



**Association for action against violence and trafficking in human beings
OPEN GATE/ LA STRADA MACEDONIA**

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Annual Report 2011

A Short Summary of 2011 Accomplishments

In the history of every organization, there are several important dates and years which stand out for the special significance they hold. For Open Gate, 2011 was a memorable year for more than one reason. The organization managed to fully execute the annual programme which included activities related to lobbying and representation, awareness raising, prevention and education, as well as provision of help and support to trafficked persons.

In the course of 2011, a total of 15 trafficked persons were included in the Open Gate programme for protection and social support. Nine dependants were provided with long-term shelter accommodation and daily care, while the rest of the victims received services outside the shelter. Furthermore, the support programme offered medical attention and adequate therapy to 8 dependants, while 11 dependants received legal aid and representation. Five dependants were sent to school and included in the education process, and 2 attended a vocational qualification course.

All thanks to its preventive activities, Open Gate established immediate contact with 1300 children and adolescents aged 12 to 18. Also, around 300 professionals (social workers, law enforcement officers, local government officials, teachers, non-government organizations, etc.) received training on identification, referral and prevention of human trafficking. Additionally, the SOS helpline provided 354 persons with information, counseling and referral to adequate services. Another activity which marked 2011 was the newly designed three-year strategic plan 2012-2014. This plan is of crucial importance: it prepares the team to tackle new challenges. During the preparation of the strategy, Open Gate extended its vision and mission statement, and set 5 strategic goals. As always, Open Gate proved that it has clear and previously set goals and action plans which are in accordance with the newly identified needs and target groups. The organization has also proved that it is capable of adjusting to swift social changes.

In 2011, Open Gate received acclaim for its committed work and was praised by individuals and long-term partner organizations which support the activities that this NGO does for the prevention of human trafficking. The organization was awarded a Certificate of Commendation for its professional work, openness and support by AS-TRA, a long-term associate and partner of Open Gate.

Open Gate had a budget of 13 246 533 MKD denars for its 2011 Annual Programme, and it contributed to a proper and unobstructed execution of the proposed programme and activities.

National Campaigns for Raising Awareness about Human Trafficking

In 2011, Open Gate launched two national campaigns to raise awareness and to inform the public about the issue of human trafficking. The first campaign was run in light of 18th October (the European Anti-Trafficking Day), and the second one marked the National Week Against Human Trafficking, from 2nd-9th December. Both campaigns were endorsed by the National Commission for Combating Human Trafficking and Illegal Migration and the Ministry of Interior. These campaigns encompassed 10 cities and towns in Macedonia (Skopje, Kumanovo, Sveti Nikole, Delchevo, Strumica, Bitola, the Reka Region, Tetovo, Kichevo, Struga), and the conducted activities were aimed at various target groups (the young, various professionals and the entire public) in order to draw attention to the problem of human trafficking. As a result, over 10 000 citizens were informed about issues related to trafficking in humans.

In order to mark the National Anti-Trafficking Week, Open Gate and the VIGILANCE Network conducted a series of events: 17 preventive lectures, 14 forum theatres, one art and one literary competition in 15 primary and secondary schools in 9 cities and towns in Macedonia. Furthermore, various activities were organized in 7 towns: round tables, coordinative meetings and forums. These events were attended by 140 representatives from: the local government, the police, social workers, NGOs, the Labor Inspectorate, the media, health care workers, the Prevention Unit from the Ministry of Interior, customs officials, the border patrol and the Prosecution.

The central event in the series of organized happenings to mark the National Anti-Trafficking Week was the forum entitled *Major Challenges in Curbing Human Trafficking*, which put much attention to the relevant institutions and organizations, in terms of the major challenges they face in the process of identification of victims and the provision of protection services for trafficked persons.

In light of the European Anti-Trafficking Day, Open Gate prepared and issued a statement, signed and endorsed by all member organizations of the National Network for Curbing Human Trafficking VIGILANCE, calling for effective implementation of all adopted measures in curbing human trafficking, voicing the importance of a coordinated and multi-sector collaboration on both national and local level. *Vigilance* further draws attention to: investing more efforts in disclosing new types of human trafficking (such as labor exploitation), actively implementing compensation as a powerful penalty against perpetrators and a restorative measure for victims of trafficking in humans, as well as consistently implementing laws regarding compensation for trafficked victims and improving the efficiency of the legal system in terms of enabling the victim's right to compensation.

The statement was published in the daily newspaper *Dnevnik*, and was forwarded to relevant institutions and other partner organizations, on both national and local level. At the same time, volunteers at the NGOs members of the VIGILANCE Network, distributed educational literature at high frequency spots in 9 towns in Macedonia.

Initiative to Create Local Action Plans for Curbing Human Trafficking

Open Gate set up an initiative to collaborate with civil society organizations and the local government in order to contribute to a more effective identification, prevention and assistance of trafficked persons.

This initiative started off with a one-day workshop in Skopje: *Designing Local Action Plans for Curbing Human Trafficking*. The event was attended by 30 participants from the NGOs part of the National Network for Curbing Human Trafficking- *Vigilance*, as well as representatives from the local government and the Prevention Councils within the Sector of Interior Affairs, all from various parts of Macedonia (Skopje, Kumanovo, Sveti Nikole, Delchevo, Strumica, Bitola, the Reka Region, Tetovo, Kichevo, Struga). The goal of this workshop was to initiate the creation and implementation of local action plans via a multidisciplinary approach and partnership between various institutions and organizations on local level.

Additionally, Open Gate collaborated with the NGOs from the above mentioned 10 municipalities, organizing roundtables, coordinative meetings, forums and the like, in order to extend this initiative. By the end of 2011, the Municipality of Rostushe (Reka Region), successfully completed and adopted the local action plan. The Municipalities of Struga, Tetovo and Delchevo have created local action plans which are executed mainly with the support of the NGO, and are currently lobbying for the adoption of these plans. Skopje, Kumanovo and Kichevo are in the process of putting together action teams which will work on creating draft action plans for curbing human trafficking.

Informing and Educating the Young on the Issue of Human Trafficking

Since it was founded, Open Gate has been striving to minimize the number of trafficked persons. One of the methods used is educating and informing the young and various professionals about the problem. In 2011, Open Gate held 13 preventive lectures in several elementary and secondary schools in Skopje, and run 2 forum theatres which encompassed about 500 adolescents. At the same time, the organization carried out a two-day training for peer educators on prevention of human trafficking. This training was attended by 17 pupils from 8 secondary schools in the city of Skopje. The role of these young educators is to disseminate information about prevention among their peers.

Apart from the training for secondary school pupils, Open Gate organized training on Prevention of Human Trafficking for the teaching staff of 15 elementary schools from the municipalities of Kisela Voda and Aerodrom. This training was attended by 21 representatives with various professional backgrounds: school teachers, special education teachers, counselors and student advisors. The goal of the training was to raise awareness and sensitivity of school staff about the issue of human trafficking, as well as to include them in the process of identification, referral and prevention of cases of trafficking in humans. After this training, the participants hosted 21 preventive workshops educating over 300 pupils from 9 elementary schools.

Open Gate's Contribution to a Better Education System

In the course of 2011, Open Gate welcomed 10 students from the Social Work Policy Institute at the School of Philosophy. These students had the opportunity to spend three months interning with the organization, as well as attending two trainings: one on providing social assistance to trafficked persons, and another one on working at the SOS helpline for victims of human trafficking.

Furthermore, about 60 students from the School of Pedagogy in Skopje, Tetovo, Shtip and the Social Work Policy Institute from Skopje attended a three-day training, at which they were informed and educated about trafficking in humans. These activities are the result of the practical implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding, signed with the School of Philosophy in Skopje, in 2010.

This document aims to foster intern work and hone the practical skills of future professionals, currently students of Social Work Policy. The Memorandum is an indicator that Open Gate is a reputable organization which offers high-standard volunteer-work and internship programmes for university students.

At the request of the Bureau for Education Development, Open Gate prepared 300 copies of the documentary *You Are Alive*, which was distributed to 100 secondary schools in Macedonia, in order to strengthen the prevention of human trafficking, considering the fact that the young have been identified as the category of highest risk. Namely, the documentary *You Are Alive* was selected by the Bureau for Education Development as a tool used by teachers to inform and educate pupils at elementary and secondary schools in Macedonia.

Open Gate Signs MoU with Ministry of Labor and Social Policy for Provision of Services at State Shelter for Trafficked Persons

Open Gate was selected and asked to work at the State Shelter, running the psycho-social programme for victims of human trafficking. The collaboration was made official by signing the Memorandum of Understanding between Open Gate and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. This document governs the rights and duties of the signatories, i.e. the possible ways of collaboration. On the basis of this Memorandum, Open Gate covers all expenses for activities immediately related to victims of human trafficking. The organization also provides the staff who works in shifts, 24/7, and covers all activities from the social programme for victims of human trafficking. On the other hand, the Memorandum states that the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy shall cover all running costs in terms of the operation of the Shelter.

Provision of Assistance, Support and Protection to Trafficked Persons

As was the case in the past, trafficked persons included in this year's programme for protection and social support have had access to a number of specialized services. More specifically: medical attention- the victim would receive a physical exam by a doctor of general practice or a specialist, depending on the specific needs; adequate psychotherapy (individual or group sessions); Legal aid- general and specialized legal counseling; Establishing contact with immediate family; Assistance in obtaining personal documents, etc. During they stay at the Shelter, the victims are included in a variety of activities, creative workshops, recreational programmes, etc.

During the year 2011, 15 dependants were included in the programme for protection and social support at Open Gate. Long-term shelter accommodation and daily care were provided for 9 dependants, and the rest received services outside the Shelter. Furthermore, the support programme offered medical attention and adequate therapy to 8 dependants, while 11 dependants received legal aid and representation. Five dependants were sent to school and included in the education process, and 2 attended a vocational qualification course.

Conducted Research on the Existing Compensation Mechanisms for Victims of Human Trafficking

This research outlined numerous shortcomings in the legal proceedings and provided further recommendations for overcoming these shortcomings. The recommendations were presented to the public prosecution, judges, lawyers, as well as officials from the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labor and Social Policy/ The National Referral Mechanism and various non-government organizations which, as part of their operation, insist on the implementation of the legal framework in dealing with cases of human trafficking.

As a result of the proposed recommendations, an Open Gate representative was asked to take part in a workshop organized by the Macedonian Association of Public Prosecutors and the Association of Judges of Macedonia. The workshop was entitled *Effective Implementation of the Legal Framework for Cases of Human Trafficking*, and focused on the proposed recommendations, leading to a productive discussion on the possible ways of their effective implementation.

In November, 2011, in a case where the victim of trafficking was part of the programme for social protection, including legal representation, law-enforcement officials implemented the measure of confiscating the perpetrator's assets. This gesture indicates a more active implementation of such strict measures.

Initiative for a Proactive Identification of Forced Labor and Trafficking in Humans for Labor Exploitation

Open Gate has perceived the necessity to design a more effective approach to providing workers with better services, as well as the need to strengthen the referral mechanism for victims of human trafficking. Therefore, in November 2010, Open Gate launched its year-long pilot project *Prevention of Extreme Violation of Workers' Rights*. The project aimed at establishing collaboration between Open Gate and the Union of Independent and Autonomous Trade Unions of Macedonia (UIATUM) in curbing human trafficking and raising awareness of the Union's members about the different forms of trafficking in humans, including labor exploitation. This project resulted in a detailed analysis of the existing capacities and the preparedness of UIATUM to carry out activities and programmes for the prevention of human trafficking and labor exploitation in Macedonia. The analysis also gave insight into the presence, perception and opinion about the issues of human trafficking for labor exploitation, forced labor and labor rights. It also identified areas for potential collaboration between Open Gate and UIATUM.

As a result of the year-long cooperation, the two institutions designed a joint action plan for addressing human trafficking for labor exploitation. Furthermore, Open Gate prepared and printed 20 000 copies of preventive and informative literature, aiming to raise awareness about labor exploitation. These copies will be distributed among workers in various specific sectors.

Strengthened organizational and professional capacity

Improving the individual and organizational portfolio of Open Gate is a crucial part of the general strategy for the management of staff and resources used in attaining the goals of the organization. Therefore, Open Gate has been investing in the development of its staff by participating in specialized trainings, workshops, study visits, seminars, conferences, and various other ways of broadening and upgrading staff's skills.

Worth mentioning are the study of the US system for curbing human trafficking and the programme for strategic management for NGO leaders, offered at Harvard Kennedy School.

In the past year, Open Gate took part in trainings organized by the Institute for Sustainable Communities, tackling the following issues: project management, management of human resources, finance management, strategic planning, fundraising, representation and lobbying, teambuilding, etc. At the same time, Open Gate took part in various other trainings, aiming to contribute to expert and efficient response to the needs of different target groups.

Cooperation with the Media

Considering the fact that the media play a significant role in any society, Open Gate maintains a continuously stable relationship with the media. At the same time, the organization seeks possible ways of facilitating and improving good communication with all target groups, fostering a proactive relationship with the media as they are the main source of passing on messages to various target groups. In 2011, Open Gate resorted to several instruments for communication: public service announcements, its web page, press conferences, forums, statements, interviews, e-newsletters, special events and various other ways, which helped inform the wider public about the crime of human trafficking. In other words, about 40 different publications were run in the electronic and print media. All thanks to the timely and continuous communication with the media, the public was informed about the crime of trafficking in humans, its rampant spreading, the potential risks associated with the crime, as well as possible ways of prevention. Among other things, last year the organization issued several print publications (2 leaflets, an annual report, research on victims' right to compensation, and other preventive literature).

Open Gate closely collaborated with the print media in order to inform the public and to raise awareness about trafficking in humans. In that manner, Open Gate accomplished its mission, all the while respecting the fundamental human rights.

Major Projects and Donors for 2011

Institutional Grant via CIVICA Mobilitas

Implementation period: 01/01/2011-31/12/2011

Aims and Objectives: Financial support for the Open Gate 2011 Annual Programme, endorsing activities related to combating human trafficking: capacity strengthening of relevant organizations, prevention and education, assistance and support for trafficked persons, as well as representation and lobbying.

Project Title: *Local Response to Human Trafficking*

In Collaboration with: National Network for Curbing Human Trafficking- VIGILANCE

Implementation Period: February, 2011- February, 2012

Aims and Objectives: The overall goal of the proposed intervention is to provide stronger civil society organizations in Macedonia, reduce trafficking in human beings, raise public awareness and strengthen citizen/government cooperation, as well as improve support to potential and trafficked persons.

Project Title: *Provision of Help and Protection to Victims of Human Trafficking*

Implementation Period: April- December, 2011

Aims and Objectives: Provision of protection and financial help to victims of human trafficking by endorsing the operation of a state shelter which offers accommodation, medical and legal aid, and building social reintegration skills of trafficked persons.

Project Title: *Provision of Reintegration Services to Victims of Human Trafficking*

Implementation Period: 01/01/2011-31/12/2011

Aims and Objectives: Provision of protection and financial help to victims of human trafficking by endorsing the operation of a state shelter which offers accommodation, medical and legal aid, and building social reintegration skills of trafficked persons.

Project Title: *Prevention of Extreme Violation of Workers' Rights*

Implementation Period: 20/10/2010-20/11/2011

Aims and Objectives: Exploring the possible areas of collaboration between Open Gate and the Union of Independent and Autonomous Trade Unions of Macedonia (UIATUM) in curbing human trafficking, particularly labor exploitation, creating a joint action plan and raising public awareness about trafficking in humans.

Project Title: *European Action for Compensation for Trafficked Persons*

Implementation Period: 01/07/2010 – 30/06/2011

Aims and Objectives: Inclusion of Compensation as a measure in both the national and international policies in combating human trafficking, as well as developing tools and instruments for the implementation of these measures, entitling the victim to compensation.

Project Title: *Capacity Strengthening of Future Teachers and Social Workers in Multi-Ethnic Societies*

Implementation Period: 01/10/2011-31/12/2011

Aims and Objectives: Strengthening the capacities and skills of students working with young learners in multi-ethnic societies, as well as enabling practical work and internship in various NGOs.

Donor: OSCE

Project Title: *Partnership Action against Trafficking (PAAT) in South-East Europe (SEE)*

Implementation Period: January, 2010 – June 2011

Aims and Objectives: Enhancing stability, democratization and rule of law in South East Europe by endorsing the harmonization of EU laws and regulations in protecting the human rights of victims of human trafficking.

Donor: European Commission

Project Title: *Reintegration Programme for Victims of Human Trafficking in the Republic of Macedonia*

Implementation period: April, 2010 – March 2011

Aims and Objectives: Provision of help and support to victims of human trafficking, fostering their successful social reintegration.

Donor: King Baudouin Foundation