RE/INTEGRATION: A ROAD BACK FOR TRAFFICKING VICTIMS

Human trafficking continues to plague the Balkan region, taking many forms and claiming many victims. Addressing and combating human trafficking has been a priority issue within the King Baudouin Foundation (KBF) in Belgium for many years. Most recently this has been in supporting the re/integration of trafficking victims in the Balkans.

Re/integration is the process of recovery and social and economic inclusion for victims of trafficking, and States are obliged by national and international law to protect trafficked persons and support their sustainable reintegration into their societies.

Re/integration is one of the most important and most complex aspects of the anti-trafficking response. It is comprised of different components including settlement in a stable, safe environment, a reasonable living standard, mental and physical well-being, and opportunities for personal social and economic development. It’s a complicated process, requiring intensive and long term assistance, particularly in the case of trafficked children, who are especially vulnerable.

The TVRP re/integration story in the Balkans is now being studied as a blueprint for similar projects elsewhere in the world.

Basic data

The TVRP has been in place since 2007 in Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania and Serbia, since 2009 in Kosovo and since 2012 in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Grants totalling 1.5M€ were awarded to 15 NGOs between 2007 and 2014 in these countries.

In 2011 the German Development Cooperation Agency (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit - GIZ ) joined KBF as a co-funder of the TVRP.
Focus on the victims

Supporting victims in healing their trauma and returning to productive, peaceful and fulfilling lives is extraordinarily difficult and complex work.

The trafficking victims the TVRP set out to assist suffered many forms of exploitation. Many were sexually exploited but some women trafficked for labour were also sexually exploited, as were many children trafficked for street begging. Men gradually also came into focus as a lesser-acknowledged but equally exploited category of trafficking victim.

Successful re/integration is a complex and costly undertaking, requiring a diverse set of short and long term services for trafficked persons (and sometimes their families).

The TVRP exercise identified three distinct phases of re/integration over a period of three years:
› crisis intervention (0-3 months)
› transition (4-12 months)
› re-integration/social inclusion (13-36 months).

The timeframes varied for different organisations and individuals, but all agreed that assistance should be comprehensive and long enough to allow for recovery and re/integration into the family and community.

Beyond assistance, one of the main achievements of the TVRP has been to build a common understanding of the highly complex undertaking that is re/integration. Numerous regional exchanges, peer learning opportunities and exchanges of practices led to mutually developed tools including quite critically the development of tools to monitor and evaluate individual re/integration plans and services.

Passing the baton

The hope is that the lessons learned from the many advances and occasional setbacks during KBF’s ambitious re/integration programme between 2007 and 2014 will form the basis of continued and vital re/integration work by others.

Already there are encouraging signs that governments in the Balkans, despite hard-pressed budgets, can now see the social, economic and emotional value of confronting a major and disturbing problem, which was once a low priority.

The KBF experiment may be is over, but it has paved the way for others who can now see the positive benefits of long term, comprehensive re/integration efforts.

Funding for re/integration continues however to be a challenge directly threatening the sustainability of such services in the Balkan region. The TVRP changed this, pushing for government financial and in-kind support, leveraging private-sector contributions; and establishing social enterprises. In 2014, about 100,000€ have been invested in four social enterprises in Albania, Macedonia and Serbia. In addition to diversifying funding sources of NGOs, these enterprises provide beneficiaries with opportunities for work and skill development.

What would you have done if you had not been assisted?

“I would probably fall into severe depression, I think. I was isolated without connections with other parts of the world. I would survive without assistance but that would be very hard”.

(Woman trafficked for prostitution and labour)
FROM ANALYSIS TO ACTION

Key elements for success

**A tailor-made approach:** The programme was based on the needs of re/integration organisations, rather than being designed and imposed upon them, with a number of NGOs praising the TVRP approach as a "partnership" rather than a donor/grantee relationship.

**Flexibility:** TVRP grants could be used for any aspect of re/integration work - services, staff, office costs, etc. Such flexibility is invaluable where precise needs and numbers of potential victims are unpredictable.

**Step-by-step:** The TVRP was developed carefully and gradually, based on an independent assessment of the region's needs. It was designed to adapt and evolve based on emerging needs.

**Long-term is key:** A long-term strategy is essential to achieve comprehensive sustainable re/integration success. Funding must be long-term too - in some cases TVRP funds bridged gaps between partners’ other grants, or during funding crises.

**More than grants:** The TVRP’s main component was grants ensuring that partners could offer high quality re-integration help, but the programme also encouraged partners to connect and learn.

**Reasonable procedures and reporting requirements:** TVRP partners had to submit an interim and final report for each grant, which helped identify challenges faced during the programme - information which proved useful for seminars and partner meetings about victims’ progress.

**Cooperation between donors:** The partnership with GIZ allowed to increase the financial and geographical scope of the TVRP and led to stronger government involvement and support to the NGOs.

**Recommendations for the future**

**More attention to identification:** Links between re/integration and victim identification need greater attention in moving forward, particularly amongst less identifiable trafficking victims.

**Greater understanding of failed re/integration and re-trafficking:** More needs to be done to ensure that individuals are able to recover and move on from trafficking. This necessarily requires greater understanding of what leads to failed re/integration and, in some cases, even re-trafficking.

**Higher levels of funding for re/integration work:** Some organisations continuing re/integration work are still facing funding crises. Even during the TVRP, finance was sometimes inadequate to meet the full range of re/integration needs. More attention is needed on fund-raising strategies.

**Longer timeframe:** An even longer timeframe is needed to aid the transition from just assistance for victims to long-term re-integration programme and to foster relations between partners.

**More advocacy with governments:** More effort is needed by donors to influence governments and state-run services to take responsibility for re/integration support.

**More tailored exit strategies:** Creating the Regional Social Business Fund was seen as a way to smooth the TVRP’s end in 2014, but not all NGOs received funds for a social enterprise and some felt this inappropriate for their current work.

**Strengthen network of NGOs:** Informal partnerships and ad hoc communication have developed outside of more formal TVRP-facilitated meetings and events. Time will tell to what extent partner organisations will maintain their network beyond the TVRP.

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**Impact of TVRP**

1. Successful re/integration of almost 60% of beneficiaries under the TVRP, 2007 to 2014
2. Comprehensive, long-term, high quality re/integration services available to trafficking victims, potential victims and their families in seven countries
3. Re/integration services for different victims, including men and children, and forms of trafficking
4. Sensitive and ethical re/integration services available in seven countries
5. Victim’s input solicited in developing re/integration programmes and policies
6. Monitoring tool and indicators developed in view to more efficient case management
7. Enhanced cooperation, agreements and partnerships with government partners
8. Diversified funding for re/integration programmes toward sustainability

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**The impact when trafficked persons receive long-term, comprehensive, high quality re/integration assistance**

One young woman, trafficked as a teenager into prostitution, has struggled a great deal to recover and move on with her life. She received a wide range of services over a period of years. But now, several years later and after much support, she feels that she is really recovered from her trafficking experience and re/integrated: "Those were things, scenes that you could not see elsewhere, not even on TV. I wanted to die. To me, this was the only end of the suffering, of the horror. It's only these last years that I made my mind up to forgive myself, convinced myself to forget, to leave it behind".

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The King Baudouin Foundation is an independent, pluralistic foundation working at the local, regional, federal, European and international levels. We seek to change society for the better so we invest in inspiring projects and individuals. In 2014 the King Baudouin Foundation and the Funds which it administers provided 30 million euro in support to 270 individuals and 1,712 organisations for projects in the areas of poverty, health, development, civic engagement, heritage etc.

The Foundation also organises seminars, round table discussions and exhibitions, shares experience and research results through (free) publications, enters into partnerships and encourages philanthropy, working ‘through’ rather than ‘for’ the King Baudouin Foundation.

2,122 people working in our steering groups, advisory committees, management committees and independent juries make their expertise available free of charge. Their generous efforts ensure that the right choices are made on an independent, pluralistic basis.

The Foundation was set up in 1976, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of King Baudouin’s reign.

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