

National Colloquium: Shelter and Services Evaluation for Action

International Standards and Comparative Models

November 30, 2012

Dr. Mohamed Mattar

Executive Director The Protection Project

The Johns Hopkins University SAIS

The Protection Project

I am honored to be speaking to you this morning about the international standards and comparative models on shelter services available to child victims of commercial sexual exploitation, especially sex trafficking.

As you all know, there are four evils of commercial sexually exploitation of children. Child trafficking, child prostitution, child sex tourism, and child sex pornography.

In this colloquium we are focusing child trafficking.

Allow me at the outset to thank the person behind the idea, a distinguished leader, a committed advocate, and most of all, a good friend of The Protection Project. And she is also my good friend.

Congresswoman Linda Smith, who set for all of us an example of a good model of what she calls “villages or homes of Hope” in Fiji, Nepal, India, and Jamaica.

This is Linda’s choice of words. In other countries we call them shelters, or care facilities, or crisis centers, or safe houses.

Regardless of the term used, we are talking about the following services:

- Shelters separated by gender

I like the trafficking law of Moldova of 2005 that explicitly provides for this separation.

I understand that Samantha Healy of Shared Hope International was in Moldova between 2002 and 2005. And I think that is why we have a good law in Moldova.

- Shelters providing a child victim with food, clothing, medical care, and counseling
- Shelters granting a child victim legal representation
- Shelters offering victim rehabilitation

These are what I call effective remedies for a child victim of trafficking.

3

And these are the international standards.

As you all know, although the US did not ratify the CRC, it did ratify the Optional Protocol to the CRC on child prostitution, which provides in Article 9 the full social reintegration and physical and psychological recovery a child victim.

We also ratified the Trafficking Protocol, which in Article 6 talks about “appropriate housing” and the “special needs of children.”

These are the international standards that were embodied in the United Nations Model Law against Trafficking in Persons, which explicitly states in Article 28 that victims shall be entitled to “temporary housing or the movement of a victim to a place of temporary safe residence.”

Are we in compliance with these international standards?

Well, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act sets minimum standards that all countries must abide by “to ensure that victims are not inappropriately incarcerated, fined, or otherwise penalized solely for unlawful acts as a direct result of being trafficked.”

We need the new Trafficking Victims Reauthorization Protections Act.

I testified before Congress this Wednesday and I was asked by Chairman, Congressman McGovern, why do we need a new reauthorization.

I answered, to me, it’s not about funding, although we need funding for our programs to combat human trafficking. It is about moving forward. It is about continuity. It is about enhancing the protection we grant victims of trafficking, including child victims.

This is the principle of non-punishment of a victim of trafficking and must be observed without any hesitation or limitations.

And this means that when we find a child victim we do not put him behind bars, but we place him in the appropriate shelter that provides him with all the care he needs.

All this is good, however, in providing shelter for a child victim of trafficking, there are challenges that you see in many countries around the world.

One is the lack of funding.

For example, in Paraguay a shelter for female trafficking victims was shut down for lack of funding.

As a result, the 25 girls housed at the shelter were returned to their families, some of whom were complicit in their exploitation.

A second is establishing shelters that are specifically for children as opposed to adults.

And finally, sometimes we have shelters for victims, sometimes operated by NGOs and sometimes operated by governments, but we cannot reach the victims so that we can reach out to them.

I do believe with these experts present today, some familiar faces, many distinguished scholars, and my good friend Carol of ECPAT USA, we are going to have a successful and productive meeting.

Thank you for being a part of this important event.