



Minutes from the joint meeting of the Working Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk (WGCC) and the CBSS Task Force Against Human Trafficking (CBSS TFTHB)

24th of October 2007

***Venue:** Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Fredsgatan 8*

Participants for the WGCC:

Chair:

Estonia, Ms Anniki Tikerpuu, Ministry of Social Affairs

Vice Chair:

Sweden, Ms Agneta Björklund, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Denmark, Mr Bertil Mahs, National Board for Social Services, Ministry of Social Affairs

Finland, Ms Anne Hujala, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health

Germany, Ms Sinone Franke Müller, Ministry of Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

Lithuania, Ms Audra Mikalauskaitė, Ministry of Social Security and Labour

Norway, Mr Björn Bredesen, Ministry of Children and Equality

Poland, Ms Teresa Łęcka and Mr Tadeusz Trzaskowski, Agency for Teachers' Inservice Training.

The Secretariat: Mr Lars Lööf, Children's Unit

Ms Milda Urbonaitė, Intern to CBSS Secretariat.

Participants for the CBSS TFTHB:

Chair:

Latvia, Ms Inga Dobelniece, Ministry of Interior

Sweden: Mr Per Wallén,

My Andrén Intern, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Secretariat: Ms Sofia Ekfeldt-Nyman, CBSS

Guests to the meeting:

Ms Brita Öström, Head of Europe Department, Save the Children Sweden.

Mr Claes Lyckner, Kvinnoforum, Swedish Women's Forum. Ms Ida Arnoldsson, Intern to Kvinnoforum.

Ms Anniki Tikerpuu Welcomed all participants to the meeting and noted that there could be more cooperation between WGCC and TFTHB in the future, because these groups have many common tasks and ideas to share.

Ms Dobelniece in her opening address noted that during Latvian Presidency of CBSS three main fields are especially emphasized: 1) education; 2) energy; and 3) civil security (promoting democratic values, stability, sustainability, etc.). WGCC and CBSS Task Force Against Trafficking in Human Beings, TFTHB, are expected to coordinate activities and actions, thus allowing synergy effects to benefit both groups. The overall objective of the CBSS TFTHB is to serve as a point of departure for efforts and proposals and it has 3 main objectives: 1) develop cooperation of institutions, which are responsible for preventing and combating human trafficking; 2) promote harmonisation of legislation; 3) facilitate cooperation between governmental institutions and NGOs in this field.

Ms Dobelniece also noted that TFTHB plans to organise training seminars for diplomats from CBSS Member states in December. Victims of human trafficking very often are outside their countries of origin, so education of diplomats is very important. Moreover, Ms Dobelniece stated that she is very positive to the cooperation between the WGCC and TFTHB.

Mr Lööf presented in full the Baltic Sea Region Comprehensive Assistance to Children Victims of Trafficking, BSR CACVT, project, detailing how the training was developed, how the participants to the training were chosen and how the training as such has been coordinated with other activities that the WGCC implements both in the field of fighting trafficking of children, and in the field of abuse and violence against children. (Presentation is attached: “BSR CACVT evaluation071024”).

Questions:

Mr Mahs: Is this information available on the Childcentre web site?

Mr Lööf: This exact presentation is not available yet, but the information of the project on the web site is quite extensive and has a special sub folder under the heading of “Child Trafficking”.

Mr Trzaskowski: Can any country use the tools and resources disseminated during the training?

Mr Lööf: Yes, all the resources published are open for professionals to use, naturally recognising the author.

Ms Tikerpuu: Invited Ms Öström to address the meeting on the issue of how Save the Children has been involved in the programme and how Save the Children Sweden plans to pursue the topic.

Ms Öström congratulated to the successful management of the CACVT project. She noted that it was very interesting and useful to follow this project which for *Save the Children Sweden* has increased the knowledge about the situation of children in the project countries and contributed to a wider net of contacts. Through the seminars it is obvious that participants have gained strength and new knowledge not only about children in situations of trafficking, but also about children in vulnerable situations in general. Sustainability seems to be the main constraint of this project. Government representatives have to take responsibility and secure

that the project is mainstreamed within existing mechanisms with attached budgets in the future.

Ms Öström also shared Save the Children Europe programme's new strategy to put focus on children in relation to migration. Migration will most likely be a major issue in Europe the years to come; our societies have an ageing population, to fill the labor market a young population has to be invited, treatment of young people is of outmost importance to avoid xenophobia and exclusion in the societies. Many young migrants are now arriving to the EU from the European countries outside the EU, from Africa and Latin America. We have to learn to admit that it is not always in their best interest to be returned. They arrive to look for work opportunities and are not victims of trafficking. Whoever they are, for whatever reason they come, and where ever they arrive they have the same rights as a child citizen of that particular country. In addition we have to pay attention to children who are left behind when parents and caregivers migrate. Schools and local communities have to be better prepared to protect this group of children.

In general we should avoid to only have negative images of migration. Some children also tell us about positive experiences and gained knowledge after a period in another country. Therefore, it is important to secure that we really listen to the children when we design projects, programmes or research. Project designed by adults with the best intention may turn out to become a failure if we do not listen carefully to what the children ask for in terms of support and protection. Furthermore; advocacy is of outmost importance. Not at least to try to shift focus in the discussion from trafficking to migration. In current EU directives and papers on migration, and there are many, there is no focus on children. This has to be changed. Much of funding opportunities are strictly limited to trafficking whereas most projects actually work more in relation to poverty, children at risk in general or with migration.

Questions:

Ms Björklund: I note that children's migration is an important issue at the moment and it raises our awareness of the vulnerability children and young people face when in migratory movement.

Ms Mikalauskaite: Many persons from Lithuania migrated to western countries when Lithuania joined the EU leaving their children behind. This is one problematic area in Lithuania at the moment.

Mr Mahs: It seems that definitions of trafficking and of migration overlap somehow and they may at times become confused.

Ms Tikerpuu: The definitions are set by international legal conventions.

Mr Lööf presented the mapping project presently being finalised by Mr Svante Weyler. The mapping project has identified some major issues that the WGCC may want to pursue further:

The young people interviewed identified what was helpful in their reintegration:

- Strong trust in the young person from the helper
- No strings attached to the assistance given
- "Non-professional" attitude
- Strong presence of the helper
- Focus on reintegration not on the victim's story

- Dedication from the side of the helper

Other issues so far highlighted in the mapping work:

- NGOs funded by foreign donors carry out most of the direct assistance work
- How to start mainstreaming this assistance within the local and governmental services?
- Still calls for more training
- More coordination needed on the national level
- Police investigations of children from other countries committing crimes need to be coordinated with police intelligence on trafficking and with child protection services

Ms Björklund noted that this issue is another piece to a puzzle that the WGCC is trying to complete.

Mr Bredesen noted that some of the work the WGCC implements could very well be reasonable for the TFTHB and expressed his interest in a further discussion.

Ms Ekfeldt Nyman noted that a big problem of organising trainings on human trafficking is looking for financial resources, so WGCC and TFTHB can share their experiences in identifying funding and learn from each other.

Ms Öström noted that political will is absolutely crucial. Usually it takes a lot of time to look for money. As a good example she mentioned Norway, where the ministry has set up funds dedicated for NGOs.

Mr Wallén: Agreed, that political support is of paramount importance.

Mr Lööf presented the outcome of the discussions held at the 4th meeting of National Contact Points, NCPs, in Warsaw in May. The discussions focused on

1. Dissemination of knowledge and activities undertaken in the region need to be improved. NGOs, public agencies, professionals and international organizations have too limited knowledge of trainings undertaken or other programmes assisting children or aiming at preventing child trafficking.
2. How to strengthen the NCPs role in being the national node for information in relation to children and trafficking.
3. Child Friendly witness procedures should be used when interviewing victims of trafficking by police or other professionals.
4. The need to train judges and prosecutors was addressed
5. Practices and assessments made when considering returning a child to the country of origin should be further shared between member states.
6. A need to increase the ability to identify children victims of trafficking and involved in criminal activities.

Mr Lyckner thanked WGCC for inviting him to this meeting and said that he found it very interesting to listen to other presentations and that he would use some of this information in his work. He also mentioned that he has been working in *Kvinnoforum* since early 2000s. 5-6 years ago this organization started to map actors that are involved in preventing and combating human trafficking in Russia. NGOs have been active in this field for quite a long time, while governmental institutions only recently started their activities.

Kvinnoforum has organised 10 conferences together with its partners in Russia covering different topics in the field of human trafficking. Some positive results are seen: Police officers began to contact NGOs for advice on how to treat human trafficking victims – a more humane approach slowly appears. Another important issue is capacity building. NGOs are getting more and more skilled in this. After a conference held in Niznij Novgorod the Police Academy increased the volume of study materials for the cadets. Before the conference, such material was completely absent. Moreover the NGO partners started more consistently to lobby higher governmental levels. Several times victims of human trafficking came to these conferences and their cases were dealt with at the meeting since all actors were present.

There are a number of problems and challenges. The major difficulty has to do with the legislation, especially in Russia. It is very difficult to apply the Russian Penal Code in order to prosecute traffickers. More or less the same is true for Sweden. Another problem is corruption. It is widespread in Russia and impedes the entire prosecution process. The third is lack of capacity building. Only a few specialists are presently specialized in combating human trafficking, therefore it is difficult to tackle the problem. Another challenge is lack of cooperation between the governmental authorities and NGOs. One more problem is mass media. It is very one sided. Basically it focuses on victims and they are not depicted positively. Furthermore, no funds are allocated for taking care of victims. It is left to NGOs, but they receive no designated funding for this and rely entirely on foreign donors.

Mr Lyckner also mentioned that *Kvinnoforum* works in the human trafficking field with a gender perspective. But when it comes to police and NGOs this perspective is not applied.

Ms Dobelniece stated that in her view, the CBSS TFTHB must assist Russia in developing a full understanding of human trafficking on the governmental top level.

Mr Lyckner noted that in Russia NGOs feel a lack of respect. Officially governmental institutions listen to them, but in practice they are ignored.

Mr Bredesen noted that in Russia some good examples also can be found, and as an example he mentions that Russia has financed several conferences on children's issues in the context of the Council of Europe and also in the WGCC cooperation.

Conclusions from the meeting

Ms Ekfeldt Nyman noted that this meeting would be useful for the organisation of training programmes by the CBSS TFTHB and that WGCC experiences would be valuable.

Mr Wallén thanked the WGCC for inviting to the meeting and he also thanked *Save the Children Sweden* and *Kvinnoforum* for their useful input. Mr Wallén proposed to continue to organise such joint meetings between the two groups on a regular basis in order to exchange views.

Ms Dobelniece supported this opinion.

Mr Bredesen agreed with Mr Wallén and noted that WGCC and TFTHB have more to talk about in the future. He also proposed to organise joint conferences/events.

Mr Lööf noted that the Northern Dimension Partnership on Health and Social Wellbeing has included in their suggested plan for 2008 to mandate the Nordic Council of Ministers to organise coordination events where initiatives fighting trafficking in human beings shall meet and discuss topics of mutual concern.

Ms Tikerpuu noted that steps for common future cooperation between WGCC and TFTHB were taken during this meeting, so the cooperation on regular basis should be continued. She thanked all the speakers and Sweden for the organisation and concluded the meeting.