the organization.

V. CONCLUSIONS

In recent years, increasing attention has been paid to the problem of human trafficking in Kyrgyzstan. Today, Kyrgyzstan is known as a source, transit and destination country for victims of human trafficking.⁹ The dynamics of human trafficking in Kyrgyzstan are very complex and cover a wide spectrum ranging from exploitation of labor migrants to forced prostitution.

The problems of human trafficking and smuggling take place in every region of Kyrgyzstan. Nevertheless, there are specific factors and features effecting the situation in each region of the country. In the southern regions of Kyrgyzstan – Osh, Djalal-Abad and Batken – as a result of lack of land resources, high population density, non-functioning industrial plants, high poverty and unemployment rates have created the preconditions for labor migration of the able-bodied population to industrial rayons of Russia and agricultural rayons of Kazakhstan. In particular, massive labor migration is typical for tobacco producing rayons of Osh region – Nookat, Uzgen, and Kara-Suu – since labor of migrants from these rayons is actively used on tobacco plantations in Kazakhstan.

As a whole, the labor migration process to industrial rayons of Russia is typical for all regions of Kyrgyzstan, but probably in different scales depending on the economic situation of each region. The unofficial and spontaneous nature of labor migration leads to the creation of recruitment systems that exploit Kyrgyz citizens, often resulting in egregious human rights violations. In the mid 1990s, the Kyrgyz government began to make certain efforts in regulating the labor migration process.¹⁰ But systematic state policy in solving issues of labor migration, including preventative educational work with the population and protection of citizens' rights while working abroad, is still necessary.

Another type of human trafficking that is also very urgent, particularly for young women, is trafficking for sexual exploitation. Kyrgyz women are recruited for work in countries like UAE, Turkey, South Korea and other countries. Women from border rayons of Uzbekistan are recruited and trafficked to Kyrgyzstan. Internal trafficking of women appears within the country as well, when young girls, mostly from rural areas, are involved in the sex-industry, either by false promises of employment or even kidnapping. Oftentimes, under-aged girls from rural regions of Kyrgyzstan forced to work as prostitutes in the capital or other major cities.

According to statistics from law enforcement agencies, investigation of cases of human trafficking have increased over the past two years, but nevertheless the number of investigations is significantly less than the actual prevalence of this crime. Many law enforcement experts believe that imperfect legislation is one reason for the low level of investigations, particularly the absence of legal mechanisms to ensure protection of victims. In addition, lack of a special structure in the Ministry of Internal Affairs that is devoted solely to the issue of human trafficking hampers law enforcement from adequately responding to this crime.

The use of human beings as collateral in trade deals is a specific type of human trafficking that exists in the Naryn region of Kyrgyzstan. This type of human trafficking is related with small enterprises and constitutes informal business guarantees for trade deals between Kyrgyz and Chinese businesses. Many NGOs and law enforcement representatives participated in the meetings were inclined to examine the issue of human collateral as a characteristic of human trafficking in Kyrgyzstan, although this issue of consent in these deals was rather controversial. There was a lack of understanding of the full definition of human trafficking and how in these instances, where individuals held as collateral are denied freedom of movement, have their passports confiscated, etc., these individuals may be considered victims of human trafficking regardless of whether or

⁹ For details see –“Women and children trafficking in Kyrgyz Republic”, IOM, Bishkek, 2002; also US State Department TIP report, 2003.

¹⁰ Agreement on labor and social protection of labor migrants as of 28.03.1996 between Russian Federation and Kyrgyz Republic Governments; agreement on labor and social protection of labor migrants, involved in agricultural work in the cross-border regions as of 22.05.2002 with Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Consulates General of Kyrgyz Republic have been opened in Almaty (Kazakhstan) and Yekaterinburg (Russian Federation).

not they consenting to being human collateral. There does seem to be a decrease in the prevalence of this problem as the tightened visa regime has made it more difficult to travel to China, but there are still individuals being held in China who need assistance in being repatriated to Kyrgyzstan.

In terms of the NGO capacity to carry out prevention and protection activities in Kyrgyzstan, the NGOs surveyed demonstrated a high level of willingness to work on this issue and a competence to engage in prevention and protection activities. The NGOs reported that over the past three years they have been expanding their services, which illustrates that the general public is aware of their work and is in need of the services that NGOs provide. So, the NGO sector has good visibility with the general public that will be crucial for effective anti-trafficking activities. The overwhelming majority of the NGOs surveyed had either already conducted some kind of anti-trafficking activity or were currently implementing anti-trafficking projects. The most commonly noted challenges that NGOs face are a lack of access to information on the problem, a low level of knowledge about legislation and policy related to combating human trafficking, and insufficiently trained personnel to implement comprehensive and high-quality prevention and protection services.

As for government attitudes toward the problem of human trafficking and the level of support for interventions, there seemed to be a general knowledge of the problem among city, regional and national government officials, although there was variation from region to region. Among government officials, there appeared to be a greater willingness to acknowledge and address the issue of labor migration than trafficking for sexual exploitation. Similarly, there is a need to counter a prevailing myth, not only among governmental officials but also the public at large, that women victims of sex trafficking are only women who were already engaged in prostitution and that women victims of sex trafficking always know what they will be doing abroad, therefore they don't deserve or need assistance upon returning to Kyrgyzstan.

The information gleaned from participants of the focus groups reinforced the assumptions of the project – that victims need access to medical, psychological, and legal services as well as economic assistance in order to reintegrate successfully. Another significant need that is not sufficiently met is the need for short and long-term shelter, either as part of a reintegration plan based on each client's needs as well as protection and shelter during police investigations and court cases. Finally, the focus group participants highlighted the need for economic assistance upon returning to Kyrgyzstan. "Sezim" made an excellent point that this economic assistance needs to be of an amount and duration that does not foster dependency among returned victims. Instead, economic assistance should focus on professional skill building so that returnees can compete better for available jobs or possible start their own business.

As a result of roundtable with NGOs, meetings with government representatives in the capital and regions of Kyrgyzstan, and the information provided by returned trafficking victims, the following recommendations will be incorporated into the implementation of the "Preventing Human Trafficking in Kyrgyzstan" project:

- There is a significant need to hold large-scale information and educational work on risks of human trafficking, legitimate alternatives of work abroad, migration rules in destination countries of labor migrants, for various population groups because there is such a weak understanding of these issues among the public.
- In combination with information and educational activities, there is also a need to empower women and girls to make safe life decisions, and to educate men and boys about women's rights and gender equality. Also, efforts to improve the legal literacy – knowledge of basic rights – among women, men and youth are another important element in prevention. This is particularly important in rural areas.
- Government structures need to cooperate and coordinate with NGOs in solving the issue of smuggling of and trafficking in persons. Suggestions for this included conducting lobbying campaigns aimed at drawing attention of government agencies to issues of labor migrants and victims of trafficking, as well as joint NGO-government information campaigns for the public and targeted risk groups.
- There is a weak understanding of the problem of human trafficking and knowledge of legislative acts on smuggling and trafficking of people, both among representatives of NGOs and governments

structures, therefore it was suggested to learn from the experiences of NGOs and government agencies of other countries where actions to prevent human trafficking have been in place for a number of years (such as Ukraine and Russia) through joint seminars and conferences and professional exchange programs.

- Similarly, there is a need to establish networks and partnerships between Kyrgyz NGOs and government agencies and their respective counterparts in destination countries. This will help improve services to trafficking victims and labor migrants and make repatriation and hopefully criminal cases easier.
- In terms of assistance to victims, the general consensus was that protection and rehabilitation services are much needed, but that the need can be met by hotlines and crisis centers in major cities such as Bishkek and Osh.
- There is also a need to improve cooperation with medical establishment, to strengthen referral mechanisms and to educate physicians, nurses, counselors, etc. on how to work with trafficking victims.