

## **Wolksrant article, 24 May 2004**

### **“The girls fight with feelings of guilt and embarrassment”**

#### **Portrait interview, Olaf Tempelman**

Name: RI and S. Age: 27 and 20. Nationality: Romanian. Status: social worker of the ADPARE organization and of victims of trafficking of women. I reached the conclusion that the victims of human trafficking need more than 6 months after the repatriation to reconstruct a new life.

S. comes from a poor family, from an impoverished Romanian village. She always had a bad relationship with her parents, she says.

At the age of 17, she found a boyfriend who looked fine and whom she trusted. He came with the idea of both immigrating to Italy.

S thought he had a good idea. But with one condition, he said: she had to leave first and he will leave right after. But she never reached Italy. She was delivered to the Serbian - Romanian customs, by her boyfriend, directly to the traffickers.

What followed was a voyage throughout Yugoslavia about which S still can't talk about. She was forced to prostitute herself in the city of Tetovo from Macedonia. She couldn't run away, she tells us, because she and the other girls who were Bulgarian, Ukrainian and Russian were guarded by armed men with fire weapons, just like in a jail.

After 10 months S managed to escape with help from a client. The client took her to IOM, in Pristina, Kosovo. After 2 months she was repatriated to Romania. When in the country, she tried to go back home, but her father was more violent than before. On the street, she was afraid of not being kidnapped by the ex-boyfriend who had sold her.

That is the way S ended up in Bucharest, in the shelter house of IOM. Shelter is assured for a period of 6 months for the victims who can't go back home, after the repatriation, – because of domestic violence or because of the risk of being kidnapped by those who had trafficked them.

“The problem is that you can't do much for these girls in only six months”, says the social worker RI. “Most of them don't trust themselves. They fight with feelings of guilt and embarrassment. The self-respect is all gone. They can't focus, they have flashbacks from the experience they had when forced to prostitute themselves, they are depressives. After six months they are far from being able to be independent and to find a job by themselves”.

“The vulnerability of some of them, which existed even before they were trafficked, is now accentuated by the experienced they lived”, says I. A study of 40 already repatriated cases, after a period, shows upsetting results. Some of them become victims of domestic violence; others are fighting with psychological problems. Some of them made contact again with bad intentioned friends and ended up being trafficked again.

To enhance the chance of reintegration the social workers have initiated the ADPARE association, with the help of some Dutch ladies. ADPARE represents an association for developing alternative methods of reintegration and education.

The girls who have to leave the shelter thus receive, for a period of a year and a half, material, juridical and psychological help. The last takes place individual or in groups where the girls share the experience they had. In the next phase, they are helped with schooling and support in looking for a place to live and for a job. The priority is for the girls to become more responsible and surer of them.

“Most of the victims come from social environments with problems and they never learned some of the basic things”, says I. “We try to do what the family hasn’t”. Especially for this target she has been coordinating a program of adoption inspired by the Foster Parents Plan, for a few months now. With 30 Euro per month the girls can be individually supported. For 8 of the girls, adoptive parents have been found, and for the others, the social workers are still searching.

I: “This way they receive a little of the family they never had. At the beginning of each month, together, I make a list of how the money will be spent, with each girl, for example: for a computer course, for the dentist or for school supplies. At the end of the month, they have to justify the spent money, meaning they have to show the bill notes. This way, the case in which they buy shoes with the received money, from the first day, is prevented. The correspondence with the foster parents is developed with the help of the social workers.

The money received for S, are used for treating a medical complication which she got from the time she was forced to prostitute herself. Another part of the money is used to pay for the hairdresser school which ADPARE hopes to continue paying from donations of a new program of schooling.

S’s dream is to become a hairdresser and work in one of the luxurious beauty parlors from the centre of Bucharest.

Olaf Tempelman.