



## REPORT

# Activities 2022 to end trafficking in human beings

## PREVENTION OF TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN AND CHILDREN OF UKRAINE

### Advocacy and Raising Awareness

The escalation of Russia's war in Ukraine on February 24, 2022 has disproportionately affected women and children as they fled the war. They have been through traumatic experiences and are in great fear for their families. Since the beginning of the war, the criminal entities capitalize on the desperate situation of the refugee women and children for profit. Human traffickers try to trap and mislead women and children during their escape or in the arrival states within the European Union with dubious offers. Girls and women with disabilities are also targets. Therefore, MARTA Centre immediately joined the NGO coordinating group meeting twice a week online in Latvia discussing policies development to assist refugee women and children including actions to be done by NGOs and by government in close cooperation. As a result, we prepared information and developed services suitable for refugee women and children. This included measures to prevent trafficking and profiting off of the vulnerable situation of women on the regional and national levels guaranteeing social safety measures for all refugees from Ukraine, and improving access to housing, education, employment, health care, social assistance, safe transportation within Latvia and through Latvia to join with their families etc.

MARTA Centre also initiated as well as participated in roundtables and meetings to raise awareness about the situation of women and children in Ukraine on different levels of governance – national, European, and international and focused on joint efforts to end demand/ punish sex buyers.

We learned of recruitment attempts at railroad stations, bus stations and distribution points, so MARTA immediately developed informative materials in Ukrainian about trafficking in human beings and where to seek for help in case of emergency. These materials were distributed at the points where refugees are gathering, as well as in the toilets of Circle K gas stations on the borders.

MARTA prepared an online lecture, recorded for distribution about how to detect victims of trafficking and refer them for assistance. On October 7<sup>th</sup> another training will take place for 30 NGOs that provide

assistance for refugees from Ukraine on the risks of trafficking, identification of victims, and algorithms of action in cases of detected victims.

MARTA consulted and helped to develop policies for the key refugee assistance organization in Latvia so their staff or volunteers prevent sexual exploitation within their organization.

MARTA organized five regional discussions with female deputy candidates from different parties and voters raising crucial issues on prevention violence against women and human trafficking before the parliamentary election on 1<sup>st</sup> October.

## Support of Women and Children in Ukraine

MARTA assisted grassroots women and community organization efforts to support women and children in their emergency situations in Eastern and Southern Ukraine with evacuation, medicine, clothes, food, hygienic products, and baby food etc. to diminish risks of them being trafficked with the support of Donor Direct Action as well as donations of Latvian citizens. Altogether 86,000 EUR have been transferred without any bank Commission from Latvian side for grassroots community organizations to assist women and children.

The results of cooperation with reliable organizations in Eastern Ukraine - Mariupol, Donetsk, Luhansk, Kostiantynivka Konstantinovka, Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, which know precisely the needs of the population and regularly report on the assistance provided <https://www.facebook.com/mrpl.business/>

Thanks to the donations, we created:

- a team of specialists providing evacuation, psychological, and humanitarian assistance to civilians, mostly women and children;
- a structure that provides rehabilitation for injured women and children, care of the seriously ill and support of relatives of fallen soldiers;
- a call center, which receives more than 220 calls every day and provides information on psychological, humanitarian, social, legal and medical assistance, as well as job opportunities, for peaceful residents who have disappeared and been deported to Russia;
- medical premises where equipment and medicines are purchased;
- children's playrooms;
- online legal support for women abroad.

MARTA also organized virtual psychological consultations for women together with another organization SKALBES in need in Ukraine as a local phone company offered a similar cost structure for calls as in Latvia. So far 321 consultations have been provided.

Atrocities carried out by the Russian Federation armed forces and documented in Bucha, Irpin and many other cities revealing the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. Women and children, especially girls are exposed to systematic sexual abuse, that leaves long lasting consequences including physical and mental abuse. This leaves refugees in an even more vulnerable situation that can be exploited by predators of sex trade. Pregnancies as a consequence of sexual violence are becoming another tool to control women exploited by governments restricting abortion, and sex trade opportunists.

MARTA Centre assists the - Women's Information and Consultation Centre in Kyiv Ukraine on documenting crimes against women, educating specialists about how to work with women that had been raped and humiliated as well as the organization ELEOS Ukraine to establish a shelter for women and girls

that had been raped and tortured by the soldiers of Russian Army. These projects are partially financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by 15<sup>th</sup> November 2022, but co-financing is needed to continue our support.

## Support of Ukrainian refugees in Latvia to prevent their trafficking

MARTA has provided psychological support for 13 refugees in Latvia, as well as rehabilitation in the places where they are located. There had been raised funds to buy food, ensure safe transportation, translation services, accompanying client to the Hospital of Traumatology and Orthopedy, Refugee Centres and other relevant institutions, support in preparation of different documents for institutions, and assisting and connecting with the State Security Service to ensure crime documentation. MARTA's anonymous flats have been frequently used for Ukrainian women in desperate situations as well as victims of sexual trafficking. Based on their stories, MARTA was more capable to negotiate proper social safety measures to prevent trafficking relying on cooperation with the government and other NGOs in the coordinating group.

Two refugee women already are employed at MARTA Centre. One works as psychologist and another assists in coordinating support work with Ukraine.

## ASSISTANCE OF VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING

So far in 2022, the social rehabilitation has been provided to five adult women, one person suffered from labor exploitation, the other four women from sexual exploitation. One client was provided accommodation in the anonymous MARTA apartment during the rehabilitation process, but after evaluating the complexity of the situation, we see that the client will also need support with a place to live when the social rehabilitation service is over, so we are currently working on this issue now to secure safe housing. In 2021 and 2022, MARTA carried out a study on support options for victims of child trafficking, and after presenting the research results to the relevant ministries, negotiations were started on adapting the existing social rehabilitation to the interests of the child. Still, we observe that cases of sexual exploitation are neglected by the police and no criminal proceedings are initiated for human trafficking. As authorities still has a problem to identify victims of sexual exploitation, MARTA educates them about detection of victims of sexual exploitation. This summer MARTA held a three-day summer training for social workers providing knowledge on sexual exploitation and detection of victims, etc.

MARTA tries to involve survivors voices in raising awareness for people, as well as specialists about human trafficking, by sharing the story of their experience in a way that protects their identities and privacy. Even now, one survivor of sexual exploitation is actively involved in the creation of informative materials, in which she shares information about institutional violence and repeated victimization in the situations when she sought for help. Informative video materials will be used in educational seminars.

To prevent burn out of specialists MARTA Centre raised funds to support specialists and prevent their burn out. They have access to team supervisions, as well as individual supervisions and every Tuesday morning the whole team of MARTA have guided conversation with the psychotherapist about the impact of the war in Ukraine, challenges that we face by supporting people and dealing with resistance and hate from Putin's regime supporters.

## PLANS FOR 2023

### ADVOCACY

- Facilitate creation of government financed prostitution/pornography exit strategies programme
- Preparation of alternative reports on national human trafficking prevention efforts

- Organize Information events for the State Police and other government agencies on prostitution/pornography as a form of violence, trafficking, and a need to have fines for sex buyers.
- Public awareness raising about sexual exploitation and the need to fine sex buyers
- Facilitate human trafficking survivors telling their stories at inter-institutional conferences
- Boost and support women's activism, continue to enhance the awareness of women, youth, officials, decision-makers, women's organisations and other significant stakeholders around Latvia and Europe
- Contribute to stronger women's rights advocacy on international level involving voices from Ukraine, Belarus, and Central Asia
- Get discriminatory legal amendments and proposals revoked and make sure parliament, government and National Centre for Education documents are based on integrated gender-equality approach
- Raise awareness about different individual-level social activism forms and compile an Activist's Handbook
- Formal cooperation (cooperation agreements/memorandums) with authorities responsible for human trafficking victims: Consular Departments of Foreign Ministry, State Police, Citizenship and Migration Office and others. Clear victim referral mechanisms
- New cooperation and funding opportunities identified
- Delivery of workshops/seminars to specialists working with these issues to create uniform understanding of domestic violence and human trafficking

#### ASSISTANCE FOR VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING

Continue to provide rehabilitation for victims of trafficking, improve services and ensure support for specialists thus preventing their burn out.

#### CONTINUATION OF PREVENTION OF TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN AND CHILDREN FROM UKRAINE

We want and can help in the future to ensure:

- supervision for teams of psychologists;
- support in getting women and children to safety. Funds are needed for travel expenses, tickets, doctors who accompany seriously ill people and children, also other companions, transport and catering.
- rehabilitation for women and children;
- legal assistance to those Ukrainian women who are already abroad by creating a chatbot program;
- warm winter clothes for women, children, and men;
- blankets and bed linen.
- Document war crimes
- Work on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda
- Continue support newly established shelter for women and girls in Ivano Frankivsk region in Ukraine.