PSYCHO-SOCIAL CENTER "VATRA"

ANNUAL REPORT 2009

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PSYCHO-SOCIAL CENTER "VATRA"

ANNUAL REPORT 2009

ANALYSIS OF THE ACTUAL SITUATION OF THE TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN ALBANIA

Vlore, 2009

Analysis of the actual situation of the trafficking in human and domestic violence in Albania

Annual Report 2009

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Introduction

Dear readers,

It has been 10 years since the establishment of "Vatra" Psycho-social Centre. During these years "Vatra" has been growing and making progress and its staff has professionally developed through the implementation of a number of projects and activities, and also through the overcoming of challenges and difficulties faced in its work and its efforts for the support and protection of women and girls victims of human trafficking.

The key to our success has been and still is the close collaboration with central and local state institutions, national and international organizations, networks and coalitions that provided to our organization the possibility to widely contribute in the mitigation of a series of problems characterizing Albanian society.

Our objectives would not have been fulfilled successfully without the support and collaboration of our donors such as: the American Embassy, USAID, Kvinna Till Kvinna, Norwegian Church Aid (with funds of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs), The Sigrid Rausing TRUST, World Learning, CAAHT (USAID funds), IOM etc. whom I thank for the trust, appreciation and support given during our work over the years.

I also thank "Vatra"'s Board, its staff and all its volunteers who have been working with devotion and sacrifice to help and support all the women and girls in need.

Aware of our mission, we will continue working and fighting other issues as

problematic as the human trafficking phenomenon, namely domestic violence, that constitutes today one of the most disturbing problems of Albanian society. The ever increasing figures of women and girls, victims of violence, represent a necessity for the intensification of efforts and work of the local and central state institutions in collaboration with the civil society and the whole community, in order to provide aid and support to the victims of violence.

Brikena Puka
Executive Director

ANALYSIS OF THE ACTUAL SITUATION OF THE TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN ALBANIA

It has been years that Vatra has focused its work on the two most problematic fields facing the Albanian society during these years of transition, such as the phenomena of human trafficking and domestic violence. To give a real evaluation of the situation on the development of these phenomena during this year, we are analyzing the causes that have stimulated these phenomena and the social consequences they have brought to the Albanian society.

The socio-economic and political situation

Found for years in a difficult political and economic situation, the Albanian society is still at the levels of a fragile society without a defined identity, due to the low development of the economy, compared with the other European countries, the patriarchal mentality inherited from the past, shattering of family balance, the lack of emancipation of the population, etc; indicators that represent the extent of civilization of a country aspiring for democracy.

In order to bring to the attention and analyze these phenomena you must

understand why Albania, a country that geographically is part of the European continent, even after 20 years continues to remain one of the few countries that are not members of the EU. Isolated from the other countries of the region for more than half a century, it remains a state with a deformed democracy, due to bad governance and the very large scale corruption spread to all the state structures which have governed the country in these two last decades.

Being a country where the government and the state institutions operate with two different standards, where their high officials are being appointed and removed whenever their actions conflict with the government and policies, thus flagrantly violating the constitution of the country, Albania is considered by the internationals as a country that still has much work to do, in order to meet the standards necessary to the existence of a democratic country.

The changing of governments in Albania is always accompanied with the changing of staff of central and local institutions. The firing of specialists or trained and qualified employees every time the main leaders leave and their replacement with unqualified people, parties militants and not professionals has obstructed the fight against the phenomena Albania is being criticized for by the internationals and has created the suitable ground for corruption, crime and illegal trafficking, thus making them part of the Albanians' life. Similarly, the country's bad governance during these two decades has reflected wrong models and lifestyles to the Albanians, which in turn have deformed all the positive human values of our culture and history in part of the society; values which despite of being under the conditions of extreme poverty, have been preserved and developed for centuries in accordance with the changes occurred in the country.

It is true that poverty is part of the human life, but it should not be seen as an excuse to act against the norms and rules of democracy, because their

breach would inflict such changes to our characters and behaviours that would fall against the laws of development of life and society in the country.

The global financial crisis that hit the most developed countries in the world has also influenced our country that is known for the low economic level, and the extreme poverty of the population, thus making the life of its most vulnerable strata subject to acute social problems such as unemployment, illiteracy, illegal trafficking, violence in family and society, organized crime, insecurity of life, etc.
Of course, the unstable political situation has played a negative role in all these years of transition, which in turn has hindered not only the normal development of the economy, but also the development of all walks of life in the country. This abnormal and highly politicized situation has created uncertainty, forcing a good part of the population to emigrate in search of a better life. This year's parliamentary elections were another real reflection of the unaccountable politicians, who in the face of their mean interests showed the low level of their emancipation and civilization.

Albania is a country with a pronouncedly patriarchal mentality, where due to the heritage of the past, maschilistic psychology prevails in all walks of life .Although women in Albania constitute over 50% of the population they are less represented in politics and decision-making. Even though the political parties approved the law on the 30% quota for women's representation in parliament, putting them at the end of the candidates' nomination lists resulted in an unsatisfactory representation of women in politics and decision-making pursuant the law with only 12% of the total number of the women candidates. Under these conditions, there is still much to be done by our society, but above all, it is the duty of women to work and fight at national level in order to earn the rights they are entitled to, for the purpose of their inclusion in all walks of life.

Vatra's staff have worked for many years and are still working hard in the

field and in the community aiming the awareness raising of the Albanian society, so that women can be appreciated and treated with respect for the mission they carry, for their intellectual and human values while not allowing anyone to mistreat, violate and use this great force as worthless goods.

From our ongoing assessment of the situation in the country, we have seen with concern that the negative phenomena such as unemployment, illiteracy, human trafficking, violence in family and society, crime within the family, etc, have affected to the highest percentage women as the most vulnerable strata of society. We see and read in the print and visual media about tragic events that happen every day in Albania, where trafficked women and girls are forced by traffickers to cross the border illegally in order to be exploited in the European countries; women, girls and children who suffer domestic violence, who are killed or commit suicide because of the great poverty and inability to face the difficulties of life, etc. No one is able to explain why so many incidents happen in a country with such a small population and what happens later with the victims, let alone the state institutions as the main responsible bodies which do not work seriously for the implementation of the Strategies, action plans and laws approved by the government with the aim of combating and putting to justice all the persons that cause them.

It is unforgivable that even though 20 years have passed from the change of the system, the state institutions of the relevant fields have not conducted genuine studies on any phenomenon that exists and develops in the country, aiming the real understanding of the situation, the extent of their spreading, the most affected age-groups and strata etc. These studies would enable the drafting of different social policies and programs and would dictate the taking of immediate measures thus implementing them in all the areas that are considered as problematic and source of the phenomena.

In the framework of the various projects, “Vatra” realizes each year two

studies on the phenomena it works on, namely: Study on human trafficking and study on violence in the family and society. As a result of these studies we understand closely the extent of their spreading, the areas of origin, the affected strata, the problems that are generated, and their evolution in the country and in the region. In support of these studies "Vatra" has drafted its mid term and long term strategies, and has set up projects with clear and achievable objectives, in order to help directly the most affected strata of society and particularly the victims of these phenomena. This work done in all these years has had its impact on the mitigation not only of the phenomena but also of the negative effects generated by them.

As it is custom, this year too the real situation regarding the development of the phenomena in Albania is reflected in the report of the American State Department published in June 2009[1]. In this report Albania remains in the second group of countries, which have sharp problems regarding the development of human trafficking, corruption, organized crime, etc. These countries have not taken the appropriate measures and have not implemented properly the action plans for attacking the criminal elements, as well as combating and preventing their development. Albania is not criticized for the lack of measures in the field of legislation, strategies and action plans because with the support and advice of the international community it has prepared and drafted good anti trafficking laws and strategies; it is the failure to- implement them that leaves much to be desired.

The presentation of this situation by the internationals, showed that studies and reports published by Vatra are both realistic and important since not only are these reports drafted and prepared through the information taken directly in the field, community and also by the victims treated in the shelter, but also because they reflect the problems and concerns divided by area,

[1] American State Department "Trafficking in Persons Report 2009"

mentality and culture, their economic development, living standard of the strata in need, age- groups, educational level, etc.

All these have given Vatra the opportunity to define clear objectives, which have at their focus the cooperation with all the state institutions. Human trafficking and domestic violence are criminal phenomena and as such they are fought by the state institutions. Organizations with their work and contribution have an impact on their mitigation and this is achieved through awareness raising campaigns, dissemination of information and provision of rehabilitation and reintegration services for the victims of these two phenomena. Considering this fact, Vatra has worked with the state institutions and has supported them in the prevention and fight against these phenomena. It is through this cooperation and the contribution given in years that Vatra has become an important and highly demanded factor not only for these institutions but especially for the community and the strata in need.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN ALBANIA

Although more than 10 years have passed since human trafficking emerged as a phenomenon that enslaved the lives of hundreds and thousands women and girls in Albania, year after year we continue to attend with concern the fact that not only has it not disappeared, but in certain periods it has taken various forms, showing in this way that this criminal phenomenon, due to the profits it brings, is able to challenge any effort and measure taken by the government to fight it.

It is true that during all these years the Albanian government has made efforts and has drafted Anti-Trafficking National Strategies, has established special structures in every District Police in the country, has adopted strong laws to sentence traffickers and pimps, but time has showed that all these measures yielded no relevant effects due to the failure to implement them properly, as well as due to the state's weak fight, particularly regarding the capture and conviction of criminals who keep alive this phenomenon. The law institutions are the only institutions which have failed completely in this fight because of declaring void tens and hundreds of judicial proceedings made by the victims against their exploiters. The failure of these institutions to put the traffickers on trial and sentence them, resulted in the victims' loss of confidence in justice, and rooted in them the fear to leave the pimps and the networks of this trafficking.

The lack of the defence lawyer for the trafficked victims and their defence from the state prosecutors, has put us in front of numerous problems and difficulties because these state employees, before taking the victims under protection, prejudge them for what they have done thus resulting in proceedings conducted in a less than serious manner and postponed

endlessly for years. If a prosecutor during the investigation addresses the victim with the words "you are willing to do this job", what kind of defence lawyer will be he for her?!!! He has punished her without even starting the trial. This is why victims do not trust the defence and they are right in not denouncing and not collaborating with the law institutions, because their fate has already been judged and decided upon. Even this year Vatra assisted 4 victims who had denounced their exploiters; two of these cases were closed before taken to court and two others continue to be postponed although almost 9 months have passed from the date of the commencement of the legal procedures.

It has been years that the Law on "Witness protection" has been approved and this year it was reviewed and new additional articles were approved, but surprisingly no victim of trafficking has benefited from this law. If laws are drafted in such a way that leaves witness victims outside the protection programs, then who needs these laws? For three consecutive years we have attended the judicial case of a victim accommodated in the shelter, who had denounced her exploiter. Three years of fights with the prosecutor's office and the courts, which do not close it as a case but play ping-pong with the perpetrator, arresting and releasing him depending on Vatra's complaints. Even though this victim has been at high risk for three years, surprisingly this case was not classified by the state as to be included in the protection program. It was USAID and the U.S. Embassy in Albania in collaboration with IOM that handled this case as a very serious one and included it in the witness protection program.
In all this farce it is a well-known fact that the system of justice in Albania continues to be the most corrupted one, this specified also by the surveys made by many national and international organizations showing that as such it has never supported and protected the victims, but in many cases it has taken the defendants' side, being indifferent and not insisting on their guilt and conviction. Apart from this, it has occurred that certain individuals in these institutions have pressured victims, threatening them that they can

be sentenced pursuant the law on "Illegal exercise of prostitution" and not considered as victims. This situation that has been going on for years has hindered the work of Vatra shelter's staff for raising the awareness of victims so that they cooperate and denounce their traffickers and pimps.

In order for you to have a closer look at how these institutions function in Albania we will bring to your attention another concrete fact among many other such cases. On August 29th 2009 "Gazeta Shqiptare[2]" wrote:
"…. The Court of Serious Crimes declares innocent the well-known businessman from Fier who was accused of exploiting women. This court had previously sentenced this person along with his collaborator with 20 and 18 years in prison, respectively for the criminal offences of trafficking women for prostitution in aggravating circumstances, as well as money laundering. The Supreme Court dismissed the decision given against them for procedural violations!!! After reviewing the case once more at the Court of Serious Crimes surprisingly this court finds both defendants not guilty!!! "
This is the Albanian Justice!!! After this tragicomic event occurred in these institutions, no one can believe in the security of life of this victim from the criminals she has accused in Albania.

The National Anti trafficking Strategies drafted by the Albanian government during all these years clearly define the tasks and measures to be implemented by the state institutions involved, but apart from the National Coordinator's Office and the state police, the other institutions as the Ministry of Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Foreign Affairs etc, have not been properly engaged and have not undertaken the necessary responsibilities regarding their implementation, to support and treat victims.

Extreme poverty and the lack of motivation for the future force the victims

[2] Gazeta Shqiptare , September 29, 2009

towards prostitution in and out of the country. Almost 8 years have passed from the approval of the first Strategy in 2001 and 2 years from the last Strategy of 2008-2010, and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities as one of the main actors involved in these strategies has not made possible the achievement of some important objectives regarding the improvement of life of the victims of human trafficking. The lack of long-term programs and projects for their accommodation and employment shows clearly the indifference and lack of seriousness of this institution to help this target group

It was only during 2008 that for the first time this Ministry (certainly based on the information given by the Regional Office of Employment in Vlore) applied small scale projects to encourage employment and the victims of human trafficking were to be included in them. So out of 39 victims that were treated in our shelter during this year, only 7 were included in the projects but even these for a period of 4 months. During 2009 such projects were not discussed further.

Similarly, the issue of victims' accommodation has never been considered with responsibility by the relevant institutions, at a time when it is known that employment and accommodation are the essential issues of life. Even a normal person cannot go forward in life without them, let alone the victims that have sharp health, social and legal problems. These are some of the main reasons that hinder the victims to leave the networks of human trafficking. Trafficking cannot be prevented and combated without taking concrete measures for opening work places, especially in the urban areas, without increasing the living standard of the population which will change the socio-economic situation especially in those cities that are known as source areas of the phenomenon because it is known that poverty is the main factor that stimulates and keeps alive these phenomena. This is what the Ministry of Labour should do since it is known that the negative phenomena do not disappear by themselves and the victims cannot be rehabilitated without being treated in Social Centres which should be

established throughout the country for their treatment and preparation for normal reintegration in society.

During all these years of work, we have encountered many difficulties in solving the problems of trafficked victims, difficulties that were present even in the collaboration with the state institutions, for the simple fact that the main leaders of these institutions not only do not provide help but they surprisingly do not know about the existence of these official documents. The explanation to this is that after strategies and action plans are drafted and approved, the Government does not undertake any awareness raising campaigns aimed not only at informing the main institutions which will implement them but also the wider community, such as the urban and rural areas of the country. In the current conditions, we cannot claim that the Strategies and action plans of the government can contribute and have full effectiveness in the fight against human trafficking if the communities and the different strata of the population are not informed and aware of them.
The report of June 2009 of the American State Department[3] underlined precisely the fact that the Albanian government had failed to meet the minimum standards for fighting and eliminating the phenomenon, addressing direct criticism to the police institutions, prosecutor's office and the Courts, which are still the most corrupted institutions in the country. Indeed, corruption is no longer a sporadic phenomenon in Albania. Since years it has turned into a phenomenon that has stricken all the state institutions which use bribing as a practice of their work in solving problems. However, this should be intolerable in the justice system, since these institutions address the major issues concerning the safety of victims' life.

It is very difficult to address the phenomenon of human trafficking, since not only are you dealing with criminals thus putting your life at risk every day but also because of the few opportunities that you have to help and solve the

[3] American State Department Report "Trafficking in persons 2009"

numerous problems the victims have. However, the courage, commitment and the human feelings of Vatra' s staff working with women and girls affected by this phenomenon, have made it possible for Vatra, as the first organization involved in this fight since 1997, to treat and help the highest number of victims, who are now away from the networks of human trafficking.

When we started this fight we were alone, later other important international and national organizations joined us, working, helping and contributing in our mutual fight. Organizations such as USAID, OSCE, UNICEF, IOM, ICITAP CAAHT, Save the Children, Kvinna Till Kvinna, Norwegian Church Aid, American Embassy and the Embassy of the United Kingdom etc, have not been just donors in Albania but have also contributed directly to the undertaking of a series of important initiatives. By supporting the government and NGOs, with the necessary assistance in the field of legislation, social services, establishment of residential centres, professional qualification of state structures, drafting Strategies and Action Plans, etc, these organizations became the determining factor of the main developments in the country regarding the phenomenon. Without their support and cooperation this phenomenon would look differently.

Despite the work and fight for their rehabilitation and reintegration, victims of trafficking will always remain excluded and discriminated, as long as the state institutions do not give them serious consideration. This is based on that the fact that even though several years have passed since the government has recognized the existence of the phenomenon, the victims have not yet obtained their social status, which would give them motivation and protect them from the injustice. In these years governments have drafted and approved social statuses for different social strata but the victims of human trafficking are the only ones who have not benefited from this. It has been almost three years since the establishment of the Regional Anti-Trafficking Committees at district level in Albania, a structure attached to every prefecture in the country, but in Vlora this Committee does not perform

any function. Vatra is the only institution that despite not being a member of this committee with voting rights (surprisingly the government did not include the NGOs in these structures although in all these years they have been the only ones which have worked and contributed in this field), constantly informs it on every problem that occurs in connection with the phenomenon and the victims, but it has never received support from it.

Due to the indifference and inactivity of this committee, Vatra has been forced to present all the problems and difficulties encountered to the central institutions and particularly to the National Coordinator's Office, whose staff have shown full commitment and responsibility in solving them. The cases of successful cooperation are numerous too. This year the staff were dealing not only with educational preparation of a victim willing to continue higher education at University, but also with the documents for her application. For this purpose we asked the help of the Regional Committee of Vlora, who not only did not support us but they never gave us an institutional response, be that formal. We had to intervene at the National Coordinator and the Ministry of Education to find a solution for this problem and allow the girl to attend her university studies normally.

Similarly, the abandonment of children by parents who emigrate or by mothers who are involved in the trafficking networks, has made these children the most at risk and most requested target group by traffickers of all networks. Little minor girls without support are often subject to abuse by the relatives and irresponsible family members, who have taken them under custody. Found under these conditions they are often forced to go on the streets, because the state that should take care of them does not support them, due to the lack of social centres at national level. For two minor girls of 11 and 13 years of age referred to the shelter by the police, we have asked the help of the Regional Committee and the relevant institutions dealing with children, aiming their treatment in state residential centres, which have full responsibility for their reception. There is still no solution to this problem.

We believe that the non-functioning of these Committees happens due to the mentality of the leaders of the institutions regarding the phenomenon rather than to the inability or their incapacity to solve the problems. It is this mentality that has turned these institutions into the main obstacles to the normal reintegration of the victims in society.

In Albania it is very easy to condemn a victim of human trafficking. Apart from the state, family and society, the media becomes part of the problem too. With its writings it not only discriminates and disparages the victim, but it also prevents her from having a normal life in society. Every day in the major newspapers of the country you read stories and incidents that have occurred to the victims of trafficking. There you find no thought, analysis, criticism or suggestion on what happens in relation to the phenomenon or on what happens with the victims, on the contrary, every victim that is caught by the police or reports the traffickers will find herself for days on the pages of newspapers sometimes even accompanied with her photos. Nearly 5 years have passed since a victim treated in the shelter collaborated with the police and reported a network of international traffickers, but not only was she not included by the state in the witness protection program, but she still continues to suffer her painful past even today that she has created a healthy family.
This happens because when they do not have much to write, newspapers will repeat again different stories of victims mentioning their full identity. But what is more irritating about these articles is the discriminatory and underestimating language that they use, deteriorating in this way the victim's image in the family and society. It is the media that writes infinitely about human rights, but never defending this target group, because the articles written in the media remain just informative articles never managing to criticize the institutions for their poor efforts in fighting the phenomenon or to raise the voice on the numerous issues the victims face.

Fully engaged in the field of human trafficking and after several years of

long fights, we see that even this year the phenomenon in Albania appears in its two main forms: external trafficking, which is identified with the exploitation of victims outside the borders of Albania and which is reducing, and internal trafficking that is identified with the exploitation of victims in daily prostitution in the country's big cities.

Trafficking of women and girls exploited outside the borders of Albania

Trafficking in women and their exploitation outside the Albanian borders reached its climax from 1997 until the years 2004 - 2005, time in which the number of trafficked girls was increasing from year to year. The use of boats and speedboats from the traffickers in years turned this phenomenon into a profitable business, with these means being used publicly and nearly in a legal way, to make the transportation of "humans as goods" and exploit them in the European countries.

Being a harbour city, Vlora in those years was known as the most infamous city in the country and the region, not only because the phenomenon flourished and developed there, but also because of the tragedies which caused the drowning of tens and hundreds innocent lives coming from every area of Albania.

From 1999 until 2005 over 2013 victims involved in the national and international human trafficking networks have been interviewed and treated only by Vatra' s staff, not a small number compared with the country's population. Vlora as a harbour city was one of the five main points, from where the trafficking occurred. The number of Albanian victims always on the rise worried the governments of the destination countries, which saw this not only as a phenomenon that increased crime in their countries but also as endangering the population due to not being controlled. Under these conditions the governments of the destination countries such as Italy,

United Kingdom, France, Belgium etc and especially the American State Department, intervened and obliged the Albanian government to take strong measures to hit and fight the criminal elements that stimulated this trafficking. In addition to the numerous measures undertaken by the government, in April 2006 it approved the Moratorium for banning motor vessels, which influenced significantly in the prevention of the phenomenon and its blocking during all Albania's coastline, from where human trafficking passed in EU countries.

The numerous measures taken by the Albanian government, as well as the increase of the number of Italian coast guard ships, which did not allow Albanian speedboats to stop on their coasts, forced the traffickers to take immediate action, by changing their direction from a "marine transport", to a "border land transport". Greece, Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo as states bordering Albania, would be used by traffickers as passing ways for their victims, who were transported to be exploited in other European countries. For this purpose, the traffickers forced the victims to cross the border on foot, by using those points which were not guarded and controlled by the police of these countries. Consequently not only did this phenomenon blossom during these years, but the idea emerged that human trafficking was disappearing.

Blocking the road that had connected the phenomenon with Italy from 1997 until 2004, made Greece the country most coveted by traffickers, who not only use it as a destination place for exploiting their victims but also as a transit country for passing them to other countries of Europe. Only during 2004 - 2006 over 296 victims who have been assisted and treated in Vatra shelter were exploited in this country. (A detailed analysis for this country is given in the studies published for 2004 and 2005)

Moreover, even though the police of the European countries and particularly that of Greece, returned every day a considerable number of clandestines,

among them women and girls, our police let them free in the border without identifying them and included them in the group of persons crossing the border illegally, this due to the fact that no one of them had regular identification documents. The Palermo Declaration clearly defines the duties and responsibilities that both the destination and origin countries have for the identification and treatment of trafficked victims. Such duty is the provision with correct information and identification data of the victims who are repatriated. Apart from the Police of the United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium and France during all these years no other state has implemented this duty, especially Italy and Greece, at a time when it is known that these are the countries with the highest number of Albanian victims.
The frequent change of police officers dealing with human trafficking and their replacement with untrained officers as well as the lack of social workers in checkpoints for the identification of victims has made impossible the assessment of the real situation of the phenomenon in order to decide whether it is growing or declining.

These are some of the main reasons why after 2006 the number of victims exploited in Europe referred by police and treated in the shelter, declined sharply (from 549 repatriated for the years 2002-2005 to 96 for the years 2006 -2009), when in fact our information obtained from the community at the border points with Greece, as well as from the victims themselves revealed much higher figures. We will not stop here to show why this is happening because from 2002 -2008 we have conducted detailed analyses for the development and evolution of this phenomenon, the causes that stimulated it, the source and origin areas, ways of trafficking, the age groups at risk, repatriation and recycling of victims of trafficking, profiles of traffickers and victims, etc., which have been reflected in studies published each year by Vatra.

By analyzing the phenomenon in years, it has been noticed that some of its distinguishing elements have undergone changes in accordance with the

actions taken against it by the law institutions in several European countries, along with the development that the phenomenon has undergone during these years. So, one of its elements such as the *Ways of Recruitment* has changed. From 1997 until 2000 among the many ways the traffickers used for recruiting victims, "forced kidnapping" was the most used. After 2000 this method came towards its disappearance due to the very high risk that it presented, particularly after the changes to the legislation regarding the phenomenon. A trafficker denounced for this criminal act would suffer the maximum sentence consisting from 20 to 25 years of imprisonment. Such a severe and long punishment certainly has forced the traffickers to abandon this kind of recruitment.

The age-group has been another important element used by the traffickers, due to the income they generated from them. From 1997 to 2002, the minor victims accounted for around 70% of the total number of the trafficked victims, but the changes in legislation and the establishment of severe penalties for the traffickers that exploited minors consisted of a very high risk for their lives. This was one of the main reasons that forced them to rise the recruitment age of the victims from 18 to 25 years since even though they were captured by the police of different countries the traffickers were protected, because the victims of this age-group admitted they were recruited willingly and exercised prostitution at will.

Another element that has changed during these years as far as the phenomenon is concerned, is also the traffickers' profile. It is known that the Albanian traffickers are described not only by the victims, but also by various international experts as the most violent traffickers, because in the early years of the onset of the phenomenon, they were all connected with crime and had serious criminal precedents. After 2004, the measures taken not only by the Albanian government, but especially from the different countries of Europe, helped the law institutions of these countries to hit the traffickers. This forced them to change their appearance by becoming friendlier to their victims. So

from 2005 and onwards we would notice a great change in the relationships that were established between the victim and the trafficker. With an oral and not signed agreement, the traffickers would decide not only to reward the victims by giving them a very small percentage of the income that they themselves earned but they would also be less violent and would take measures for the protection of their health. This resulted in the reduction of the number of denouncements made by the victims against the pimps and the traffickers. Only from Vatra during 2002 -2004, 80 victims denounced 211 traffickers, but after 2005 this number has decreased reaching inconsiderable numbers. We are not giving the causes why this happened and is still happening because we have conducted a detailed analysis on this problem in the studies of 2005 -2006.

The various studies that Vatra has conducted in all these years have provided an analysis of the development of the phenomenon only for South and Middle Albania, since these are the areas reached by Vatra's activity, without having the opportunity to give a broader picture for this phenomenon at national level.

Since the organizations dealing with human trafficking and the shelters established for the treatment of victims are located in South and Middle Albania, it has been possible to assess the situation of the phenomenon only for this part of the country, but we do not know what the situation is in the northern and north-eastern areas of Albania, what is degree of development there, who are the heads etc. As the work of the organizations in these areas is inexistent due to the patriarchal mentality that exists as far as the phenomenon is concerned and the dangerous criminal groups that operate in these areas, for years and years no institution or organization has given a real assessment of the situation of the development of the phenomenon for this part of Albania.

Morina, Hani i Hotit and Kapshtica are the border points that connect Albania

with Kosovo, Montenegro and Macedonia, where border crossing is free due to the removal of the visa regime with these countries. This has allowed traffickers to use them not only for the victims who are exploited in Kosovo and Macedonia but also for passing them in Greece or through Slovenia to Italy. Women organizations working in these countries report a phenomenon always on the increase that worries their countries and a high number of Albanian girls and women who are exploited in night clubs, discos, motels and hotels which are attended by the soldiers of UN, KFOR , EULEX etc.

During this year we were informed several times by La Strada, an organization operating in Macedonia, on actions taken by the police of this state, who had caught Albanian victims exploited in this country, but surprisingly after their repatriation our police did not refer any case to our shelters, or ask for our social workers, even if this was just to interview and identify them despite the existence of the National Referral Mechanism Agreement for Victims of Trafficking. Unfortunately, for years this Agreement has not been implemented properly by its signatory members, this being particularly true for the state institutions.

Since the repatriated victims were not referred to the shelters operating in the country, the question rises: where did the repatriated girls end up? What happened to them?!!! If the police had cooperated with us, the victims would have taken the relevant information on various opportunities existing for them, they would have been informed about their rights etc. This information is never given to them at the border points due to the lack of the Law "On information". Had this collaboration been working properly, many girls would have been helped and treated by being included in the rehabilitation and reintegration programs and their abandonment of the networks of trafficking would have become possible.

Dealing for years with this situation Vatra has asked the National Anti trafficking Coordinator, in the framework of the implementation of the

National Referral Mechanism Agreement, to appoint at each border point a social worker, member of staff of the organizations that are signatories to the Agreement, as the only professional and experienced people who will enable accurate identification of victims and regularly provide guidelines to the government on the measures to be taken against the phenomenon.

Also considering the implementation of this Agreement as very important, we have asked the Police Directorates of Border Districts to strengthen the cooperation with the shelters working in this field, because during 2008 - 2009 the referral of victims by these police stations has decreased considerably. This conclusion is supported not only by the statistics presented in various studies conducted by Vatra, which show that only for 2005 and 2006 the police have referred to our shelter 361 cases, compared to 140 cases that have been referred during 2007 - 2009. Other organizations managing shelters share the same concern and report lower figures than Vatra's.

Under these circumstances, this lack of cooperation and information has turned the real assessment of the development of the phenomenon at national level into a real challenge because a complete study has not yet been conducted neither by the state institutions nor by the NGO-s that operate in this field. The establishment of a shelter in Kukes or Shkoder would make possible the covering of the North and North-eastern areas of the country regarding the recognition of the phenomenon and would provide direct help for all the victims caught by our police or who are repatriated by the police of the border countries such as Kosovo and Montenegro.

During 2007- 2009 Vatra has assisted and treated 93 victims exploited outside the borders of the country, a very low figure compared with the previous years (only for the 2004 – 2006 period we have assisted 576 victims). However, the girls themselves give another view of the development of this phenomenon. This has not only been ascertained from Vatra but also from the other

organizations that work in this field. In continuous meetings with the members of the NCATS (National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters) but also with the international organizations and especially with specialists of the field such as USAID, CAAHT, ICITAP and Terre Des Hommes etc, that operate in Albania, as well as in the meetings with the Responsible Authority at the office of the National Anti-trafficking Coordinator, we have discussed and debated that the situation is not that which is presented by the State Police.

From our studies and studies of other shelters members of NCATS, which are based on the number of victims we treat, which is lower compared to previous years, it has been accepted that there is a reduction in the number of victims trafficked outside the borders of Albania. This shows a mitigation of the phenomenon, but it does not mean that it should not be evaluated and overlooked as a phenomenon that no longer exists. It is important that the police take severe measures to control the borders and fight the phenomenon not only with operations but in a permanent and continuous way, with the aim of keeping it under control.

What has stricken our attention and continues to be a concern, is facing every day with an ever-increasing number of women and girls exploited in daily prostitution. A report published by the Centre "Aksion Plus" presents information on the development of daily prostitution in the city of Tirana, the high number of women and girls included in this phenomenon, the areas where they exercise it, category of clients, the profits they earn etc. Tirana, as the city with the largest population in the country, has the highest number of victims exploited in prostitution. This centre has analyzed only the most vulnerable part of this target group that works on the street, leaving outside other groups such as students, high school girls, minors, etc., victims exploited in the most luxurious hotels and motels of Tirana. However, although this report does not have comprehensive data, be that only for this city, the 53 sex workers identified by this centre, show that daily prostitution is becoming a very disturbing phenomenon for our country and society.

Faced with this reality Vatra' s staff have intensified the information campaigns with the community, but above all with the state structures as the main actors who must take their responsibilities for taking effective measures to fight and prevent this phenomenon. The intensification of our efforts for making the government accept internal trafficking will be one of the most difficult challenges for 2010 not only for Vatra but for all the organizations working in this field, in order for the government to develop action plans with concrete measures for fighting and hitting the phenomenon at national level.

Internal trafficking

Internal trafficking as a phenomenon is one of the main links of human trafficking, since it functions the same way as its main elements (such as recruiters, carriers, hosts, source areas, ways of recruitment, pimps, clients, etc.) with the only difference being that this phenomenon takes place within the country for as long as traffickers are able to pass the victim from Albania to EU countries.

Since internal trafficking is identified with daily prostitution, the Ministry of Interior and the State Police consider it as "at will" or "voluntary" prostitution. From 2005 and onwards Vatra based on its studies, has sought to sensitize these two institutions and has requested that they accept the internal trafficking as a phenomenon not separated from human trafficking because there are objective reasons showing that voluntary trafficking in Albania, be that internal or external, does not exist and cannot exist for as long as we will have this socio-economic situation:

First: In Albania, prostitution is punishable by law and this is sanctioned in the Constitution. This makes its openly exercise, both from the pimps and victims, very hard. Its exercise in any way would penalize both parties.

Second: It is also known that in Albania exists a patriarchal mentality for

this phenomenon resulting in the exclusion of all those women and girls who exercise it. This is closely connected with the moral values that the Albanian family reflects and it is for this reason that Albanian women and girls, particularly those in rural areas, find it difficult to do it voluntarily and openly. This would penalize them for their whole life.

Third: The victims are involved in trafficking due to the great poverty that exists in the country. It is the lack of income that forces them to be exploited in prostitution not the will to have sex or to consider it as a possible profession.

Fourth: The recruited victims circulate within the country from the small towns to the big ones where they are exploited. As such they can not do this alone without support and without some knowledge. The fact that women and girls of the northern areas or rural areas are found in these cities shows that this has not happened occasionally, but as a result of their involvement in a network of trafficking.

Fifth: Unlike the foreign victims such as Moldavian, Romanian, Russian, etc, part of whom in most cases exercise prostitution voluntarily, the Albanian victims always have a pimp who can be "the husband" or "fiancé", who has introduced her to the networks of trafficking and exploits her in different ways (the methods of recruitment through false engagements or marriages continue to function successfully in our country).

Sixth: The Albanian pimps are recognized anywhere in the world as dangerous and very violent criminals who would never allow the victims to be free or act on their own. There have been many cases of Albanian victims brutally killed, as there are also many of those girls whose whereabouts are unknown. Many are the cases of different family members coming to us for help in search of their girls, who have left home for years and cannot been found.

To prove what we mentioned above, we are bringing some data from the lives of victims that Vatra has assisted and treated during all these years.

... ... The story of Z. SH starts on a September day in 2008. Z. only daughter of a poor family often went on summer holidays to her grandparents in a village of B. There Z. meets the son of the neighbour who worked as a waiter in a restaurant in the city of D. After telling of his love and promising to marry her, he asked her to move and live with him in the city where he was working. Very much in love Z. secretly agrees to leave home without telling her parents and went to live together with her boyfriend in the hotel where he worked. Two days later her boyfriend introduces Z. to another boy, who would help her to get a "job" in another hotel which he owned. Forced by her boyfriend Z. agrees to "work" for this person. This is when her suffering began, because from the day she began working, she never saw the boy she fell in love with, but forced and abused by the pimp who exploited her, she passed from one hand to another being sold depending on the offers ... .

The cases of victims are many, but we want to highlight the fact that these cases keep repeating and the victim apart from being exploited, violated and abused remains the poorest person in the world although with her "work" she has enriched many criminal traffickers. Thus from 2197 victims assisted so far, none of them has any personal incomes from the "work" done, not to say that they were so poor that they did not have the opportunity to buy even one package of cigarettes, let alone other things necessary for living. The question rises: if these girls are trafficked "voluntarily" or practice prostitution "at will", where are the great incomes they have earned during their exploitation in years? How is it possible that none of them has a home to live, a bank account? How is it possible that none of them has bought any property or business etc.?!! It is known that the traffickers and pimps have become today businessmen

and owners of the most luxurious hotels and restaurants in country. There is only one answer to these questions: They are simply victims of the phenomenon and as such they should be treated by the state, family and society.

The situation with foreign victims is different. We have treated about 48 girls from Moldova, Romania, Russia, Bulgaria etc, 37 of whom used the income earned to buy a home in the countries of origin. That is why "voluntary" trafficking does not work in Albania. The Albanian pimps and traffickers would never allow sharing the profits with their victims. This would be possible only in those cases when they themselves let them free, but this happens when the victim is sick or old and they cannot exploit them anymore. Under these conditions it is understood that no one approaches them.

It is also a fact that whenever the police, based on the information received, has undertaken control operations in different hotels in big cities, the victims have never been alone but accompanied by pimps, who provide them the clients, payments, facilities where they are exploited etc. In April 2009 the police referred to our shelter a victim, who was caught by them during a control. This case was identified as exercise of prostitution "at will", but in fact she was found locked in a room together with the client in an apartment rented by two traffickers. And surprisingly, although the victim had dozens of clients a day, no money was found on her. Can this be called "voluntary" trafficking?!!

Concerned about the scale of the spread of this phenomenon and in order to have a more accurate assessment of the situation, in August we undertook a series of meetings with the specialists of the anti-trafficking structures of the Police Directorates in the districts of Vlora, Fier, Durres, Elbasan and Saranda, in order to discuss and draw their opinions regarding the development of the phenomenon in the districts where they operate. From all the meetings it resulted that not only has internal trafficking, or the exploitation of women in the country as they called it, increased in these two years but it has also become a very worrying problem for the police of

these districts. This occurs because the exploitation of women in the country is not legally recognized as trafficking, which in turn creates obstacles during its attack by the Police.

Trafficking in human beings is known by all for its existence in the country, but unaccepted by the government, which still ignores it even after ratifying the CE Convention by Law No. 9642, 20/11/2006 "On measures against trafficking in human beings". This phenomenon continues to develop normally increasing the profits of traffickers and of the criminals that deal with its organization. Even though we have information on the high number of girls who are trafficked from these networks, which recruit them from poor areas and exploit them in the country's largest cities, the number of their referral from the police is very small. This happens because even when the victims are caught by the police forces, they are treated by the prosecution as cases of illegal exercise of prostitution, leaving free the pimps, hotel owners, clients, etc. and penalizing the victims who exercise it. The lack of cooperation between the prosecutor's office and the police regarding this phenomenon was another concern that was highlighted in the meetings, being a huge obstacle in the work of police in terms of fighting the traffickers. This situation dictates the need for immediate measures aiming changes in the legislation, so that the exploitation of women in prostitution can be legally considered as trafficking and the punishment of all the persons who are part of it can be included in these laws. To penalize the victim means either not to want to accept the situation or to deliberately present it not as a criminal and dangerous phenomenon but as a mundane phenomenon of community life.

If prostitution is punishable by Constitution, then the law must be applied equally to all. The implementation of two standards by these institutions i.e. leaving free the pimps, brokers, clients and other persons, and the treatment of the victims as if they were criminals, has made them unwilling to cooperate with the police to denounce the exploiters thus making this kind of phenomenon much more protected.

Vatra's staff have often confronted the law institutions in protection of the victims, to make possible the release from the absurd charges made by these institutions, and they have strongly asked for the punishment of those who are really guilty. Only for this year about 7 girls accommodated in the shelter have been helped and released from these charges, 3 of whom have later pressed criminal charges against their exploiters.

It has been a while that we have raised with concern the issue of the development of internal trafficking due to the dimensions it has taken, the ways it functions, etc, saying exactly that this phenomenon is turning Albania into a destination country too. But differently from the destination countries in Europe, where this phenomenon is more controlled and the high economic level results in better clients, in poor Albania, with the exception of two or three big cities such as Tirana, Durres and Vlora, the victims most of times have ordinary clients, unemployed, drug addicts, drunks and old men. Obviously taking into consideration this kind of clientele, the traffickers do not take measures to protect the victims and often they oblige them to have unprotected sex, thus risking their lives.

Additionally, for the exploitation of their victims traffickers use rented flats located in the suburbs or in new buildings, which to a great extent are empty because their owners have emigrated abroad. Vatra has considered the use of these apartments as a separate problem, because without being recognized and denounced by the community this phenomenon becomes very protected, and as such the police needs more time for detecting and fighting it.

Another serious problem arising by this kind of trafficking is that, being an uncontrolled exercise of prostitution, it constitutes a high risk for the spread of sexually transmitted diseases in the population. The health system in Albania has not undergone any reforms for nearly 20 years and the public health institutions that deal with this problem do not show proper care for the treatment and diagnosis of the infected persons. This is due not only to

the lack of medicines and other equipment, but also to the lack of rehabilitation centres for the treatment of sick persons. The greatest part of victims is carrier of infectious diseases because of the sexual abuse they suffer. Even this year we had in our shelter girls diagnosed with Hepatitis B and C, two of whom with Hepatitis C, and despite being seriously ill the state hospitals did not accept to treat them.

In this year's analysis we have evidenced that traffickers continue to recruit and exploit victims with mental health problems. This is another serious concern that is often associated with unwanted pregnancy and childbirth. Because of the mental problems they have, girls and women of this target group fall very easily prey to the traffickers. The way they are exploited and treated by the traffickers results in serious mental trauma for them. During these years we have assisted a considerable number of girls exploited in the country and due to the aggravation of the disease we have asked health institutions to give them a better and more qualified service in the district psychiatric hospital, but unfortunately, as elsewhere, this hospital does not treat them either. The lack of qualified state centres for the treatment of victims with various health problems increases the level of risk for the life of the population in the country.

Since the Ministry of Health as the institution that has clearly defined tasks in the National Anti trafficking Strategy, does not take its responsibilities for the protection of victims' health and that of the population in the country, then we are right in saying that these strategies continue to remain formal and unapplied documents.

Another phenomenon that has been noticed this year is the fact that the ratio between the number of victims involved in trafficking and exploited abroad and the number of victims exploited within the country, is still equal; i.e. 50% to 50%, thus verifying what Vatra has analyzed and identified years ago, meaning that as long as the traffickers exploit the victims in and out of the country this ratio will remain the same. Thus, from 25 trafficked

girls and women treated in the shelter during 2009, 13 of them have been trafficked within the country and 12 are victims of external trafficking exploited in Italy and Greece. As it is obvious from the statistics the situation between internal and external trafficking is almost equal. This is evidenced not only by the figures that we report but also from the information and data given by the girls accommodated in the shelter.

What are some of the special elements that distinguish this phenomenon from external trafficking?

The duration of victims' exploitation

Different from the external trafficking, the exploitation of the victims in the country does not last for years. This exploitation might be short, seasonal and unorganized.

The traffickers' profile

(Full data on the profile of traffickers of all networks and of victims have been given in the study published in 2002. Here we are giving some differences that exist between the two phenomena).
The traffickers who exploit the victims within the country work individually. In general they do not accept to become part of large national and international networks. In contrast to the other traffickers they are not very violent and make agreements with the victims. They often change their victims. When they are caught by the police they try not to exploit again the victims that have been with them in order to avoid in this way trouble that may come from police. Generally they are not rich.

Victims' profile

The distinguishing characteristic of this phenomenon is the exploitation of victims with mental health problems, who due to the problems they have, are quickly deceived by the traffickers.
Another feature of this phenomenon which differs from external trafficking is the

age-group. This includes the exploitation of adult victims from 30 to 40 years of age, which is not being practiced by the traffickers who exploit the victims abroad.

Payments of clients

Because this phenomenon is carried out within the country, where the life standard of the population is very low, it is obvious that clients' payments are settled in accordance with their economic level, which, compared to the profits that traffickers earn from the other phenomenon, is many times lower. This is one of reasons why traffickers who exploit victims abroad, have now become businessmen, powerful owners of construction companies or owners of hotels and restaurants in the country.

Unprotected sex

Traffickers are careful to provide victims of big networks, who are exploited for a long time outside Albania proper health care, whereas not only is this health care missing for the victims of internal trafficking but they are also exploited by ordinary, old, drugged and drunk clients etc. This has led to an increase of the number of victims with unwanted pregnancy or infected with various types of infectious diseases.

This year's analysis has been focused on what has been identified as a concern regarding the development of the phenomenon, roles and responsibilities of the state institutions to fight human trafficking within and out of the country, the treatment and reintegration of the victims in the society. Of course, we haven't touched upon part of the problems and concerns raised above because a detailed analysis for them has been conducted every year in every study and report of Vatra, starting from 2002 until 2008. Our research and publications focus on what happens during the year, cases are evaluated in accordance with their development in time and in the community, followed by an assessment of the measures taken by the government and civil society, on the effectiveness and contribution they have provided to mitigate these phenomena.

VIOLENCE IN THE FAMILY AND SOCIETY

Domestic violence and human trafficking are two phenomena, which have in common the violence that is exercised in different forms, against all the women and girls involved in them.
Vatra has conducted for years special projects for the prevention of domestic violence, but the work of several years with human trafficking highlighted the fact that here violence is reflected in its highest degree, that of slavery of human life.

The Albanian economic, political and social context is a result of the lack of investments in many areas, especially in education and health, or of the development projects in agriculture, especially in the rural areas consisting of over 60% of the population. This situation has resulted not only in the great spread of domestic violence in the recent years, but also in its appearance in its most serious form, that of crime within the family. The publications of written and visual media, as well as other studies conducted by different NGOs at national level, show the high percentage of women who have killed their husbands, because for years they have been prey to their husbands' violence. Maybe this is related to the fact that domestic violence affects women of all strata, age -groups, educational and professional levels, different ethnicity and religion.
But if violence against women with low economic level is present every day in our lives in all its forms, to the other group, to women with economic incomes, professionals with higher education level this violence becomes less evident because of not reporting it. This explains the fact why violated women with low income undertake extreme measures against their perpetrators or husbands. This is the target group of women referred by

police forces and other institutions to be treated and assisted in our shelter. In one recent research conducted last year by Vatra (March 2008) regarding this phenomenon, the highest percentage of persons abused within the family is occupied by women. This was reported by 87% of interviewed persons.

The Albanian patriarchal mentality of the family inherited from the past has created discriminatory relations between the two sexes, because of the culture that exists in the Albanian families. This has led violence historically to be considered as a matter which belongs to the men, who according to the canon or custom code have the right to treat women as a chattel and can do anything with it.

> *... ... .. A. T. mother of two children was systematically being violated by her husband and every time he beat her, he would let her out of the house together with the two children regardless of whether it was day or night, cold or rainy. With "the right" of the husband and strength of the man he would force her to come back home, without asking if she agreed or not ... ...*

As long as violence against women will be explained by tradition and customary law and shall be treated as a private matter and not as a problem for the society, and as long as the role of institutions and legal structures is ignored, violence will exist and our society will continue to remain a patriarchal society without emancipation and human civilization values.
Despite the fact that with the phenomenon of human trafficking the state and law structures have been more active, when it comes to domestic violence these structures are indifferent and not cooperative because it is always treated as an internal matter, with the aim of maintaining the family balance.

Although domestic violence is becoming an increasingly worrying phenomenon we do not yet have data at national level on the scale of its spread, the causes and effects of violence, its various forms, affected target

groups etc. The negligence of the institutions regarding this problem has resulted in an incompleteness of the measures taken by the government to fight the phenomenon, because:
Although almost 3 years have passed from the approval of the Strategy to fight domestic violence, the government has not developed programs and has not undertaken awareness raising campaigns at national level, in order to put an end to violence and protect its victims. Moreover, in many districts of the country the basic structures for its implementation have not yet been established, and even in those areas where they are established they are inexistent.

For almost 2 years "The Network of Women against Violence and Trafficking" implemented in 12 districts of the country a project in the framework of the implementation of the Strategy for the establishment of a Regional Council against violence in each district. This council would help in the establishment a 24-hour toll free phone line available to the community that would report cases of violence, and in the appointment of a social worker at the Municipality. Since Vatra has a 24-hour phone line, the Municipality of Vlora decided to provide financial support for this number.

Since the phenomenon of domestic violence is not considered a criminal offence, unlike human trafficking, it is less attacked by the structures of police and law. As this phenomenon takes place within the family, it is understood that the intervention of the government for taking effective measures to fight this phenomenon in years has been inexistent. This has resulted in the phenomenon reaching a greater extension across the country, significantly increasing the number of victims of violence.

In the analysis of the phenomenon we have identified the fact that victims of violence go through the same sufferings, exclusions, discriminations, like the victims of human trafficking.
Finding herself under difficult conditions, a violated victim banished from home or who has ran away from it for freeing herself from violence, finds it

impossible to find new opportunities for living. In many cases such a victim, unprotected and unsupported, is often at risk of being included in the networks of human trafficking.

> *... ... . E.D. a girl about 20 years old was being violated every day by her father a man with bad habits and an alcoholic. Under these conditions E. decides to run away from home. However she did not have a real place to stay. The first days she stayed at a friend's house who introduced her to a boy, who according to her, was her relative. After some days, the boy proposed her "marriage" and asked her to go and live together. From that day, locked in a rented apartment, she became a victim exploited by the trafficker in daily prostitution.....*

The lack of economic support, the reaction of the social opinion, family members and the distrust in legal institutions, very often force women to fall prey of violence. In a country where the patriarchal culture prevails, domestic violence is becoming a problematic phenomenon for society. The fact that the abusers are not only part of the family but also part of society, has made it possible for a good number of them to be involved in criminal and violent situations in community because of instant conflicts that they create in different places, or in the areas where they live.

With the entry into force in June 2007 of the Law "On measures against domestic violence", the government took its first steps for the protection of abused victims. But if the victim is legally entitled to a Protection Order, what's it worth for if the victim isn't protected by it. The fact that the victim has to live under the same roof with the abuser, doesn't give her any guarantee for her life. And this happens because the state itself has not created the appropriate structures for treating not only the victims, but also the other family members. These structures include shelters, counselling phone lines, rehabilitation programs for the victims, children and abusers, etc. As long as protection measures will lack, violence against women and girls will continue. We say this because during

this year we have had numerous requests from violated women asking to take refuge in shelters, but they have not been treated by Vatra because these victims were accompanied by their children (more than 4-5 children) from 2 to 18 years. This denial has occurred not only due to the limited capacity we have in the shelter but also due to the specific treatment children of different age-groups and sexes need.
The increasing number of demands coming from all around the country speaks for the increase of cases of violence, as well as for the different strata it has included. The existence of only two NGO managed shelters throughout the country, dictates the immediate need for the state to respond to this reality with the establishment of a considerable number of multifunctional centres for each district. The children do not have to have the same destiny of the victim. They have their right to live and enjoy their adolescence outside the shelter.

Found under these conditions and without protection even in cases when the victim has a Protection Order, she cannot escape violence since she lives in the same house with the perpetrator. The Protection Order issued from the court does not precede the tragic events that can occur to the victim, because it is not executed immediately after issuance from the court and often it is not executed at all. This is also due to the lack of responsibility of the bailiff's office which besides the prolongation and indifference is also unprepared for facing difficult situations, which require immediate intervention for their solution.

Often found in such situations, Vatra's staff has been forced to seek the help of the State Police for the execution of the Protection Order for some victims accommodated in the shelter, who because of their situation needed the intervention of the institutions to protect them.

Unlike human trafficking, the phenomenon of domestic violence affects all the strata of society, thus making it very vulnerable. This has resulted in different groups of society being involved in the fight against the phenomenon

and trying to provide solutions for the situation, regardless of the results they achieve. A violated victim is not prejudiced and discriminated as a victim of trafficking. Instead, in cases when state institutions fail to give a solution to her problems, she receives support not only by her family, but also by other community members. Similarly, the children of a violated victim are accepted and supported by everyone, even by the perpetrator himself, while the child of a trafficked victim is not only unacceptable and discriminated, but carries insulting epithets which accompany him/her throughout life.

However we must admit that all these years, little work has been done with the community, particularly in the rural areas, to eradicate the masculine mentality regarding women. The good work done for many years during the previous system in relation to the treatment of women in the family and society, developed and emancipated not only the relations between the sexes, but also gave women an opportunity that through education and employment to become a determining factor in the development of the country. During these 20 years her backing down from the economic sector, and dissociation from the public and social life turned her into a housewife economically and materially dependent on her husband, thus returning once again to the patriarchal mentality inherited from the past. This is one of the main reasons why domestic violence has reached these dimensions and women continue to remain the most affected strata.

The phenomenon of violence can not disappear without empowering the woman and involving in this fight not only the state institutions, but the entire society. We emphasize this because violence in general is not reported, but even in those cases when this happens, the victim is not supported and helped. The state institutions were not helpful for helping and solving the problems of victims of violence treated in Vatra shelter thus placing in front of us numerous difficulties for getting the information and accompanying documents the victim herself has in these institutions, with the aim of starting the judicial proceedings or for other needs. Let's take one of the victims of violence treated in shelter. Although she had been violated by her husband

for years and at least once a month had reported this to the police, surprisingly when we asked information about this case at the Vlora District Police Directorate we got no response, since the sector that covered these issues did not have anything recorded. The same happens with the health care service. Even in this sector you can rarely find recorded information on the medication and treatment of violated women. Both these reports provided by these institutions are very important, because without them the victim can not initiate a judicial proceeding against the perpetrator.

A negative phenomenon that we have identified this year in connection with this phenomenon is the bad work of the courts. Al though the victim has suffered serious physical injuries and often her life has been at risk the courts do not expedite the proceedings, but try extending them endlessly through hearings for reconciliation, aiming the victim's return to the perpetrator. By this we do not want to say that the court prejudices the victims of violence as it ordinarily happens with the victims of trafficking. Their only aim is to maintain the family balance. Even though in principle we should accept that the family has its values, when this becomes a risk for the life of the persons living in it, the court must decide immediately in order to avoid crime within the family, which in the last two years has reached great dimensions.

The phenomenon of domestic violence should be a priority of the work of all state institutions, so that measures can be taken for fighting and preventing it as soon as possible. We should avoid a repetition of what happened with the phenomenon of human trafficking, whose mitigation took many years of work and efforts. The fight against indifference and non implementation of all laws and Action Plans designed by the government for these phenomena must be continuous and everyone should be part of it. Only in this way we can precede their development and avoid the social problems that they generate.

Vera LESKO
Anti-trafficking Expert

PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED BY "VATRA" PSYCHO-SOCIAL CENTRE DURING 2009

PROJECT

"Rehabilitation and reintegration centre for trafficked, violated women and girls and those at risk."

Funded by:

- Norwegian Church Aid
- CAAHT (with USAID funds)
- Kvinna Till Kvinna
- The Sigrid Rausing TRUST London
- World Learning (with USAID funds)

The project "Accommodation, rehabilitation and reintegration shelter for trafficked, at risk and violated women and girls" is a project that is implemented from 2001 and onwards.
The establishment of the first shelter in Albania by "Vatra", in 2001 would

provide help to thousands of women and girls, who as a result of the difficult socio-economic conditions in which they were, were included in the networks of human trafficking.
The work done by Vatra's staff during these years in support of the trafficked victims, resulted in the rehabilitation of a high number of women and girls who now have a different life. This hard work and the staff's devotion have had a direct impact on the reduction of the number of the trafficked victims.

During this year Vatra' s staff have focused their work in two main directions: work in the field through direct meetings with the families and community, and work in the assistance and treatment of the victims of trafficking and domestic violence. The staff have paid special attention to the work in the direct meetings with the community especially in the rural areas, for the numerous social problems, these areas face.

It is important to emphasize the fact that thanks to Vatra' s sensitizing work of so many years in these areas, the patriarchal mentality that exists in this population with regards to human trafficking and the treatment of victims of this phenomenon has now changed.
This is reflected with the fact that an increasing number of victims are being admitted and joined with the families. Only during this year **42** women, girls and **9** children have been admitted in their families out of the total of **78** women accommodated.

To provide a realistic and accurate assessment on what is being done and what has been achieved during 2009, we are giving below an analysis for each activity carried out, according to the objectives.

Objective1:

Provide a safe and comfortable environment where women and girls can have access to the services provided: accommodation, interviewing, legal and health assistance, individual and family counselling.

ACCOMMODATION

During this year, a total of **51** girls and women, and **10** children accompanied by their mothers have been accommodated and received the services provided at the shelter.

Accommodation	women and girls	children	total
Accommodated for the first time	48	10	58
Accommodated more than once	7	1	8
Remained from the previous year	12		12
TOTAL	67	11	78

As it can be seen from the above table, the number of the beneficiaries who have been treated and assisted by Vatra' s staff is higher (**78**) than the total number that we had envisioned for the entire year 2009 (**40**), **almost double.** The situation regarding the two phenomena, trafficking and domestic violence, is related to the economic poverty that exists in the country, lack of jobs, the mentality and prejudices as part of the popular culture, the apathy and indifferentism which has gripped our society, which in turn leave room for the development of the negative phenomena, including especially all the strata in need. It is precisely this situation that allows the phenomena of human trafficking and domestic violence to develop normally. It is the task of all, but especially of the government and the state institutions to take concrete measures, reduce poverty and increase living standards in the country, which in turn will have an impact on the mitigation of these phenomena and will prevent the development of other negative phenomena.

Under these conditions, Vatra' s staff have increased their responsibilities, in finding new options using all possible resources in order to help the strata in need affected by these phenomena. As a result Vatra has intensified the sensitizing campaigns with the community, especially the youth, girls and women as the most affected target groups of society in order to help and inform the affected people through their involvement and assistance in

social services programs offered by Vatra free of charge.

The number of trafficked victims and those of domestic violence that are assisted from Vatra, would be many times higher, but due to the limited number of accommodation facilities and also due to the lack of funds, many of them are assisted and supported by the staff out of the shelter in the areas where they live. Obviously this way does not allow women to be strong and continue their fight for the protection of her rights
This is one of the key challenges to Vatra' s staff, who continuously have supported and continue to fight for the rights of women even when difficulties come across, in order for the women and girls in need to find warmth and support when facing situations in which they may find themselves.

Referral

If we take a look at the number of victims referred in the shelter, we see that this year the number of girls referred by police has dropped compared with the same period of the previous year.
This has come as a result of the lack of the cooperation from the structures of the state police, with which we have collaboration agreements for referral of cases. As a result the National Referral Mechanism Agreement is not implemented due to the fact that, the border police on purpose or due to their inability do not make the exact identification of the victims of trafficking.

However, in order to include a higher number of girls who are trafficked and suffer domestic violence and now need help, Vatra's staff have strengthened the cooperation with the organizations working in the same area, with families in the areas of origin, and with the community, who have referred cases for long-term reintegration and rehabilitation assistance.

It is regrettable that the number of victims of domestic violence is increasing

significantly and, due to lack of state residential centres, they do not find a solution to their problems. Many organizations working in this field have concentrated their activity only on sensitizing campaigns, leaving out of the attention the establishment of shelters which would help a considerable number of victims, and would help avoid conflicts and crime within the family.

Concretely the referrals are as follows:

1. The District Police Directorates - 26 girls and women (and 8 children accompanied by their mother)

- *Vlora Police* — *11 girls and women and 8 children*
- *Fier Police* — *4 girls and women*
- *Sarande Police* — *10 girls and women*
- *Durres Police* — *1 girl or woman*

2. Organizations - 14 girls and women and 1 child

- *Jetë dhe Shpresë - Gjirokaster* — *6 girls*
- *Të ndryshëm dhe të barabartë* — *2 girls*
- *The Reception Centre Linze* — *2 girls and women*
- *The Counselling Centre in Elbasan* — *1 woman*
- *The Counselling Centre in Durrës* — *1 woman*
- *Tjetër Vizion Elbasan* — *1 girl*
- *IOM* — *1 woman and 1 child*

3. Family - 10 girls and women and 1 child

10 girls and women and 1child

4. Self-referred - 5 girls and women and 1 child

5 girls ,women and 1child

Interviewing – Identification

It has been years since Vatra has raised its concern to the relevant institutions regarding the identification of the victims, considering this as a very important element, to reflect the real situation of the phenomenon in the country.

Found in this situation for years, Vatra has asked the National Anti Trafficking Coordinator for the appointment at every border point of a social worker, part of the staff of the organizations working in this field as the only persons trained and qualified who will enable accurate identification of the victims and on the basis of the real situation will provide accurate guidelines to the government for the measures that should be taken to fight this phenomenon.

Vatra's social team having a long experience regarding this phenomenon is very professional in the practice it follows during the interviewing, in order to make the correct identification for each beneficiary accommodated in the shelter. What distinguishes our staff from others is that it works in the field and continuously evaluates the situation in accordance with the developments of life in the country. Having knowledge on the areas of source and origin of these phenomena, we were able to gather more information, which is used not only by us to determine the priorities of our work, but also by institutions interested in working in this field. This has made Vatra an important actor in Albania and wider in the Region.

Out of 66 cases accommodated in the shelter, during this year we have identified:

Trafficked and accommodated for the first time	19 girls and women
Trafficked and accommodated more than once	6 girls and women
At risk	11 girls and women
Violated	18 women and girls
Clandestine	1 woman
Children	11 children

Below we are presenting the social, economic and family situation of the victims of trafficking and domestic violence for the 10-months period January – October 2009.

The social status of women and girls, victims of human trafficking and at risk for human trafficking

Age-group	
14-18 years old	7 girls
18-25 years old	26 girls
25-35 years old	3 girls

As you can see from the table, the girls recruited are mainly 14-25 years old. From the analysis of this element, as well as based on the information received from the girls accommodated in the shelter, it has resulted that traffickers continue to aim at this age-group, given that the profit generated from their exploitation is higher. This age group can be manipulated more easily, due to the situation in which they are, and the impossibility to have a better future in the areas where they live.

After analyzing this element, it resulted that minors and girls up to 20 years old are exploited in the internal networks of trafficking. Consequently Vatra` s staff have intensified their work with schools, as well as in the field in order to include young people in voluntary joint activities, to disseminate information widely in the population.

Education	
Illiterate	3
Elementary education	6
Secondary education	21
Secondary education, uncompleted	1
High school	1
High school, uncompleted	3
Higher Education, uncompleted	1

Areas they come from	
Urban	16
Rural	20

The economic and social situation of the trafficked victims is very problematic. Most of them have a low level of education. They come from the rural areas where the mentality towards these phenomena is not only despising, but in many cases very exclusive. Certainly the situation is worse for those families which because of poverty do not pay attention to good-raising and education of children, particularly girls, who in order to meet vital needs fall victims to the phenomenon. This situation can be changed only if the government with its central and local institutions, and society as a whole, are involved in mass sensitizing campaigns, with the aim of informing the community on the consequences and problems that generate from these phenomena. Differentiating work should be done with the victims' family members in order to make them aware that the abandonment of children because of public or family opinion, not only risks the girl's life, but it also becomes a burden to the family.

Methods of recruitment	
At will	10
False engagement /marriage	12
Promise for work/school	2
At risk of being trafficked through deception	11
Kidnapped	1

Methods of recruitment which are still successful in Albania include trafficking "at will", false marriages and engagements etc. But what we want to analyze is the method of trafficking "at will" or "voluntary" trafficking as it is usually called in some EU states. There is no "at will" or "voluntary" trafficking in Albania and this is so for several major reasons:

First: In Albania, prostitution is punishable by law and this is sanctioned in the Constitution. This makes its openly exercise, both from pimps and the victims very hard. Its exercise in any way would penalize both parties.

Second: It is also known that in Albania exists a patriarchal mentality regarding this phenomenon, resulting in the exclusion of all those women and girls who exercise it. This is closely connected with the moral values the Albanian family reflects and as such the Albanian women and girls, especially those of rural areas, find it difficult to do it in a voluntary and open way. This would penalize them for all their life.

Marital state	
Single	33
Married	2
Divorced	1

The fact that 33 victims trafficked and at risk out of the total of 36, are unmarried shows once again that the patriarchal mentality that exists in relation to the phenomenon, in the areas where they live prevents them from creating a family and integrate in the society.
This mentality is so pronounced that often when trying to solve the problems of the victims accommodated in the shelter, the staff have been faced not only with indifferentism of the heads of various institutions, but often with their despise too.
Vatra has always raised with the concern and criticized all the obstacles encountered because of the directors of these institutions, asking higher instances or even the president's or prime minister's office for the solution of problems and putting an end to the prolongations and obstacles they create. Problems with justice, employment, education, registration of children, etc. have been some of the many issues that Vatra has managed to solve.

Domestic violence

Domestic violence in Albania is presented to its highest extent, that of crime within the family. This is another field in the focus of Vatra's activities. For some time now we have been facing every day worrying facts and incidents, which are challenging the state and its institutions and the whole society as well. In order to provide a statistical report on the violence exercised against women and girls, as well as to better understand the situation of their social, economic, cultural, and educational status, we are presenting the following data:

Age-group	
14-18 years old	1
18-25 years old	3
25-35 years old	6
Over 35 years old	**8**

Education	
Illiterate	2
Secondary education	4
Secondary education, uncompleted	2
High school	7
High school, uncompleted	1
Higher education, uncompleted	2

Violence exercised	
Psychological	18
Physical	18
Sexual	10
Financial	16

Areas they come from	
Urban	9
Rural	9

Marital state	
Single	4
Married	8
Divorced	6

Perpetrator	
Husband / Fiancé	12
Father	4
Ex fiancé	1
Other (son and daughter in law)	1

Employment	
Employed	2
Unemployed	16

Children	
With children	10
Without children	7
Pregnant	1

As reflected through the tables above for the social status of the women and girls victims of domestic violence, they are always violated by the men of the family, in most of the cases by the husband or ex-husband and in other cases by the father or married son or his wife. They are women aged 25-35, but it varies generally up to 40 years old, because of being more informed in relation to domestic violence and having the courage to react against this violence and the continuous change of the Albanian mentality regarding the right roles of the partners in a family. They are of course married or come from a marriage that has not worked out, i.e. divorced, and around 90% of them are unemployed due to the low educational level they have in comparison with the job market requirements. However the main cause is still their poor family background where the incomes come only from men. The economic impossibility to face life obliges them to accept violence and not denounce it.

The existence of violence is noticed without differentiation both in rural and urban areas. However the reason that sometimes it dominates in the urban areas is that women in this areas are more informed to react against domestic violence.

The main cause of women's divorce remains violence. In most cases it is identified as physical and psychological violence and very little or not at all as sexual. If we stop at this last, the fact that it is not reflected does not show that it does not exist but women do not know how to identify it or they feel it is still taboo speaking about such marriage relationships.
Physical violence is the most obvious and it serves as grounds for divorce, but after divorcing, the psychological traumas become part of the lives of these women, as a result of the continuous psychological violence exercised by their ex-husbands, but also of the reality they are faced with. That is why it has been necessary to provide individual and group counselling for their personal growth. Found in a very difficult psychological and physical situation, at the moment of their arrival in the shelter, all the violated women and girls have been assisted by the social workers, the psychologist and the doctor of the shelter. Moreover the lawyer has conducted counselling with them on the rights provided to them by Albanian law in facing their perpetrators.
For the 18 cases of the victims of violence accommodated in the shelter during this year, the lawyer has assisted in the issuance of 5 Immediate Protection Orders and Protection Orders. He has assisted the divorce proceedings of 3 women abused by their husbands and 1 woman abused by her son and his wife in the trial for the division of ownership.

Even though Vatra's staff work with devotion to support and assist the victims of violence, the relevant institutions responsible for the enforcement of the Law on "Measures against domestic violence" and the bailiff's office are very indifferent. Some employees and even the heads of these offices at the moment of execution of the Immediate Protection Order or Protection Order have openly expressed their hesitation, or non-collaboration in their

implementation. This is due to the masculine mentality that exists in these individuals, and because of the fear they have to face the husbands in the moment of execution of the Immediate Protection Order and Protection Order. This is evidenced in the concrete cases treated by Vatra.

Objective b: Enable the reintegration of the girls and women through inclusion in vocational training and education, employment, in the communities of origin or in other shelters.

REHABILITATION

Medical Assistance

The medical assistance is offered to the new beneficiaries from the first day of their accommodation in the Shelter and after that they are under the care of the doctor of the Centre. **258** medical visits (repeated) have been conducted in total for the entire month.

35 cases have been examined for Sexual Transmitted Diseases, 4 women violated and maltreated physically have been examined by the shelter's doctor assisted by the legal doctor of the regional hospital of Vlora.
The shelter's doctor has performed **17 group counselling sessions** on the hygienic and nutrition care especially at the beginning of the summer season, which carries different risks for health in the cases of carelessness on hygiene.

After an examination at the Directory of Health Service (DSHSH) one of the victims of internal trafficking has been identified with Hepatitis and immediate measures were taken for her hospitalization in the hospital of Vlora. This case was not taken seriously and responsibly by this institution therefore she was sent to Tirana for further treatment.

Aulona Centre, Vlore has offered to the beneficiaries in the shelter, the realization of pap tests free of charge. In November, 12 beneficiaries of the shelter made this analysis.

Legal assistance

The lawyer of the Centre has offered legal assistance and counselling to all the cases treated in the shelter. The lawyer has assisted the **victims of trafficking** during the denouncement processes they make at the Police, Prosecution Office, and Courts, **victims of violence** in the process of the issuance of the Immediate Protection Order and Protection Order, or in proceedings for divorce, child custody, ownership etc.
Also, the lawyer of the Centre has discussed different topics with the beneficiaries in the shelter, regarding the Albanian legislation and what it foresees for problems such as: trafficking in human beings, domestic violence, children's rights etc. Concretely these topics have been: The Law "On witness protection", "Legal sanctions for the criminal act of trafficking in women", "Family Code" and Measures against violence in family relationships", "Their rights according to the Constitution" etc.

For this year the lawyer has offered assistance and counselling to **28** girls and women accommodated in the shelter and more specifically:

- **9** cases of trafficked girls
- **Counselling in relation to what the Albanian legislation foresees for the protection of the victim and the punishment of the traffickers has been offered for these cases.**
- **5** violated women have been assisted in the issuance of the Immediate Protection Order and Protection Order

Likewise 14 cases related to civil proceedings such as: ownership, divorce, child custody, child registration issues etc. have been assisted and treated.

Legal assistance has been offered to **16 other cases** from the *community* regarding divorce, ownership, child custody issues as well as direct counselling with beneficiaries in community.

Psycho-social assistance and counselling

Taking into account the problems that the accommodated girls have had

such as: neurosis, depression, psychological stress, low self-esteem, self-blame etc, the psychologist, as well as the social workers, have conducted individual and group counselling sessions with each of the beneficiaries.

Individual counselling has been offered in accordance to the personal needs of the beneficiaries adapting them to the individual plan of reintegration. This counselling is focused on the stability of their emotional state, increase of self-esteem, plans for the future, independent life, relationships with the family and others, vocational trainings etc. **410 individual counselling sessions** have been conducted (in a repeated way) during this year according to the specific problems of each beneficiary under the care of the social workers and the psychologist.

Group counselling and discussions with the beneficiaries. This counselling has been mainly focused on the establishment of correct relationships between the girls themselves, the staff, the employer, families etc. **156 group counselling and discussions** have been conducted during this year**.**
The topics of the group counselling have been selected based on the problems that have been observed in the group of beneficiaries alternated with free discussions and psychological games as an effective way of freely expressing themselves and getting out of the daily routine.
The consultations have been conducted by the social workers and the psychologist of the centre, according to the relevant cases.

Social-cultural activities in and outside the shelter

Different social, cultural, and entertaining activities **have been conducted during this year** within and outside the shelter.
Among the most important activities conducted within the shelter we can mention: the celebration of the birthdays of the beneficiaries, the celebration of the national days, entertaining games etc.
Similarly, the organization of activities outside the shelter with the beneficiaries has been considered very effective, as a way for their psycho-

emotional discharge, their entertainment, knowledge on tourist, historical, and cultural values of our country etc. These activities have been conducted in: the mountain of Llogara, the ancient city of Apollonia (Fier), the Castle of Ali Pashe Tepelena (Portopalermo, Himare), the Monastery of Zvernec (Vlore), the Cavalone Zoo (Narte, Vlore) etc.

REINTEGRATION

The program of social reintegration of the beneficiaries in the society is another important step of Vatra shelter services including accommodation of the beneficiaries evaluated preliminarily, in rented apartments, the employment of beneficiaries, counselling with their families and joining with their families. Also this process involves the assistance of the beneficiaries in their families, after they leave the shelter and continue their lives in society.

Joining with the families

The priority of the staff's work has been and still is the joining of the girls and women with their families and establishing correct relationships with them. But this union is reached only after the actual situation of the family of the victims and the circumstances that have involved them in trafficking have been studied well. After this step, awareness raising of the family for accepting the girls continues, based on a prior plan of their return to the families compiled by the social team of the shelter for every beneficiary assisted during this year. **42** girls, women and **9** children accommodated during this year in the shelter have joined their families.

Counselling in the family

Vatra' s staff have contacted and have conducted **132** cases of counselling with the families of the girl beneficiaries. These visits have been conducted by the social workers at the families, and through meetings conducted in the offices of Vatra. The counselling has consisted in the establishment of relationships between the families and the girls, the progress of the girls accommodated in the shelter, their performance in vocational courses and

their future. Also contacts have been established and about **174** phone calls have been realized with the families of the accommodated beneficiaries.

Referrals to other institutions

In the framework of the functioning of the National Coalition of the Anti-trafficking Shelters, there exists among the shelters the possibility of mutual referrals so that the beneficiaries could be given access to various services.

"Life and Hope" – Gjirokaster	6 girls
"Different and Equal", Tirana	*3 girls*
"Another Vision" Elbasan	*1 girl*
Reception Centre for the victims Linze to Vatra	*2 girls and women*
Counselling Center, Elbasan	*1 woman*
Counselling Center, Durres	*1 woman*
IOM to Vatra	*1 woman with 1 child*
Vatra to Different and Equal	*2 women and girls with 1 child*
Vatra to Different and Equal	*1 girl (for temporary services)*

Rented apartment

2 girls and **1** mother with **1** child have been accommodated in a rented apartment. Vatra' s staff , through their continuous visits, have conducted the monitoring of the apartment. The beneficiaries have expressed their concern and difficulties in relation to the economic situation, employment etc. The staff have supported and have given options for their solution.
The social workers and the psychologist of the centre have assisted and emotionally supported them for every problem they have shown.

Educational reintegration programs adapted individually

Vocational qualification

During this year **27** girls and women have been included in the vocational courses from whom:

- Finished the hairdressing course and were certified 11 girls and women
- Finished the cooking course and was certified 1 woman
- Finished the tailoring course and were certified 4 girls
- Finished the computer course 1 girl
- Finished the tailoring course and were certified 3girls and women
- Were registered and attend the hairdressing course 6 girls and women
- Is registered and attends the cooking course 1 girl

After completion of the course, in the framework of project, the beneficiaries are given respectively:

- For the hairdressing course, hairdressing equipment such as: Professional hair dryer, scissors, and professional poker, brushes and combs etc. Out of 11 girls who completed this course 3 were employed as hairdresser assistants in beauty salons, and the other 8 are exercising their profession near their families with the donated equipment.
- For the tailoring course: sewing machines, different cloths, scissors etc. The four girls who finished this course exercise the profession near their families.

Out of 27 women and girls professionally qualified, 7 were supported by World Vision, Vlora, in the framework of the cooperation with Vatra.

Economic empowerment

Micro-business

A very important achievement of Vatra's work with the support of the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) was the establishment of 4 micro-businesses (with free grants) and the support and equipment of one existing micro-business.

Likewise, another micro-business (beauty salon) was established in September of this year with the support of World Vision, Vlore, for one of Vatra's beneficiaries treated in the shelter.

Vatra's staff have worked with the local authorities in the areas the girls came from for the facilitation, support and increase of business revenues aiming the alleviation of the payment of business taxes for one year.
The establishment of the micro-businesses for the beneficiaries and the alleviation for the payment of taxes to the local authorities are a direct contribution to the increase of income and strengthening and development of the girls' micro-businesses in the future.

Vatra's leading staff and the Centre's social workers and accountant have monitored the progress of **6** micro-businesses offered to the beneficiaries. The focus of the meetings and visits conducted were the achievements and difficulties encountered during the management of the business, and instructions have been provided on how to overcome them.

In the framework of the program of "World Vision" Organization, Vlora branch, for the support and economic empowerment of the strata in need, **4** girls treated in the shelter and reintegrated and their families were given support for opening irrigating wells and buying vegetable and fruit seedlings.

Employment

During this year, in cooperation with the Regional Directorate of Employment, Vlore, 20 girls and women were employed and more specifically:

- 11 in tailoring enterprises
- 1 cook's assistant
- 3 hairdresser's assistants
- 3 salespersons in a boutique and a grocery
- 2 cleaners

Two of the beneficiaries treated in the shelter who are in the long term reintegration process, were employed *(*with support of World Learning and USAID funds*)* as social operators in Vatra's prevention office.

Provision of Birth certificates

The provision of beneficiaries with birth certificates is a priority of staff's work, in order to complete all the documentation for the identification of cases.
Also, this document facilitates many services that the beneficiaries need during the time of their stay in the shelter such as: registration at school, provision with passport, opening of judicial proceedings, employment, vocational courses, etc.
In the realization of this service Vatra has cooperated with the different District Police Directorates and the local government in the areas the beneficiaries come from.

Witness protection

Upon request of Vatra Centre, the American Embassy, through USAID and IOM has followed the process of life safety of one beneficiary accommodated in Vatra shelter. Due to prolongations of the judicial proceedings, and due to the high risk for life, this case was evaluated and was included in the protection program of the American Government.

Objective 3: Continue the partnership with the State and the National Coalition of Albanian Shelters, as a member of the group of the Anti-Trafficking Responsible Authority, aiming the encouragement, drafting and implementation of a National Anti-Trafficking Action Plan.

Having as one of its priorities the cooperation with the state institutions, NGOs, and participation in various networks and coalitions, Vatra even this year has tried to expand the membership in new networks and strengthen the cooperation with the existing partners.

Ministry of Interior

This remains the most important partner for the field where we operate and the problems we treat. It is precisely this cooperation that enables us to successfully achieve the undertaken objectives. Even during this year, Vatra has been supported by the **Office of the National Anti-Trafficking**

Coordinator in the Ministry of Interior, for the cases of witness victims in the court proceedings. This office has also provided special support for taking security measures in all the processes that pose a high risk for the girls' lives.

"Vatra" Centre has participated in all the meetings of the National Anti-Trafficking Task-Force organized by the Office of the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, where it has been discussed on the achieved results in the framework of the implementation of the National Anti-Trafficking Strategy 2008-2010, the encountered problems and difficulties.

In February the Office of the National Anti-trafficking Coordinator in cooperation with Vatra, organized the one-day training for the members of the Regional Anti-Trafficking Committee, Vlore. The training aimed the capacity building of the members of this Committee, with regards to knowing and implementing the National Anti-Trafficking Strategy 2008-2010, taking of responsibilities in the Fight Against Trafficking in Human Beings, and the evidencing of the best cooperation practices of Vatra with some of the state institutions, members of the Regional Anti-Trafficking Committee (KRAT), Vlore.

Although the cooperation with National Anti-trafficking Coordinator continues to be effective and successful, the cooperation with the state police is fading. This is more evident with Police Directorates of southern districts, because of their failure to implement the National Referral Mechanism and the inaccurate identification of the trafficked victims at border points.
We have presented all the difficulties encountered during this year to the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, with the aim of taking measures to strengthen their cooperation with the shelters, for the assistance that should be given to the victims, thus having a direct impact in the mitigation of the phenomenon of human trafficking.

Ministry of Education

In April, in collaboration with the Office of the National Anti-trafficking

Coordinator, the Deputy. Minister of Education, **in the framework of the National Anti-trafficking Strategy 2008- 2010**, supported Vatra's staff in the process of facilitating the enrolment procedures for one of the girls accommodated in the shelter so that she could attend University.
The Educational Directorate in Vlore and Fier, the Directorates of high schools in the areas where Vatra implements projects for sensitizing the community on the prevention of trafficking and domestic violence, have supported Vatra's staff in the successful realization of the educational sessions with the young, the distribution of Vatra's publications, competitions among the schools, etc.

The Municipalities and Communes

The cooperation with the local authorities has consisted in the sensitizing work that Vatra does in all the rural areas of the districts of Vlora and Fier, for the development of the workshops in community, registration of Roma children, identification of girls at risk of trafficking and provision of the opportunity to receive services in Vatra shelter etc.
Concretely during this year, Vatra cooperated with the Municipality of Vlora, Fier, Roskovec and with the Communes of Novosele and Shushice (Vlore) and with the Commune of Levan (Fier), as well as with all those Municipalities and Communes the beneficiaries accommodated in the shelter come from. These institutions have also supported Vatra's staff in the facilitation of procedures of supplying identity cards and birth certificates to all the beneficiaries accommodated in the shelter. In the same framework the Municipality of Vlora this year enabled the covering of the phone costs of the shelter and the appointment of a social worker (of its structure) supporting the provision of services for the girls and women accommodated in the shelter.

The Regional Anti-trafficking Committee, Vlore

The Committee continues to be inactive. Even this year, the Regional Anti-Trafficking Committee (RATC), has not conducted any meetings of the technical table, to report or discuss regarding the development of the phenomenon in the District. As always, Vatra has cooperated with the

institutions, members of the Technical Table of RATC, individually and directly by solving all the problems arising for any beneficiaries treated in the Shelter and in community.
Not only has RATC in Vlore failed to take any responsibilities regarding the phenomenon, but it has also been quite indifferent in the solution of specific cases presented in institutional ways from Vatra, such as education, employment, support for the girls and women assisted in the shelter.

The National Anti-trafficking Coalition of the Shelters

During this year, the National Anti-trafficking Coalition of the Shelters has conducted regularly the meetings of the agenda. In these meetings they have discussed the mutual problems and difficulties that the shelters encounter in their work such as: the lack of referral by the District Police Directorates, the lack of financial support by the state for the shelters, health problems, judicial proceedings etc.
What has been identified in the meetings of NATCS and is still a problem for the long-term Reintegrating Centres, is not only the lack of referral by Police, but also by the Reception Centres, which keep the girls for a short time and do not provide appropriate information on the services the Reintegrating Centres provide, by denying them the right to benefit from the long-term reintegrating services.
In October 2009, in the framework of the European Day against Trafficking in Human Beings, NATCS organized its first Conference with the theme: "Together in the Fight Against the Trafficking in Human Beings", with the participation of representatives from central and local state institutions, national and international organizations etc. In this Conference, among others were presented the activities realized by NATCS, the difficulties encountered and the challenges for the future. In this Conference, the Ministry of Labour Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, promised financial support for the shelters of NATCS, as the only institutions with the appropriate expertise and structure for the treatment of trafficked, at risk and violated women and girls.

National organizations

Collaboration with the national organizations working in the same field remains a priority of Vatra's work for the inclusion of as many actors as possible operating in different districts of the country aiming the coordination of joint actions in order to fight and prevent the negative phenomena which influence the society's life. During this year this cooperation has consisted in the undertaking of joint actions for the protection of the rights of women and strata in need, participation in and organization of joint activities, experience exchange, referral of cases of victims of trafficking or domestic violence for long term assistance and reintegration in "Vatra" shelter etc.

In the framework of this cooperation Vatra, with the support of KTK, organized in June 30th and July 1st 2009, the seminar with the theme: "The finalization of the establishment and institutionalization of the network of 8 organizations supported by KTK".
This seminar aimed at the institutionalization of women's organizations network supported by Kvinna till Kvinna to strengthen the cooperation and unify the initiatives of legal, social and economic character in order to protect the rights of women in Albania. These organizations are: Vatra Psycho-Social Centre, "Gender Alliance for Developmet" Centre, "Association of the women with social problems" Durres "Agitra-Vision," Peshkopi, "Me woman", Pogradec, "Woman to Woman" Shkoder, "Jona", Sarande, "Woman's Forum", Elbasan.

The seminar was also attended by the Local Coordinator of KTK Mrs. Safete Beqiri and by Mrs. Vera Lesko, as the Guest of Honour in the seminar, The President of the Network of Women Groups of Kosovo Mrs. Belgjyzare Muharremi, Mrs. Marjana Meshi, President of NATCS, who brought the experience of the operation of their networks and coalitions.
The seminar concluded with the approval of:

1. Institutionalization of the Network Agreement

2. The name of the Network. Its name was decided to be "Empowering Albanian Women Network"
3. Election of the Chairperson of the network (according to the alphabetical order of the organization's name)
4. Regulation of the Network
5. The 6-month, July - December 2009, Action Plan.

In September 2009 "Agitra Vizion" organization, member of the network, organized a seminar in the city of Peshkopia, which served for exchanging experiences among the organizations with regards to women's economic empowerment in the areas covered by each organization respectively.

In November 26th, the Empowering Albanian Women Network (EAWN), in the framework of the 16 international days of activism against violence against women, conducted a meeting with the President of the Republic of Albania, Mr.Bamir Topi. The aim of this meeting was presenting to the highest state institution with the problems and difficulties the Albanian women face today as well as the organizations supporting them.

International Organizations

Once again this year Vatra has had the support and encouragement of International Organizations such as: USAID, The American Embassy, CAAHT Program, The Sigrid Rausing Trust London, Norwegian Church Aid, Kvinna till Kvinna, OSCE/ODHIR, IOM, Antislavery International, Amnesty International, UNICEF, World Vision etc. Without their support, the achievement of objectives undertaken in the fight against Human Trafficking would not have been possible. Our international partners have supported Vatra not only financially but also with regards to:

- Lobbying to the central and local state institutions, in order for these institutions to take upon the responsibilities and become implementers of the policies taken by the Albanian government, in support of the victims of Human trafficking.

- Supporting with trainings for Vatra's institutional and organizational capacity building.
- Inclusion of Vatra' s staff in International Activities and Conferences, as well as involving them as Anti-trafficking experts.
- Referrals of cases of trafficking victims for rehabilitation and reintegration in the shelter.
- Assessment of the situation of cases of denouncement against the traffickers and pimps, and protection for the victims with high risk for life.

PROJECT

Improvement of the social and cultural status of the trafficked, at risk and violated women and girls, aiming their further integration in the normal life of society

Funded by:

American Embassy

This project was undertaken in support of the victims of human trafficking and those of domestic violence, aiming their reintegration in the normal life of society. It is known that all the victims have a low social, economic, educational and cultural status. In such context the services provided in the framework of the project, have completed and supported the victims' socio-cultural enhancement in the best way possible.

Activities realized in the framework of this project

Education

For the successful realization of the victims' general and cultural education, Vatra's staff have cooperated closely with the Directorate of Education, Vlore on the basis of the collaboration agreement signed with it.

The teacher of the shelter has followed up the performance of 3 beneficiaries in the courses against illiteracy, based on programs approved by the Ministry of Education for the primary cycle (elementary).

Additionally, attention has been paid to 4 other beneficiaries who continue distance high school education in Vlora.
This year one of the beneficiaries in the shelter started higher education in the University of Vlora. For this Vatra's staff cooperated and were supported by the Office of the National anti-Trafficking Coordinator (at the Ministry of Interior), Ministry of Education and the Directorate of Education Vlore, aiming the facilitation of the procedures for the registration and testing of the beneficiary in the University entry exams.

Embroidery and handwork activities

One of the activities held with the beneficiaries in the shelter's facilities is embroidery and handworks. During their free time, generally during the afternoon the beneficiaries spend time exercising their skills in embroidering various models adapted for wall frames, knitting or using the bodkin according to various models, or even working with beads, this being a new style of handwork. These activities have been assisted by the representative of World Vision, Vlore. This has resulted in: training of the beneficiaries through the course, discharge of negative energies and stress and increase of self-esteem by realizing various creative works.

In September 2009 the representatives of World Vision and the Evangelical Church, Vlore, organized an open fair with the works of these girls, with the participation of representatives of different institutions of Vlora. A part of the income generated from this activity passed to the beneficiaries and the other part was used for different activities carried out with the beneficiaries outside the shelter.

Vocational qualification

This service has been included in the presentation of the project activities: "Shelter for trafficked, at risk and violated women and girls".

Educational sessions with the girls and women in the shelter

The topics of the sessions conducted with the girls and women accommodated in the shelter during this project have been selected in accordance with the requirements of the victims, but also with the current situations occurred in the shelter.

Thus the topics have been as follows:

- Trafficking in Human Beings.
- Trafficking situation in Albania.
- The causes and consequences of trafficking. Ways of protection.
- Domestic violence in Albania.
- The Albanian Legislation regarding the protection of victims of trafficking and domestic violence.
- Drugs, alcohol and the consequences of their use.
- AIDS and STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases). Ways of protection.
- Discrimination and prejudice between the communities with different ethnicities.
- The parent-child relationship; an important factor for raising a healthy generation.
- Adolescence and communication, etc.

These trainings resulted in the increase of the information level of the girls and women accommodated in the shelter on the risk represented by negative phenomena such as: trafficking in human beings, crime, domestic violence, drugs, STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases) etc, as well as on the forms and ways of protection from them. The women and girls have participated actively during the conduction of these sessions and have discussed in relation to the relevant topics, bringing real facts from their lives.

PROJECT

"Awareness raising campaign for sensitizing women, girls and young people on the risk represented by the trafficking in human beings the other negative phenomena that stem from it".

Funded by:
Kvinna Till Kvinna (with Lindex funds)

"Vatra" Centre has been working for years in the field of prevention particularly in the rural areas of the districts of Vlora and Fier, aiming the dissemination of information regarding the risk represented by negative phenomena such as: trafficking in human beings, domestic violence, use of drugs from young people, illiteracy etc.

The areas of the implementation of the project are: the communes of Novosele and Shushice in the district of Vlora, Levan Commune and the Municipality of Roskovec in the district of Fier.
These areas were selected for the fact that, besides being problematic in relation to human trafficking phenomenon, they are areas with a considerable percentage of Roma population. It is precisely Roma women and girls that result as the target-group which is most affected from human trafficking.
Consequently, the work of the prevention staff during this year has consisted in the dissemination of information on the risk of trafficking in human beings and its consequences.

Project Activities
Educational sessions with the students

The signing of the collaboration agreements with the Directorates of high schools and the other educational institutions in the areas of intervention enabled the successful realization of these sessions.

The educational sessions with the young have been conducted in the following schools:

1. "Faslli Fejzo Danaj" in Shushicë Commune, Llakatund village (Vlora District);
2. "Pilo Prifti" in Novoselë Commune (Vlora District);
3. "Dino Ismaili" in Levan Commune (Fier District);
4. "Adem Vrapi" in the Municipality of Roskovec (Fier District).

62 educational sessions have been conducted this year, with the participation of **883 students.**

The topics treated during the educational sessions were selected based on the problems of these rural areas and the suggestions of the students and teachers of the schools. A total of **7 topics** have been discussed, such as: "Trafficking in Human Beings", "The trafficking situation in Albania", "The causes and consequences of trafficking in human beings", The protective measures against it", "Violence in the Albanian family", "Albanian legislation for the protection of the victims of trafficking and domestic violence", "Drugs and their consequences", "Sexually Transmitted Diseases. Ways of protection?" etc.

It is worth mentioning that many of the young people of these schools have offered their voluntary work for the distribution of the informative materials in the community.

Educational sessions with women and girls of the Roma community and others

Another target-group with whom the prevention staff have worked in this project are the women and girls of the Roma community and the community as a whole. Collaboration agreements for the conduction of educational sessions were signed with the Directors of the Health Centres in the communes of Shushicë, Novoselë and Levan who formed groups composed of **15-20 women and girls** who regularly have taken part in the conduction of the educational sessions. **21 sessions** have been conducted in total with

the participation of **75 women and girls of the Roma community and the community as a whole.**

It is worth mentioning that a considerable number of men both from the Roma community and the community as a whole have taken part in the educational sessions organized with the women and girls. A total of 27 men have participated in these sessions.

Seminar with the community and the local institutions

November 2009, marked the organization of a seminar in the commune of Shushicë, the village of Llakatund in the district of Vlora, with the theme: *"For a society without violence and exploitation"*

The development of this theme was recommended by the Head of Shushicë Commune because as he expressed himself, the phenomenon of violence is more problematic in the rural areas. Participants in this seminar were the heads of the local government, health centre, the directorate of the high school, teachers, police representatives, high school students, members of the Roma community and the community as a whole etc. The topics presented in the seminar consisted in giving information regarding the existence of violence in this commune, its negative consequences to the individual and to society in general, what the Albanian legislation foresees in relation to this phenomenon etc. The participants had debates and discussions on the issues treated in the topics.

At the end of the seminar, the Head of the Commune promised the inclusion in the structure of the health centre of a psychologist who will treat and give psychological counselling to the victims of domestic violence as well as to the whole community.

The participants greeted this initiative of the Head of the Commune and considered it as a step forward in the fight against domestic violence.

Radio and television talks

Radio talk

A radio talk was organized in October on the topic: "Internal trafficking, a serious problem that affects the entire Albanian society". During this talk Vatra's experts provided information on the internal trafficking of girls and women and the current trafficking situation in Albania.
The aim of this talk was the dissemination of information on trafficking in human beings and ways for its prevention, in the community, the city of Vlora and also in rural areas.

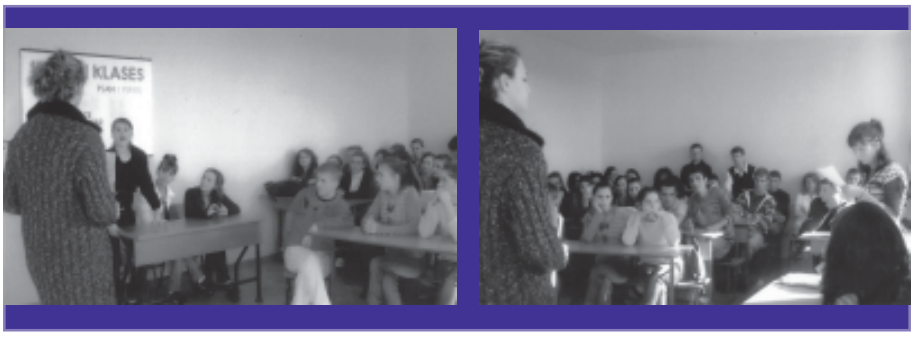
Television talk

In the framework of the 16 days of worldwide activism against violence against women (25 November-10 December), at the beginning of December, "Vatra" Centre organized a television talk with the theme "Violence in the Albanian family" with specialists from the legal and social field. The aim of this talk was the sensitization of the community in order to get more information on the implementation of the Law "On Measures Against Violence in Family Relationships", and the measures taken by the state institutions for its implementation in support of the victims of domestic violence.

Competitions in high schools

This is one of the most accepted activities from the young people, due to the fact that their inclusion and activism in these competitions on acute social themes that worry the young people and society, has been very high and very productive. Moreover the realization of these competitions is seen as a way of making high school students more interested and more involved in taking the information given during the educational sessions.
2 competitions were organized in the framework of the project: one in October 2009, in "Dino Ismaili" high school in Levan Commune (Fier) with the theme: **"You don't decide for my life"!.** The questions of the competition were asked based on the information the young people had taken during the educational sessions on the human trafficking

phenomenon, its consequences, the ways of protection from it etc.
The second competition was organized in December 2009 in the "Adem Vrapi" high school in the Municipality of Roskovec, in the framework of the World AIDS Day with the theme: **"Protect your life"!.** The questions asked in this competition were on: Sexually Transmitted Infections, AIDS, their consequences and ways of protection.
These competitions were conducted in cooperation with the Directorates and teachers of these schools.



Preparation and distribution of leaflets

11 **leaflets** were prepared in accordance with the topics of the educational sessions and seminars conducted. These leaflets have been distributed not only to the participants in educational sessions and seminars, but also to the community of the areas where the project is being implemented. In support of the sensitizing campaigns, Vatra's staff have realized numerous activities in open areas and in streets. These activities have been developed in the framework of World or European days for the protection of human rights and particularly for the fight for the prevention of negative phenomena that worry society today. Concretely these activities have been realized on:

- October 15th "European Day Against Human Trafficking",
- November 25th "International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women",
- December 1st "World AIDS Day".

In these activities the staff have distributed leaflets, brochures, posters and

bulletins in accordance with the theme of the respective day.

During the whole project were prepared and distributed in total **2850 leaflets** from which **1350** during the development of the educational sessions conducted with the young people and with the women and girls and during the seminars in community. Around **1500** leaflets were distributed during the other sensitizing activities in public environments and in the streets of the cities of Vlora and Fier.

Assistance and legal counselling

The lawyer of the centre has offered this year assistance and legal counselling for the community. The cases have been numerous and mainly on issues such as: divorce, amendment of documents, change of decision, child registration, child custody etc.

A total of **45 legal counselling sessions** have been provided to 21 women and girls from the community of the district of Vlora. Also 16 beneficiaries from the community were entitled to direct legal assistance.
In the framework of the realization of the educational sessions conducted by the social team with the students and women and girls in the rural areas, the lawyer of the Centre has treated topics such as: "On measures against violence in family relationships", "The Albanian legislation for the protection of victims of trafficking and domestic violence".

Psychological counselling

This service is offered by the psychologist of the Centre who is part of the project team and in cooperation with the social team conducts individual and group counselling not only with the students of the high schools, but also with the women and girls of the Roma community and the community as a whole. A total of **28 individual psychological counselling sessions** were conducted in the framework of the project, of which **12 with the women and 16 with the young people**.

Activities not foreseen in the project

Meeting with representatives of state institutions and civil society

On November 25th, "Vatra" centre in cooperation with "Plan & Go" organization organized a meeting with representatives of state institutions and civil society in the district of Vlora. The theme of this meeting was **"Disruption of the circle domestic violence - irregular migration – trafficking".**

Participants in this meeting were representatives from the Police Directorate of the district of Vlora: The section of fight against trafficking and the Section of domestic violence; the Regional Directorate of Border Police Vlore, the Social State Service, the Regional Directorate of Employment, the Regional Directorate of Vocational Qualification Vlore, World Vision etc.

The discussions of this meeting were focused on the consequences that the phenomena of human trafficking, domestic violence and irregular migration bring to the Albanian society. Likewise the measures taken by the Albanian state to fight these phenomena and the civil society's contribution in this field were identified in the meeting, and ideas and opinions were given on the possibilities for minimizing these phenomena in the future. There were also discussions about the establishment of an information centre in one of the communes of the district of Vlora (because the rural areas are more affected by these phenomena) so that the community can take the necessary information on the phenomena of domestic violence, irregular migration and trafficking.

This project will continue to be implemented until February 2010.

CAPACITY BUILDING OF VATRA

Vatra is always trying to find new ways and support for the organizational and professional capacity building of the staff and institution, so that not only the staff but the institution itself can develop continuously in accordance with the changes that occur in the country.

On May 28th 2009, Mrs. Brikena Puka, currently Executive Director finished the 1 year training offered by CAAHT Program with USAID funds, on organization management and direction. This training was realized in the framework of "Vatra" Centre's transferral of leadership, from Vera Lesko to Brikena Puka.

Vatra's achievements in the fight against human trafficking are a reflection of the work, efforts and sacrifice of the staff during these 12 years, which has been materialized with different appraisals given by various countries of the world.

This year Mrs. Vera Lesko, former Executive Director of Vatra, currently

its Honorary President, was honoured with two International Awards:
- The "Woman of courage" award, accorded by the American State Department and delivered by the American ambassador in Albania, Mr. John Withers on March 12th 2009, in the ceremony organized with representatives of high state institutions, diplomatic corps accredited in Tirana, national and international organizations etc.

- **On June 17th 2009** Mrs. Vera Lesko, was honoured again with the important award delivered by the American State Department "Hero of the Fight Against Trafficking in Human Beings". This award was delivered to Mrs. Lesko personally by the Secretary of State Department, Mrs. Hillary Clinton in the ceremony organized in Washington in the framework of the publication of the Report of the American State Department for the year 2009, on trafficking in human beings.

Photo from the ceremony of "Hero of the Fight Against the trafficking in Human Beings" award, organized by the American State Department, on June 17th 2009, Washington

Photo from the ceremony during which Mrs. Vera Lesko received the "Woman of courage" award from the American State Department, delivered by the Ambassador John Withers

Vatra's staff, participants in the ceremony during which Mrs. Vera Lesko was honoured with the award

VATRA'S PRIORITIES FOR THE YEAR 2010

1- Coordination of actions with all the actors that work in the field of human trafficking and lobbing in group to the government, for evaluating the situation in relation to the phenomenon of internal trafficking considering it not separated from the human trafficking phenomenon.

2- Organization of joint actions with all the members of the NATCS to lobby to the government, aiming the appointment in all border points of the country, of a qualified social worker from the organizations which work in this field, aiming the exact identification of the trafficked victims.

3- Establishment of a Regional cooperation of the shelters that work in the field of trafficking in human beings, aiming the dissemination of mutual information, and long-term support for the victims assisted by the organizations themselves.

4- Preparation of a concrete program with the members of NATCS to influence to the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, aiming the implementation of obligations that derive in the framework of the protocols and agreements signed between the parties. Cooperation of police of destination countries which should support with the relevant information all the repatriated victims from these countries.

5- Preparation of a concrete action plan of NATCS initiated at the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, aiming the drafting of the Action Plan to fight internal trafficking, its approval from the government and the implementation of the measures taken for the prevention of the phenomenon.

6- Organization of joint actions with the network of Albanian Women to undertake achievable initiatives for the protection of women's rights and particularly intensification of sensitizing campaigns to fight and prevent domestic violence.

PARTICIPATION IN NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

During this year "Vatra" Centre, has participated in different national and international activities, among which we can mention:

- 2-3 February 2009, participation in the training: “The right for compensation of the trafficked people. The International Standards. The compensation mechanisms. Legislation and practice in Albania”. This training was organized in Tirana by the Centre for Civic Legal Initiatives.

- 26-27 March 2009, participation in the study visit organized by IOM, in the framework of the regional project: “Fighting Trafficking in Human Beings in the South-eastern Europe and the Balkan Region - Phase IV”, in Pristina, Kosovo. The subject of this study visit was: Effective practices in the identification, referral, assistance and protection of the victims of trafficking”.

- 16 June 2009, Vatra’s Executive Director, participated in an activity

organized in the framework of the OSCE project, "Capacity building of Women for acting as a lobbying force for the parliamentary elections 2009" and was certified by OSCE. The certificate was delivered by the President of the Republic, Mr. Bamir Topi.

- 24-26 June 2009, OSCE/ODHIR, participation in the international meeting in Warsaw, Poland, on "Repatriation of the victims of trafficking from the European Community States", organized by OSCE/ODHIR.

- 16 September 2009, Participation in the Final Conference of KVKTNJ. This Conference served for the presentation of the source package of the best practices and findings of the Report: "Efforts undertaken in Albania for the Fight Against Trafficking in Human Beings 2008-2009".

- 4-10 October 2009, Study visit in Kosovo and Macedonia, organized by Kvinna Till Kvinna, with the participation of the representatives of the organizations of RRFGSH (Empowering Albanian Women Network".

- 12 October 2009, participation in the training with the theme: "The role of NGOs in the implementation of laws on gender equality in society", organized by the Centre for Civic Legal Initiatives".

- 13-15 October 2009, participation in the Regional Workshop with the theme: "Creation of a European Coalition of trade unions and non profit organizations for the prevention of violence and the protection of women and youth in their work places, with a special focus on trafficking". This seminar was organized by Antislavery International in Romania, Bucharest.

- 15 October 2009, participation in the round table "Monitoring the Courts, experiences and opportunities for the future", organized by USAID, Albania.

- 28 October 2009, participation in the National Conference with the theme: "Empowerment of women in Albania - Strategy for all inclusive development", organized by Refleksione Association.

- 2-4 December 2009, participation in the Regional Workshop with the theme: "Creation of a European Coalition of trade unions and non profit organizations for the prevention of violence and the protection of women and youth in their work places, with a special focus on trafficking". This workshop was organized by Antislavery International in Poland, Warsaw.

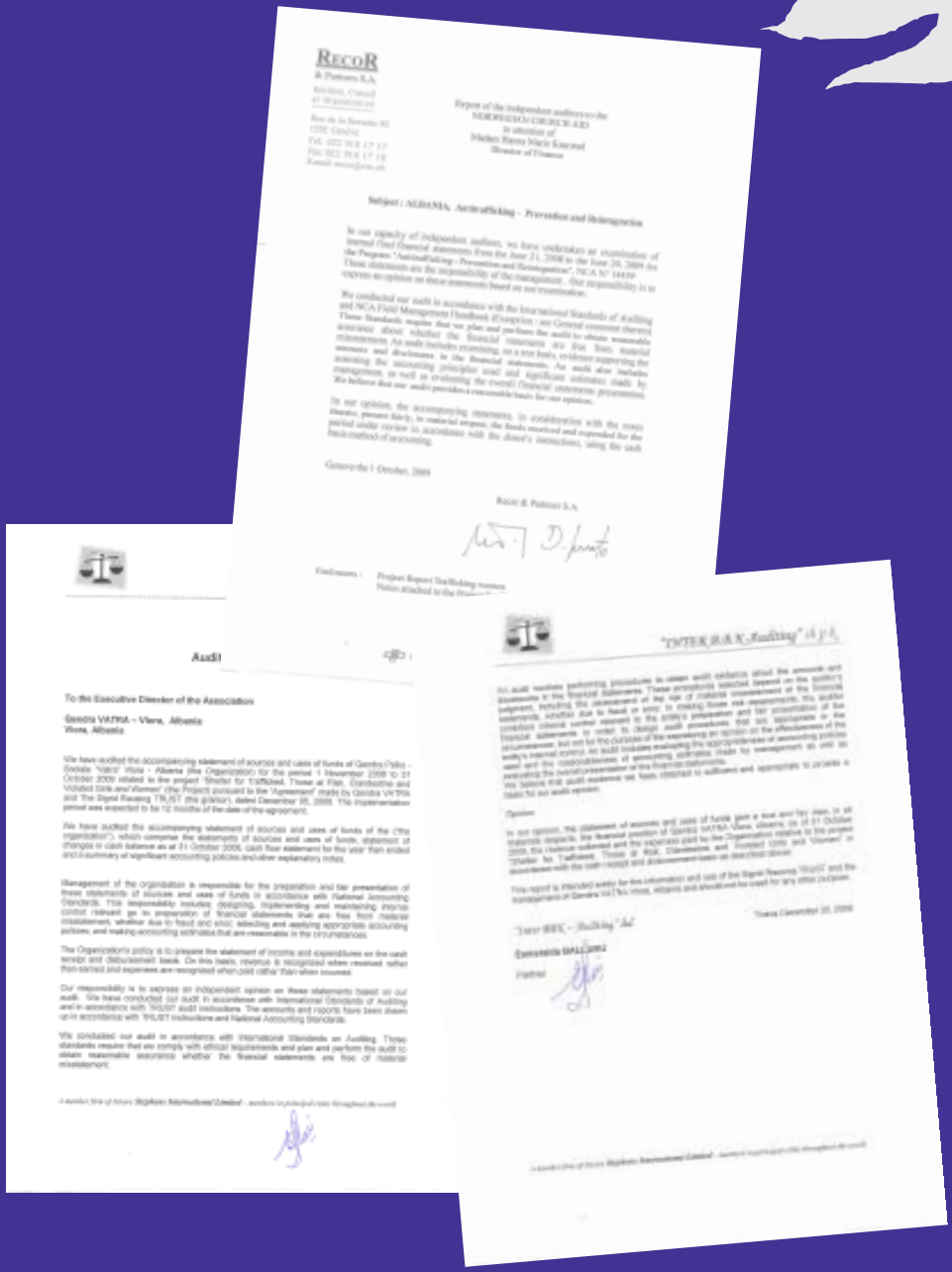
- 4 December 2009, participation in the National Conference: "We can stop domestic violence", organized by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.

- 8 December, participation in the National Conference with the theme: "Let's make it real –The implementation of the Law on Domestic violence in Albania", organized by Refleksione Association.

- 11 December 2009, participation in the Second National Debate on human rights in Albania, organized by CRCA (Children's Rights Centre in Albania).

- 16 December 2009, participation in the training: "The right for compensation and other basic rights of the victims of trafficking in human beings in the Law and in practice", organized by the Centre for Civic Legal Initiatives".

AUDITING REPORTS



RECOR
& Partners S.A.

Report of the independent auditors to the
NORWEGIAN CHURCH AID
In attention of
Madam Hanna Marie Knarvik
Director of Finance

Subject : ALBANIA. Anti-trafficking – Prevention and Reintegration

In our capacity of independent auditors, we have undertaken an examination of Internal Final financial statements from the June 21, 2008 to the June 20, 2009 for the Program "Anti-trafficking : Prevention and Reintegration", NCA N° 14439. These statements are the responsibility of the management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these statements based on our examination.

We conducted our audit in accordance with the International Standards of Auditing and NCA Field Management Handbook (Exception : see General comment thereof). These Standards requires that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free from material misstatements. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statements presentation. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our opinion.

In our opinion, the accompanying statements, in consideration with the notes thereto, present fairly, in material respect, the funds received and expended for the period under review in accordance with the donor's instructions, using the cash basis method of accounting.

Geneva the 1 October, 2009

RECOR & Partners S.A.

Enclosures : Project Report Trafficking women
Notes attached to the Financial

Audit

To the Executive Director of the Association

Gender VATRA – Vlora, Albania
Vlora, Albania

We have audited the accompanying statement of sources and uses of funds of Gendra Vatra – Gender Vatra - Albania (the Organization) for the period 1 November 2008 to 31 October 2009 related to the project "Shelter for Trafficked, Those at Risk, Dependents and Violated Girls and Women" (the Project) pursued to the "Agreement" made by Gendra VATRA and The Signal Reasing TR,IST (the grantor), dated December 05, 2008. The implementation period was expected to be 12 months of the date of the agreement.

We have audited the accompanying statement of sources and uses of funds of the ("the organization"), which comprise the statements of sources and uses of funds, statement of changes in cash balance as at 31 October 2009, cash flow statement for the year then ended and a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory notes.

Management of the organization is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these statements of sources and uses of funds in accordance with National Accounting Standards. This responsibility includes: designing, implementing and maintaining internal control relevant ge to preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud and error; selecting and applying appropriate accounting policies; and making accounting estimates that are reasonable in the circumstances.

The Organization's policy is to prepare the statement of income and expenditures on the cash receipt and disbursement basis. On this basis, revenue is recognized when received rather than earned and expenses are recognized when paid rather than when incurred.

Our responsibility is to express an independent opinion on these statements based on our audit. We have conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards of Auditing and in accordance with TR/IST audit methodsfera. The accounts and reports have been drawn up in accordance with TR/IST methodsfera and National Accounting Standards.

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing. Those standards require that we comply with ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement.

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"DVTEK-RAK-Auditing" sh.p.k.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. These procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risk of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of the expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by management as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements.

We believe that audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Opinion

In our opinion, the statement of sources and uses of funds give a true and fair view, in all material respects, the financial position of Gendra VATRA -Vlora, Albania as of 31 October 2009, the revenue collected and the expenses paid by the Organization relative to the project "Shelter for Trafficked, Those at Risk, Dependents and Violated Girls and Women" in accordance with the cash – accrual and disbursement basis as described above.

This report is intended solely for the information and use of the Signal Reasing TR,IST and the management in Gendra VATRA, Vlora, Albania and should not be used for any other purposes.

Tirana December 20, 2009

"DVTEK-RAK – Auditing" Sh.p.k

Emmanuela HALLUNI

Partner

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ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT

ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT OF "VATRA" PSYCHO-SOCIAL CENTER, 1 JANUARY-31 DECEMBER 2009

PROJECTS AND DONORS OF "VATRA" PSYCHO-SOCIAL CENTER FOR THE YEAR 2009

Nr	Projects	Donors	Period	Remained fund from 2008	Budget	Fund sent during 2009	Total Incomes	Expenses	Exchange gain/lost	Real Difference
1	"Rehabilitation and reintegration centre for the trafficked, violated girls and women and those at risk."	Norwegian Church Aid	June 2008-June 2009	5237.17	0.00	37277.00	42514.17	42504.08	6.28	16.37
2	"Awarenness raising campaign to sensitize the youth, women and girls , on the risk the trafficking in human beings poses. "	Norwegian Church Aid	September 2008 - February 2009	3909.41	0.00	9503.00	13412.41	13414.00	-0.93	-2.52
3	"Rehabilitating and reintegrating centre for the trafficked, violated women and girls and those at risk."	CAHHT (whith USAID founds)	May 2008- March 2009	6.15	0.00	15673.49	15679.64	15679.42	0.00	0.22
4	"Rehabilitation and reintegration centre for the trafficked, violated women and girls and those at risk."	Norwegian Church Aid, Kvinna Till Kvinna (Sweden), World Learning (with USAID funds) ,	April 2009 - January 2010	0.00	152437.00	129034.52	129034.52	108581.37	166.06	20619.21
5	Improvement of the social and cultural status of the trafficked, at risk and violated women and girls, with the aim the further integration in the normal life of society	American Embassy in Albania	September 2008- June 2009	1145.12	0	7084.39	8229.51	8229.01	1.31	1.81
6	"Awareness raising campaign to sensitize the women, girls and the school youth on the risk the trafficking in human beings poses and the other negative phenomena that stem from it".	Kvinna Till Kvinna (Sweden)	Setember 2009 - February 2010	0.00	11500.00	11500.00	11500.00	7462.52	1.69	4039.17
7	Seminar : "The finalization of the establishment and institutionalization of the network of 8 organizations supported by KTK".	Kvinna Till Kvinna (Sweden)	June 2009	0.00	2500.00	2500.00	2500.00	2498.81	0.90	2.09
8	VATRA	Solidarity contribution	January 2009 - December 2009	4195.32	0.00	1173.23	5368.55	2907.84	37.23	2497.94
	Total			**14493.17**	**166437.00**	**213745.63**	**228238.80**	**201277.05**	**212.54**	**27174.29**