

11th International Anti-Corruption Conference: Workshop 6.3

Presentation Abstract

1. Your name: Marija Andjelković	2. Workshop Title: Countering corruption to combat trafficking in human beings
3. Title of case-study or paper: "LJUDMILA"	

Ljudmila (18 years old) grew up in a village on south of Moldavia near the border with Ukraine. Her parents worked the land in the local collective farm, earning less than \$5 a month. Ljudmila was not working as she just finished school.

In December 2002, she met a girl from the neighborhood whose name was Elena. They soon became friends and two weeks later they left with a local bus to Kishinev where another girl, Magdalena, and a guy known by Elena, whom she introduced as a Vasilij, joined them. He bought tickets for three of them and they left to Bucharest to get Yugoslav visas.

In front of the Yugoslav Embassy there was a line with more than 100 people who were standing two days in the line for a visa. They waited a short time, when a man who introduced himself as Goran approached them and offered to get visas for them for \$50 a person. At that moment, Ljudmila found it suspicious that Vasilij and Goran acted like they knew each other for a long time and the fact that Vasilij offered to pay for their visas by saying that they would earn that money quickly and pay him back. All three girls said yes. They got their visas during the afternoon and they went to Timisoara, and the next morning to Novi Sad. They didn't have any problems at the border.

In Novi Sad, Vasilij took them to a café and he explained that he must meet with the owner of the pizza place where the three of them would work and he would stop by the police station to report their stay, which is obligatory for the foreign citizens (which is partly true) and that because of this, he must take their passports. After one hour, he returned with the alleged owner of the pizza place and they all left the café. But instead of the pizza place, they left the girls at an apartment without any explanation as to where they are going this time. During the night, the alleged owner of the pizza place (without Vasilij) returned and he ordered them to come with him. When Ljudmila asked him where he was taking them in the middle of the night and where Vasilij was, who was keeping their passports, the men slapped her. Although scared, she kept asking for the explanation and then the man beat her up in front of the two other girls who kept quiet. At that moment Ljudmila was sure that something was wrong in the whole situation and that they would not work at the pizza place. The alleged owner of the pizza place changed his mind and took only Elena, leaving Ljudmila and Magdalena locked up at the apartment. That was the last time Ljudmila saw Elena.

The next day around noon, the "owner" returned with a young man. He ordered them to take their things and come with him. Ljudmila asked him again where he was taking them and he beat her up again. In broad daylight, the men dragged them into the car. After two hours drive, they arrived at a little town and entered a bar, which was not very visible from the outside. The "Owner" gave them to the bar owner and he soon left. Ljudmila quickly realized that she will not work as a waitress. The same night the bar owner raped her in front of Magdalena.

The next night Ljudmila and Magdalena were forced to give sexual services to the bar guests (in the rooms above the bar). According to Ljudmila, they had 10-15 clients per night.

After a month Ljudmila succeeded for the first time to escape with a help of a client. She went to the police where, after a very unpleasant interrogation, she was even more surprised when the bar owner Vlada arrived. Without any explanation, the police officers turned her over to the bar owner who took her back to the bar. That night she was beaten up as a warning for the future. Nevertheless, Ljudmila did not give up and in the next two months she escaped two more times, but the bar owner always succeeded in finding her. After her last escape, the bar owner drove her to Belgrade, taking her to a pretty luxurious apartment. At the apartment, behind a big office desk, she saw a young woman who introduced herself as Lola. Soon came a man whose name was Zoran. They took her to a small room and left her there. The apartment was an office of an escort agency "Paradise" owned by Zoran, and Lola was his spouse. Out of the apartment, she ran the business and made the appointments for the clients and the girls that were working there. Agency was just a cover up for giving sexual services to a certain clients. The situation at the agency was not very different from the situation at the bar where Ljudmila was previously; the clients were rich, but the abuse was the same. At the agency, Ljudmila met a woman from Belgrade that worked there and whose name was Andrijana.

Andrijana was divorced and a mother of two sons. She had a university degree and had thought that work at the agency would be only a way for extra income. At the time she met Ljudmila, she wanted out from the agency. Soon she started getting threats from the Agency owner who asked her to pay him so she can walk away.

On July 1st, 2002, Adrijana called the NGO ASTRA from Belgrade that works on eliminating trafficking in human beings. She left the address of the agency in case something happened to her and asked that they do not report anything to the police, because among the agency clients there were also police officers. She would try to talk to the Agency owner once again as she was afraid for her children. She said that he was waving his gun around telling her that he had contacts in the police, he was protected and that nobody could touch him. She also said that there were six other girls including a foreign girl Ljudmila.

On July 2nd, 2002, she left a message on the answering machine: "I called yesterday, I just wanted to say that everything is OK, I had the conversation. Leave it as is... please."

On July 3rd, 2002, she called third time. She was scared. He was threatening her again; he said that she owed him 1000 DM and that she must bring it to the agency at 8 p.m. One of her sons had left for the weekend and the other was still home. When she called him on July 1st, he asked her for money, threatened her and he told her that he would find her at her work because he knows where she works.

She said that there were around 11 girls, some from Belgrade, and some from the other towns and one foreign citizen Ljudmila. Some considered this to be their profession and some wanted out, but they couldn't. The girls were under physical and psychological violence and were blackmailed.

She also said that Zoran was 36 years old, his secretary was his girlfriend and she had two children. Everybody calls her Lola, but she thought that this was not her real name.

The same day, ASTRA reported the case to the police department for public peace and order. Fortunately, the case was reported to the Department for foreign citizens, with which ASTRA has good cooperation.

Adrijana left her apartment and went with her children to her sister's. In the meantime, ASTRA did not get any information from the police until July 12th, when they received the notice about a raid on that address. At almost the same time, Adrijana called ASTRA where volunteers concluded that Adrijana either did not know about the raid or the raid did not happen. One of ASTRA's volunteers went to the address of the agency. It turned out that it was an address of a big building and that there was a raid, but it was at the wrong apartment. ASTRA called the police again with the whole story, but the police officer told us that the raid was at the right place. ASTRA's volunteers went to the address again and checked the number of the apartments of both agencies. Through the phone service, volunteers got the address of the apartment where the agency "Paradise" was located, where Adrijana and Ljudmila were. Before that, ASTRA's volunteers found out that the agency advertises usually with the ads in verses. Taking in consideration that information, the phone number and the address, volunteers started to search through the newspaper with that kind of ad. They found a few ads for "Paradise" agency with the date after the raid, which was enough to conclude that the "Paradise" agency was not closed, but still working. This time ASTRA called only the department for foreign citizens who went to the agency right away and conducted a raid during which they found Ljudmila together with five other girls from Serbia.

Epilogue:

Ljudmila was moved to a shelter for victims of human trafficking. In cooperation with IOM, she was transferred back home after a month. Since then she has not called either ASTRA or people from the Shelter or any similar NGO in Moldova.

Adrijana called ASTRA and told us that she has moved to another apartment and has changed the phone number. She believed she was safe. On August 14th, 2002, the chief of the department of the public peace and order in Belgrade B.B (41), who was supposed to fight against prostitution and trafficking in human beings, was arrested because of suspicion that he received a bribe from the owners of the escort agencies. He was accused of taking bribes from the escort agency owners for the last two years in return for not arresting the girls or owners of the agencies. There have not been any raids in those agencies for the past two years, even though they advertise in the newspapers daily. As the police later announced, B.B. also decided which agencies would be raided and which would be protected. After this arrest, many other people from the same department were arrested as well. In November 2002, criminal charges were brought against B.B and other suspected policemen in this case. Police continued the investigation thanks to the information they got from Ljudmila. Though many escort agencies closed in that period, according to information that ASTRA received, because of the lack of legal regulations and proofs, owners of the agencies are opening agencies at new locations after a few months. The Serbia and Montenegro Embassy personnel in Bucharest, from this case study, is still the same.