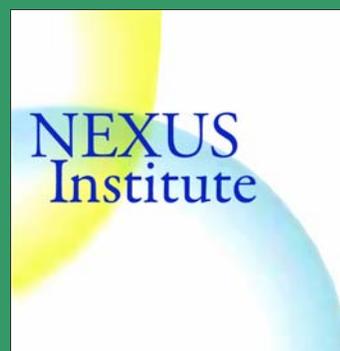


Why Shelters?
Considering
Residential
Approaches to
Assistance

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Rebecca Surtees
NEXUS Institute to
Combat Human Trafficking
Vienna, Austria



Why shelters? Considering residential approaches to assistance

**Rebecca Surtees
Senior Researcher
NEXUS Institute to Combat Human Trafficking
Vienna, Austria**

Abstract

Shelters are the most common form of assistance available to victims of trafficking in the SEE region as well as many other parts of the world. Shelter programmes offer a residentially based model, along with a wide range of services offered to clients during their tenure. For many trafficked persons, this form of assistance is vital in their initial stabilisation and recovery as well as in their longer term assistance and reintegration. At the same time, there are reasons why the shelter model is not the ideal solution for all trafficked persons – centring around issues associated with the shelter model itself; the way in which shelter programmes are currently designed; and the personal circumstances of some trafficked persons. Based on the experiences of both clients and staff, this paper explores situations in which the shelter model may not always be the best assistance option. It also considers how some of these issues may be addressed within the framework of residential programmes and where non-residential models may better suit the needs of some trafficked persons.

Foreword

Over the past decade a remarkable transformation has occurred involving the capacity of many nations around the world to provide assistance to victims of human trafficking. Until recent years the availability of an organized framework of assistance for those who had been enslaved and severely exploited was rare. Since that time, there has been tangible progress in providing care for individuals who escape or are rescued from those who exploit and abuse them. One of the central elements evidencing this progress in many countries is the availability of shelter-based care.

This report recognizes the important role that shelters play in providing critically needed care and support for many victims of trafficking. The availability of safe havens where victims of trafficking can stabilize and begin to recover their lives is a positive development. At the same time, this report takes a deeper look at this development by examining current assumptions underlying the near-exclusive reliance around the world on a shelter-based model that precludes, without alternatives, those who have survived their trafficking experience from receiving recovery assistance unless they agree to become residents in facilities with all of the associated limitations and restrictions that this typically entails.

The findings of this report are drawn primarily from interviews conducted with service-providers, particularly staff at shelters, and victims of trafficking who have escaped or been rescued. It is this latter group who provide particularly telling testimony. Their first person accounts of the facts and perceptions of their experiences identify a number of problematic policies and practices that they faced because assistance was tied to shelter residency. They raise questions that challenge common assumptions underlying the use of shelter-based care as the only mechanism for providing and receiving protection and assistance. And they describe their experiences with the limitations and restrictions imposed by staying in shelters.

Listening to the voices of individuals who assistance programs are intended to help leads to the inevitable conclusion that shelter-based assistance, especially as currently implemented, cannot be the sole model utilized for supporting the recovery of trafficking victims. The issues raised as a result of these interviews should compel service providers and policymakers to revisit certain generally accepted practices that are based on previously unexamined assumptions to determine how improvements can be made in the overall framework of offering and tailoring the provision of assistance in ways that may better meet the needs of all recovering trafficking victims. Such an inquiry is at the heart of the meaning of providing victim-centred care. This report should help in guiding these reviews.

The NEXUS Institute seeks to assist policymakers, service-providers and other anti-trafficking actors end human trafficking and improve assistance for trafficking victims by providing insight, independent analysis and the tools to take more effective action. I believe that those dedicated to combating human trafficking and caring for victims of trafficking will find that this report raises important issues and provides new insights that will help them with their work.

Stephen Warnath
Executive Director
NEXUS Institute to Combat Human Trafficking

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I am sincerely grateful to the many trafficked men and women who agreed to be interviewed for these studies and whose experiences and opinions form the foundation of this paper. Their experiences, insights and suggestions are invaluable in understanding what is (and is not) working in terms of victim assistance and protection. I would also like to acknowledge all of the anti-trafficking organizations and professionals who have cooperated with the NEXUS Institute and its partners in its research, providing valuable information about their anti-trafficking work and facilitating access to beneficiaries and other trafficked persons.

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Rebecca Surtees
Senior Researcher
NEXUS Institute to Combat Human Trafficking

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1. Introduction

The shelter model is the most common and most often imagined form of assistance available to trafficked persons in many parts of the world. Shelter programmes are typically comprised of a communal residential facility where a wide range of services are offered to clients. For many trafficking victims, a shelter is the first place where they feel safe and secure after exiting their trafficking situation.¹ This form of assistance is often of vital importance in their initial stabilisation and recovery as well as in their longer term assistance and reintegration. At the same time, there are reasons why the shelter model is not the ideal solution for all trafficked persons which centre around:

- the nature and characteristics of the shelter model itself;
- the design and implementation of many current shelter programmes, and
- the personal (social and economic) circumstances of trafficked persons.

This paper explores the different residential/shelter models available to trafficked persons as part of anti-trafficking assistance frameworks. Based on the experiences of both trafficked persons and anti-trafficking professionals, the paper explores situations in which the shelter model provides an important mechanism for recovery as well as when the shelter may not be the best solution for some beneficiaries. As importantly, the paper considers how it may be possible to address some of these obstacles within the framework of residential programmes, by making adjustments to shelter approaches and models. It also explores situations in which non-residential models and non-trafficking specific services may better suit the needs of some trafficked persons

This paper is based on studies conducted by the author for the Nexus Institute to Combat Human Trafficking² (Vienna) between 2005 and 2008 which involved fieldwork and extensive interviewing of trafficked persons, in South-eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Different assistance models were explored through interviews with anti-trafficking personnel and service providers. While this primary data forms the base of this paper, it is supplemented by the author's previous research in South-eastern Europe, West Africa, and Southeast Asia and a review of relevant literature and resources.

¹ The United Nation's *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children* (which supplements the UN Convention on Trans-national Organised Crime, adopted by the UN General Assembly on November 15, 2000), defines "trafficking in persons" as:

the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring 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 labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

Article 3(b) emphasises that the consent of a victim of trafficking (in persons) "to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used" (United Nations 2000).

2. The shelter model

Assistance and protection is a key aspect of anti-trafficking work (one of the 3 “Ps” – prevention, protection and prosecution) and the provision of safe shelter is central in the assistance work of many organisations. Moreover, different international instruments call for the provision of shelters for trafficked persons.² Shelters, which serve as a “one stop” access to many services, are often seen as the most appropriate solution for meeting the various needs of victims of trafficking (Simeunovic-Patic 2005: 31, UNODC 2006: 144). Moreover, for many trafficked persons, the opportunity to stay at a shelter is an important, even integral, step in their recovery from trafficking.

There are a range of different shelter models currently in place to support and assist victims of trafficking.³ How accommodation is arranged depends on a range of issues, including:

- Victim characteristics:
 - whether foreign or country nationals;
 - the type of trafficking/exploitation experienced;
 - the stage of recovery;
 - the specific profile of the victim;
 - whether s/he is a VoT and/or a victim of violence.
- The type of shelter dwelling/facility:
 - communal shelter facilities;
 - communal living in private houses or apartments.
- The period of assistance:
 - short term for emergency care and stabilisation;
 - medium term in the transition phase;
 - longer term reintegration assistance and support.

² Articles 6 & 7 of the UN Protocol focus on assistance and protection for trafficked persons in appropriate cases. More specifically, Article 6 (3) calls on state parties to consider implementing measures to provide for the physical, psychological and social recovery of victims of trafficking in persons, including, in appropriate cases, the provision of appropriate housing and Article 6(4) requires states parties to take into account, in applying the provisions of this article, the age, gender and special needs of victims of trafficking in persons, in particular the special needs of children, including appropriate housing, education and care (United Nations 2000). Guideline 6 of UNHCHR’s *Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking*, E/2002/68/Add.1, specifically prescribes the provision of safe and adequate shelter that meets the needs of trafficked persons and that trafficked persons not be held in immigration detention centres, other detention facilities or vagrant houses. Previous international instruments have also recognized the importance of shelter for vulnerable persons. For example, the United Nations Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action calls on governments to “provide well funded shelters and relief support for girls and women subjected to violence as well as medical, psychological and other counseling services and free or low cost legal aid, where it is needed, as well as appropriate assistance to enable them to find a means of subsistence” (United Nations 1995).

³ See Surtees and Somach (2008) for a discussion of different residential models for victims of TIP and DV in the E&E region. Other studies which have considered aspects of shelter models in SEE include: Bjerkan & Dyrliid 2005; Brunovskis & Surtees 2008 & 2007; Milivojevic 2007; Rosenberg 2006b; Surtees 2008, 2007 & 2005. Studies which have looked at anti-trafficking shelters globally include Clawson & Dutch 2008; IOFA nd; Gallagher & Pearson 2008; USAID 2005.

- Shelter location and national context:
 - in a transit country (typically short term care);
 - in a destination country (primarily short term care but also long term care where victims have options for temporary/permanent residency);
 - in a country of origin (both short or long term care).

3. Benefits of shelters

Certainly staying in a shelter setting provides many positive opportunities and experiences for trafficking victims.

Assurance of a safe, stable and comfortable living environment can be vital in service provision for trafficking victims. This is perhaps particularly likely to be the case when trafficked persons lack a safe environment to which they can return upon exiting trafficking. Because it has been found in other contexts (e.g. domestic violence) that homelessness can lead to symptoms of psychological trauma and high levels of stress (Elliot et al. 2005), the provision of safe shelters is valuable as a safe place in the initial recovery period and may also serve, in some cases, as a location for longer-term recovery and reintegration.

Shelters – with their attendant facilities and staffing support – provide intensive support to trafficked persons at highly stressful times. Because many trafficked persons are in a vulnerable state post-trafficking, having someone (a trained professional) to talk and turn to can be a vital resource, as one trafficked woman explained: “First they helped me to get over this. I was in a state of shock, I was having nightmares. I was afraid to stay there. I thought that the traffickers were coming after me, to look for me and it was helpful to speak to [the social workers]” (Surtees 2007b: 139). Another described the calming effect that the service provider had on her:

I met for the first time [the social worker] who came to pick me up at the police station. She told me that we were going to an assisting centre and I was going to be safe. I felt good because she didn't ask me to tell her anything about what I have lived because I was exhausted and the only thing I wanted was to have a bath and rest. She told me that I was going to do exactly that and I felt calmed (Surtees 2007b: 149).

Others explained how shelter programmes offered a safe, stable and healthy space for them to speak and interact after their trafficking experience:

I felt safe there. It was good. After the stress that I had, it was good to end up all of a sudden in a place where it was peaceful, where you could sleep, have something to eat, to have things explained to you and be told that you would get home safe. I was pretty peaceful (Surtees 2007b: 149).

There is also the sense of security which comes with being in a safe and often confidential facility where traffickers cannot find them and where staff or authorities will intervene if needed. Indeed, for some, the decision to enter a shelter programme was directly linked to security concerns, including threats to victims and their families. Some clients described the

stress of leaving the shelter after their tenure precisely because of the perceived loss of security:

Before I came to the centre, [the traffickers] were every evening outside my house. And even if I called the [police] officer and told her that I would be home, how much can she do as I am here in the village and she is in the city?" (Surtees 2007b: 167).

I wanted to stay [in the shelter] for some more time because the traffickers made a threat that they would immediately kill me on my return home if I ran away (Surtees 2007b: 137).

I can't go home. The person who trafficked me and who I denounced lives next door to the house of my parents (Surtees 2007b: 137).

I was scared [when the recruiter was released]. At that time I wouldn't even leave the shelter... I realized myself that my life was in danger. I think I will have to leave the shelter in a few months and I think I will go to some acquaintances in [another town]. Maybe they will let me stay there over the winter. I am afraid that the recruiters will find me there and kill me (Surtees 2007b: 137).

Living communally with other persons who have faced similar situations can be a reassuring and positive experience for some clients. Beneficiaries discussed the importance of not feeling alone. This sense of shared fate and understanding can be an important aspect of shelter life, as different shelter beneficiaries explained:

To tell you, in general, about [shelters]... I noticed that I was not alone, that there were people that accepted me the way I am. I went through this bad experience and I found support. I noticed that always when I was feeling alone, there was somebody next to me, to tell me "heads up, you are not alone", something like this. Somebody was listening to me also (Surtees 2007b: 147).

Well, I saw I was not the only one who... I realise now, I realised a long time ago, that it could happen to anyone, no matter what race you are or anything. At the time I thought it was only happening to me, because I have such bad luck and felt like vanishing... And the fact that we could have fun and socialize and at the same time we knew what we went through (Surtees 2007b: 148).

In the right circumstances communal living arrangements can even be empowering for beneficiaries. As one psychologist working at a trafficking shelter noted: "The group will not make the victim label stronger. Rather, the group will strengthen their resistance towards negative attitudes and prejudices in society. The group offers a community that makes the individuals stronger and provides them with an arena where they are being understood" (Bjerkan & Dyrliid 2006).

Communal living also potentially affords greater information about and access to services. Shelter environments provide a forum for information sharing – certainly between clients and staff but also between clients who can share information about the recovery process,

available services and so on. And not only are many resources and services available through the shelter programme but staff is also often able to facilitate access to non-shelter services. One study about the provision of health and psychological services for trafficking victims found that clients were more likely to have had access to a range of services when resident in a shelter programme (Zimmerman et al. 2006: 61-2; see also Brunovskis & Surtees 2007; Surtees & Somach 2008).

In sum, where shelter conditions are good, with professional and sensitive staff and with a healthy, safe and constructive atmosphere, shelters can be a positive resource and a valuable site of assistance.

Despite all of these positive aspects a shelter stay is not a perfect solution for many trafficked persons. Victims of trafficking (as well as some anti-trafficking professionals) have raised a range of issues and problems with shelter based assistance which centre around three main themes:

1. *The nature and characteristics of the shelter model, such as:*
 - the (often negative) social attitudes to shelters and assistance;
 - that the shelter experience can be intense and/or intrusive; and
 - being associated with other trafficked persons (who may be stigmatised).

2. *The design of many current shelter programmes, which includes:*
 - the focus on “typical” victims and “typical” problems, like female adult victims of sex trafficking;
 - the stress of communal living arrangements;
 - problems with the closed shelter model;
 - the constraints of shelter rules and regulations;
 - barriers created by cultural and linguistic differences; and
 - the (high) cost of shelters.

3. *The personal circumstances (social and economic) of trafficked persons, including:*
 - the need to earn money to support the family; and
 - not wanting to be separated from the family.

Understanding how current shelter programmes may not always represent an entirely attractive or accessible type of assistance is an important first step in designing more widely accessible and appealing anti-trafficking assistance programme. It is to these issues that we now turn.

4. Problems and issues with the shelter model itself

The shelter model itself poses problems for some trafficked persons; concerns centring on different issues including:

- the (often negative) community attitudes to shelters;

- that the shelter experience can be intense and/or intrusive; and
- being associated with other trafficked persons (who may be stigmatised).

Social attitudes to shelters and assistance

In some social and cultural environments, the need for assistance is negatively viewed. That is, to require assistance reflects badly on the individual victim and, in some communities, the family as a whole. The need to rely on assistance seemingly lowered anti-trafficking programme beneficiaries in some people's estimation. Some assisted victims suffered negative reactions and discrimination by friends, neighbours and community members precisely because of the assistance they were receiving. Some community members seemed to resent assistance being given to "prostitutes", while others apparently felt that assistance is something only for "social deviants", as the following comments from trafficked persons reveal:

I think our community doesn't quite understand why girls who were sexually exploited should be provided with some help. They think prostitutes should not be helped (Surtees 2007b: 197-98).

I heard from other girls that in their villages, where the people know what happened to them, the fellow villagers are not very glad when they see assistance delivered to them from specialized organizations... For example, a girl who opened a sales booth in her village, while being assisted by an organization, was in a way rejected in her village. The people gossiped about her that "it was better if they helped proper hardworking people, instead of this prostitute". I think that in a small village it is impossible to keep secret the fact that someone helps you (Surtees 2007b: 197-98).

Yes, at least where we live, people don't regard you well, if you ask for assistance from state organizations... Usually, assistance is requested by drunkards or people that don't want to work to maintain themselves (Surtees 2007b: 197-98).

Many men are ashamed of appealing for help, because our society does not really accept or approve of men who appeal for assistance. They must manage on their own (Surtees 2007b: 197-98).

A number of trafficking victims in SEE described being ashamed and uncomfortable with their need for assistance:

I am still ashamed to appeal for help first... My mother is also hesitant and ashamed to do so (Surtees 2007b: 147).

[About calling a helpline] I didn't have any courage. I was ashamed to call and ask for help... I am not used to asking for help... That's why my cousin did that for me... Yes, I prefer not to appeal for help first... I feel shame in asking for something... This is my nature (Surtees 2007b: 147).

No, I did not know of any others except [one NGO] and then I found out about [another NGO]. I also knew about the Department of Social Affairs but I didn't

want to contact them for help...because I was ashamed to ask for help (Surtees 2007b: 147).

... and blame too. I suppose that in my village people would blame me saying that “after such disgraceful behaviour, he doesn’t deserve to be helped (Surtees 2007b: 197-98).

Sometimes I had a feeling that I am like a handicapped. So why should anyone help me if I have legs and arms? Why should anyone help me if I have legs, if I have hands, this is the only thing that I have. This help, for example, was brought, but in the beginning I felt not quite comfortable, because I was used to doing everything on my own (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007: 142).

As a result, many victims seek to keep their trafficking experience a secret from family and friends as well as their community. Shelters are perhaps the most overt and visible form of assistance, consequently accepting accommodation in a shelter potentially risks “outing” victims.⁴ Residential facilities may particularly identify victims in countries where institutions have not traditionally formed a part of the social assistance framework and where extended family support has filled this gap. In some cases, fears that their trafficking story will become public may lead victims (and/or their families) to decline assistance. This is particularly likely to be the case when organisations are known as anti-trafficking agencies (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007: 59, 124; *Beyond Trafficking* 2004: 23, Derks 1998). The mother of one victim who declined assistance explained her decision as such: “If she stayed at the shelter and was away from home for a while, the neighbours will think that she was a prostitute. Every time she leaves the house, they assume she is a prostitute” (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007: 126). Similarly, one social worker explained that even where victims were inclined to accept assistance, families often refused shelter assistance to avoid stigmatisation: “They don’t want the women to be assisted. If they are in the shelter, then everyone will know what happened. And the families are ashamed” (Surtees 2005: 423). In the field of domestic violence, private accommodation options have been increasingly explored, at least in part, to address the stigma of being assisted in shelters which identify residents as victims of abuse (Fulbright 2004).

In addition, accepting to stay in a shelter may identify parents and family members as “negligent”, given their socially prescribed responsibility to care for family members. Having a family member live in a shelter may have negative repercussions for the family in the local community. One man felt that in his community the stigma attached to not taking care of one’s child would be stronger than stigma associated with prostitution. Similarly, another woman said: “The child is mine, so she should be helped by me, not others” (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007b: 60).

⁴ That being said, victims can equally be “outed” through other anti-trafficking interventions – through outreach in communities, police inquiries in communities or association with certain organisations (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007: 124).

The shelter model can be intrusive

Assistance by its very nature is intrusive, requiring clients to divulge very personal and traumatic experiences. And the shelter model is perhaps the most intrusive form of assistance, with service providers involved in every aspect of a beneficiary's daily life. For some victims, this intrusiveness is difficult to handle. One victim explained the peculiarity of this dynamic: "So no one limits my independence [in the programme], but the situation is certainly different if you are on your own. Maybe I wasn't used to that, it was something unusual" (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007: 31-32). Another shelter resident also described her stay as difficult because of the intrusive and controlling nature of the programme:

Vesna told us she had experienced it as difficult to stay in the rehabilitation shelter. She had a feeling that the personnel wanted to control her. She had got to know that a lot of the women who had been staying in this particular shelter ended up going abroad once more, and she assumed the control exercised by the personnel was an effort to prevent this from happening to her and the other women staying there (Bjerkan & Dyrliid 2006).⁵

In some socio-cultural environments, the shelter model may be experienced as particularly intrusiveness. The intensity of service provision may be at odds with some individual's or community's sensibilities about sharing personal matters with strangers. This has arisen as an issue in shelters for domestic violence victims where the individualistic focus of programmes can be problematic for women who come from societies and cultures that frame their lives *vis-à-vis* family and community and the orientation to an independent life is at odds with their sense of self (Arora 2004: 13-15; Fulbright 2004).

Shelters are also potentially intrusive in that they often isolate clients, separating them physically from family and community as well as through the use of restriction and rules, issues discussed in more detail below (Brunovskis & Surtees 2008, Surtees 2007b). Whereas this isolation may be helpful for some people and in the very early stages of assistance (as a period of decompression, contemplation, stabilisation or recovery), it may not always be experienced as such. Where individuals draw support from engagement with their family and community, the sense of isolation potentially involved in a shelter stay may be a central concern (and, by implication, impact decisions about whether to accept assistance). Many abused women say that the most difficult aspect of entering a shelter is to lose contact with their family, a requirement when shelters are secret and confidential (Haaken & Yragui 2003: 50-51, 57). This raises questions about the helpfulness, advisability and necessity of the isolation of victims in all cases, particularly when it is at odds with individual desires or socio-cultural norms.⁶ Such decisions are best informed by individual needs and on a case by

⁵ This has also been an issue in terms of service provision for other vulnerable groups. Some victims of domestic violence, for example, have left shelter programmes precisely because of the intrusiveness of the model. Explained one domestic violence shelter staff from the United States, "Women have said that it is as controlling and abusive relationship. In addition to the strict rules, there was always someone wanting to know their business. It was causing some women to go back to their batterers" (Fulbright 2004).

⁶ At least part of the rationale for the secrecy and isolation of clients in secret and closed shelters is that of security. This is an issue both in assisting victims of DV and THB. However, security issues are generally context specific and not all beneficiaries have security problems, making the use of secret and restrictive

case basis; alternative models are needed where persons experience shelter models in more intrusive ways.

While the intrusiveness of the shelter model was a factor in decisions to decline assistance in a shelter, all forms of assistance may be perceived as intrusive. In Thailand, some trafficked persons did not seek out assistance because it required revealing private information about themselves and their trafficking of which they were ashamed (ICCO 2004: 32). In SEE, when programmes required a high level of commitment from clients (something linked with but not exclusive to shelter programmes), some trafficked persons were more likely to decline (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007).

Not wanting to be with other trafficked persons

Although being with other trafficked persons can be helpful, some beneficiaries explained how the shelter setting (often with many trafficked persons) amplified their stress:

And also I couldn't speak to the girls even if they went through similar situations. Sometimes I was crying when I was remembering my experience. They were asking what happened but I couldn't say what was in my soul (Surtees 2007b: 148).

Research into why some trafficking victims decline assistance found that, although some respondents formed strong friendships in the shelters, others found it stressful to be close to others who have had traumatic experiences. And while victims in shelters would talk to social workers or psychologists, many did not want to hear about the experiences of other clients or share with others their own experiences. In some shelters, group counseling is not possible precisely because of this dynamic (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007, Surtees & Somach 2008).

To some degree, the desire to be proximate to other trafficked persons appears to be influenced by time. Although initially a shelter stay might be positive, some trafficking victims found it important to break away from trafficking services and other victims as part of their recovery process. A community comprised only of trafficked persons may serve to remind victims of their “differentness” and their trafficking experience, which could lead to a sense of social segregation that compromises reintegration efforts (Bjerkan & Dyrliid 2006). Some trafficked persons may seek to distance themselves from other trafficked persons (as well as the programmes that assist them) to avoid what Halvorsen (2004) describes as “shame by association”, being associated with the negative characteristics ascribed to stigmatised persons. Members of stigmatised groups may be characterised by a lack of unity and loyalty; they may be concerned with seeking recognition from and interacting with persons with more influence and esteem.

It is also the case that, for some trafficked persons, the shelter environment (with other trafficked persons) was not a supportive and healthy environment. Group living situations often have internal conflict and tension which shelter residents may find uncomfortable and/or difficult to deal with. This was described by a number of trafficked women:

models a potential problem for many victims (Surtees & Somach 2008, see also Brunovskis & Surtees, Surtees 2007b, Warnath 2007).

I am unsatisfied with other girls in shelter. We are in bad relations. We are all different. Each has her own story, but we all have similar problems. We should support each other, because we know what we went through. We were all victims in some way. But actually we don't have understanding for each other. We trip each other instead of giving a hand. We annoy each other. For small things. Staff from the shelter tries to calm the situation down. I went through bad things. I don't have to be bothered by someone in shelter. We don't respect each other.

Yes, but I didn't like the girls from the shelter... I even had a fight with some of them.

Yes, I like it here [at the shelter]. The people, the conditions. Regretfully, only with the girls I'm still not able to get along with.

Yes, I met 27 girls in [the residential programme] and there was only one I got along with... And she had left a normal family but not because she wanted to, but because of the rape. She was a regular, educated, urban child. All the others were a disaster compared to her.

Moreover, some situations were described by research participants in which fellow shelter residents, themselves trafficking victims, used victim's past experiences against them, for example, making snide remarks about their past involvement in prostitution (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007).

5. Design and implementation of shelters for trafficked persons

Some concerns about shelters are a function of how the programmes are designed and/or implemented. These included:

- the focus on “typical” victims and “typical” problems, namely adult women trafficked for sexual exploitation, to the exclusion of other experiences and profiles;
- the stress of communal living arrangements;
- problems with the closed shelter model;
- the constraints of shelter rules and regulations;
- failure to anticipate and address cultural and linguistic barriers within shelter programmes; and
- the often prohibitive cost of shelters.

The focus on “typical” victims and “typical” problems

Different shelter models have been developed to respond to different profiles of trafficking victims, different forms of trafficking and also different stages of recovery. However, the most prevalent model globally is that of a communal residential facility geared primarily for unaccompanied adult women trafficked for sexual exploitation. For example, 88% (or 24 of the 27 shelters surveyed in one study) served female victims between the ages of 19 and 24 (IOFA nd: 9). Shelter options are less available for minors of both sexes, victims of different forms of exploitation and males in spite of recent evidence which suggests that a noteworthy

percentage of assisted victims fall within these categories.⁷ The current way that shelters are organised, therefore, may not be appropriate or appealing for these other groups (Surtees 2008a&b).

There are very few accommodation options for male victims in national anti-trafficking responses around the world (Clawson & Dutch 2008; Derks 1998; Gallagher & Pearson 2008; Surtees & Somach 2008; Surtees 2008c&e, 2005). Most shelters do not lend themselves to mixed sex accommodation, leaving few options where housing is needed. One adult male trafficked to the former Soviet Union, returned home to find his apartment occupied and was without a place to stay. No shelter options were available to him and he was still living temporarily with friends or in homeless shelters at the time of the interview several years after his return (Surtees 2007b: 211-3). Similarly, a 16-year-old male minor trafficked for begging within SEE was temporarily accommodated in the shelter for foreign (female) victims while his documents were secured. Because the shelter was not equipped to accommodate an unaccompanied male victim and no other services were identified, he was sent home unaccompanied by train after only a few days despite the fact that his mother had been involved in his trafficking (Surtees 2005; cf. Surtees 2006a: 16).

Other beneficiaries have assistance needs which cannot easily be met within the existing shelter framework targeting “typical” female sex trafficking cases.⁸ A recent study of reintegration programmes found that there are a wide range of cases which can be categorised as “difficult” – for example, trafficking victims who:

- have dependent children or family members,
- have disabilities (mental and physical),
- have substance abuse problems,
- have mental health problems,
- have serious medical conditions,
- face safety and security problems,
- have had past experiences of violence,
- lack legal status – for example, who lack documents or official legal status,

⁷ While the assumption is that more women are trafficked than men, consideration of different contexts throws this into question. In Cambodia, many men are deceived by recruiters, forced to pay high recruitment fees, subjected to hard and abusive work in construction and fishing in Thailand, conditions which often constituted trafficking (Derks 2000, 19, Derks 1997, 31). In Mongolia, of the 105 presumed trafficking victims assisted from January to October 2007, 31 were males (30 adults and one minor), all of whom were trafficked for forced labour (Surtees 2008c). In SEE, male victims – trafficked for labour, begging and delinquency – accounted for a noteworthy minority of assisted victims in 2003 and 2004 (Surtees 2005, Surtees 2007a) as was also the case in Belarus and Ukraine where male victims accounted for 28.3 per cent and 17.6 per cent respectively of the assisted caseload between 2004 and 2006 (Surtees 2008e). Moreover, other forms of trafficking have been increasingly recognised. In SEE, for example, 15-35% of all victims assisted in 2003 and 2004 had been trafficked for purposes other than sexual exploitation (Surtees 2005: 32-34).

⁸ A study of shelter services for trafficked persons in the United States found that, while emergency shelters for women and girls was usually not a problem, it was difficult to find similar placements for men and boys. Moreover, transition and permanent housing/shelter is difficult for all victims but in particular for domestic minor victims and trafficked persons with mental health or substance abuse problems (Clawson & Dutch 2008).

- lack family support, and/or
- are socially marginalised (Surtees 2008a).

Often these “difficult cases” have not been anticipated in the shelter model (or the assistance framework generally). For example, existing shelter programmes are not always the most comfortable or appropriate arrangement for mothers and their children, on the one hand, and for the other shelter residents, on the other hand, as some beneficiaries explained:⁹

Sometimes I had arguments with the girls from the shelter, sometimes because of my children who disobeyed me and were crying in the corridor (Surtees 2007b: 204-6).

One thing that sort of bothers me the most is the child... She still cannot understand what it is all about. But she’s a regular child, she likes to play and when she laughs she is a bit loud, like screaming and it is not allowed in the shelter. Maybe that one thing, but the rest is fine. For example, when she is a bit louder or when she screams or does something else which is not allowed. And I can understand it all but I cannot tell her don’t scream. And, when I do tell her, I cannot expect her to understand because she is a child. They might not be happy with that. Maybe they don’t like it, the fact that she is screaming or that she is laughing loudly (Surtees 2007b: 204-6).

Accommodating beneficiaries with serious mental illness can also be problematic (but essential where appropriate alternatives are not available) including being extremely disruptive for other shelter residents, as illustrated by the comments of a psychologist in the former quote and shelter residents in the latter two quotes:

There were [two girls], grave mental disorder, they set fire to the floor, ruined the walls with glue. They cannot control themselves, they are ill. But the state cannot give them anything (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007: 88).

Yes, and then they put us up in one house... one girl had some problem in her head. She’s crazy, she can just kill someone (Surtees 2007b: 209-10).

She was having hallucinations, she left several times and came back. Then again, she didn’t have parents or anyone (Surtees 2007b: 209-10).

Other “difficult” cases are equally complicated to accommodate in typical shelter programmes. Moreover, these categories are not mutually exclusive and many beneficiaries face multiple difficulties, further complicating service provision and prospects for successful

⁹ Some of these children were trafficked with their parents (or were born of a trafficking experience) and required similar support and care; others had been left in the country of origin but were reunited with the parent upon return. Some shelters allow for the accommodation of parents along with their children, other shelters have accommodated victims along with other family members like siblings. Considering the family unit as a whole may, in many cases, be vital to the provision of shelter services. Some service providers reported mothers declining assistance because they were anxious to return to their children and/or because those children did not have someone appropriate to care for them (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007, Surtees 2008a&b, 2005).

re/integration (Surtees 2008a).¹⁰ Finding appropriate care options for a wide range of beneficiaries is complex both in the short and long term. Few shelters currently meet these needs.

The stress of communal living arrangements

For many clients, the communal nature of the shelter can be stressful, particularly given that other beneficiaries have also suffered terrible experiences and are in crisis. Having emerged from highly stressful, violent and exploitative conditions some victims find that recalibrating their responses and behaviours to the shelter setting is a difficult adjustment. In the initial phase, many clients continue to use “survival responses” such as self-protection and competition on which they depended during trafficking, responses which can detrimentally affect their relations and interactions with other residents and staff (Zimmerman 2003: 7).

Descriptions by assisted victims about the stress levels in the shelters include the following:

I would like to say that it is very difficult for the shelter staff to work with all beneficiaries... Each beneficiary has her own character... Some girls try to contact their owners... Many girls find it difficult to begin a new life... Many of them are used to making easy money ... It is hard for them to recover physically and psychologically at least in the first period (Surtees 2007b: 144-45).

Women were nervous, agitated, some of them frightened. Some of them didn't speak at all, others spoke too much (Surtees 2007b: 144-45).

When I got here, I was cursing all of the time. I got into fights or was hysterical. [The shelter director] said that it wasn't nice and I listened because she said that little by little things would get better. And then I told myself not to do those things anymore and everything became normal (Surtees 2007b: 144-45).

When I was in the shelter, there were moment when I was throwing the food from the table and breaking different things (Zimmerman et al. 2006: 20).

Such responses are typical and common given the trauma and exploitation they have suffered. Victims may need to react in these “aggressive” or “problematic” ways (both consciously and unconsciously) as a means of processing and coming to terms with their experiences. Problems can be exacerbated where these reactions are not acknowledged, respected and, to some extent, accommodated. Suppression of these reactions may increase frustration and aggressive impulses which can slow recovery and eventual smooth relations in the shelter environment.

Lack of personal space and privacy can amplify existing problems.¹¹ Many programme staff highlighted the importance of good conditions in residential facilities to, at least in part,

¹⁰ This is consistent with programmes for domestic violence victims where, for example, feedback surveys for some shelter programmes found that shelters were often especially difficult for women with large families, language barriers or cultures that forbid sharing personal matters with strangers (Fulbright 2004).

assuage some of the stress of communal living. Physical space was underlined as important, as one service provider explained:

If we want people to change and recover, we need to create an appropriate environment for that to be possible. Having good conditions in your shelter is vital and also that you do not have too many people all together.

Having adequate space for clients (including private space where possible) and a functional arrangement of living quarters was often key in avoiding and/or addressing tensions and providing quality care. Accommodating victims in separate rooms (ideally with private bathrooms) was seen as one way to mitigate some of the stress that arises from close living quarters, as one shelter staff explained:

We have a big space at the center – it's more than 400 square meters. So we have the opportunity to accommodate people and if we see that the person is in, let's say, a complicated situation and he or she doesn't want to be mixed with others, we can isolate him because we have this possibility because of the big premises (Surtees & Somach 2008).

Problems with the closed shelter model

Many residential programs are closed and maintain confidential addresses. In some countries, this model involves a closed facility where individuals have little or no freedom of movement and must always be accompanied when outside the shelter. In other countries facilities (including residential reintegration programmes), while not strictly closed, are also not entirely open. They tend to be secret locations and the movements/activities of beneficiaries are monitored and limited (Brunovskis & Surtees 2008).¹²

Closed-type shelters were originally conceptualized for the accommodation of foreign victims who lacked legal status in the country¹³ and/or in high security cases. To the extent that security is the rationale, there may be situations where this model is appropriate. As one shelter expert in Europe noted:

In some cases we need to have a closed shelter because you can't have a proper level of security in an open shelter. If you have a victim of trafficking that is risky and is testifying in a case and being threatened then they need to be in a closed

¹¹ Personal space has also been an issue for many domestic violence victims accommodated in shelter. Many find the communal arrangement difficult to handle and programmes have increasingly explored options for private accommodation to offset this additional stressor (Fulbright 2004).

¹² Questions have been raised about closed shelter model, especially in cases of national victims in their countries of origin and foreign victims with legal stay options in the country of destination. See Brunovskis & Surtees 2007 & 2008; Gallagher & Pearson 2008; Milivojevic 2007; Reiter 2005; Rosenberg 2006; Surtees 2005b, 2007b.

¹³ Of note is that in some countries there has been little adjustment in the use of closed shelters in spite of changes in the composition of trafficking (e.g. the identification of national victims) and the legal framework (e.g. the issuance of temporary residence permits for foreign victims in many countries) (Brunovskis & Surtees 2008).

environment. We have to think also if we put the others at risk when we have them all in an open environment, not only the actual victim.

However, the use of closed shelters does not precisely correlate with established security concerns. Many shelters in BiH, for example, have a general policy that all trafficking victims require security as opposed to being based on an assessment of the security risks of each individual victim. Shelter staff typically felt that restricting the movement of victims within closed shelters was necessary for their protection – to prevent them from communicating with traffickers and being lured or threatened to go back, or in putting others in the shelter at risk by having traffickers identify the victims on the street and then follow them back to the shelter (Rosenberg 2006).

Not all victims of trafficking face the same level of risk. Moreover, risk levels may fluctuate according to situation, time, location and involvement in criminal proceedings. And yet many trafficked persons are kept in highly restrictive, closed settings without an established need. Risk assessments should be undertaken on an on-going basis and in response to the victim's evolving situation. While many anti-trafficking actors argue that it is better to err on the side of caution and anticipate high risk situations, and each victim's safety is paramount, this undifferentiated treatment does not come without a cost to victims. Where safety and security concerns are not relevant, overly emphasising these assumed risks (manifested in a closed shelter stay) may impede the recovery and stability of victims, with victims unnecessarily stressed and anxious about their safety.

Moreover, the model is used more broadly in both countries of origin and destination and not always only in response to legal issues or high-risk cases, as one shelter resident in SE Europe explained: "I have not any big complaints except that they didn't allow me to go out. I had no reason to be closed. I have no problems nor any risk. I haven't been denounced. I asked for a job very early because I was bored inside" (Surtees 2007b: 177). In Cambodia, there have been repeated incidences of trafficking victims trying to escape from closed facilities (Blakeslee et al. 2005: 14). Similarly, a study of child trafficking in SE Asia found beneficiaries unhappy with closed shelter programmes, as one trafficked boy explained: "I don't know why they are keeping me here. I didn't do anything wrong. I don't like it here. I want to go home" (ILO 2006: 34).

Such a universally restrictive approach has potential consequences for victim recovery. The isolation and control of closed shelters may limit not only an individual's psychological recovery but also options and possibilities for their social reintegration given that social contacts and economic possibilities are constrained by their closed living environment. How institutionalisation – and more particularly this form of highly restrictive institutionalisation – may impact the wellbeing and functioning of beneficiaries merits consideration and study. Issues of concern might centre around the ways that closed shelters impact the social and psychological impacts of beneficiaries, how such a model might foster dependency, how a focus on security may foster fear and anxiety amongst beneficiaries and so on (Frederick 2005: 141, Surtees 2008a). Where minors are kept in closed facilities, there are further potential developmental impacts. One woman had been in a closed shelter with her daughter for two and half years while custody papers were obtained and legal proceedings pursued. The girl (now ten years old) – was not able to attend school or play freely and was being educated on an *ad hoc* voluntary basis by one of the shelter staff. One fourth of her life had

been in a shelter and the preceding years with her mother in a trafficking situation (Surtees 2007b: 204-6, cf. Surtees 2008a, 2006a: 15, Brunovskis & Surtees 2007).

Restrictions in assistance and services – like closed shelters – may factor into a victim’s decision to decline assistance. A closed model approach led one victim to question her decision to accept assistance: “It was just like a flat, maybe the bad thing was you weren’t allowed to go anywhere... It would have been good going out for a short while, at least, but being closed for two and a half months, it makes you go crazy. I might have not agreed to come [if I knew about the limited freedoms]” (Surtees 2007b: 178, see also Brunovskis & Surtees 2007).

The use of confidential shelters has increasingly come under scrutiny in domestic violence programmes where, as with trafficking victims, the rationale is often client and staff safety. The discussion centres around whether violence will occur where shelters are known publicly, the assertion that publicly known shelters can invite community support and protection of residents and staff, and that there is little evidence that public sites are a greater risk to staff or beneficiaries (Haaken & Yragui 2003: 58-59, 66). While domestic violence shelters are technically not “closed”, trafficking shelters could nonetheless potentially benefit from some of these findings, discussions and assessments.

There are also outstanding questions about the legality of closed shelters and the extent to which the accommodation of trafficked persons in closed shelters constitutes detention, something prohibited in international and often national legislation. According to the *UN Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking*, E/2002/68/Add.1, detention of victims is inappropriate and (implicitly) illegal. Under its provisions, States are required to ensure that trafficked persons are not, in any circumstances, held in immigration detention or other forms of custody, a position linked to the issue of non-prosecution for status-related offences (Gallagher & Pearson 2008: 10). While it may be the case that countries require foreign trafficking victims to be accommodated in closed type shelters, this may not be consistent with international principles and standards for the protection of trafficking victims.¹⁴ And while the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) guarantees freedom of movement only for persons lawfully within a country (which trafficked persons may not be), the Human Rights Committee has noted that freedom of movement is “an indispensable condition for the free development of a person” and any restrictions on this right “must be provided by law, must be necessary ... and must be consistent with all other rights” (Gallagher & Pearson 2008: 13). The Committee has also noted that:

Restrictive measures must conform to the principle of proportionality; they must be appropriate to achieve their protective function; they must be the least intrusive instrument amongst those which might achieve the desired result; and they must be proportionate to the interest to be protected... The principle of proportionality has to be respected not only in the law that frames the restrictions, but also by the

¹⁴ For example, Guideline 1/5 calls on states to protect the right of all persons to freedom of movement and ensuring that anti-trafficking measures do not infringe upon this right, while guideline 6 calls for the provision of safe and adequate shelter that meets the needs of trafficked persons.

administrative and judicial authorities in applying the law (Gallagher & Pearson 2008: 13, see also Dottridge 2007: 8).

A related issue is the extent to which trafficked persons can consent to their accommodation in closed shelters models given that they are commonly giving consent under constrained circumstances (i.e. because it is the only assistance available, because they are told that it is mandatory, because they have not fully understood the assistance and implications of accepting assistance, because they have no other options). In some settings, trafficked persons are kept in shelters and institutions without their or their families' consent (Frederick 2005: 141). Other victims give consent in constrained situations and, in hindsight, may not have accepted this shelter assistance had they been fully informed of its nature (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007; Surtees 2007). There is little recognition of the fact that consent should be sought on an on-going basis (Gallagher & Pearson 2008: 20).¹⁵

The constraints of shelter rules and regulations

Rules and regulations are needed to facilitate the smooth operation of shelter facilities – to avoid security and safety issues; to organise communal living; to prevent conflict between residents and between residents and staff; and to prevent victims being pursued by their traffickers. However, there has been some recent discussion of the need to consider and evaluate more carefully some of the rules and restrictions in place in residential programmes, including how this impacts overall effectiveness in advancing the recovery of assistance beneficiaries. Typical rules and restrictions may include, for example, restrictions on the use of telephones; restricted freedom of movement; set timetables and schedules; and limited contact with persons outside the programme (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007; Brunovskis & Surtees 2008; Surtees 2007b).

While there is an argument to be made for a period of decompression after trafficking (i.e. to allow victims to break with the trafficker, disrupt the relationship of dependency and create a safe space), this rationale has temporal limits. Nevertheless, restrictions are often longer term, sometimes for several months and even longer. In some programmes in SEE beneficiaries are not permitted to keep mobile phones and the use of the shelter's phone is strictly regulated. Further, the lack of privacy and trust demonstrated by monitored phone calls must inform how victims experience the world around them and the process of reintegration itself (Brunovskis & Surtees 2008 & 2007). A number of victims have shared how they felt about and experienced these restrictions:

I have only one objection – I can't phone my family. Only once a month. This is not enough. Everything else is ok. I wish it were possible to speak more often with children and family (Surtees 2007b: 175).

The first thing she asked me [at the shelter] was if I had a mobile, because they first said I wouldn't be allowed to have one. It came as a shock, what would I do without a phone? I'd die (Surtees 2007b: 175).

¹⁵ Please see Gallagher and Pearson (2007) for a discussion of the legal issues surrounding closed shelters for trafficked persons.

Rules also typically include the use of timetables and schedules and restricted contact with persons outside of the programme. Most shelters in SEE have set time schedules – for meals, activities and bed times – with the rationale that this was to keep order in the shelter, to keep things running smoothly and without conflict. However, for a number of respondents (the majority of whom were adults), these schedules were restrictive and, in their opinion, often unnecessary. Some experienced the rules – like being required to take afternoon naps or told what they were allowed to eat – as infantilising, stressful and constraining, as shelter residents explained:

But the problem was because we had to wake up and then to go to sleep again during resting hours from two to four pm. For example, we woke up around nine to ten am. Then we had to go to sleep from two to four pm. Then you woke up and you had to go to sleep at eleven pm. I didn't like that, for example. We were not allowed to watch TV during resting hours. I didn't like that (Surtees 2007b: 174).

For example there were some rules about going out. We couldn't go out the centre, and they wouldn't let us, unless we were going to the professional building centre. I felt like I was in the police station again, like a prisoner (Surtees 2007b: 177).

I think the first thing is freedom... For two months and two weeks, I was locked between four walls. I was banging my head against the radiator and I was hitting the walls with my bare fists. I was simply going crazy. When I talked to the director and she told me that I was supposed to stay for two or three more months, I was destroyed. I protested (Surtees 2007b: 177).

Many trafficked persons receiving assistance in Asia also took issue with the restrictions involved in the care models, as one beneficiary explained:

After we were rescued we were kept in a shelter for seven months. We had to go through health check ups and the doctors were very uncooperative with us. We spent a very regimented type of life in the shelter. Several girls during their stay there even requested the shelter in charge to send them back to the brothel or to their house (ILO 2006: 8).

In Nepal, restrictions on movement while in shelters were one reason for some trafficked persons not to seek out support (ICCO 2004: 32).

While there are obvious reasons why rules and restrictions are needed, there are also indications that they are not exclusively grounded in trafficking realities. The use of restrictions is an established element in therapeutic treatment, most notably within psychiatry and treatment of addictions. However, any use of restrictions must be guided by a clear rationale for their use, strict supervision and guidelines for appropriate use, ensuring individuals' rights and ethical treatment and that violations of victims' rights do not occur (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007). That the majority of beneficiaries did not face security problems raises questions about the unilateral need for isolation and secrecy (and by association, no phones and no outside contact) that is an aspect of many residential programs (Brunovskis & Surtees 2008).

Shelter programmes where trafficked persons had greater autonomy in terms of basic daily activities – like doing their own cooking; their daily schedule; relationships with persons outside the programme; and managing their leisure time – were generally more positively received by victims (Surtees 2007b). Rules developed in discussion with clients are likely to be more appropriate, responsive and experienced more positively. As has been noted amongst victims of domestic violence, shelters should not replicate past dynamics of control and limited autonomy by trying to control all aspects of residents' conduct or denying them the ability to make choices about their lives. Some domestic violence shelters are problematic for some clients precisely when they find the rules too restrictive, as one shelter staff explained: "Women have said that it is as controlling as an abusive relationship. In addition to the strict rules, there was always someone wanting to know their business. It was causing some women to go back to their batterers" (Fulbright 2004).¹⁶ Rules that severely restrict residents' autonomy do not empower them to evaluate their options and make decisions about their lives and futures. To support victims in taking control of their own lives, residents must participate on their own terms, to the greatest extent possible and consistent with the recovery needs of other shelter residents (Minnesota Advocates 2006, cf. Hayward et al. 2000: 340).

Such features resonate with some trafficked persons, who may decline assistance because of such controlling features (see Brunovskis & Surtees 2007) or come to resent the staff and programmes (see Bjerkan & Dyrliid 2005: 131, Brunovskis & Surtees 2008, Milivojevic 2007: 227, Surtees 2007b). The use of penalties and punishments is potentially controlling, infantilising and unnecessarily restrictive, as shelter residents explained:

They did catch me once looking out the window and they gave me a warning. It was very strange to get a warning for such a stupid thing. But now I calmed down. But still it is not fair. It's still a window and you're only looking out of it. And even if we are to leave the windows open, they still think we're looking out. But this doesn't mean that if we leave the windows open I'm looking out all day long (Surtees 2007b: 181).

It would only be normal that if I met someone I'd say I live in the shelter. And I'd come here and say that I'm seeing someone and that I want to go out with him. So I met this guy in the video club, we've been seeing each other for two years now, and he invites me out, but I can't go because I have to be home by ten. What should I tell him about why I can't go out, why I don't have a phone? They're depriving people of all these things. Maybe I want to get drunk. I need it at some moment... Why must they control it and say you can't do it? And all the things I wasn't allowed to do. I'd go to [a nearby town], get drunk and then come to the shelter and say...I don't even remember the lies I said (Surtees 2007b: 182).

The importance of being able to make choices and being in control of one's life while in shelter programmes cannot be overemphasised. Where rules and restrictions impinge on

¹⁶ Dependence on services means that beneficiaries may have little choice in negotiating shelter rules with programme staff nor are there always the means by which beneficiaries can express dissent or negotiate (Brunovskis & Surtees 2008). Where beneficiaries do "rebel", this can be seen and dismissed as bad or irrational behavior (Joniak 2003: 967, cf. Brunovskis & Surtees 2007).

clients' sense of control and freedom, the result for the individual's recovery, the pre-eminent consideration for any assistance programme, can only be counterproductive.

Cultural and linguistic differences

Many social service interventions – including shelters – are developed based on the worldview and perceptions of those (usually middle class professionals) who design and implement them.¹⁷ Programmes are designed and implemented according to the normalised models – of food, language, child rearing, social codes, dress, etc. – of those who develop them. Organisations often reflect their own perspective, interests and attitudes in how they define trafficking, who they are able and/or willing to assist and what kinds of assistance they are willing to provide (Long 2004; Surtees and Somach 2008). Therefore, shelter support may not fully reflect the needs, values or worldviews of beneficiaries (whether social, economic, religious, cultural), which may be limiting and even alienating for some clients.

Studies of immigrant and refugee women have often noted the complications in conveying information and providing services across linguistic and cultural barriers, barriers experienced both by staff and beneficiaries. In some cultures, sharing personal problems with strangers is not acceptable. In others, the focus on an independent life may be problematic for women who come from societies and cultures that frame their lives *vis-à-vis* family and community. Where minority and immigrant women link their well-being directly to family and community, distance from family and community while in the shelter can be a serious stressor. Even the type of services may be out of step with beneficiaries, as explained by one shelter worker in Canada: “We act strictly based on our Canadian society expectations of what counselling should be and expect them to act according to what we think is appropriate” (Arora 2004: 13-15). Moreover, there are myriad cultural divides which must be considered and addressed when working with trafficked persons who may come from foreign countries or from different cultures/ethnicities within a country.

One trafficking victim spoke about the gap she felt with the shelter staff abroad, all of whom she liked very much and felt supported by but from whom she felt an intangible distance:

I did not feel comfortable. I didn't feel that they could understand me and I needed to speak with somebody else. But I came here and I had someone with whom to speak. I felt that somebody could understand me. I felt better when somebody was listening to me. In [that language] I couldn't say everything. I didn't know all the words. .. [It was] not just the language, maybe it was also not being [from that country] (Surtees 2007b: 156).

In other cases, cultural differences resulted in discrimination by staff as well as by other beneficiaries. An assessment in Cambodia found that Vietnamese women and girls face discrimination in shelter programmes: “The enmity between the Khmer and Vietnamese spills over to these victims. Vietnamese victims may not be treated as well as others in some

¹⁷ This has been an issue within the domestic violence shelter movement in the UK and North America which was originally established by white, middle class, educated European women (Arora 2004).

shelters and also face possible deportation to Vietnam... NGOs reported a high incidence of flight from shelters by Vietnamese victims” (Blakeslee et al. 2004: 14).¹⁸

More attention is needed to the specific social and cultural dynamics that influence recovery and reintegration. A victim’s national and cultural background informs which services are sought and appropriate as well as how to administer assistance. Culture plays a central role in interpreting symptoms and treating patients and there is a need to take into account this broader socio-cultural terrain in the care of beneficiaries. One service organisation in Italy explained an extreme example: “We were helping a Romanian woman who was convinced she was possessed by a demon... we sought help from the formal (public) health services, in addition to consulting psychiatrists and ethno-psychiatrists. The possibility of referring her to an orthodox exorcist was not excluded” (Zimmerman 2003: 6506). Cultural mediators who understand and translate the customs and codes of both groups can facilitate communication and consequently service provision for a culturally diverse population.

Linguistic barriers can also compromise service provision. Language differences can be addressed, in part, by translators and multilingual staff, but translation is not in and of itself a panacea. At a very practical level, the costs of translation/interpretation can be prohibitive. In addition, some trafficking victims explained that they were uncomfortable working through translation: “They wanted to communicate with me but I didn’t want to. I was still feeling afraid. What I had been through. I didn’t want to share it with anyone. It was my life, and all the more because of the translator, who was [from my country]. I thought my life is not her business” (Surtees 2007b). In other situations, victims reported feeling badly treated and even judged by translators: “[My friend], however, as far as she told me, was badly treated by the translator who was brought there by the police. The police officer didn’t understand what the translator was saying” (Surtees 2007b). Moreover, not all services can be effectively provided when working through interpreters; there is the risk of miscommunication and even misdiagnosis – for example, in the provision of psychological assistance.

As many victims stay temporarily and even permanently in countries of destination, attention to different social, cultural and linguistics factors are important (Surtees 2007b: 157). Social services in many countries involve assisting victims in dealing with the multiple stresses of life in a new country/culture, such as accessing services they are not aware of, apprising them of the legal framework in the country, providing linguistically and culturally appropriate services, considering cultural issues about privacy, stigma and shame, paying attention to family and community control over decisions, etc. (Cooper et al 2004: 30-32, cf. Arora 2004). Shelter programmes for trafficking victims must equally navigate these cultural and linguistic barriers, helping not only foreign clients to access services but also persons from ethnic minorities or races who may experience mainstream assistance as confusing and inaccessible. The programmes must work to incorporate the needs, values and worldviews of these “other” women.

¹⁸ This is consistent with domestic violence shelters residents who reported stress caused by lack of sensitivity to and accommodation of their social and cultural needs – for instance, being prohibited from cooking food from their home country, practicing religious ceremonies or doing other activities which they value as central to their lives and well-being (Arora 2004).

The (high) cost of shelters

Shelters are expensive programmes because of factors like:

- the need for permanent and qualified staff,¹⁹
- the need for a permanent facility,
- recurring costs and expenses regardless of whether the shelter is operating at capacity,²⁰ and
- the fewer victims which can be assisted when employing this model.²¹

NGO representatives managing shelters in SEE considered the issue of cost and funding to be critical:

Funding is a huge hindrance, as we are never able to know if or when we will have funds. And it's difficult to provide just the most basic care to victims, who arrive at the shelter lacking any personal belongings. And providing clothing and food is only a start, providing proper assistance and protection is even more costly (Surtees 2006a: 20-22).

NGOs need constant and substantial support – importantly, staff are projects – often funding is only for projects and not for staff, but we need to pay people too...you can't have people in and out on projects, you need funding to support the staff who are working on these issues (Surtees 2006a: 20-22).

We want to help, we're prepared to do it, but without financial support we can't do it...We don't know how much longer [our donor] will provide support, and as it is, it's not enough – victims need much more. Where should we send these victims? We only provide temporary support at the shelter, and the local administration can't

¹⁹ A study of shelters for victims of trafficking in different regions found that the average number of staff included nine full-time employees, three part-time staff and three volunteers (IOFA undated: 12). The number and type of staff needed for the different type of shelters is linked not only to the specific size of the shelter but also its programme objectives. Staffing for emergency response interventions, immediately following exit of trafficking, will require intensive one-on-one time with victims, 24 hour staffing and various types of professional. The staff to beneficiary ratio is likely higher than that of semi-independent living arrangements where staff are not required on site for 24 hours a day and where support needs are not as intense.

²⁰ Some shelter programmes exceed their ideal capacity in an effort to meet the accommodation needs of victims, which can potentially compromise the quality of care provided to residents. However, not accommodating these victims can, in a very real sense, compromise their physical safety and well-being. That being said, there are other shelters which do not run at full capacity. In SE Europe since 2003 some countries have seen a decreased number of identified and assisted victims and many shelters have been running below capacity.

²¹ The size and composition of shelters and residential accommodation varies considerably according to target group and stage of recovery. One survey of 27 shelters, most of which housed adult female victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation, found that the average number of beds was 14 and the median number was eight (IOFA nd: 10). The difference in numbers may be due to the blurring of different stages of assistance and reintegration. Many longer term reintegration shelters accommodate fewer, as large numbers are hard to manage and can create a disruptive environment for meaningful reintegration. By contrast, transit centres may house more victims who stay for short periods, en route to their final destination.

ensure homes for victims who are unable to return home (who have no family support), and if they didn't finish school and/or get a job, if we don't support them with money, we can't help them (Surtees 2006a: 20-22).

With few exceptions, most funding for shelters continues to come from international donors rather than national governments, as both IO and NGO representatives explained:

The international community funds local NGOs to manage shelters for victims of trafficking. Without international support these shelters would not exist because the Government has insufficient resources to fund them (Surtees 2006a: 22).

Many donors say that shelter money should come from the government, but the government is not providing this funding. So [we] raise money, but are never sure of resources (Surtees 2006a: 22).

A transition to at least some government support is important toward national ownership of and commitment to assistance and protection for trafficked persons. However, at the best of times, funding for shelter programmes for victims of trafficking (and victims of violence more generally) is inadequate and insecure. Thus, it is urgent that shelter organisations find means and mechanisms to ensure sustainability such as ways to access adequate funds or adjust the shelter programme to mesh with available resources.

6. Residential model is not an option for everyone

The very nature of the shelter programmes (centralised assistance in a residential model) is not feasible for some trafficked persons, limitations posed by individual and social circumstances, namely:

- a shelter stay prevents them from earning money to support and assist their families; and
- victims and/or their families may be uncomfortable with the separation involved in a shelter stay.

Family expectations and needs

Many studies have documented the need to support one's family (whether as parent, sibling or child) as one reason that people are vulnerable to trafficking. This economic dynamic generally does not change as a result of trafficking and may be further amplified if debt has been incurred as a result of trafficking or to fund the initial migration. Even with its many resources and opportunities a shelter is not an option if victims have (economic) responsibilities to their families. Some victims are responsible for a dependent child or spouse; others for a dependent sibling or parent. Where trafficked persons are an important (even the main) income earner for their family, there may be financial consequences to a shelter stay in that they are unable to work and earn money to support their family (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007).

One shelter director in a destination country explained how it was difficult for women to stay in her shelter for precisely these economic reasons: "It was hard for them to explain to

their families back home why they aren't coming home and why they're not able to send money. For women with children, they usually come from broken marriages and need to work. Many have children and their mothers take care of the children while they work abroad". She went on to relate the problem faced by one foreign woman assisted at her shelter:

Some trafficking victims experience their stay in the shelter as a waste of time since they want to make money. One [foreign] woman left her child with her mother when she went abroad to work and when she called her mother she asked that she come home since school was starting and they needed money for the child to go back to school. The mother did not know that she was staying at the shelter and she did not want to tell her but also did not have anything else to tell her so each time they talked they fought. The trafficking victims have no money and no explanation for why they are not working or why they stay at the shelter. While trafficking victims are in the shelter, it would be useful if some funds could be sent to support the family... The families back home need to be assisted back home, not just the trafficking victim so it can relieve her burden to find work and support the family.

For some victims a shelter stay (with the attendant assistance) was considered a luxury which they couldn't afford precisely because of the need to work and support their family. This was one aspect of victims declining assistance in SEE (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007: 89-91). In Cambodia, some Vietnamese women trafficked into prostitution are subject to debt contracts and experience family pressure to remit money and to comply with their exploitative situation (Blakeslee et al. 2004: 14, cf. TAF 2005: 44). And, in the United States, one trafficking organisation found that trafficking victims often do not seek state benefits because they are more commonly focused on sending money home and paying off debt before thinking of their own needs (Shigekane 2007: 126).

Separation from family/community is not desirable or possible

Many victims reject or are resistant to the shelter model because of the separation that it involves from their family and social network. The first inclination of many trafficked persons is to immediately return home to their families after having escaped trafficking rather than accept assistance in a shelter programme, as one woman explained: "When I was offered to go to the shelter here, I thought it must be like the one [abroad], which I liked. But I did not want to go to the shelter. I just wanted to go home" (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007: 50-6). This seemed to be particularly common among women who have experienced very traumatic trafficking experiences who, while able to benefit from assistance, are likely to decline assistance because the shelter model creates distance with their social environment (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007: 54).

Given that many shelters restrict contact between victim and family, even in cases where the family was not involved in the trafficking, victims may find the shelter model unpalatable for both trafficked persons and their families. Many victims struggle with loneliness while in residential assistance programmes where access to family and community was generally restricted, both when assisted at home and abroad, as one victim illustrated: "I cried for two weeks. It was hard. Although there were problems at home, I kept thinking and I still think

about home. I am safe here and everything is fine but I think about my family all the time” (Surtees 2007b: 150).

Wanting to return to the family rather than staying at a shelter does not necessarily mean that trafficked persons have had (or anticipate having) bad experiences in a shelter programme. Wanting to go home may reflect a desire to return to a happy and healthy family relationship. Where a shelter stay restricts this contact victims may be less inclined to accept it regardless of the strength of the assistance available at the shelter (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007b: 54-6).

In addition, there are some situations in which trafficked persons are discouraged from staying at a shelter by their family who may be confused by or are suspicious of the shelter programme. As discussed above, some shelters are closed and secret, even to victim’s closest family members. One police officer explained how this can affect families’ attitudes to assistance:

Generally, the family does not want the victim to come to the shelter. This is because she has been away for two years and now she is back. They want her to come home, and we try to explain the situation, but they say we are harassing them and they don’t see it as help. The family has to contact the victim through the police. Even when they have visits we do this through the police and arrange to meet at the police office. The shelters are secret and it is not good if the families see them and also, it is very difficult for other victims, whose family don’t come to see them, [to see that other victims get visits from their family]. The family does not need to know where the shelter is. It is secret for police reasons (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007: 57).

While there are good reasons for limiting information about shelters, this nevertheless may be both confusing and worrying for family members. Many victims described their families’ suspicion of assistance, worried that they were being abused or exploited in the shelters. One trafficked woman explained that when she was first offered assistance at the shelter her mother would not even let the service providers speak to her. She feared her daughter would be taken away and put in a cell behind bars:

My relatives were influencing my mother [that the situation in the shelter must be bad] and that hurt me since I felt my mother didn’t trust me. My relatives were doubtful [of the shelter and its intentions]. And my mother didn’t understand why she couldn’t come to the shelter and see for herself. I used to tell my mother that they gave me clothing and cosmetics. My mother would demand that I show her that they didn’t hurt me – that there were no bruises. She’d tell me to take off my clothing to check for herself. Now my mother is grateful for the help (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007: 57-8, 67).

In other cases, families simply wanted their daughter, sister or mother to return home so that they could be together again. One victim declined all assistance offered because her family wanted her to come home. They said that they would support her in spite of her being pregnant which is a common source of tension and even rejection in families of trafficking victims: “We couldn’t wait to see her when she came back. We were so worried. We were so

excited to have her back that we accepted the baby... There is space in the back and maybe we will build a space for the baby to sleep” (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007: 66).

Service providers themselves stress the importance of family acceptance and the value of returning home, as illustrated by one social worker in SEE:

They want the family to accept them, to help them. Because the family is life long support. And I believe that they want to go back to the family, even for when they find the support of the family. The family is ready; the family is the first choice that they made actually. If we say “do you want to go back to the family?” and the family accepts them then they go back to the family. If we say “so you want to go back to the family” and then the family does not accept you and you get in touch with the family and they say “no I don’t care” then the only place is the shelter (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007: 66).

7. Alternative options and interventions

What becomes clear is that there are both advantages and disadvantages to the shelter model and that the appropriateness and effectiveness of shelter programmes for trafficked persons are ultimately case specific. While for many trafficking victims a shelter stay is an essential step in their post-trafficking recovery, for others a shelter stay is not necessarily an option or solution.

Reconsidering and tailoring shelter structures, operations and rules

To some degree, the problems and issues raised are a function of how some shelter programmes are designed and operated. Where this is the case, it is possible to make adjustments to the shelter programmes to better meet the needs and interests of a wider range of beneficiaries.

Shelters are typically communal facilities with full time staff and quite comprehensive rules about the operation of the shelter. However, as discussed above, communal living is not always the most appealing or effective model for some beneficiaries. It may also not be appropriate at later stages of recovery, after the initial crisis has been dealt with. Semi-independent living programmes and private apartments might be explored when a communal living arrangement is a deterrent, as these afford clients both the privacy they require and access to professional support and intervention. Said one domestic violence service provider about this alternative residential model: “The women appreciated the privacy, the freedom to practice religious beliefs, and the independent living. They no longer feel that they are under the microscope”. Such models may also serve to address the high costs of shelter programmes; private living may be more cost effective because it doesn’t require the staff and infrastructure of a communal shelter (Fulbright 2004).

Shelter rules and regulations should be developed with the participation of beneficiaries to ensure that programmes are consistent with their needs and are satisfactory to them as clients. Even where shelter clients understand and agree with the importance of rules, they often objected to rules which did not make sense to them or which they felt were unnecessarily restrictive (Surtees 2007b). Programme rules which were consistent with how

one behaves at home were deemed acceptable and reasonable by clients, as one shelter resident explained:

Yes, typical things... They were the same rules – no alcohol, no drugs, no revealing the address, no going out too much, you're supposed to tell someone when you're going out. In the beginning we were supposed to report all the time, in the beginning, the first month and a half it was only until eleven pm, and then we could go out occasionally ...basically there were some rules, basically it was not doing the things you wouldn't do at home. It wasn't that strict. Basically, the reasonable limitations, not like in those shelters where they overdo it (Surtees 2007b: 183).

One client reported that even though the police determined that she did not face any specific security risk, she was prevented from spending time with her mother who lived in the same city as the shelter and was able to call her mother only once a week. Given that reintegration was the goal of the programme, being disconnected from her family was counterproductive and stressful for her:

I could go to my mother, but I had to return at ten pm. They let me go. Then I would return at ten pm. But that upset me, why at ten pm? Why I can't stay to sleep at my mother?... I was unsatisfied because I couldn't go out, I couldn't phone my mother when I wanted and because we had to go to bed at eleven p.m. That upset me. This is not the army (Surtees 2007b: 181-82).

By contrast, another client explained being satisfied with a programme where the rules were adjusted over time and in discussion with beneficiaries, based on their needs and circumstances:

The staff found out about that... So they called a meeting and I was thinking that they would throw me out for coming late. But instead we sat down and discussed things as normal people do, to see what each person wants and needs, and what they could do to meet those needs. And I asked them why I wasn't able to go out, why won't they let me spend one weekend at home, why all the people from [the capital] were able to go... So, first we settled that, you can go home and sleep over. Then [the social workers] came the next day and said they decided that we could go out when we wanted, "if you want to stay out until four in the morning, okay". The only condition was that everyone fulfilled their obligations, meaning you can't be late for work, school. So we started functioning really well. It was a breakthrough. It's important when no one has control over you... Having that freedom is really... you're human regardless of what happened in the past. You've got some problems, maybe with yourself, but that's what I needed, to be able to go out, and socialise, and not make the shelter my whole world (Surtees 2007b: 185).

Alternatives to shelters

The efficacy of the shelter model itself is at question given some of the issues raised in this paper including:

- the need to earn money to support/contribute to the family economy;

- the desire to return home to the family immediately;
- certain beneficiary profiles such as adult men, adults with families, minors, victims of other forms of trafficking;
- the social and psychological impact of long term institutionalisation;
- the “isolation” of shelters as potentially marginalising for residents.

Possible alternatives to shelters should be explored in appropriate circumstances to address these different issues.

One option is the development of non-residential programmes to serve the needs of those who require the range of resources and services provided by a shelter but for whom shelter programmes are inappropriate. This approach can also help beneficiaries – like adult men, adults with families, minors, and victims of other forms of trafficking – who currently may not be able to or wish to be accommodated in shelter programmes but who do require the range of other resources and services which are offered as part of shelter programmes. Increasingly there have been initiatives in SEE to access local services for the assistance and reintegration of trafficked persons in their communities of origin in recognition that not all trafficking victims can or will accept shelter-based assistance. It is also a clear recognition that assistance needs go beyond the time spent in a shelter facility. Similarly, in other regions, community based assistance is being explored. For example, in Cambodia, alternative options for care might include foster care, kinship care and care at the temple (Kavoukis 2004, Surtees 2000).

Alternative forms of support may be available to trafficking victims from family/friends or the community (e.g. church or community groups).²² Where assistance is community-based, some of the problems faced in the context of shelters may not arise. Victims may be able to return to their families and access different forms of assistance, like job placement or vocational training. In fact, it was generally agreed that where alternative options were available, victims preferred to pursue them, as one social worker in Albania noted: “If they find any other source of support – like family or friend – they might leave [the shelter]. It’s a reflection period and they are encouraged to think of what support is available to them... They usually only leave when they have support outside” (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007: 71-72).

²² In some communities, religious organisations play a prominent role in providing social assistance and assisting the socially vulnerable, including victims of trafficking. In some areas of Albania, the Catholic Church plays a prominent role in the daily life of congregation members and in the provision of social assistance. Assistance from the Church is consistent with community members’ world view and these same community members may be more resistant to and suspicious of assistance from “outside” organisations (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007: 71-2). In spite of the important role that can be played by religious organisations, attention must also be paid to situations when this religious assistance is somehow conditional on religious involvement or where the ideological position of the organisation on issues such as abortion, prostitution and/or marriage can have a negative or constraining impact on offers of and access to assistance by trafficked women. One victim felt that religious organisations put undue pressure on victims who needed assistance: “There are many representatives of different religions in [our] villages who attract people and offer help on the condition of converting to their religion. This is not good when you are manipulated by someone or when there are some conditions to accepting assistance. It should be sincere, from the bottom of one’s heart (Surtees 2007b).

That being said, non-residential programmes and services cannot address all problems associated with the shelter model. Trafficked persons who cannot stay at a shelter because of the need to support their family may equally face problems in finding the time and opportunity to access non-residential services. One woman described how she had enjoyed the support she was able to get from one assistance organisation but could not continue to access this assistance in the long term: “It was a very good thing that they came and offered help; it helped me a lot, psychologically. I felt calmer when I came here. Outside, everything felt dark, like people were saying bad things about me. But after a while I stopped coming here because I had to work”. The girl was living at home and had very strained relationships with her mother and brother and her primary aspiration was to be able to live independently. This meant that she had to work many hours to earn money to pay rent and food costs and, as a consequence, could not benefit from the psychological assistance and support offered by the organisation (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007).

Mainstreaming trafficking assistance

Policymakers and service providers should consider how anti-trafficking assistance can be dovetailed appropriately and effectively with other assistance programmes (i.e. migrant worker groups, domestic violence programmes, single mothers, etc.) and/or mainstreamed into government social services. This would help address the situation where some victims decline assistance offered through formal assistance frameworks, including shelters, precisely because they prefer to access non-trafficking related services (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007: 64-70). An examination of the opportunities and limits of utilizing existing state social assistance frameworks, in countries where such a viable framework exists, might include recognising and categorizing trafficked persons as one category of vulnerability within social assistance programmes and developing appropriate responses within this broader social assistance structure.

Non-trafficking specific assistance is also likely to be more accessible to trafficked persons who are outside of the capital cities and large towns and where skills in trafficking identification and assistance are less developed. One Serbian girl who had been kidnapped was not identified as trafficked (she was trafficked to Italy and had been raped many times by her traffickers) but rather as a victim of kidnapping. She received psychological support and assistance (from GOs and NGOs), but not as part of the trafficking assistance framework. Anti-trafficking actors only became aware of the case when the trial took place and the girl testified, which was some time after she had been victimised. She and her mother, who was supporting her financially and emotionally, declined trafficking specific assistance because they had already received emergency assistance and said that, beyond this, they could cope on their own. The girl was constantly accompanied by her mother during the trial and it was clearly both this family support and the emergency (but not trafficking specific) services that were central to her recovery (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007; cf. Bjerkan 2005). This suggests that there can be trafficking cases which can be appropriately and effectively addressed using services available to the community generally.

The mainstreaming of anti-trafficking within government social services would also potentially address issues of sustainability in the longer term. However, standards of care available through government social services can vary widely. This approach would not present a sound option unless and until available government social services meet the level

and quality of care needed by trafficking victims. In the short term, alternative assistance programmes would still be needed to fill the gaps.

Throughout SEE and other regions of the world as well, NGOs providing services are primarily specialised in trafficking rather than on general social protection issues. Further, few service providers assist other socially vulnerable groups (i.e. victims of violence) in spite of the inter-related aspects of protection needs and many commonalities in approach. Given decreasing funds for trafficking, it may be worth considering if this is the best strategy in terms of appropriate services and future sustainability. While trafficking victims do have distinct needs, these needs (and the associated services) often overlap with other vulnerable groups. Anti-trafficking efforts, therefore, might best be considered a social protection issue within the social sector more generally and, thus, benefit from strategic links between service providers working with different vulnerable groups. Any consideration of moving some aspects of assistance to a country's more general social assistance framework would best be determined on a case-by-case basis (Surtees 2006a: 36; Surtees & Somach 2008).

Integrating anti-trafficking assistance with other social protection and vulnerability programmes has the additional advantage of mitigating the stigma which may exist against marginalised and stigmatised groups like trafficking victims. Organisations which offer services to unemployed or poor women appear to have had a certain success in reaching trafficking victims (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007). Some programmes have been specifically designed to mitigate the risk of identification as a trafficking victim; some organisations target socially vulnerable groups including, but not limited to, trafficking victims. In smaller towns and communities, this serves as an important form of camouflage. For instance, one organisation working in a very conservative environment in Albania, where there was little sympathy for trafficking victims, offered their trafficking specific assistance within a broader framework of assistance to unemployed people, offering classes and counselling to trafficking victims alongside others. In this way they successfully approach victims without exposing them as trafficked even in the presence of their families who generally knew nothing about the trafficking experience (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007: 125-6). Similarly, community women's groups in Nepal invite returnees to participate in women's and children's clubs to discuss various social and health issues which allows them to meet the returnees regularly and assess integration in less intrusive ways than organising a meeting or interview (ILO 2006: 30). And, in Thailand, trafficked women prefer to receive vocational training in heterogeneous groups rather than in a group of trafficked persons (ICCO 2004: 34). This can also be important when assisting less considered profiles of trafficking victims (i.e. trafficked men) – who may be less inclined to seek out or accept assistance because of socially prescribed expectations that men be able to look after themselves and not require assistance (Surtees 2008c&e, 2007b). It is also helpful in terms of reaching out to persons who may not necessarily see themselves as trafficked or who are uncomfortable with their categorization as 'trafficking victim' (Brunovskis & Surtees 2007, Surtees 2008c&e, 2007b).

Beneficiary involvement and inputs

One means of ensuring that assistance is responsive to victims' needs is by communicating and involving beneficiaries in assistance, not only in terms of their individual service plans but also in terms of their evaluation of services and services providers (Surtees forthcoming 2009, 2008b). By speaking with and learning from the experiences of beneficiaries, service

providers will be better equipped to assess when shelter models are (and are not) most suitable and what alternatives might be more responsive to their situation. Systems of intervention and assistance which are designed, implemented and adjusted in a participatory manner are more effective, efficient and ultimately humanistic.

How this involvement and participation can best be done, however, is an open question. Engaging with beneficiaries is a complicated process and involves both time and resources. Organisations use different tools to solicit inputs and participation of beneficiaries – for example, client feedback/satisfaction forms and questionnaires, anonymous suggestion or complaints boxes, interviews/discussions with beneficiaries and so on – each with advantages and constraints. Beyond specific tools is the process of participation itself – for example, the extent to which clients feel empowered to “criticise” services and organisation on which they depend, social and cultural taboos against criticism of an assistance organisation, willingness/ability to evaluate and critique in more repressive social and political environments (Surtees forthcoming 2009, 2008b). Far more time and attention is needed to how shelter programmes (and assistance organisations generally) can interact and engage with beneficiaries about programme models in the sensitive, ethical and constructive ways.

8. Conclusion

There is no question that shelters can and often do play a vital role in anti-trafficking assistance. Trafficked persons themselves have, in different ways and at different times, expressed their satisfaction with and gratitude for this form of residential programme, as one woman explained:

I'm so proud of those people. Thank god that such good people exist. Thanks to [the director], thanks a lot because she organized a place like this, where people like me can stay. Thanks to good people that give money and who think about us. We really need help. Not only me, but all girls there. I am very satisfied and I will be grateful until the end of my life to [the director] and all of the people who work in the organization (Surtees 2007b: 150).

However, shelter accommodation is not a panacea. Many trafficking victims find this model inaccessible and not universally suitable to their needs, and, for some, even unappealing. Where assistance frameworks organise support and assistance only around shelters, there may be missed opportunities to assist and support the recovery of a much wider range of trafficked persons. As illustrated by the accounts in this report and elsewhere, the needs of many trafficking victims are not being adequately met within the assistance model, which relies exclusively on shelter-based care. As a result of these accounts, it is time to reconsider how shelters are designed and implemented. It is also important to explore the suitability of other models of assistance (non-residential and non-trafficking specific) to examine how they can best help to meet the needs of those whose needs will be unmet if the near-exclusive reliance upon shelter-based care for trafficking victims continues. Persons who decline assistance or explore other avenues of support have often been overlooked. However, they can tell us much about moving ahead both within the shelter paradigm and also more broadly. A number of issues have been highlighted herein as a starting point for

discussion. Much more attention is needed to better understand how trafficked persons – with their varied backgrounds, needs and trafficking experiences – value the residential and non-residential services available to them. Only through this process will it be possible to provide the most appropriate and effective assistance to future victims of human trafficking.

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Appendix 1: About the NEXUS Institute to Combat Human Trafficking

The NEXUS Institute to Combat Human Trafficking, based in Vienna, is a multi-disciplinary policy and research centre dedicated to the development of more effective counter-trafficking responses by governments and non-governmental organizations around the world. NEXUS specializes in providing independent analysis based upon evidence-based research; objective assessment and constructive evaluation and expert technical advice, training and capacity-building support with the objective of helping to achieve more concrete and sustainable results in the area of counter-trafficking and related violations of human rights and criminal law.

NEXUS works globally and brings over a decade of experience addressing human trafficking, migration policy and related issues to its work, including extensive anti-trafficking research, policy and programmatic experience in Europe as well as other regions. This experience includes a number of recent trafficking studies and analysis including those listed in appendix 2.

For further information, please contact:
Stephen Warnath,
Executive Director
NEXUS Institute to Combat Human Trafficking
Vienna, Austria
Email: office@nexusinstitute.net

Appendix 2: NEXUS publications

The NEXUS Institute conducts empirical research and policy analysis on a range of issues and subjects related to trafficking in persons. Illustrations and examples of NEXUS' work include:

- *Efforts to Combat Human Trafficking in the OSCE Area: Coordination and Reporting Mechanisms: 2008 Annual Report of the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Trafficking Human Beings* (2008) which analyses anti-trafficking coordination and reporting mechanisms amongst OSCE member states;
- *Re/integration trafficked person – Handling “difficult” cases* (2008) explores the range of “difficult” cases faced in the re/integration of trafficked persons in SEE and what services are needed to support the reintegration process;
- *Re/integration trafficked person – how can our work be more effective?* (2008) explores some of the issues and obstacles to re/integration through the lens of re/integration programmes in SEE – issues identified by both service providers and trafficked persons themselves
- *Traffickers and trafficking in SEE: considering the other side of human trafficking* (2008) describes patterns of trafficking in SEE, with attention to traffickers and their activities;
- *Trafficking of men – a trend less considered: the case of Belarus and Ukraine* (2008) considers trafficking in men from Belarus and Ukraine including their trafficking experiences and what can be done to meet their assistance and protection needs;
- *Trafficked men, unwilling victims* (2008) consider why anti-trafficking agencies and trafficked persons themselves do not always make the link between men's experiences and trafficking in persons and why men may be resistant to be categorised as trafficked;
- *Method and models for mixing services for victims of domestic violence and trafficking in Europe and Eurasia* (2008) considers the different methods and models for assisting victim of domestic violence and trafficking including options for mixing these services;
- *Agency or illness – trafficking victims' choices and behaviours* (2008) considers assistance systems in SEE including the values and philosophies inherent in these programmes, with particular attention to the use of rules and restrictions and the impact these may have on victims' recovery;
- *Intersections between trafficking in persons and domestic violence* (2007) examines the relationship between the two issues with particular attention to whether the link is causal;
- *Leaving the past: when trafficking decline assistance* (2007) explores the trend of victims declining assistance, including the reasons behind these decisions;
- *Listening to victims* (2007) presents trafficked persons experiences of identification, return and assistance, including good practices and recommendations;
- *Handbook on anti-trafficking data collection in SE Europe: developing regional criteria* (2007) is a practical tool for how to collect, maintain and analyse data about both victims of trafficking and traffickers;
- *Victim assistance programmes in SE Europe* (2006) evaluates existing assistance and support for trafficking victims in the region;

- *Child Trafficking: Different Forms of Trafficking and Alternative Interventions* (2006) considers trafficking in minors for labour and begging as well as the existing assistance framework in the SEE region, with attention to how this does (or does not) meet the needs of minors trafficked for these less-considered forms of exploitation;
- *Child trafficking in Sierra Leone* (2005) outlines the scope and nature of child trafficking in the country;
- *Anti-Trafficking Programmes in Albania* (2005) evaluates the range of USAID anti-trafficking efforts, including assistance programmes, in Albania.