



Working Paper No. 05/05

Human Trafficking in The Republic of Armenia

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January 2005

Abstract

The Republic of Armenia (RoA) has gone through an economical turmoil for the past two decades; the consequence of the disastrous earthquake (December 1988), conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh (1989-1994), the independence from the Soviet Union (1991), the economic blockade, the deterioration of traditional economic relations and loss of markets, all of these factors caused deep financial crisis in the country.

Independence from the Soviet era resulted in high cost of poverty rate of 43- 51 percent, unemployment rate of 18 – 76 percent which resulted in migration of over 1 million people. Women were left alone with no financial support to survive and had no choice, but to separate from their family in search of a “better living” in foreign lands.

Although there are and will never be any factual numbers, human trafficking in RoA has become a growing disease and increases rapidly. Local NGO's, and reliable sources suggest that for the past 5 years, 3,000-5,000 men, women and young girls were sent to the neighboring countries for sex and forced labor exploitation.

This paper will clearly demonstrate the grass root of the problem, steps taken and further strategies to be taken by the government, local NGO's, international agencies and the Diaspora community to prevent and hopefully stop human trafficking.

The views expressed in this Working Paper are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent those of the Armenian International Policy Research Group. Working Papers describe research in progress by the author(s) and are published to elicit comments and to further debate.

Keywords: Armenia, Human Trafficking, Women and young girls trafficking

* The content of this paper is based on an individual research, author's interviews with local NGO's, investigators and the victims. Author wishes to express her gratitude to local NGO's and other individuals whose names can not be revealed for security reasons.

SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been a significant increase worldwide in recognizing a “phenomena” as human trafficking which exist throughout the world. The abuse of the basic human rights of trafficked persons, who are mainly women and young girls, arouse great concern among governments and the United Nations in many countries, especially the post Soviet era countries. Researchers differ on the numbers of women trafficked throughout the world, however, United Nations (UNDP) reports an estimated 4 million women, men and young girls have been trafficked from one country to another and within countries and it also indicates that trafficking is a 5-7 billion U.S. dollar annual operation.

U.S. Government and non-government experts number differs from the UNDP, it is estimated that over 700,000 to 4 million women, young girls and men are trafficked globally each year into the sex industry and forced labor, with 50,000 into the United States. Numbers are always difficult to obtain, but the revenue collected from the trafficking in women and young girls often reveals what the demography of trafficking cannot tell us with precision that the numbers of trafficked women and young girls are appalling.

In a major effort to combat trafficking, U.S. Department of State released it’s fourth annual ***Trafficking in Persons Report*** ⁽¹⁾ to address the major concern raised by the President and the congress on the growth of the global human trafficking. The report emphasized that no country is immune to this act, women, young girls, men and often children are trafficked into the international sex trade and forced labor situations throughout the world. Women and young girls are being taken out of their homeland and lured by promises of secured employment with good earning, but then upon arrival to their destination, find themselves forced into prostitution.

Human trafficking does not apply only to women and young girls, in search of an employment to support their family, men fall into the hands of the trafficker to be smuggled to the neighboring countries, to perform hard labor for over 18 hours a day, making less than \$1.00 a day and in many cases their wages are not paid for months.

Trafficking brutalizes women and young girls exposing them to rape, torture, and to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted and infectious diseases, violence, dangerous working conditions, poor nutrition, and drug and alcohol addiction. Increasing numbers of women and young girls contracting to HIV/AIDS in Armenia has raised major concern . Severe psychological trauma from separation, coercion, sexual abuse, and depression often leaves a life time scar on the victims and leads to a criminal life style of drugs, alcohol addition and sexual violence.

⁽¹⁾ The State Department is required by law to submit a report each year to the Congress on foreign government efforts to eliminate severe forms of trafficking in persons. This June 2004 report is the fourth annual TIP Report. Although country actions to end human trafficking are its focus, the report also tells the painful stories of the victims of human trafficking--21st century slaves.

In Armenia, traditional gender inequalities and feminization of poverty is also a major contributing factor to human trafficking “ 76% of women stated that if they could find employment at their homeland, they would never leave Armenia” ⁽²⁾

Trafficking is a multi stage process and on every stage of it victim’s human rights are violated. They are tricked, sold, resold , exchanged , given instead of debt , forced into the most inhuman conditions. In many cases victims sell their assets to pay traffickers for their recruitment. Treated as commodities, victims are extremely vulnerable to physical and mental abuse and many diseases, including STD’s and HIV/AIDS. Individual traffickers and criminal chains reject all the human rights of victims and the “states violate the human rights of victims by not enacting /or enforcing those laws....Many governments re victimize the victim” ⁽²⁾

⁽²⁾ ***Trafficking in Women and Girls***- Prepared by Gulnara Shahinian-EGM/TRAF/2002/EP1- Dated November 8, 2002- Presented to Expert Group Meeting on “Trafficking in women and girls” 18-22 November 2002 Glen Cove, New York, USA

SECTION 2- DEFINITION OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Trafficking in persons is broadly defined as “modern-day slavery”, but different countries and laws provide variations on the exact definition. Human trafficking is considered to be the third largest and fastest growing criminal industry in the world, victimizing millions of people and reaping between 5-7 billion dollars a year.

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act defines "severe forms of trafficking in persons" as sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age; or the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. ⁽³⁾

Definition of Terms Used in the Term "Severe Forms of Trafficking in Persons" are:

"Sex trafficking" means the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act.

"Commercial sex act" means any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person.

"Involuntary servitude" includes a condition of servitude induced by means of any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that, if the person did not enter into or continue in such condition, that person or another person would suffer serious harm or physical restraint; or the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process.

"Debt bondage" means the status or condition of a debtor arising from a pledge by the debtor of his or her personal services or of those of a person under his or her control as a security for debt, if the value of those services as reasonably assessed is not applied toward the liquidation of the debt or the length and nature of those services are not respectively limited and defined.

"Coercion" means threats of serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; any scheme, plan or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that failure to perform an act would result in serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; or, the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process.

⁽³⁾ **Trafficking in Persons Report** - The State Department is required by law to submit a report each year to the Congress on foreign government efforts to eliminate severe forms of trafficking in persons.. Released by the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons- June 14, 2004- Introduction- internet resource - <http://www.state.gov>

United Nation has defined the trafficking in two most commonly used and influential definitions.

“United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, Supplemental Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children”

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

Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000, [United States federal law; the definition below is of 'severe forms of trafficking in persons', for which there are criminal penalties in the United States]

- 1) Sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion or in which the person induced to perform such an act is under 18, or
- 2) The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion, for the purpose of subjecting that person to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.

Amnesty International has defined human trafficking as an an abuse of human rights. It results in the abuse of the human rights of trafficked persons including the rights to: physical and mental integrity; life; liberty; security of the person; dignity; freedom from slavery, slavery-like practices, torture and other inhuman or degrading treatment; family life; freedom of movement; privacy; the highest attainable standard of health; and safe and secure housing. Measures addressing trafficking must place the protection and respect of these rights at their core, as well as the right of trafficked persons to effective redress, including reparation, for the human rights abuses to which they have been subjected. ⁽⁴⁾

⁽⁴⁾ Amnesty International’s General Recommendations on the draft European Convention against Trafficking in Human Beings- 10 September 2004 IOR 61/018/2004

INTERNATIONAL PROTOCOL TO COMBAT TRAFFICKING ⁽⁵⁾

The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children is a wide-ranging international agreement to address the crime of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, on a transnational level. It creates a global language and legislation to define trafficking in persons, especially women and children; assist victims of trafficking; and prevent trafficking in persons. The trafficking in persons protocol also establishes the parameters of judicial cooperation and exchanges of information among countries. Although the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children anticipates accomplishing what national legislation cannot do on its own, it is also intended to jumpstart national laws and to harmonize regional legislation against the trafficking in women and children.

In December 2000, 148 countries gathered in Palermo, Italy to attend a high-level conference opening the new UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime to States signature. Of the 148 countries present, 121 signed the new UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, and over 80 countries signed one of its supplementary protocols — the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. The new UN Convention and its supplementary protocol on trafficking in persons have to be ratified by 40 countries before they become instruments of international law.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS PROTOCOL ⁽⁵⁾

- That trafficked persons, especially women in prostitution and child laborers, are no longer viewed as criminals but as victims of a crime.
- That global trafficking will be answered with a global response. Although organized crime such as traffickers, smugglers, pimps, brothel keepers, forced labor lords, enforcers, and gangs are powerful forces organized cooperation by police, immigration authorities, social service agencies and NGOs is encouraged by this Protocol (Art. 10)
- That there is now an accepted international definition of trafficking and an agreed-upon set of prosecution, protection and prevention mechanisms on which to base national legislation against trafficking, and which can serve as a basis for harmonizing various country laws
- That all victims of trafficking in persons are protected, not just those who can prove force (Art. 3a and b)
- That the consent of a victim of trafficking is irrelevant (Art. 3b)
- That the definition provides a comprehensive coverage of criminal means by which trafficking takes place, including not only force, coercion, abduction,

deception or abuse of power, but also less explicit means, such as abuse of a victim s vulnerability (Art 3a)

- That this new international definition of trafficking helps insure that victims of trafficking will not bear the burden of proof (Art 3b)

⁽⁵⁾ *The UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime was adopted by resolution A/RES/55/25 of 15 November 2000 at the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations; entry into force on 29 September 2003*

- That the exploitation of prostitution and trafficking cannot be separated. The Protocol acknowledges that much trafficking is for the purpose of prostitution and for other forms of sexual exploitation (Art 3a)
- That it is not necessary for a victim to cross a border so that women and children who are domestically trafficked for prostitution and forced labor within their own countries, are also protected subject to provisions listed in Article 3 of the main Convention
- That the key element in the trafficking process is the exploitative purpose, rather than the movement across a border (Art. 3a)
- That this Protocol is the first UN instrument to address the demand which results in women and children being trafficked, calling upon countries to take or strengthen legislative or other measures to discourage this demand that fosters all forms of exploitation of women and children (Art. 9.5)

SECTION 3 – CAUSES OF TRAFFICKING

It is a generally a recognized fact that high poverty and unemployment rate, family violence, gender discrimination, wealth inequality, easily attract trafficking agents to recruit victims from the most vulnerable areas and export them to countries with well-organized trafficking networks.

Majority of victims of trafficking are of the average age of 15 to 32 years, they originate mainly from poor rural and urban areas in Armenia (mostly Southern region), where they are under a tremendous pressure from family members to make an earning, in any way possible. It is reported by a private investigator that 80 percent of the village women and young girls fall into trafficking by choice, only to run away from a miserable living condition.

On a recent interview conducted in Dubai with 147 young girls (ages of 18-25), majority acknowledged that they were aware of the consequences, only 20 percent were tricked into trafficking. Even if a certain number of the trafficked women knew they will work as prostitutes, they did not know that they would be kept in slavery like conditions being unable to escape from their exploiters. ⁽⁶⁾

Traffickers use a variety of techniques to control their victims. Victims of trafficking often come from the most vulnerable areas living under unbearable condition, making less than \$1.00 a day, runaways or displaced persons, orphans in orphanages, some individuals go as far as selling their body organs to make money and support their family members. Traffickers are mostly trusted close family members, best friends, neighbors, or organized groups of criminals.

⁽⁶⁾ *Author's personal interview with individuals investigating women trafficking in Dubai.*

Upon arrival at the “promised” destination, victim’s passports are taken away and they are locked up in a house and under strict control and surveillance. If the victims resist cooperating with the traffickers, they are most likely threatened to be handed over to the authorities of the country they reside in illegally. In most cases, the victims are beaten, raped and physically restrained to prevent them from leaving. Traffickers also threaten to inform the family of the women that they are working abroad as prostitutes. Left with no documentation, lack of financial resources, insufficient knowledge of language leaves very little, next to nothing for the trafficked person to either; 1) continue their activity and hope for the best, 2) try to escape and face the worst, or 3) commit suicide or be killed by their captives. Meanwhile, the "traders" who have negotiated the deal, live a lavish life style with putting a price on each young, innocent girl which can start from \$1,000 to \$30,000 ⁽⁷⁾.

Major contributors to the trafficking can be categorized as:

- High Poverty Rate
- Corruption
- Economic Instability
- Domestic Violence or sexual abuse
- Lack of job opportunities
- Gender Inequality
- Lack of public awareness
- Lack of Education

⁽⁷⁾ Author’s phone interview with a trafficking victim from Gyumri.

The World Bank published a document called, “*Armenia at the Glance*”⁽⁸⁾, which, indicated that 43 percent of the Armenian population live below the national poverty line with 64 % of the national population living in the urban areas.

Considering the fact that Poverty is the grass root of the trafficking, various measurements has been taken by the government to overcome poverty. In May 2000, by the order of the Prime Minister, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs)⁽⁹⁾ was formed with the joint efforts of the member countries in broad consultation with stakeholders and development partners, including the staff of the World Bank and the IMF.

The document is modified every three years with the annual progress reports to reflect the economic development. PRSP’s goals and main policy directions are expected to result in poverty reduction down from the 2001 level of 50.9% to the following rates:⁽⁹⁾

- 41 percent by the year 2005
- 29.1 percent by the year of 2010
- 19 percent by the year of 2015

The other major factor which links to poverty is a high unemployment rate. According to the Sample Labor Force Survey conducted by the NSS in 2001 unemployment constituted 32.8% of the economically active population, more than triple of the officially registered unemployment statistics.⁽¹⁰⁾ In some rural areas, unemployment can rise up to 64.5 percent due to seasonal unemployment and/or high migration of the male population to other regions or surrounding countries.

⁽⁸⁾ The World Bank, “Armenia at a Glance” dated 9/24/04

⁽⁹⁾ Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper- page 33

⁽¹⁰⁾- Armenia: Social Snapshot and Poverty, Statistical and Analytical Report, Yerevan 2002, page 45

SECTION 4- STEPS TAKEN TO COMBAT TRAFFICKING

In June 2004, the US State Department released the fourth annual Trafficking in *Persons Report (TIP)* ^(II) . Using a minimum threshold of 100 persons to trigger an investigation, the State Department placed 116 countries into three Tier categories:

Tier 1: Countries whose governments fully comply with the Act's minimum standards.

Tier 2 : Countries whose governments do not fully comply with the Act's minimum standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards.

Tier 3: Countries whose governments do not fully comply with the minimum standards and are not making significant efforts, if they do not make any significant efforts within 90 days from date of report, the country may face economic sanctions from the US.

The report indicated that Armenia is primarily a source and transit country for women and girls trafficked for sexual exploitation mainly to the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) and Turkey, as well as Russia, Greece, and other European countries. Trafficking to Russia, Turkey and the U.A.E. for the purposes of labor exploitation was an increasingly significant problem. There were a few cases of trafficking in women from Uzbekistan to Armenia for sexual exploitation. Advocates expressed concerns about internal trafficking and trafficking of orphans, but no confirmed cases were uncovered.

Although the report indicated that the government of RoA did not fully comply with the minimum standards to eliminate trafficking, but it is obvious that a major effort has been made during the past several months to combat trafficking. Cooperation between police and NGOs increased the number of investigations, and provided police a greater understanding of international and domestic sources of trafficking. A strong collaboration and cooperation was built among various international Governmental, local NGO's; UNDP, UNHCR, IOM, OSCE to create a consortium to fight human trafficking. Due to this continuous significant efforts, Armenia has successfully updated it's status from Tier 3 (non-compliance) to Tier 2 (making significant progress).

^(II) The State Department is required by law to submit a report each year to the Congress on foreign government efforts to eliminate severe forms of trafficking in persons. This June 2004 report is the fourth annual Trafficking In Person (TIP) Report.

The report outlined the activities and efforts made by the government in reference to prosecution, protection and prevention;

Prosecution

While prosecution efforts improved and victim identification increased, courts handed down few convictions, and only on related crimes with low sentences. Article 132 of the criminal code, adopted in August 2003, prohibited trafficking in persons for “mercenary purposes” with a maximum penalty for aggravating circumstances of four to eight years of imprisonment. These penalties were not commensurate with other grave crimes, such as rape. Previous reports highlighted trafficking to the U.A.E., and during the reporting period, police investigated suspected trafficking operations to Dubai involving an estimated 90 women. Police initiated two criminal investigations under Article 132 on trafficking in persons and 17 under Article 262 (operating a brothel), nine of which referred to pimping abroad or trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation.

The sentences handed down ranged from substantial fines and correctional labor to one year imprisonment. Prosecutors noted a continuing problem with definitional elements and weak penalties; the National Assembly was expected to consider amendments to the criminal code. Corruption was a problem, and two police officers and two airport officials received administrative penalties for abuse of power related to a trafficking operation to the U.A.E. Police conducted in-service training using examples from actual trafficking investigations. The government cooperated with Georgia and the U.A.E. in investigating and apprehending traffickers, including cooperating in the return of a suspected trafficker from the U.A.E. to stand trial in Armenia.

Protection

Law enforcement improved its record of victim identification and referrals to a service-providing NGO. In one operation, police identified eight foreign prostitutes, suspected they were victims and referred them to an NGO for assistance. Armenian NGOs provided most victim assistance, but cooperated well with police. In order to alleviate vulnerabilities of an at-risk group, the government adopted a program to provide apartments to children who graduated from orphanages, and provided assistance to poor families with needy children.

Prevention

Prevention activities increased during the reporting period, especially through the use of mass media. The National Police were featured in several training films and TV shows on trafficking, and the Ministry of Education approved anti-trafficking educational lectures for secondary and university students. In January of 2004, the government approved an anti-trafficking national action plan for 2004-2006. The government contributed the equivalent of \$11,000 of its own funds to support the work of the National Anti-Trafficking Commission, and foreign donors provided the remaining funds. The government’s Department for Migration and Refugees conducted extensive outreach on migration issues, which prevented a significant number of individuals from succumbing to trafficking, according to an independent survey.

IOM in association with a local NGO conducted a thorough investigation and interview with 59 women and young girls who were victims of trafficking. Majority of the victims were originated from Yerevan, Gyumri and Vanadzor and other vulnerable areas of Syunik Marz. Unfortunately due to lack of victim's privacy protection and high publicity of the cases, only 2 women out of 59 cases filed an official complaints.

The new Criminal Code of Armenia, which came into force on August 1, 2003, contains a provision on human trafficking: “Driving people to prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, to forced labor or services, to slavery or to a state equivalent to slavery or to a subordinate condition, as well as recruiting, transporting, hiding or receiving people in order to obtain their organs, is subject to punishment in the form of a fine from 300 to 500 times the minimum wage, or corrective labor for up to one year, or detention for up to two months, or incarceration in prison from one to four years,” reads Article 132 of the Criminal Code.

In addition to the Criminal Code, following legislatives has taken place by the government to prevent trafficking:

- March 30, 2004- The Government of Armenia and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) launched the Anti-Trafficking Programme: Capacity Building Support and Victims Assistance. ⁽¹²⁾
- .In January 15, 2004, an action plan (Annex 2) was approved by the government to develop for PREVENTION OF TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS (2004-2006). This action plan consist of 5 items to be implemented by the end of 2006 ⁽¹³⁾.
- In March 25, 2003, the Republic of Armenia ratified the UN Convention against Organized Crime and its relevant Protocols.
- In October 2002 the Government of Armenia established the interagency Commission on anti-trafficking in human beings which includes representative of government structures, ministries and concerned agencies.
- The Government of Armenia signed the following bilateral and multilateral agreements:
- The CIS Convention on legal assistance on civil family and criminal matters (January 1993).
- Agreement between the Republic of Armenia, Georgia, Romania and Bulgaria on legal assistance in civil and criminal matters.
- Agreement between the Republic of Armenia and George on legal assistance in criminal matters (June 4, 1996).
- Agreement between the Republic of Armenia and Georgia on legal assistance in civil matters (March 4, 1997).
- Agreement between the Republic of Armenia and Bulgaria on legal assistance in criminal matters (September 1995).

- Agreement between the Republic of Armenia and Romania on legal assistance in civil and criminal matters (March 25, 1996).
- Agreement between the Republic of Armenia and Bulgaria on legal assistance in civil matters (September 1995).
- Agreement among the Government of Black Sea Cooperation Participating States on cooperation in combating crime, in particular in its organized forms (October 2000)

⁽¹²⁾ UNDP Armenia Press Release- <http://www.undp.am/?page=pressrel&id=128>

The overall objective of this two-year project is to facilitate the development of a national framework to tackle the problem of human trafficking as well as to provide direct assistance to the victims of trafficking. The project has three major components: building the institutional capacity of key state agencies; raising public awareness; and assisting victims of trafficking. As part of the public awareness campaign, a special “Artists against Trafficking” initiative will be launched throughout the country. The project is supported by the Governments of Norway and the Netherlands, and it will be implemented by UNDP, the International Organization for Migration and UMCOR international NGO.

⁽¹³⁾ Annex 2 - ACTION PLAN FOR PREVENTION OF TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS FROM THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA - 2004-2006 -Approved by the Government of the Republic of Armenia
15 January, 2004

- Additional measurements and steps were taken by the government to develop two National Plans of Action (NPA), the first for children and the second for women which consist of anti-trafficking activities.
- Local NGOs and international organizations in the country have taken concrete steps to combat trafficking . A foreign-funded program for journalists and government officials on awareness campaigns and investigative reporting resulted in a marked increase in media coverage and improved Government cooperation with journalists reporting on trafficking.
- OSCE has provided various grants to young journalist and investigators and encouraged them to conduct and produce talk shows and documentary films for public awareness purposes.
- U.S. Embassy’s Democracy Commission Small Grants Program and the IV program has also provided small grants to the journalists to strengthen the professionalism of reporting of human trafficking.
- IOM has been working very closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and diplomats of other countries to disseminate trafficking information in Armenia as well as all neighboring countries.
- Local NGO of Democracy Today has taken major steps and measurements for public awareness of human trafficking throughout Armenia, specially in the most vulnerable regions. They have been aggressively working with community leaders in to disseminate information to community centers, churches, schools, conduct ongoing workshops, established and publicize a hot line to report trafficking, they have also produced numerous booklets and a documentary movie to publicize the facts and the horrifying consequences of human trafficking. U.S. Embassy funding allowed the NGO to publish a book “Human Trading” which has been distributed around the world ⁽¹⁴⁾.
- Local NGO Hope and Help has been working very closely with IOM to create an ongoing campaign to combat trafficking. The NGO conducted a thorough investigation of the most urban and vulnerable areas of Armenia and published a Report to the UNFPA in reference to commercial sex work and trafficking in Armenia. ⁽¹⁵⁾
- The U.S. human rights and democracy strategy continues to focus on fundamental issues, including anti-trafficking efforts. U.S. assistance to support this strategy in Fiscal Year (FY) 2003 totaled approximately \$22.4 million, of which about \$12.2 million was allocated for U.S.-based training and exchange programs. ⁽¹⁶⁾

- U.S. Embassy in Yerevan has conducted over 220 town hall meetings and been working very closely with the local community leader to strengthen the public awareness of human trafficking in various regions.

⁽¹⁴⁾ *The book was published in 2004 by Democracy Today. The book demonstrates various statistics in human trafficking in Armenia and the CIS region*

⁽¹⁵⁾ *Report on some aspects of Commercial Sex Work in Armenia- Hope and Help- 2001, submitted to UNFPA- The report outlines a thorough investigations of commercial sex and trafficking throughout Armenia.*

⁽¹⁶⁾ *US Department of State. - Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2003-2004.Armenia (05/17/2004) - Human Rights in Armenia- <http://www.hra.am>*

SECTION 5- SUGGESTED STRATEGIES

On a recent interview with AZG Daily ⁽¹⁷⁾, the Ministry of Justice was skeptical to believe that trafficking exists as a ““phenomenon” due to the fact that so far there has not been any concrete evidence nor an official complaint has been made by victims to indicate that human trafficking takes place in the country.

Despite the ongoing efforts by the government and the progress, following recommendations are made to further improve the anti-trafficking policy in Armenia;

1. Recognize and address the root cause of trafficking (poverty, gender discrimination, family violence, unemployment)
2. Create employment for young generation to avoid migration and trafficking
3. Re-visit Victim’s protection law. Victims should not be treated as criminals.
4. Central government should mandate and organize a commission to work closely with the expert NGO’s to establish a mechanism to combat trafficking.
5. Develop and implement a more stricter procedure for border control in both origin and destination.
6. Public awareness to combat trafficking is the most important tool to prevent trafficking, specially in the vulnerable areas. Central Government should allocate a budget for expert NGO’s to continue their efforts in combat trafficking in most vulnerable areas (Southern Marz).
7. Establish a center in various Marzes to disseminate information about trafficking and HIV/AIDS.
8. Develop a mechanism to create a system to conduct a thorough research, collect data, conduct investigations, survey and statistics. These are crucial to combat and prevent trafficking. Research should be conducted in both countries (origin and destination)
9. Collective collaboration of the government with the Local expert NGO’s
10. Recognize and acknowledge that trafficking in Armenia concerns; women, men, children and newborns.
11. Specific victim protection program to assure smooth integration (avoid publicity)

12. Reintegration assistance to the victim upon return to the origin. This program should be tailored for each individual to avoid re-trafficking. The program should consist of; security protection, medical and psychological assistance, temporary shelter, vocational training, rehabilitation, self employment, providing micro loans to start a business and in many events relocation of the victim to another region.
13. Expert NGO's should be provided funding to conduct post trafficking training which should consist of HIV/AIDS and STD prevention, constant reminder of the fatal consequences of trafficking and monitor the health of the victims.
14. To avoid trafficking of newborns to Georgia and Iran, national legal adoption policy and procedures should be reviewed and evaluated to enforce a more stricter process. (investigation indicated that young mothers carry their newborn across the border to be sold for \$1500)
15. Close Cooperation and collaboration of local expert NGO's and other international organization is vital to combat trafficking.
16. Develop and monitor trafficking activities at both airports (origin and destination)
17. Develop a black list of the traffickers and suspicious individuals at both airports (origin and destination)

(17) *AZG daily*, interview with the Ministry of Justice- by Marietta Makaryan-
<http://www.nyu.edu/globalbeat/ARMENIA/marietta1.html>

18. Review the current victim protection and right's legislation
19. Severe punishments for the law enforcement cooperating with the traffickers (investigation indicated police officers played a major role in trafficking)
20. Severe imprisonment punishments for the traffickers (traffickers serve 3-5 months in prison)
21. Conduct a thorough investigation in various orphanages in vulnerable areas. In some orphanages, specially in the southern regions new born babies are sold across the border, young girls are being forced to conduct sexual acts to earn money and disabled/retarded children are sold for medical experiments. .

SECTION 6- HIV/AIDS IN ARMENIA

For the past several years, Ministry of Health, local NGO's, UNDP and it's cosponsoring organizations, World Vision, MSF Belgium and other Diaspora non-profit organizations have been working aggressively to prevent the growth of HIV/AIDS and other Sexual transmittal diseases in Armenia.

In November 1989, a National Center for AIDS Prevention (NCAP) was established in Yerevan, The Center is the only governmental organization within the Ministry of Health, which deals with HIV/AIDS prevention in the country The central government established a National Center for AIDS Prevention in Yerevan to develop a mechanism to strengthen the planning, create advocacy, develop a productive public awareness and overall support and provide information to the public to prevent HIV/AIDS and other STD. ⁽¹⁸⁾

The center reports that from 1988 to December 1, 2004, 304 HIV carriers were registered in the Republic of Armenia, 288 of them are citizens of the Republic of Armenia. Men constitute a prevailing part in the total number of HIV carriers 224 cases (77.8%), women represent 64 cases (22.2%). 288 reported cases include 4 cases of HIV infection among children (1.4%). In 2004, 13 cases of HIV-infected women were registered, which is unprecedented for the statistics of the country. This year one case of HIV infection has been registered among children.⁽¹⁸⁾

Although less than 1% of Armenia's population is registered as HIV positive, Armenia is in danger of experiencing the next wave of the HIV/AIDS pandemic unfolding in the Caucasus. The World Vision has recently reported unprecedented 53 new cases of HIV infection has been registered in 2004. Statistics shows an alarming growth in a number of women with HIV, already reaching 64 out of 304 registered HIV carriers. The World Vision has been aggressively making endless efforts to prevent HIV/AIDS by conducting training seminars to engage journals to fight against HIV/AIDS. ⁽¹⁹⁾

The UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS in Armenia was established in 1996 to support an expanded multisectoral response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the country. The group performs a leading role in joint policy formulation and strategic decision-making, facilitation of collaboration and joint action of UN System for effective response to national HIV/AIDS needs and priorities. The members of the Theme group consists of; UNAIDS cosponsor Agencies in Armenia: UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO and the World Bank. ⁽²⁰⁾ Theme Group will develop cooperation with the UNESCO National Commission and

UNDP-funded national and regional programs active in Armenia as well as other National Counterparts; the government representatives of the Ministry of Health, National Center for AIDS Prevention, USAID, IOM, World Vision, MSF Belgium. ⁽²⁰⁾

⁽¹⁸⁾ HIV/AIDS Epidemic in the Republic of Armenia- <http://www.armaids.am>

⁽¹⁹⁾ The World Vision Armenia internet resources - <http://www.wvarmenia.am>

⁽²⁰⁾ UN HIV/AIDS Theme group in Armenia - <http://www.armaids.am/Partners>

Following Table prepared by the UNAID illustrates the estimated figure of HIV/AIDS in Armenia for the 2003.

Adult (15-49) HIV prevalence rate	0.1% (range: 0.1%-0.2%)
Adults (15-49) living with HIV	2500 (range: 1200-4100)
Adults and children (0-49) living with HIV	2600 (range: 1200-4300)
Women (15-49) living with HIV	900 (range: 400-1400)
AIDS deaths (adults and children) in 2003	<200 (range: <400)

Source: UNAIDS - 2004 Report on the global AIDS epidemic (as of Dec. 2003)

SECTION 7 – FACTS

Sevan- 15 year old living with her grand mother and a drug addict uncle, was beaten and thrown out of her house in the middle of winter to search for drugs for her uncle. After spending few nights, her trusted neighbor provided her with shelter, then with the promise of an employment in the Emirates, sold her to a trafficker for \$150.00, upon arrival in Dubai, she was resold to a wealthy 70 year old man for \$10,000. After 2 years of brutal and abusive living condition, she committed suicide by slashing her wrists which left no choice for her captor than returning her back to Armenia (with \$5,000) but in one condition to not press charges. She is currently pursuing her law degree and hope to combat trafficking. *(interview with the local NGO)*

Ijevan- 38 year old woman, mother of 2 was tricked into a promised bakery job in Abu Dhabi. Upon arrival, her passport was taken away and she was locked up in a room where she received between 15-20 clients a day. After a major illness, she was sent back to Armenia for treatment. To avoid embarrassment and publicity of her dark secret, she did

not press charges. She is chronically depressed and under psychiatric care. (*interview with the local NGO*)

Gyumri- A mother of two girls 17 and 18 literally sold her daughters to a wealthy 60 year old Iranian man for \$50.00 per girl. Her daughters vanished with no trace. (*interview with the Local NGO*)

Abovyan- 22 year old was taken to Dubai by her best friend for a short vacation, she never returned. When tried to escape, she was beaten to death, her body was found in desert. (*interview with local investigator*)

Goris- 12 years old girl was taken to Turkey by her neighbor to wash dishes in a restaurant. Sold to an organized crime boss, she was forced into prostitution. After few years of abusive living condition, she managed to escape by hiding underneath a passenger bus and made it across the boarder to Armenia. She is currently 16 years old with a child, living in a poor village in Syunik region, without family support and under the most unbearable condition. (*Personal phone interview with the victim*)

Syunik Marz- A group of 15 men were taken to Turkey to work in a factory for a period of 60 days. Upon completion of their assignment and working over 14 hours of hard labor, they were given 70 percent of what they were promised and told that the owner of the factory fled the country and no more wages will be paid. They were put on a van and sent back to Armenia without any proper documentation. *(interview with local NGO)*

Lori Marz- A woman who became pregnant due to commercial sex activity, carried her new born across the boarder to Georgia to sell her for \$1,500 per each child. *(interview with local NGO based on finding from the border)*

Yerevan- 2 sisters at the ages of 17 and 18, residing at Ojandak orphanage ran away due to ongoing abusive treatment and ended up in the hands of traffickers. They were taken to Dubai and started working as prostitutes. One sister became pregnant, she was forced into abortion and was put back to work. *(interview with a local investigator)*

Alaverdy City- The region is mostly populated by Azeris. Nearly 3,000 people cross the border to Georgia every week. There are several restaurants and bars at the boarder cities, where over 20 Armenian girls are working as prostitutes. Alyosha, an Armenian, works on both the Armenian and the Georgian sides of the border. says that Armenian girls come from the refugee villages in the region around Bagratashen, Alaverdi and other towns to “presumably” work as barmaids or shop helpers. The Azerbaijani owners of the shops do not pay salaries. Instead they find “buyers” for the girls. The main buyer of Armenian girls, Samad, a trader of Ukrainian confectionary, says it is easy to get Armenian girls at a cheap price. “The supply has increased,” he explains. “The more there are, the cheaper the price.”⁽²¹⁾

A group of Armenian private investigators conducted a thorough investigation in Dubai in February 2004 and find out that over 12 young women, between the ages of 20-30 are currently held in Dubai jail for prostitution. They are Armenian citizen under fake fraudulent documents and counterfeit papers. The faith of these girls are not known at this time.

⁽²¹⁾ A Matter of Life or Abandoned Honor?

The article, which deals with the lives of two prostitutes near the Georgian border, was published in Avarot Daily and in Hetq on-line By Karine Simonyan Ankiun + 3 TV Company -/www.nyu.edu/globalbeat/ARMENIA/karin

COUNTRY COMPARISON

The Republic of Georgia

Situated in a very strategic area, Georgia with over 5 million people had its share of economic and political instability. Since its independence in 1991, the people of Georgia have endured periods of civil war and unrest as well as violence related to the independence aspirations of the breakaway regions.

The break up of the Soviet Union has resulted in many visa free entries and a break down in monitoring of these borders. The Georgian transit route has expanded due to an open door policy with Turkey. Human trafficking, specially women and young girls increased by a phenomena number, many women are being trafficked through Georgia to Turkey and Greece and on to the Mediterranean countries.

U.S. imposed a serious threat to Georgia to improve its judicial system and re-visit its criminal codes to combat trafficking. U.S. State Department Trafficking in Person Report (TIP) indicated that Georgia is a source and transit country for women trafficked primarily to Turkey and Greece for purposes of sexual exploitation and domestic servitude. Report also added that the country is "a source country for women trafficked primarily to Turkey, Greece, and the UAE, with smaller numbers trafficked to Israel, Spain, Portugal and the United States for purposes of sexual exploitation, domestic servitude and forced labor." It expressed special concern that "thousands of children living in the streets and in orphanages" were vulnerable to trafficking.

As of September 9, 2003, due to its ongoing efforts the U.S. State department recognized Georgia's ongoing efforts to combat trafficking and the country was put on Tier 2 (Watch Llist) in the report, an indication that Georgia has made significant efforts in the past year, but sufficient progress has not yet been made.

Comparison of RoA with Georgia resulted in the facts that Georgia imposes a more severe penalties and punishment for the traffickers which in many cases can result in imprisonment of 5-12 years with maximum penalties of 20 years for aggravated circumstances, versus Armenia that the imprisonment of a trafficker is 300-500 times of income and 3-5 months in jail.

RoA has been aggressively working very closely with the local NGO's and the international agencies to combat trafficking. Georgia started a very strong anti-trafficking program through its public defender's office, however due to lack of foreign funding, its operation has been somewhat stopped, hot line is no longer working and the NGO's are no longer funded by the Central government to continue their efforts.

In concluding the comparison, Georgia's prosecution law seem more severe than Armenia, however its protection and prevention law is lacking a major mechanism and cooperation

of the central government with the NGO's and other international agencies. Although put on Tier (2) by the U.S. Department of State, the country is still in the watch list and if the appropriate measures are not taken, George might face an economical sanction by the U.S.

CONCLUSION

Human Trafficking involves moving women, young girls, men, women, from one place to another and placing them in conditions of forced labor. The practice includes forced prostitution, domestic servitude, unsafe agricultural labor, sweatshop labor, construction or restaurant work, and various forms of modern-day slavery. This global violation of human rights occurs within countries and across borders, regions, and continents.

For the past decade, Armenia has been the source of human trafficking to the neighboring countries and in some cases, as far as U.S. and Canada. Women and Young girls were sold and resold, acted as sex slaves and been stripped out of their identity, and treated like commodities rather than human beings.

Combating trafficking involves national and international cooperation among NGOs, social agencies, judicial/law enforcement, and migration authorities. The government should take a comprehensive approach which requires a focus on bringing justice and exercise more severe punishment to penalize traffickers and to aid victims. The Central Government should make a firm commitment to implement the action plan and create a closer collaboration with the NGO's and other international agencies to prevent this act.

Armenian Diaspora has reached it's peak of 8 million throughout the world. Over 375 organizations has been established to aid Armenia in many form and shape, but only 1 deals with human trafficking. This task has never been publicized nor acknowledged by the community. To successfully combat this act, Diaspora community, specially religious organizations should establish a committee and a mechanism to deal with human trafficking in the country, before it's too late.

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