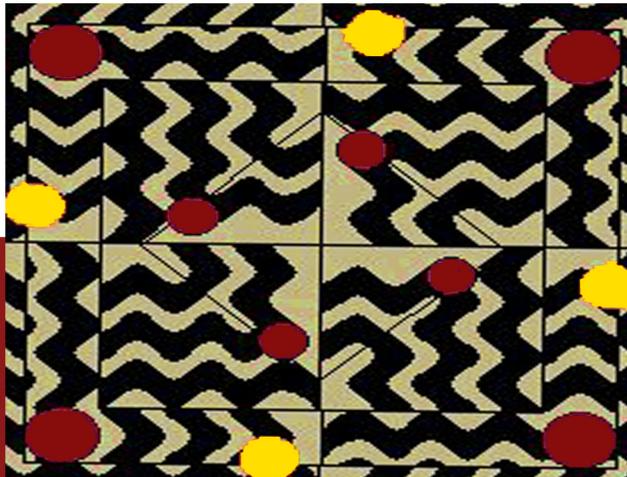


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DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Independent Final Evaluation of Combating Trafficking of Women in Moldova: Moldova Employment and Training Alliance (META)

Catholic Relief Services

USDOL Cooperative Agreement No. E-9-K-4-0061



2009

M INTERNATIONAL INC.
MACRO

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the Combating Trafficking of
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Alliance (META) Project**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report describes in detail the final evaluation, conducted during November 2008, of META. The report was prepared by Macro International Inc., according to agreements specified in its contract with the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking (OCFT). The evaluation of META in Moldova was conducted and documented by Rodica Novac, an independent evaluator in collaboration with USDOL/OCFT staff, the META project team, and stakeholders in Moldova. Macro International Inc. would like to express sincere thanks to all parties involved in this evaluation: the independent evaluator, Catholic Relief Services and its partners, and U.S. Department of Labor.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF ACRONYMS	vii
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	ix
I PROJECT BACKGROUND	1
1.1 Aims and Objectives	1
1.2 Strategy and Approaches	2
1.3 META Program Activities	3
II EVALUATION OBJECTIVES	5
III METHODOLOGY OF EVALUATION	7
3.1 Desk Review of Project Materials	7
3.2 Field Visits	7
3.3 Limitations	10
IV FINDINGS	11
4.1 Context Challenges	11
4.2 Project Design and Implementation Issues	11
4.3 Partnership and Coordination Issues	21
4.4 Management and Budget Issues	25
4.5 Sustainability and Impact	28
V LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES	33
5.1 Lessons Learned	33
5.2 Needs Assessment	34
5.3 Methodology	34
VI CONCLUSION	37
VII RECOMMENDATIONS	39
ANNEXES	
Annex 1: Terms of Reference	
Annex 2: Project Logigram	
Annex 3: List of Meetings	
Annex 4: List of Participants in Stakeholders' Meeting	

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CCTIP	Center for Combating Trafficking in Persons
CIVIS	Center for Sociological, Political, and Psychological Investigation and Analysis
CPD	Center for Partnership and Development (Implementing Partner)
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
EGP	Employment Generation Project (META)
ILAB	Bureau of International Labor Affairs
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPEC	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
IOM	International Organization for Migration
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation
LEO	Local Employment Office
LETA	Local Employment and Training Alliance (META)
META	Moldova Employment and Training Alliance
NEA	National Employment Agency
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NRS	National Referral System
OCFT	Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PBN	Pro Business Nord (Implementing Partner from Balti)
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
RENA	Rapid Employment Needs Assessment (research prepared by CIVIS)
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
SIDA	Swedish Agency for Development Cooperation
SIEDO	The Independent Society for Education and Human Rights (Implementing Partner)
TACIS	Technical Aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States
TSL	Training for Sustainable Livelihood (META)
TOR	Terms of Reference (for Independent Final Evaluation)
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

UNFPA United Nations Fund for Population
USAID U.S. Agency for International Development
USDOL U.S. Department of Labor
YEC STAR Youth Employment Centre STAR (Implementing Partner)
VET Vocational Education and Training

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Context

The Republic of Moldova is among the countries with the highest number of trafficked persons.¹ Over one-fourth of the population is working abroad,² mostly illegally, and many become the victims of sexual exploitation, forced labor, and slavery or practices similar to slavery.³ The root causes of trafficking are still present in Moldova: poverty, domestic violence, discrimination, low level of education, poor economic development, lack of employment opportunities (especially in rural communities), a rising cost of living in urban areas, low wages, improper working conditions, and lack of community support. New generations of youth (among them the “social orphans”)⁴ are reaching maturity within declining socioeconomic conditions in rural areas and the high costs of living in urban areas; the result pushes them to work abroad and, consequently, toward the risk of being trafficked.

During 2000 through 2006 the number of trafficked persons returning to Moldova slowly declined.⁵ Trafficking patterns, however, are constantly changing; requiring a permanent effort to adjust and tailor the anti-trafficking strategies.

According to the *2008 Trafficking in Persons Report: Moldova* (published by the U.S. Department of State), the Government of Moldova does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so. Notable efforts and obstacles include the following: On March 19, 2008 the government approved the 2008–2009 Anti-Trafficking National Action Plan to combat trafficking in persons; there was no plan in place preceding that date because the previous plan had expired at the end of 2006. Although the government has acknowledged that trafficking is a problem, it continues to rely on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations to provide the majority of public awareness campaigns and victim support. During the reporting period, the government allocated US\$44,000 in its 2008 budget for victim rehabilitation center operating costs; it has also cooperated with NGOs and international assistance programs that provide legal, medical, and psychological services for trafficking victims. While it has allocated these funds for 2008, it has still not otherwise demonstrated proactive efforts to identify trafficking victims or to fund victim assistance services and rehabilitation programs.

¹ U.S. Embassy in Moldova, *2008 Trafficking in Persons Report: Moldova*.

² International Organization of Migration, *Patterns, and Trends of Migration and Remittances in Moldova*, June 2007.

³ According to the U.S. Embassy’s report, around 10% of the people living abroad have been victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation (U.S. Embassy in Moldova, *2008 Trafficking in Persons Report: Moldova*).

⁴ Social orphans are the children abandoned by parents working abroad.

⁵ The Report *Trafficking in Human Beings in South Eastern Europe, 2004—Focus on Prevention*, published by UNDP in 2005, p. 112; and *The Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, published by UNODC in 2009; show that IOM Chisinau assisted 364 women in 2001; 292 in 2002; 235 in 2003; 255 in 2004; 248 in 2005; and 254 in 2006.

The Project

The U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) received approval to implement a labor-oriented project in Moldova with funding from the U.S. President's US\$50 million initiative against trafficking in persons.

The Moldova Employment and Training Alliance (META), a three-year, US\$1.5 million program under a cooperative agreement between the USDOL Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS), is meant to address two challenges:

- How to create incentives and opportunities for Moldovans to find legitimate and economically sustainable forms of income within their country.
- How to enable those seeking to work abroad to avoid becoming victims of trafficking.

Aims and Objectives

The main objectives of the META program are to help young Moldovan women between the ages of 16 and 25 (as well as any women who have been victims of trafficking) to attain sustainable livelihoods by—

- Increasing their access to the labor market
- Improving their capacity to live independently

Through a combination of job development, employment assistance, livelihood skills training, and other support tailored to the needs of women beneficiaries, CRS aims to assist women by empowering them to manage the demands of work, personal, and family life over the long term, and to mitigate trafficking risks by empowering women against exploitation.

Expected Outcomes/Project Outputs

According to the Cooperative Agreement, CRS had to accomplish and demonstrate the following results:

- Hundreds of women provided with quality career counseling, skills training, and employment assistance services.
- Hundreds of women placed in legitimate employment (including apprenticeships or internships) through the program's services.
- Hundreds of job vacancy postings and advertisements vetted to assess legitimacy of the position and employer.
- Survey summary reports provided to USDOL regarding qualitative impacts of activities on women served.

- Improved Moldovan NGO partner capacities to provide, monitor, and sustain quality services, provided in coordination with the Local Employment Offices of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.

The Evaluation

The final evaluation of the META project was carried out in October and November 2008. It was assigned by Macro International Inc. to an independent consultant, contracted to assess the achievements of the project toward reaching its targets and objectives as outlined in the cooperative agreement and project document.

The final evaluation looks at the project as a whole and its overall impact in relation to its stated objectives. Project design, implementation, partnership and coordination, management, budget issues, sustainability, and impact are reviewed and assessed.

The goals of the final evaluation process were to—

- Help individual organizations identify areas of good performance and areas where project implementation can be improved.
- Assist the ILAB Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking (OCFT) to learn more about what is or is not working in terms of the overall conceptualization and design of anti-trafficking projects within the broad OCFT technical cooperation program framework.
- Assess the degree to which objectives relevant to the country-specific situation they address have been achieved.

Main Evaluation Findings

The project final evaluation shows that the strategies employed to meet the project objectives were appropriate and conducted to the expected outputs. In spite of the delays in implementation from the beginning, the project had an impact on direct and indirect beneficiaries and contributed to the prevention of trafficking among Moldova's most vulnerable women. The project achievements met the larger goals of the U.S. President's Initiative to Combat Trafficking in Persons and of U.S. Government efforts in Moldova.

The combination of the Employment Generation Projects (EGP) and the Training for Sustainable Livelihood (TSL) is a successful model that can be replicated or expanded. The project met its stated purpose and outputs, addressed the needs of the target group, and represented an effective tool in preventing trafficking of human beings.

Nevertheless, the issue of trafficking and its root causes are still present in the country. Similar projects are needed; especially now, when economic crises are menacing the fragile balance obtained with the donors' joined efforts.

At the end of the project, META had reported a wide variety of outputs such as: 725 women employed, 2,528 women receiving employment assistance services, 725 women completing in-demand job trainings, 4,000 youth benefiting from peer-to-peer information initiatives, 115 demand-driven (specialized vocational or technical) trainings being delivered, 374 TSL courses being delivered, 2,070 youth-oriented newsletters being disseminated, 12 new EGPs being implemented, 18 NGOs and 150 teachers providing TSL during school/extracurricular activities, and Rapid Employment Needs Assessment research being published.

On the local level, the consortia—formed by local NGOs, vocational education and training providers, employers, the National Agency for Employment (NEA), and public-private partnerships—is a good model, which should be promoted further. This model is new for Moldova and the project proved that it can be effective, especially when there are incentives for all the partners to actively participate in it.

The project's activities are not sustainable without funding; local stakeholders are involved and willing to support the activities, but their resources are limited. There is still the need for further foreign-funded support.

Key Recommendations

For USDOL

The direct beneficiaries of the project include *women victims of trafficking of any age and young women (16 to 25 years) considered at risk of being trafficked and who participate in project activities*. The project was given the ability to enroll 10% of their beneficiaries from outside the 16–25 age range. According to the evaluation findings from the prevention perspective, the limitation imposed on the project to offer services to young women between 16 and 25 is not justified; the economic factors and the domestic violence is common for both genders and all age groups (men are increasingly victims of trafficking for labor exploitation). This same opinion has also been expressed by many stakeholders and beneficiaries. USDOL might consider allowing both the gender and the age of the beneficiaries included in the project to exceed the above-mentioned limit to a larger proportion.

The project promoted the partnerships between national and local NGOs, promoted the development of networks (of teachers and NGOs), and increased the visibility and the institutional capacity of the NGOs involved in the project. It also encouraged volunteering and developed leadership among youth. These important achievements should be strengthened. USDOL might consider allocating more resources/activities for capacity building, coordination efforts, and knowledge management; as well as for documentation and dissemination of good practices and various products (manuals, brochures, films, etc.) in its future projects.

For META

The clear design of quantitative and qualitative outputs would help the donor, the grantee, and the implementing partners to establish clear goals, plan the activities, and measure the results. Outputs and indicators should be defined so as to ensure a common understanding and accurate reporting.

Documenting and promoting the good practices, especially among NEA offices and employees, would contribute to the sustainability of the project's activity beyond the project's life. NEA is an important contributor and the most important institution on the labor market in Moldova; they can adopt and promote these good practices in their own activities.

Creating ownership of the project and the results by building local capacity, promoting good practices, and improving communication will ensure sustainability beyond the project's duration.

Conclusions

While many programs and donors focus solely on helping the victims, the META project supported the agenda for social change, which can bring long-lasting changes by addressing vulnerability factors such as poverty, lack of knowledge about human trafficking and safe migration, and improving qualifications to prevent discrimination on the labor market; thus promoting sustainable integration into labor markets and preventing trafficking.

According to the International Organization for Migration, projects such as META that were implemented on the local level reduced the pressure on the national referral system in a measurable way.

The META project reached and exceeded its objectives as defined by the cooperative agreement and according to the President's Initiative.

All the implementing partners, stakeholders, and beneficiaries interviewed consider that the TSL-EGP approach was very successful for several reasons:

- Beneficiaries learn to work with existing technologies and have a better chance to integrate into the companies where they have had the technical training; beneficiaries are more self-confident and better motivated; they have information about their rights and they support each other.
- The companies hire motivated, better-informed young women who have the minimum skills required to start working.
- Through this project, the companies started to target the young people who had been considered difficult to integrate into the labor market.
- The risks of illegal migration and trafficking among young women were diminishing.

For these reasons, all are recommending META's expansion (in all the geographic areas and toward a larger target group, to include men and women over 25 years old). The companies also appreciated the direct support received from Argidius Foundation for their own development (investments in training facilities, sanitation, and electricity system, etc.).

The combination of EGP and TSL is a successful model that can be replicated. The vetting system for the companies benefiting from the project, the public-private partnerships, and the peer-to-peer support groups, all made major impacts that contributed to META's success.

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I PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Republic of Moldova is among those countries with the highest number of trafficked persons.⁶ With over one-fourth of the population working abroad⁷ (mostly illegally), many of these *émigrés* have become the victims of sexual exploitation, forced labor (or services), and slavery (or practices similar to slavery).⁸ The root causes of trafficking are still present in Moldova: poverty, domestic violence, discrimination, low levels of education, poor economic development, lack of employment opportunities (especially in rural communities), the rising cost of living in urban areas, low wages, improper working conditions, and lack of community support. New generations of youth (among them the “social orphans”)⁹ are reaching maturity, while declining socioeconomic conditions in rural areas and high urban costs are pushing them to work abroad and, consequently, to risk being trafficked.

The U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of International Labor Affairs’ (USDOL/ILAB’s) role in combating trafficking focuses on the labor-related factors that compel women and children to seek work abroad. Accordingly, USDOL has received approval to implement a labor-oriented project in Moldova, with funding from the U.S. President’s US\$50 million initiative against trafficking in persons.

The Moldova Employment and Training Alliance (META), a three-year, US\$1.25 million program under a cooperative agreement between ILAB and Catholic Relief Services (CRS), is meant to address two challenges:

1. How to create incentives and opportunities for Moldovans to find legitimate and economically sustainable forms of income within their country.
2. How to enable those seeking work abroad or interested in working abroad to avoid becoming victims of trafficking.

1.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the META program were to help young Moldovan women between the ages of 16 and 25 (as well as any women who had been victims of trafficking) to attain sustainable livelihoods by—

1. Increasing their access to the labor market
2. Improving their ability to live independently

⁶ U.S. Embassy in Moldova, *2008 Trafficking in Persons Report: Moldova*.

⁷ International Organization of Migration, *Patterns and Trends of Migration and Remittances in Moldova*, June 2007.

⁸ According to the U.S. Embassy, around 10% of the people abroad have been victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation (U.S. Embassy in Moldova, *2008 Trafficking in Persons Report: Moldova*).

⁹ Social orphans are the children abandoned by the parents working abroad.

Through a combination of job development, employment assistance, livelihood skills training, and other support tailored to the needs of women beneficiaries, CRS aimed to assist women by empowering them to manage the demands of work, personal, and family life over the long term, and to mitigate trafficking risks by empowering women against exploitation.

1.2 STRATEGY AND APPROACHES

The strategy employed in the META program built on CRS and ILAB's prior experiences, which suggest that—

1. Building linkages among local employment offices, vocational education providers, local nongovernmental organization (NGOs), and employers is an effective means of improving and creating sustainable opportunities for women to access market-driven training and jobs.
2. Providing livelihood skills training to women makes more durable human resources available to employers and empowers women to better avoid trafficking schemes and sustain the efforts of putting together a viable life—whether they choose to work in Moldova or emigrate abroad.

CRS, through the META program, undertook an integrated, locally based approach for its employment generation activities that took several forms:

1. Establishing a Local Employment and Training Alliance (LETA) center in Balti, an urban hub in the north of Moldova, to serve a variety of business sectors and drop-in beneficiaries.
2. Mobilizing public and private stakeholders in a select location into a management committee for the design and implementation of local employment generation projects.
3. Working directly with partner employers to recruit, train, empower, and employ vulnerable young women in their communities.
4. Partnering directly with the regional centers established by the USG New Perspectives for Women program, administered by Winrock International, for the development and implementation of employment generation projects.

LETA centers coordinate services with other projects funded by the U.S. Government,¹⁰ international NGOs, local NGOs, governmental agencies, and business partners to build local capacity through Employment Generation Projects (EGPs) that improve job opportunities and increase access to employment services, vocational skills training, and social support services for targeted women.

¹⁰ Winrock International's New Perspectives for Women regional resource centers; the United Nations Development Programme's Better Opportunities for Youth and Women centers.

1.3 META PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

META employed and evaluated a host of initiatives designed to reach out to and work with targeted women, local businesses, and other beneficiaries, including—

- **Awareness Raising.** META provided information and workshops about the hazards of trafficking and how to safely seek work abroad.
- **Onsite Psychological Counseling.** META provided counseling (or referrals to such services) for former victims of trafficking to facilitate their reintegration into Moldovan society.
- **Vocational Services.** META provided vocational counseling, skills training, and vocational courses that meet the current demands of the market.
- **Job Placement Services.** META provided job placement assistance, apprenticeship, or internship enrollment.
- **Job Vetting.** META provided verification of foreign work opportunities that women considered pursuing (in partnership with the existing job-vetting hotline, started by the previous USDOL anti-trafficking project).

Additional aspects of the program include the following:

- **Public-Private Partnerships.** META built alliances among local employment offices, vocational education providers, local NGOs, and employers as an effective means to improve and create sustainable opportunities for women to access market-driven training and jobs.
- **Livelihood Skills Education.** META provided livelihood skills training to women in school, as an after school activity, and as a part of employment generation projects to help women become more durable human resources and empower them to sustain the travails of putting together a viable life (whether they choose to work in Moldova or immigrate) and avoid trafficking schemes.
- **Vocational Services.** META provided career counseling; basic vocational skills training (preparedness for work and introduction to computer skills); referrals to the local employment officers (LEOs) for unemployment benefits, vocational training, and job placement assistance; and engaged vocational education providers and private-sector partners to provide technical training that meets the current demands of the market.
- **Network Development.** META strengthened the youth networks and rural NGO networks to provide economic empowerment, livelihood skills training, and peer group support to young women in rural areas before they leave their villages.

- **Research.** META produced targeted regional labor market studies designed to determine the situation and needs of young women, employers, LEOs, and training providers.

The program was designed to serve as a model for other NGOs, particularly LEOs, so as to encourage long-term sustainability through existing public and private entities.

II EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The scope of the evaluation included a review and assessment of all activities carried out under the USDOL cooperative agreement with CRS. The evaluation assessed the achievements of the project toward reaching its targets and objectives, as outlined in the cooperative agreement and project document. The evaluation considered all activities that have been implemented over the life of the project, addressing issues of project design, implementation, lessons learned, reliability, and recommendations for future projects.

Most ILAB Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking (OCFT) projects are subject to midterm and final evaluations. The project in Moldova went into implementation in September 2004 and was subject to a midterm evaluation in 2007. The goals of the final evaluation process are to—

1. Help individual organizations identify areas of good performance and areas where project implementation can be improved.
2. Assist OCFT to learn more about what is or is not working in terms of the overall conceptualization and design of anti-trafficking projects within the broad OCFT technical cooperation program framework.
3. Assess the degree to which objectives relevant to the country-specific situations they address have been achieved.

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III METHODOLOGY OF EVALUATION

The project's final evaluation has focused on project design and implementation issues, partnership and coordination issues, management and budget issues, as well as on sustainability and impact. The evaluation concentrated upon the project as a whole and was conducted by an external consultant according to the terms of reference (TOR) for the Independent Final Evaluation (see Annex 1).

According to the TOR's purpose and scope, the evaluation methodology includes—

- A desk review of project materials.
- Visits to project sites for mission evaluation.
- Consultations with stakeholders.
- Consultation with beneficiaries (including teachers, parents, and children).
- Direct observation of project activities.

3.1 DESK REVIEW OF PROJECT MATERIALS

The desk review took place in October and November 2008 and consisted of an analysis of all the documents relevant to project design and implementation: the project document, cooperative agreement, solicitation of grant application, technical and other progress reports, project logical framework and monitoring plans, work plans, correspondence, management procedures and guidelines, midterm evaluation report, and other reports or files.

3.2 FIELD VISITS

A total of 12 days were allocated to the fieldwork, which took place from November 16 to November 29, 2008. The evaluator visited the sites where the project was carried out (Chişinău, Balti, Floresti, Lozova, and Pelinia villages) to meet project stakeholders and beneficiaries, to observe the activities, and to collect data and information concerning the outputs, the outcomes, and the impact of the project. The methods and the techniques used to fulfill this task were the following.

3.2.1 Data Collection and Analyses

The TOR defines four categories of specific questions the evaluation should address:

1. Program Design/Implementation Issues
2. Partnership and Coordination Issues
3. Management and Budget Issues

4. Sustainability and Impact

A variety of methods were used to collect project information, each of them designed to help the evaluator answer the questions defined by the TOR.

3.2.2 Stakeholder Consultation

This technique involved formal data collection and included surveys of stakeholders through face-to-face interviews (or by phone when the meeting was not possible). Respondents provided their views and insights about the project and its operation, as well as about the project's context of implementation. It was a participatory approach, encouraging the involvement of the stakeholders in the evaluation in order to stimulate a sense of ownership and to increase the chances that evaluation findings would be used and acted upon.

The list of consulted stakeholders includes: OCFT, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Swiss Development Agency (SDC), the International Labour Organization's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO/IPEC), the National Employment Agency, Winrock International/U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), international NGOs (La Strada, Terre des Hommes), implementing partners (the Independent Society for Education and Human Rights [SIEDO]; Youth Employment Centre STAR [YEC STAR]; Center for Partnership and Development [CPD]; Center for Sociological, Political, and Psychological Investigation and Analysis [CIVIS]; and Pro Business Nord), EGP partner employers (Saltoianca, Floreana Fashion, Metro Cash and Carry, Accounting EGPs, Tinama Inc., Infinity Inc.), LEOs (Balti, Floresti), CRS management and field project staff, as well as teachers, parents, and community leaders (Floresti, Pelinia).

3.2.3 Focus Groups

Two structured discussions facilitated by the evaluator were conducted with Training for Sustainable Livelihood (TSL) beneficiaries (young women aged 16 to 18 from Lozova, Pelinia), two with EGP beneficiaries in Balti (19 to 25 years old), and two with indirect beneficiaries:

- In Pelinia Village: project assistant YEC STAR, teachers, parents, trainer, director, and coordinator of Pro Consult NGO, as well as mayor and deputy mayor.
- In Lozova Village: project coordinator YEC STAR, trainer, and teachers.

A total of 8 to 12 participants were randomly selected among those available at the time of the event and willing to give their opinion about the project inputs and results. The focus groups aimed to answer the following open questions relating to program design and implementation issues:

- Did the project target the women most vulnerable to trafficking?
- Were the activities appropriately adapted for the beneficiaries' needs?

- Did the beneficiaries receive substantial assistance in training for, identifying, and obtaining long-term, stable employment opportunities?
- Were the project objectives and outputs achieved?
- Was the project successful?

3.2.4 Observation

The observation process focused on the following aspects: the general status of the direct beneficiaries, the relationship between the project staff and the beneficiaries, the attitude of the parents and the teachers, the working conditions of the beneficiaries, the TSL dynamics, the general context/environment of the project's sites, and the infrastructure, etc. The evaluator participated in two TSL sessions (Lozova and Pelinia) and visited Floreana Fashion, a garment company in Floresti, Banca de Economii, METRO Cash and Carry, Fourchette, and a stationery supplier hiring beneficiaries of the EGP project, implemented by Pro Business Nord in Balti. The observation was directed at the Management Committee to the Floreana Fashion EGP, combined with discussions with the vice president of the Raional Council, and with representatives of Floresti Employment Agency (the NGO partner from Floresti), the partner employer of Floreana Fashion, and the Social Assistance Service.

3.2.5 Site Visits

The site visits included the project locations and the headquarters for CRS, the implementing partners, and the National Agency for Employment (NEA); visits of beneficiaries during their workday; and meetings with trainers and project coordinators. The goal of this activity was to find answers to the questions related to partnership and coordination issues, management and budget issues, and sustainability and impact issues.

The site visits included the following locations:

- YEC STAR, TSL/EGP implementing partner in Chişinău
- Pro Business North, EGP implementing partner in Balti
- SIEDO, TSL implementing partner in Chişinău
- Local NGOs (YEC STAR partners) from Lozova and Pelinia villages
- Local stakeholders in Pelinia Village (school, city hall)
- Floresti Raional County, Floreana Fashion, Banca de Economii, Accounting EGP, METRO, Fourchette in Balti, and Floresti.

3.2.6 Debriefing Meeting

At the end of the fieldwork, the evaluator debriefed the stakeholders on initial evaluation findings and asked for their input and comments. The meeting started with the presentation of the initial findings, which were discussed with the stakeholders.

3.3 LIMITATIONS

The project review had several methodological limitations:

1. The duration of the meetings prevented the participants from going into detail and concentrated the discussions only on a limited number of issues.
2. It was not possible to have face-to-face meetings with the representatives of USAID and the U.S. Embassy in Moldova.
3. It was not possible to interview representatives of the Ministry of Economy and Trade, nor the National Anti-trafficking Committee.
4. None of the vocational training suppliers were present at any of the stakeholders meetings.
5. Expected outputs were imprecisely defined (e.g., “Hundreds of women were provided quality career counseling, skills training, and employment assistance services”).

IV FINDINGS

4.1 CONTEXT CHALLENGES

Trafficking in persons has its roots in the social and economic conditions of the countries of origin.¹¹ Discrimination against women, poverty, lack of employment, and children's lack of access to education are the main causes of trafficking,¹² still present in Moldova today. The trafficking patterns are constantly changing, requiring a permanent effort to adjust anti-trafficking strategies.

The national policies and action plans in the field of anti-trafficking are in place, but their enforcement needs improvements. The Ministry of Economy and Trade has the mandate to coordinate the governmental bodies and the NGOs in the field of trafficking; however, results are not yet visible.

There are around 60 projects developed in Moldova in the field of anti-trafficking, financed by many donors and NGOs, including IOM, USAID, USDOL, the U.S. Embassy in Chisinau, UNDP, the World Bank, SDC, the Swedish Agency for Development Cooperation (SIDA), TACIS,¹³ the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Belgium Embassy in Chişinău, the Great Britain Embassy in Chisinau, the Denmark Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), among others. OSCE is organizing Technical Coordination Meetings to ensure harmonization between donors and between the donors and the NGOs, to inform the community, to avoid overlapping, to contribute to the project's coordination, and to a make better use of existing resources.

4.2 PROJECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

4.2.1 Achieving Objectives and Outputs

According to the cooperative agreement, CRS had to accomplish and demonstrate the following results:

- Hundreds of women provided with quality career counseling, skills training, and employment assistance services.
- Hundreds of women placed in legitimate employment (including apprenticeships or internships) through the program's services.

¹¹ National Programs to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings (National Plans of Action); Background Paper. Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings, Vienna 2001, pp. 1–2.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ TACIS is an abbreviation for the Technical Aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States program, a foreign and technical assistance program implemented by the European Commission to help members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (as well as Mongolia) in their transition to democratic market-oriented economies. TACIS is now subsumed in the EuropeAid program.

- Hundreds of job vacancy postings and advertisements vetted to assess legitimacy of the position and the employer.
- Survey summary reports provided to USDOL regarding qualitative impacts of activities on women served.
- Moldovan NGO partners' capacities to provide, monitor, and sustain quality services were improved, provided in coordination with the LEO of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.

The main outputs are presented in the logigram¹⁴ of the project (see Annex 2). At the end of the project, META had reported a wide variety of outputs, such as 725 women employed, 2,528 women receiving employment assistance services, 725 women completing in-demand job trainings, 4,000 youth benefiting from peer-to-peer information initiatives, 115 demand-driven (specialized vocational or technical) trainings being delivered, 374 TSL courses being delivered, 2,070 youth-oriented newsletters being disseminated, 12 new EGPs being implemented, 18 NGOs and 150 teachers providing TSL during school/extracurricular activities, and Rapid Employment Needs Assessment research being published.

According to the project staff and stakeholders, the project objectives and the outputs were realistic (in terms of targeted figures) and in accordance with the project's scope and the activities offered. The project—

- Offered legitimate (legal) employment opportunities to the target population by offering sustainable jobs, according to the criteria established by the project (legal contract, decent working conditions, minimum salary paid according to the law, four-month minimum duration of the labor contract).
- Created employment-related services (TSL/EGP) for the target population (the Training in Sustainable Livelihood aims to develop the personal, social and financial skills of the person; the Employment Generation Projects offered training that lead to guaranteed employment).
- Coordinated with other projects funded by the U.S. Government in Moldova (especially with Winrock International).

According to CRS reports, the main outputs were reached (number of women placed in legitimate employment, number of job vacancy postings, improved Moldovan NGO partners' capacities to provide, monitor, and sustain quality services) and some were exceeded (number of women provided quality career counseling, skills training, and employment assistance services). Other results of the project were not anticipated at the time when the cooperative agreement was

¹⁴ Logigram—a diagram of the effects of an intervention presenting the causal relations among these effects (outputs-outcomes-impacts); it aims to capture the effectiveness of an intervention (source: "Collection MEANS," European Commission 1999).

signed; for instance, the number of youth-led initiatives implemented through small-scale project design.

The cooperative agreement defines vaguely the expected outputs; there is no log frame or other document to detail the expected results and the expected impact of the project. This gave the grantee certain liberties to adjust project activities to the needs of the beneficiaries, though it makes the evaluation of the impact more difficult. At the same time, the lack of specific outputs¹⁵ generated pressure on project staff to target as many beneficiaries as possible, and prevented them from better-tailoring project activities toward those persons exposed to the highest risk of being trafficked; at least, in the case of TSL services¹⁶ (see also question number 7). A more specific quantitative and qualitative design of outputs would allow project staff to do the following:

- Adjust project activities to the local labor market (currently, the project is offering jobs that are not necessarily sustainable) and concentrate efforts on developing beneficiaries' skills, knowledge, and confidence, which will reduce their vulnerability to being trafficked and help them to find better jobs without any assistance.
- Establish monitoring indicators for the efficiency and effectiveness of the project.

4.2.2 Relevance to Moldovan Priorities

The Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2004–2007¹⁷ described the following objectives and priorities for the Republic of Moldova: sustainable and inclusive economic growth; poverty and inequality reduction through increased participation of the poor in economic development; and human resources development. The Moldovan Youth Strategy 2004–2006¹⁸ defined priorities as: facilitating youth access to services and information in order to create a favorable environment for development; increasing the rate of youth participation in social life; and generating working places for young people.

The project activities were consistent with the national priorities mentioned above by means of: offering employment for young women, increased professional and personal skills of the beneficiaries, information, and youth participation in peer-to-peer information initiatives. The project also contributed to the diversification of the local economy and, together with the employer partners, to the improvement of infrastructure through investments in rural areas (like installation of new electricity lines, or support for canalization).

¹⁵ For example: *Hundreds of women placed in legitimate employment through the program's services, hundreds of women placed in legitimate employment...*

¹⁶ The beneficiaries participating in TSL activities were students interested in extracurricular activities who had a more proactive attitude; students who left the school or ones with a laissez-faire attitude are probably more exposed to the risk of being trafficked and were not covered by the project in an extended manner.

¹⁷ Government of the Republic of Moldova, *The Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2004–2007*, Chisinau, May 2004.

¹⁸ Guvernul Republicii Moldova, *Strategia pentru Tineret (proiect)*, Chisinau, Octombrie 2003.

The reform of the public institutions is still in its early development. NEA has no infrastructure or resources to respond to the needs of the unemployed and/or companies. The potential beneficiaries are not informed about the services offered by NEA, especially in rural areas. Employers are complaining about the vocational training system in Moldova, and describe the Vocational Education and Training (VET) suppliers as incapable of meeting their expectations in terms of quality and timing.¹⁹

The project was adjusted to the local labor market; it was made more flexible and more receptive to employers' needs (through identifying employees and offering TSL and technical or vocational training courses, which provided the necessary soft²⁰ and hard skills for employment). The EGP trainings are more market-oriented than the programs offered by VET suppliers; this is a fact that has been confirmed by all the managers interviewed during the evaluation mission. The training courses combine the professionalism of the trainers with practical internships inside the companies.

The alliance at the local level, formed by the local NGOs, VET providers, employers, and NEA (the public-private partnerships), is a good model that should be promoted and expanded. This model is new for Moldova and the project proved that it can be effective, especially if there are incentives for all the partners to actively participate.²¹ The allocation of direct support was well received by the companies involved in the project, and similar incentives could be allocated for the public institutions, VET providers, or NGOs.²² However, the sustainability of these partnerships after the end of the project could not be clearly established.

CRS declares that they maintained constant attention on not creating parallel services, and always encouraged their partners to work with the LEOs or make referrals to the LEOs rather than duplicating their services. Similarly, META was designed to supplement or modify the format of the vocational training program provided by the state or offer alternatives, but not to create parallel programming.

The evaluation shows that the TSL courses provided by META were supported by NEA in a smaller proportion. The cooperation between Pro Business Nord, NEA, local companies, and VET suppliers was an example of how the partners can work together to benefit the recipients. In other situations, the META project offered short-term training (two weeks to three months). CRS explains that it became apparent very early on in the project that vocational education

¹⁹ In his study called *The Vocational Study of Formation and Insertion in the Republic of Moldova: Outlooks and Institutions*, Dr. Nicolae Toderaș describes the vocational training system in Moldova as sub-financed, centralized, and inefficient; the suppliers have little institutional autonomy, and their offer is inadequate for the actual labor market.

²⁰ The TSL beneficiaries developed skills such as how to manage one's personal and professional life, self-control, motivation, self-confidence, communication, capacity to identify and solve the problems, ability to interact with others, etc.; capacities well appreciated by all the employers.

²¹ Balti Pro Business Nord chose not to offer any incentives to the companies they were working with. The garment companies relied mostly on the support provided through the project.

²² This direct support should encourage partnership and common activities (like supporting the promotion of NEA services to unemployed people in rural areas, contributing to the setting up of job centers for youth, introducing professional counseling in schools, printing leaflets, or improving the website of NEA, etc.).

reform was only possible from the top-down—through the ministry of education who wished to work with a select group of projects funded specifically for VET reform. META worked with local vocational providers, particularly in Balti, Cahul, and Soroca, to adapt their training program to market-needs (which was effective in all three cases) but could not address VET reform on a national level.

While this professional (technical) training²³ (substituting VET) is an answer to the employers' needs, it does not offer a sustainable solution for the beneficiary. This parallel system²⁴ should not be encouraged because—

- It is not contributing to vocational training reform.
- It does not offer these young women entering the working world the vocational competence that will enable them to meet the changing demands of the workplace.
- It is not sustainable: NEA is not going to finance it (NEA offers assistance and funding to organize 4- to 6-month vocational trainings [VET] only if they culminate in official certification of the alumni), and the companies interviewed showed little interest in supporting it.²⁵
- The lack of a labor force is constraining the companies to accept employees with little experience and no qualification, which is not a long-term solution.

The companies are facing a high level of staff turnover, in spite of many amenities being offered to their employees (transportation, hot meals, medical assistance, etc.). Only a small number of them can comply with the minimum standards defined by the project: payment of the minimum wage, decent working conditions, legal employment, and a safe environment for the employees, among other criteria. Through the META project, 725 EGP beneficiaries attended TSL and participated in peer-to-peer supportive groups (four months), were offered jobs with decent working conditions, and received assistance during their TSL training period (scholarships, meals, and transportation).

²³ The META project sustained “technical training” (two weeks to three month courses) organized by the companies, as an alternative to vocational training courses, which are organized by accredited public/private bodies and last at least six months.

²⁴ The META project sustained “professional courses” (two weeks to three months courses) organized by the companies as an alternative to vocational training courses, which are organized by accredited public/private bodies and last at least six months.

²⁵ Only the company from the garment industry, which developed a training line with the help of the project (financed by Argidius Foundation and the Austrian Government), expressed the will to find solutions to continue the activities as designed by the META project (for recruitment and training of personnel).

4.2.3 Relevance to Existing Initiatives

The project design and implementation took into consideration the existing initiatives and tried to avoid overlapping through good communication with the main stakeholders, participation in the technical coordination meetings steered by OSCE, and coordination with Winrock International and UNDP. However, the evaluation findings generally confirm the opinions expressed in the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) report, *An Assessment of Referral Practices to Assist and Protect the Rights of Trafficked Persons in Moldova*.²⁶ “Nowhere is the duplication of efforts more evident than in the provision of employment-related services. Currently four NGOs and the State’s National Employment Agency provide vocational training and job referrals to victims of trafficking. The four include: Winrock, UNDP, Catholic Relief Services, and Center for the Prevention of Trafficking in Women. Most, if not all of these NGOs are USAID-funded.”²⁷ The evaluation also identified many similarities with the ILO-IPEC project in Moldova. The incentives for the employers (scholarships, practice materials); the beneficiaries’ monitoring; the cooperation between LEO, employers, NGOs, and local authorities; and the vocational training paid for by NEA are all common elements of the two models.

At the same time, there are particularities to the approach of CRS because the manner of pursuing the goals was different and there is no regional overlapping. The other projects financed by USDOL and/or USAID are complementary, also offering other type of services: psychological and social care, financial and material support, development of social enterprises/startup companies, helpline counseling, etc. All three projects focus on the economic empowerment of young persons, though the approach of each project has been different. Winrock and UNDP adopted a strategy to develop local and regional centers and promote the startup companies. CRS set up a center in Balti, but also worked with local alliances and medium-sized companies searching for personnel. These variable models adopted by CRS made the META project more flexible and permitted the building up of good relationships between the employers and NEA. In the end, this allowed META to identify its own niche of intervention.

4.2.4 Relevance to U.S. Government’s Anti-Trafficking Efforts

According to the cooperative agreement, ILAB’s role in combating trafficking focuses on the labor-related factors that compel women and children to seek work abroad. Accordingly, USDOL has received approval to implement a labor-oriented project in Moldova, with funding from the President’s US\$50 million initiative against trafficking in persons. In so doing, the challenge for the project is twofold:

²⁶ UNODC—*An Assessment of Referral Practices to Assist and Protect the Rights of Trafficked Persons in Moldova*, Chisinau, February 2007, p. 37.

²⁷ All the four projects offer a similar range of services: facilitating access to the labor market, training, awareness training, development of soft skills, etc. For example, UNDP project “Better Opportunities for Women and Youth” reported that “4,136 socially vulnerable people benefited from the services of the Social Reintegration Centers, including 992 young people being trained, of which 642 have been employed. Also, partnerships were developed with 25 private entities, which provide employment to the beneficiaries of the project.”

1. Creating incentives and opportunities for Moldovans to find legitimate and economically sustainable forms of income within their country.
2. Enabling those who want to work abroad to avoid becoming victims of trafficking.

The project achievements met the larger goals of the U.S. President's initiative and the U.S. Government's efforts in Moldova by promoting the economic and personal empowerment of the beneficiaries and contributing to job creation, rural economy diversification, and human resources development.

4.2.5 Other Design and Implementation Issues

According to IOM representatives, the public institutions are more open to cooperation, the state is making better efforts to coordinate the different projects and programs, and is willing to allocate resources for different actions. It became obvious that the Moldovan Government is more willing to cooperate with the NGOs in developing public-private partnerships and integrated social services. In this framework, the relationship between NEA and CSR has improved a great deal. NEA representatives at the local and national level are participating in the project activities, the local alliances, and the NEA-financed vocational trainings, such that 1,407 persons were referred by the project to NEA (to receive services and unemployment benefits). The General Director and other managers of NEA proved to be interested by and well informed about the activities and the results of the project.

The project offered an alternative to public services for the vulnerable target groups by offering services in rural and urban areas. According to the opinion expressed by the project stakeholders, the economic development of the country is slow; therefore, there is a continued need for the types of services this project provided. In fact, the activities of the project are still needed in the highest degree in Moldova.

For the design of the project, CRS consulted most of the main stakeholders (ILO-IPEC, UNDP, Winrock International, OSCE, etc.). During initial project implementation, there was insufficient consultation with public institutions in the field, which generated some difficulties in the relationship with NEA and the Ministry of Economy and Trade. However, in the second part of the project, these difficulties were overcome by CRS.

In this evaluator's opinion, there are several reasons why the relationship between CRS/implementing partners and NEA improved in the second part of the project:

- The Moldovan Government adopted new public policies just before the project started (e.g., The Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2004–2007 in May 2004; The Strategy for Youth, draft, October 2003). The institutional culture and inertia and the public workers resistance to new approaches made the cooperation with the NGOs before 2006–2007 very difficult.
- The hard work and efforts of the META team to contact the stakeholders and to coordinate with other projects and public institutions started to pay off.

- The META team was better able to communicate the goals of the project and the need for partnership with NEA. Hiring a communication specialist contributed to the success of this approach. The project has been promoted using a wide range of methods: press releases, articles published in mass media, articles published in CRS's worldwide newsletter, distribution of promotional materials, public events, META participation in OSCE technical coordination meetings, public institution gatherings of NGO-donors and NGOs, meetings with/visits from the main stakeholders (companies, vocational training providers, city-halls, schools/high schools, ministries), guests speakers participating in project-team reunions, etc.
- The top-down approach (META-NEA general agreement) was complemented by a bottom-up approach (implementing partners-LEA letters of agreement), which allowed LEA staff to understand the benefits of the cooperation with the NGOs: reduced costs, reduced risk, new range of services offered to unemployed, better performance of LEA, better use of public money, establishing new standards of excellence for labor market services, capacity to address issues that NEA may not have the expertise, skills or resources to manage on its own, building the respect and credibility of both organizations, possibility of validating best practices and innovative approaches before including them in public policies, etc.

The project design focused mainly on service provision for direct beneficiaries. There were few activities and little resources allocated to other things, such as capacity building (NGO, LEO), vocational training reform, knowledge management, or dissemination of project results/products. Good practices concerning public-private partnerships and the TSL-EGP model were neither documented nor disseminated; there is no website of the project, and the websites of the implementing partners offer only scant information about the project.

The definition of what constitutes a sustainable job varies from project to project. UNDP defines a sustainable job as one kept for at least six months; for CRS, the minimum duration for a job to be considered sustainable is four months; for Winrock International, the duration is three months. All the stakeholders agree that minimum wage and low specialization jobs remain a problem. Fifty percent of the jobs offered by the META project to beneficiaries were in the garment industry. Jobs in the garment industry are demanding (labor intensive) and the salaries are not that large. According to the interviewed managers from this field, professions like “seamstress” have a low level of esteem among youth;²⁸ the jobs offer short-term prospects. Unfair competition in the field and the number of vacancies encourage staff turnover; in addition, the managers complain that employees are not coming to work during the seasonal labor periods in agriculture, or that the workers are coming and leaving in cycles—resigning and then returning to the same company, several times. Worse yet, they offer prospects to work illegally in Moldova or abroad, especially in small enterprises which offer irregular work but bigger salaries. According to the article “The Global Garment Industry and the Informal Economy” published in

²⁸ For example: The manager of a company with over 1,000 employees says that the prestige of some professions is very low and youth don't want to embrace them any longer, due to “the social attitude towards them.”

the Clean Clothes newsletter from July 19, 2005,²⁹ “in Central and Eastern Europe, it is estimated that 70% of factory workers are informal, though by its very nature the informal economy is difficult to measure. In the UK, where most large factories have closed or moved overseas, there has been an increase in small units that use immigrant labor. Such workers have limited choice because of language or legal status, and are paid low wages, and work long hours, seasonally.”

4.2.6 Project Beneficiaries

The project targeted two groups of beneficiaries: the TSL beneficiaries (young women aged 16 to 19 from the rural areas), and the EGP/TSL beneficiaries (young women aged 18 to 25). The project kept no records on which beneficiaries had been prior victims of trafficking (with the exception of 20 persons referred to Pro Business Nord by another NGO involved in anti-trafficking activities). CRS established this option after it became obvious that employers were reluctant to employ prior victims of trafficking. In this way, the privacy of the victims was better protected, and the victims were anonymously integrated into project activities (EGP, TSL, peer-to-peer support groups), thus having a better chance of reintegration.

There are several considerations to be made regarding the target group.

First, the project design was mainly directed toward the *prevention* of trafficking, and much less to the *combating* of trafficking; even when it targeted actual victims of trafficking, the project did not pursue the stages of intervention that address the victims’ identification, referral, or assistance.

According to the evaluation findings, from the perspective of prevention, the limitation imposed on the project to offer services only to young women between 16 and 25 is not justified. Economic factors and domestic violence are common to both genders and to all age groups, with men increasingly becoming victims of trafficking for labor exploitation. Many stakeholders and beneficiaries who expressed this opinion appreciated USDOL’s agreement that, in some circumstances, the age of the beneficiaries included in the project could exceed the abovementioned limit.

A second reflection concerns the definition of the target group. The cooperative agreement establishes that the project should address: “female victims of trafficking of any age and young females (16–25 year olds) considered at-risk of being trafficked and who participate in project activities; those considered most at-risk include those who are poor, low-educated, living in rural areas, and/or meet other factors indicating significant vulnerability to being trafficked.” The IOM Chisinau reports are showing that the most vulnerable persons to trafficking belong to the target group defined by the cooperative agreement.

However, other considerations might be necessary. According to the publication *Targeting Endemic Vulnerability Factors to Human Trafficking* (SIREN, UNIAP³⁰ Regional Office,

²⁹ <http://www.cleanclothes.org/news/newsletter19-07.htm>.

³⁰ UNIAP—United Nations Inter-Agency Project.

December 2007),³¹ “many trafficking prevention programs broadly assume that, no matter the local context, the key vulnerability factors are poverty and lack of knowledge about human trafficking. There have been many studies throughout various parts of Asia (and beyond) demonstrating that poverty, low education, and lack of understanding about human trafficking are not necessarily key contributing factors to vulnerability at all. It is clearly more complicated in many local contexts than simply poverty and lack of knowledge, with clear implications for the effectiveness of poverty alleviation, scholarship, awareness raising, alternative livelihoods, and related prevention interventions.” Here, we have to take into consideration the high migration tendencies among Moldovan citizens, especially among youth, as an important vulnerability factor to trafficking.

Implementing partners have declared that beneficiaries were selected from a group of women at risk of being trafficked (poor, single mothers, unemployed, from families with a history of domestic violence), regardless of their studies level or the area they came from (rural or urban). In a few situations (such as Balti), the women hired in Banca de Economii or accounting EGP had a university education, or they came from urban areas (like some of the women hired by METRO Cash and Carry or Fourchette).

The accessibility of the targeted beneficiaries to the services provided by the project is relevant from the perspective of relevance of the project activities to the target group. The evaluation noted that the beneficiaries indeed belonged to the category defined by the project (i.e., poor, low educated, etc.). However, these are also persons who are currently attending school in rural areas (and have the possibility of attending extracurricular activities like TSL training), they are less willing to leave the country (which all the company managers declared was an argument for developing new jobs in the rural areas). This makes them less vulnerable to the risk of trafficking. The existing reports of international organizations or NGOs on the local situation are indicating as key contributing factors to vulnerability the elements included in the cooperative agreement and the evaluation confirms that the project made visible efforts to address them. At the same time (as mentioned in the *Management Areas in Need of Improvement* chapter), the pressure to have a large number of beneficiaries and to cover a large number of villages (192) left less time and resources for identifying and targeting those persons more vulnerable to trafficking, such as people who dropped out of school or are willing to migrate.

A third consideration relates to prior comments on the realities of the labor market in Moldova and the definition of a sustainable job. The jobs that are available in the labor market of Moldova are in urban areas, mostly in retail and the garment industry. In the services industry, very often these jobs require higher education degrees (in which case, the jobs are more sustainable). Only a few companies offer jobs that comply with the criteria established by the project.³²

³¹ <http://www.humantrafficking.org/publications/610>.

³² The companies have been thoroughly checked by the project staff. Some companies had to be rejected because they could not guarantee, for example, the safety of the beneficiaries who were supposed to work by night (organizing events).

In spite of these constraints, the project staff succeeded in matching the needs of the beneficiaries with the expectations of the companies; it also tried to answer to project demands of offering sustainable jobs, which is sometimes contradicted by the reality in Moldova. The project provided these groups of beneficiaries with long-term, stable employment opportunities, as defined by the project. Through promotion of the META model (the combination of economic empowerment of beneficiaries through offering them legitimate employment, and their personal empowerment through TSL and peer-to-peer supportive groups), all the beneficiaries now have a chance for a better life, thus reducing the risk of being trafficked. The project gave beneficiaries the necessary knowledge and tools, and built their confidence and capacity so as to protect their own rights, search for a better job, and prevent the risk of being trafficked.

Students from the rural areas are very enthusiastic about TSL and are aware of the trafficking risks. One student described the benefits of these courses as follows:

“It is very important to participate in these courses because it is essential for our future: Here we can discover new personal capacities and qualities, we can find out new things about ourselves. TSL helps us to make good decisions concerning our future profession and the development of our career. The courses are informing us in an extended manner about the trafficking in human beings, which very often is involving persons from rural areas, most of the time, in my opinion, because of the lack of information.”

4.3 PARTNERSHIP AND COORDINATION ISSUES

4.3.1 Coordination with National Efforts

According to the *2008 Trafficking in Persons Report: Moldova*, published by the U.S. Department of State, the Government of Moldova does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so. The government approved a 2008–2009 Anti-Trafficking National Action Plan on March 19, 2008; it also allocated US\$44,000 in its 2008 budget for a victim rehabilitation center operating costs and sustained cooperation with NGOs during the reporting period. However, it did not demonstrate proactive efforts to identify trafficking victims, nor did it provide funding to NGOs for victim assistance. It has instead cooperated with NGOs and international assistance programs that provided legal, medical, and psychological services for trafficking victims during the reporting period.

Before approving the 2008–2009 National Action Plan on combating trafficking in persons, there was nothing else in place because the previous plan had expired at the end of 2006. For most of the reporting period, the government’s national anti-trafficking committee remained without a leader. However, in February 2008 the government appointed a chair at the deputy prime minister level, as required by Moldovan law. The government has acknowledged that trafficking was a problem, though it continues to rely on NGOs and international organizations to provide the majority of public awareness campaigns. The Center for Combating Trafficking in Persons (CCTIP), together with NGOs and international organizations, developed and conducted seminars for high school students, teaching staff from schools and universities, priests, local authorities, and local law enforcement officials. The Government of Moldova provides free air time for anti-trafficking campaigns.

*The Moldova National Plan for Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (2008–2009)*³³ established the following objectives:

- **Capacity building:** increasing the capacity of government and nongovernmental bodies for preventing and combating trafficking in human beings through approaches based on human rights and oriented toward victims.
- **Informational management and research:** ensuring the availability of information and data exchange at national and international levels, carrying out research in the field of prevention, and providing assistance to victims of trafficking.
- **Public awareness and education:** increased awareness regarding the risks of illegal migration and the danger of trafficking in human beings.

The project contributed to national efforts to combat trafficking by organizing activities to raise awareness on trafficking issues and to prevent trafficking among young women. Training in Sustainable Livelihood and the Peer-to-Peer information campaigns are helping young women build the knowledge, skills, and confidence they need to manage their lives, making them informed and resilient to trafficking. The local coordinators participated in capacity building programs to prepare them for implementation of these activities in their communities. Newsletters were disseminated to provide young women with job information, recommendations on services and training opportunities, and trafficking awareness knowledge.

4.3.2 Coordination with Local Subcontractors

The grantee made considerable efforts to approach donors, national and local NGOs, employers, local administrations, and LEAs, conducting needs assessments and company assessments. The planning and coordination for this was demanding and time consuming; considering the number of staff involved in the META project, this was an accomplishment in itself. The monitoring system is very detailed and offers clear information about the project outputs. The regular meetings of the partners involved in the project were meant to ensure good communication on the issues relating to the project, or good opportunities for either exchanging information with other organizations or for training.

The project promoted the partnerships between national and local NGOs, the development of networks (of teachers, NGOs, volunteers),³⁴ and increased visibility and institutional capacity of the NGOs involved in the project. It also encouraged volunteerism and developed leadership among youth.

³³ Hotararea Guvernului, 472 din 26 martie 2008, Planul național de prevenire și combatere a traficului de ființe umane pe anii 2008–2009.

³⁴ The implementing partners and local NGOs from rural areas signed partnership agreements to implement the project activities. Local coordinators and teachers from rural areas were trained to deliver TSL courses and peer-to-peer information campaigns. Information brokers were trained to deliver information in communities to raise awareness about trafficking issues and job information. These networks cover 192 villages and are an important asset for the implementing partners (especially YEC STAR).

The implementing partners are strong, reliable organizations, which were able to comply with the project criteria and procedures. They have been selected according to their capacity to deliver the project outputs,³⁵ and their networks covered 192 villages and several urban areas.

The main challenges in the project implementation were the delayed start of the project, the META staff turnover, and communication with the implementing partners. From the point of view of managing the partnerships, the evaluation findings indicate the following:

- Taking into consideration the time and resources allocated for each implementing partner, the outputs established through partnership agreements were sometimes overestimated.³⁶ This was a challenge that could have easily been avoided by more realistic planning.
- A majority of the activities/outputs were developed/achieved in the last year of the project due to delays from the beginning of the project and time constraints, which caused difficulties for the implementing partners.³⁷
- Each implementing organization signed a partnership agreement. The partners were assigned to do specific tasks (for example, developing a teacher's resource guide or didactic materials) and complementary activities (such as teaching TSL to beneficiaries age 15 to 18 or producing a newsletter). It was expected that similar conditions would be negotiated with each partner for similar activities or tasks, something that in fact did not happen. This had a negative impact on the cooperation between CRS and the implementing partners.³⁸
- The communication and cooperation between CRS and some NGO partners and between CRS and other partners was difficult. The problems already mentioned (the META staff turnover, the time pressure, the changes in partnership agreements, action plans, and budgets) and the cultural differences and/or personality problems led to sensitive situations. CRS made efforts to resolve the problems and the communication improved in the final year.

³⁵ The main outputs reported by the project were delivered by the implementing partners or in cooperation with them. These NGOs have records concerning the beneficiaries and the services offered to them, according to the monitoring system implemented by CRS.

³⁶ Outputs like: *10,000 to 20,000 village information brokers and residents directly impacted by CT initiative activities receive better information; 16,000 students receive education in CT; 2,500 YMW in rural villages will have received TSL training; 17,280 copies of the newsletters will be distributed* are unlikely to be reached with the resources allocated for a two-year project.

³⁷ For example, there were many situations when the staff of the implementing partners spent nights working on the monthly financial and technical reports.

³⁸ For example, in the case of teaching TSL, the local trainers were paid in one case, and were volunteers in another. This strategy can alter the results of the project because there cannot be similar expectations from the people engaged in the project in such different conditions. Furthermore, the workload imposed by the monitoring system was very high, and it was difficult for volunteers to comply with the expectations.

- The monitoring system was efficient, but it proved demanding for the implementing partners, especially because the software did not effectively manage the database with the beneficiaries of the services, and because of the monthly reporting procedures.
- Sign-up letters of agreement with local NGOs and the schools in the rural areas, as well as the signatures of general agreements between implementing partners and the Ministry of Education and NEA, was a practice established by the project. This practice had a positive effect in terms of empowering the local actors. In the absence of follow-up activities, however, it raises expectations that could not always be fulfilled, especially in the small communities. In the long term, this might affect the relationship among the community actors and lower their willingness to be proactive.
- It is preferable that the budget allocations per budget line³⁹ (participant/day/month) for similar activities are comparable to all partners/grantees in a project.

4.3.3 International Coordination

The project efforts toward coordination with other international organizations or international NGOs (OSCE, Terre des Hommes, and La Strada) were considerable, and the results were positive in terms of avoiding overlap, promoting the project achievements, and participating in an information exchange. The project coordination efforts with Winrock International were the most successful ones (in identifying beneficiaries). The cooperation with UNDP was punctual and, with ILO-IPEC, was limited to discussions concerning META project design and information about the ILO-IPEC project delivered at the META stakeholders meeting.

At the same time, the coordination of projects like META, which uses a very specialized approach (addressing potential victims), cannot hope for more coordination with other projects that are more focused on victims or on information and awareness raising.

4.3.4 Coordination with Moldovan Government

The Ministry of Social Protection is trying to coordinate activities in the field of anti-trafficking on a national level through the National Referral System. The National Action Plan in the field of anti-trafficking is another platform for coordination, but there are no achievements yet. OSCE is currently coordinating a platform for donors and NGOs to meet and exchange information, which will contribute to the coordination of actors in the field. The coordination between civil society and public institutions is much more difficult, the public institutions being less transparent.

META developed good relationships with those companies that employed beneficiaries, but none with the trade unions and employers' organizations. There are no trade union organizations within the partner companies of the project, and only one company from the garment industry (with over 1,000 employees) mentioned their membership in the employers' organization

³⁹ Such as room renting, accommodations, meals for participants in training, etc.

(and the possibility of promoting project activities in the future among its members). The social partners are not well organized in Moldova, and it is difficult to cooperate with them.

There was no cooperation with the Ministry of Education in terms of introducing TSL in schools' mandatory curricula or concerning the reform of the vocational system (vocational centers are subordinate to this institution, which showed no flexibility concerning the recognition of the technical training organized by providers other than the accredited ones). NEA does not have vocational training centers and is willing to support only certified training, ending in 100% placement, and only if the course is a priority for the region. In the second part of the project implementation, the cooperation with NEA increased and the public-private partnerships (META, local NGOs, LEO, companies, local vocational providers) were an efficient tool for matching the needs of companies and beneficiaries. NEA financed some of the trainings, organized in partnership with vocational training providers in Balti, Cahul, and Soroca, which was a good opportunity for increasing the project's funding.

The cooperation with vocational training centers was limited (though it was efficient in the case of the partnership with Pro Business Nord) due to their lack of flexibility and capacity to address employers' demands. However, available NEA funds for vocational training are increasing, and the vocational centers are more willing to adjust their offers to the clients' needs. SIDA and the Lichtenstein Government are financing projects aimed at the reform of the vocational training system in Moldova, supporting activities like the development of new occupational standards and new curriculum (according to occupational standards), training of the teachers on the new curricula, and paying for practice materials, among other things.

4.4 MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET ISSUES

4.4.1 Management Strengths

The evaluation identified numerous management strengths:

- **Good project visibility and organization** among stakeholders, other projects, and donors.
- **Good understanding of the Moldovan context and beneficiaries' needs.** The Rapid Employment Needs Assessment (RENA) study realized by CIVIS, the experts hired for the project, the information provided by the employers, and the NGOs involved in the project, all offered a clear picture of the context and needs, and contributed to the development of services adjusted to the real expectations of both actors in the labor market.
- **Good assessment of the employers' needs and offerings.** The extensive vetting of the companies involved in the project was a very good instrument to ensure proper labor conditions and the protection of the young women hired through the project; the companies were helped to modernize their equipment or the training space and to be able to deliver training and jobs under the proper conditions.

- **Good management skills** such as steering, monitoring, evaluation, and public relations.
- **Efficient procedures** for assessment of the companies, for evaluation of the needs, for the selection of partners/experts, for setting up public-private partnerships, and for the monitoring of beneficiaries, among other factors.
- **Vision and good capacity** to identify the best strategy to approach a certain situation (addressing the root causes of trafficking; offering a complex host of services that contribute to the economic empowerment of young women).

4.4.2 Management Areas in Need of Improvement

The evaluation also identified management areas in need of improvement:

- **Planning.** The expectations of the project's management team were very high and the efforts to get these results were considerable. There remained, however, a clear disproportion between resources (time, people, and money) and the final outputs. The pressure to exceed the expected outputs defined by the cooperative agreement created competition between the partners—a race for getting more and more beneficiaries—and sometimes effectiveness surrendered to efficiency.
- **Managing the partnership agreements.** The services received by the beneficiaries were provided by the implementing partners according to the partnership agreements, which established very clear responsibilities, tasks, expected outputs, conditions, and rules. At the same time, the agreements suffered many changes, were under-budgeted, and the communication between partners was difficult.
- **Technical reporting.** The technical reports focus exclusively on what has been achieved. Information concerning the processes, as well as the main activities, the products of the project, and on the main important managerial decisions, is not included in these reports.
- **Working according to the national legislation/procedures.** Projects like META are not meant to change the labor market in a country. Its short duration and their limited funds encourage management teams to find solutions that might be conducive to building up parallel systems.
- **Managing the relationship with the national public and governmental bodies better.** Especially between the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Economy and Trade, and the National Anti-Trafficking Committee.

4.4.3 Communication with Stakeholders

The communication with the stakeholders improved, especially after someone responsible for communication was hired on by the project.⁴⁰ These efforts proved effective, and now the project is well known by all the main stakeholders and donors in Moldova. The best example is the relationship with NEA: very difficult at the beginning of the project and very good at the end.⁴¹

The CRS organizational culture and the personal abilities and skills of the management team had a strong impact on the decisionmaking procedures and the personnel involved in the project. In the long term and from a sustainability point of view, this might prove inefficient because the local staff has no chance to participate in the management of complex projects. On-the-job training is a very efficient tool and can contribute to knowledge transfer from experienced, international project managers to the local individual.

4.4.4 Leveraging Non-Project Resources

META was very successful in leveraging resources (contributions in cash and in-kind). The implementing partners (NGOs) contributed approximately 10% of their budget (cash and/or in-kind), while companies made more substantial contributions. According to CRS, over the life of the project, USDOL funding has leveraged an additional 60% in increased funds from in-kind and in-cash contributions made by partner employers, local governments, the National Employment Agency, and additional donors. In the case of the employers, the contribution was almost equal to the investments made by META in infrastructure (due to the second project being implemented by CRS and financed by the Austrian Development Agency and Argidius Foundation). NEA covered the costs for the beneficiaries participating in the vocational training courses (Pro Business Nord), including transportation, meals, and practice materials; this was one of the most important successes of the project. Local governments contributed in-kind (by offering space for technical training and TSL, and covering administrative costs such as electricity and water). They also helped employers to identify beneficiaries, promoted the company to get the approvals, and offered facilities to those companies creating jobs in the rural areas.

⁴⁰ The midterm evaluation final report indicated communication as a management area which needs improvements, noticing that the stakeholders are not well informed about the project activities, objectives and achievements and recommending CRS to improve it. All the persons interviewed during the final evaluation evoked this situation existing before and appreciated that the communication had been improved in the second half of the project.

⁴¹ The deputy general manager of NEA appreciates the project and considers that it should go on and include new activities like professional counseling, and the promotion of NEA services among young people from rural areas. He offered many details about the outputs of the project during the interview.

4.5 SUSTAINABILITY AND IMPACT

4.5.1 Plans for Sustainability

The NGOs in Moldova are not allowed to develop for-profit activities to finance their nonprofit actions (unless they set up a company). While public funding has not been available for NGOs in the past, attitudes toward NGOs have been changing in this last period. The government is more open to collaboration, to establishing public-private partnerships, and to financing integrated social services; it is also discussing an NGO public utility accreditation mechanism, which will be piloted in 2010 (this will, in fact, allow the NGOs to receive public funding). The NGOs in Moldova are also considering advocating for the introduction of a so-called “2%” finance into the Moldovan fiscal code (2% of the taxes paid by the citizens can be redirected to finance NGOs), using the model already existing in Hungary and Romania.

CRS will continue its work in Moldova for another three years, with the focus on combating poverty. Some of the META activities (establishing public-private partnerships and placement) will be either replicated or adjusted to the new project. This has been a success for CRS and proves that the project made a good impact.

There is much to say about the sustainability of the project activities beyond the duration of the project. The TSL model can be considered sustainable because the organizations involved in the project (on national and local levels) now have the capacity, the know-how, the networks, and the procedures to continue to deliver these activities. However, the model implies resources that are not available to these organizations, and local institutions (schools and city halls) are not able to support them.⁴² The solution would be to identify other donors willing to finance it, and some organizations have already applied for funding.

The EGP model might be sustainable because some companies already have the equipment, the trainers, and the know-how to organize technical trainings and can cooperate with NGOs to organize TSL and peer-to-peer support groups. The relationship between NEA, NGOs, and private companies proved to be efficient for all actors, and some efforts have been made to allocate local resources for these activities. While the EGP implementing partners have the capacity, the know-how, and the procedures to continue this activity, none of the managers interviewed were interested or willing to support these activities beyond the project duration.⁴³ The implementing partners declared that they remain interested in continuing to provide these services, and they will make all the necessary diligences to find other funding for their activities.

⁴² The Major in Pelinia appreciates the quality and impact of these activities on the young women. At the same time, it is already a big effort for City Hall to cover the local contributions for the projects financed by other donors, and there are no resources to fully support these kinds of activities.

⁴³ When the evaluator asked about how they are going to recruit persons from now on, the managers from METRO, Floreana Fashion, Tinama, Infinity, and Saltoianca said that they will use the traditional channels.

4.5.2 Sustainability of Project Components

NEA is very interested in continuing the cooperation under similar conditions (if 100% of the beneficiaries are hired), and can cover costs like vocational training, practice materials, and transport for the participants during the vocational training. They are also interested in expanding cooperation on other issues (professional counseling and promotion of NEA services), especially in rural areas. But this can only be possible in the case of vocational training centers that are certified, or only if projects like META continue to exist, because the local NGOs and the companies are not able to cover the rest of the costs associated with these activities themselves.

The EGP model, combined with a shorter version of TSL, will be continued by CRS in the next three-year project. According to CRS, the new project will offer CT awareness and goes even further; providing a host of other social capacity-building opportunities identified as priority areas by the target group. Examples include awareness raising about domestic violence, alcoholism, human rights, among other subjects, which practitioners agree are contributing factors to trafficking.

Some of the companies may be interested in supporting TSL/EGP activities because they lack personnel. The manager of Infinity SA was interested in promoting this type of activity among the members of the employer organization they belong to.⁴⁴

Many stakeholders declared that TSL is very important for the youth, and that it should be included in the schools' curriculum. Unfortunately, it seems that the Ministry of Education wants to reduce the core curriculum, not extend it—one of the reasons being the teachers' workload.

The implementing partners are interested in continuing the activities if they find other donors.

4.5.3 Impact

The project reduced the vulnerability of beneficiaries to trafficking by offering TSL-EGP services. Even those persons who were not offered a job or were not able to adjust to a workplace provided by the project are better protected against the risks of being trafficked, due to the TSL component on human trafficking.

The project is not keeping records on the percentage of persons who have held their job for more than 120 days, as this was not a requirement of the project (there were no indicators for that, and the monitoring of persons is expensive and time-consuming). The staff turnover in the garment companies varies from 10 to 50%, though these figures are based on managers' declarations. Some beneficiaries can earn good salaries in the field if they have the abilities and the willingness to become professionals. For the rest, it will take a little bit longer to adjust, or they will have to find another job.

⁴⁴ The manager told us that they are planning to organize a roundtable discussion and present the services provided by the META project, with the aim of trying to encourage new managerial practices.

Some beneficiaries were able to secure stable, formal work for a reasonable payment. Those hired by Banca de Economii, METRO, Fourchette, accounting EGPs, and those participating in the focus groups were content with their actual situation. Among them there were persons hired 1.5 years before, who now have management positions (METRO). Their employment is secure, offering good prospects for a career, with decent wages and working conditions.

It is difficult to measure the impact of such a project without a baseline study to show the situation at the beginning of the project. According to the main stakeholders, the impact of the project is noteworthy. From the perspective of prevention of trafficking, the TSL-EGP model had a strong impact on the beneficiaries. By the same token, there are many other projects on the same topic in Moldova, and participants are exposed to many awareness and informational campaigns. Some questions related to impact remain unanswered (e.g., how many persons migrated illegally or have been trafficked after they left the job offered by the project?).

In terms of combating the root causes of trafficking, META was an efficient project and one of the few that focused on beneficiaries, not on technical assistance. Nowadays in Moldova, reducing poverty is a more difficult task than preventing trafficking. The economic crisis might cause bigger problems, especially in rural areas, and the exposure to trafficking risks might increase again in the near future.

The impact of the project is detailed in Annex 2. Some considerations concerning the impact of the project on each target group are the following:

1. The largest impact of the project was on the *direct beneficiaries*. The project promoted the economic and personal empowerment of the beneficiaries and contributed to job creation, rural economy diversification, and human resources development in the areas covered by the project. The young women participating in the focus groups were enthusiastic about the benefits of the project, declaring that they recommended the project to their friends and relatives, are aware about the risks of being trafficked, and are very pleased about their future prospects. The most impressive aspect is their pro-activeness—to become volunteers, to make choices for their career, to take action for a better life, and to prevent trafficking, illegal work, or other situations that might endanger the persons they know. They are more confident and motivated; they know how to protect their rights and where to search for help. Their personal experiences (good or bad) were a good example for other members of the group, and the peer-to-peer support groups taught them to trust and to help other people and ask for help when needed. The project definitely had a positive impact on the lives of these young women: after the courses finished, they related to each other and with the project staff; are willing to take other courses and learn a new profession, develop new skills, or even learn another language. (Some companies are encouraging their employees to continue with their studies to become local specialists). Although the wages are modest, they feel more secure and they are content because they found a solution in Moldova, and there is no need to migrate and be away from their children. The project promoted a target group that was not envisaged by the companies—the youth—and was successful in doing so. The fact that the companies are open to hiring young people is a good result of the project, and the beneficiaries are benefiting from it. The impact on the *trainers* who were

involved directly in the project was considerable. They have know-how and are willing to get involved in other projects and extracurricular activities. The impact on the *teachers, parents, and local communities* needs consolidation and more effort to be effective. The teachers are better informed, but they need more training and time to become involved as trainers. The local communities are open to any kind of projects, but they have difficulties in prioritizing and making informed decisions.

2. The impact on partner organizations should be considered for each type of structure:
 - The project supported local civil society and strengthened its capacity through training, introducing new management tools and procedures, and an exchange of information and experience. It also encouraged implementing partners to use appropriate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. The *implementing partners* are now more competent in project management, they are more visible, and they have a better chance of becoming sustainable. The impact of the project was strong and their participation in the project is an important lesson learned. They developed know-how, management and networking skills, and professional experience, and they became reliable partners for other donors.
 - *NEA* needed more time to internalize the win-win situation offered by this project, from which all the partners might benefit. Now they are ready to discuss new projects, they are open to finding solutions and answers to the employers' expectations, and they are even willing to finance part of the activities. They still have difficulties and need help to develop their services, procedures, and legislation, but their attitude toward partnerships is positive.
 - The impact on the *companies* is less obvious. The companies involved in the project are probably the most socially responsible in all of Moldova. Most of them are companies with a mix of foreign capital, which often brings into Moldova the culture of the organizations' country of origin (for instance, the medium-sized companies from the garment industry are subject to social audits as a condition of receiving orders from the European market). This is the reason they were chosen to become partners in the project, since they could comply with META's selection criteria. They are more open to developing partnerships with public institutions and NGOs, and they know how to negotiate and benefit from them. They also have all the human resource procedures in place and, if they cannot get assistance from projects like META, they go back to their own practices. The project promoted corporate social responsibility, new managerial practices, and public-private partnerships, but its audience was mostly among the types of companies previously described. The Moldovan managers are less used to these practices, and will need more time and effort to change their attitudes and behaviors.
3. According to IOM, the impact of the complementary projects is bigger at the local level, because needs cannot be answered by only one project and the resources are better used. Projects such as META—providing activities like prevention for at-risk individuals by raising awareness and reducing vulnerability—are reducing the pressure on the national

referral system (NRS). In Moldova, the NRS was established in five pilot raions during 2006 (in 2007 this figure increased to 12 raions, and by the end of 2009 NRS should cover the whole country) in response to the lack of services available to victims of trafficking outside Chisinau.

4. It is difficult to assess the impact of the META project on *government* and policy structures. The project had an impact on the working procedures of NEA, which is more open to cooperate with the NGOs and is willing to co-finance activities meant to contribute to social inclusion and prevention of illegal migration and trafficking. In general, the public institutions (NEA, National Anti-trafficking Committee, Ministry of Economy and Trade, Ministry of Social Protection, Family, and Child) are now more open to cooperating with donors and NGOs, and to allocating resources to support their activities, but there are no mechanisms for direct access to public funds. An accreditation mechanism for NGOs of public utility will be piloted in 2010. This will include, hopefully, the possibility of financing the NGOs from public funds.

4.5.4 Replication

The TSL-EGP model is efficient and should be replicated or expanded to other regions and to other target groups. The main stakeholders agree that the model works, the EGP is a proactive method in preventing trafficking, and the level of awareness on trafficking risks after finishing TSL activities is high. However, the after-school TSL activities targeting primarily 16- to 18-year-old women, as designed by the project, will not be included in the next CRS project in Moldova. This is an effective instrument to empower young women and prevent trafficking, and it should be supported for several more years.

To scale-up the project's pilot activities at the national level is more difficult. There are two ways to scale-up such project. One would be to finance the organizations involved in the META project to continue to provide these types of activities (recruitment, vocational training, TSL) on a larger scale, but for the moment they do not have the capacity to work at the national level, and such a project is expensive and not-sustainable over the long term. The other one would be to support NEA and civil society to be able to provide such activities in the areas where they are most needed. This would mean documenting this experience (as a good practice), integrating it into the NEA system, thus building capacity on a larger scale and supporting the development of the mechanisms to finance NGOs, vocational training centers, or companies that provide these activities, funded by the public.

V LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

5.1 LESSONS LEARNED

- The NGO/schools/local authority partnerships and the co-managed youth/NGOs are good initiatives, but often they remain at the stage of signing an agreement. The lack of community resources is making these partnerships inefficient and raises false expectations. The level of civic participation (in NGOs, local community-based organizations, and formal and informal groups like the parents associations from each school) and the volunteering in Moldova are very developed (compared with Romania, for instance). The lack of resources for the long term might discourage this participation. Increasing the capacity of these groups to write a project proposal and manage a project is one of the first steps to building-up long-lasting partnerships.
- The project encouraged authorities, employers, and NGOs to take over some responsibilities after the project's end, but the sustainability of the project's activities remains a concern for several reasons:
 - Economic empowerment and awareness raising concerning human trafficking may be effective tools to prevent trafficking, but the effectiveness of such projects most probably depends on several external factors—the economic development of the country being a very important one.
 - These types of projects are efficient in solving local problems, such as illegal immigration and helping people to avoid the risk of becoming victims of trafficking; however, these projects are not generating structural changes in the country, mainly because they are meant to act upon the local/regional level. Without lobbying, advocacy activities, and a stronger cooperation with public institutions, such interventions will not be replicated on a larger scale.
 - The project had no impact on the vocational training system, and the technical training is not recognized by the Ministry of Education and NEA. Some companies might continue to use it in the short or even medium term, but it is not sustainable. The Moldovan public system promotes only the accredited vocational training providers—a system that will not be embraced by the companies.
 - The local communities, the companies, and the NGOs do not have the necessary resources to finance these activities themselves.
 - Without proper documentation of these best practices, the knowledge and information gained by this project will remain simply the “property” of CRS and its implementing partners; it will not be spread among Moldovan NGOs, public institutions, and communities on a large scale. Eventually, other donors will finance the same or other NGOs to implement similar projects, perhaps believing them innovative.

- The selection of the implementing partners was successful, but the communication and the management of the partnerships were difficult. CRS is very demanding and rigorous in planning and monitoring the projects implemented by the partners, and very formal in their relationships with staff. Changes in CRS project staff and changes to the agreements with the implementing partners occurred often; likewise, the cultural differences and the gap in knowledge of project management tools between the American and Moldovan staff in the projects led to tensions and frustration. The pressure to achieve and exceed the expected results was another source of pressure experienced by the implementing partners.

There are several good practices promoted by the META project that should be documented and promoted, to make it possible to replicate in other regions of Moldova or in other countries. (This could be done by collecting the procedures, the forms, the description of the services, and the results of the monitoring and evaluation, and including them in a manual; another method would be organizing study visits and trainings.)

5.2 NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Project activities were based on the conclusions of the RENA Study—a targeted regional⁴⁵ labor market study designed to determine the needs of young women, employers, LEOs, and training providers.

5.3 METHODOLOGY

The beneficiaries were offered TSL (livelihood skills and economic empowerment training), career counseling, employment assistance, and EGP (vocational and technical training) services. This contributed to a reduction in poverty and inequality, to increasing the participation of the economically disadvantaged in economic activities, and to increasing the beneficiaries' awareness regarding the risks of illegal migration and trafficking in human beings. The participants in TSL/EGP took part in peer-to-peer support groups for a period of four months, which was a good way to consolidate the achievements from TSL.

Vetting the companies is essential for the successful placement of young women in sustainable jobs, and these companies were thoroughly checked by project staff. The project only accepted those companies that were able to guarantee payment of at least the minimum wage, offer legal employment, decent working conditions, guarantee the safety of the beneficiaries, and offer other amenities to their employees (such as meals, transportation, and medical assistance, among others).

The project promoted partnerships between LEO, NGOs, vocational training schools, and the local companies. The best example was the model developed by Pro Business Nord: the beneficiaries received an official certification for their new qualification and a sustainable job

⁴⁵ In Balti and Cahul.

provided by local companies. Public-private partnership is an innovative form of cooperation in Moldova, which should be encouraged and promoted.

The Training for Sustainable Livelihood is an innovative method for Moldova, one that proved a very effective instrument to empower the young women and to raise awareness concerning the dangers associated with human trafficking. The best example was the model developed and implemented by YEC STAR in the rural areas of Moldova. It includes a manual, training for teachers and volunteers (information brokers), and workshops with 15 to 20 young women, twice a month (40 hours), as extracurricular activities organized by the school or youth clubs/organizations. The model promoted formal/informal groups and networks and improved school capacities to prevent discrimination in the labor market, promote sustainable integration into the labor market, and prevent trafficking through extracurricular activities.

The project built and consolidated social networks (networks between the beneficiaries, between the NGOs and beneficiaries, between the trainers, between the local NGOs from the rural areas, between the NGOs and schools, etc.).

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VI CONCLUSION

While many of the other programs and donors focus on helping victims, the META project supported an agenda for social change. This can bring long-lasting progress by addressing vulnerability factors such as poverty, lack of knowledge about human trafficking and safe migration, and lack of job qualifications and contributions to prevent discrimination in the labor market. It can thus promote sustainable integration into the labor market and prevent trafficking.

All the implementing partners, stakeholders, and beneficiaries interviewed consider that the TSL-EGP approach was very successful for several reasons:

- The beneficiaries learn to work with existing technology and have a better chance of integrating into the companies where they've had the technical training; they are more self-confident and better motivated; they have information about their rights and support each other.
- The companies hire motivated, better-informed young women, who have the minimum skills required to start working.
- Through this project, the companies started to target the young people who were considered difficult to integrate into the labor market.
- The risks of illegal migration and trafficking among young women in Moldova were diminishing.

For these reasons, all the stakeholders and beneficiaries are recommending that it be expanded (in all the geographic areas and to a larger target group, to include men and women over 25 years old). Projects like META are needed in Moldova, and everyone recommends its expansion.

The combination of the EGP and TSL is a successful model that can be replicated. The vetting system for the companies benefiting from the project, the public-private partnerships, and the peer-to-peer support groups had a major contribution in its success.

The companies also appreciated the direct support received from Argidius Foundation for their own development (investments in training facilities, sanitation and electricity system, etc.).

According to IOM, the projects implemented at the local level, like META, reduced the pressure on the national referral system in a measurable way.

The META project reached and exceeded its objectives, as defined by the cooperative agreement and according to the President's Initiative.

Many stakeholders (NEA, implementing partners, and companies) insisted on transmitting—through the evaluator—their message of gratitude to USDOL and the U.S. Government for financing this project.

The project's activities are not sustainable without further funding; local stakeholders are involved and willing to support the activities, but their resources are limited.

Public institutions (NEA, National Anti-Trafficking Committee, Ministry of Economy and Trade) are now more open to cooperating with donors and NGOs, and to allocating resources to support their activities, but there are no mechanisms yet for direct access to public funds.

Sign-up letters of agreement with local NGOs and the schools in the rural areas, as well as the signatures of general agreement⁴⁶ (with the Ministry of Education and NEA) was a practice established by the project. This practice had a positive effect in terms of empowering the local actors, but in the absence of follow-up activities it raises expectations, especially in the small communities, which could not always be fulfilled. In the long term, this might affect the relationship among the actors in communities and lower their willingness to be proactive.

⁴⁶ These agreements involved the implementing partners, not META.

VII RECOMMENDATIONS

To CRS/META

Many recommendations have already been included in the other chapters of this report. This section presents only the most central suggestions, to be considered by the META project team:

- Project implementation should be based on knowledge management systems designed to improve cooperation and communication, increase ownership, and promote good practices. This might include a range of practices used to identify, create, represent, distribute, and enable adoption of insights and experiences. Such knowledge, either embodied in individuals or embedded in organizational processes or practice, can be disseminated through various means; e.g., websites, descriptions of good practices, manuals, procedures, among others.⁴⁷
- Projects like META should focus more on developing local capacity to manage similar interventions, and on the transfer of knowledge to local partners and public institutions, so as to ensure the extended use of the model and the sustainability of the project over the long term.
- For future projects, a decision to include local staff with decisionmaking responsibilities into the management team should also be considered. This will contribute to the capacity building of local project managers to handle complex projects, coordinate with other projects/donors, and comply with the criteria and procedures of donors.
- It is recommended that information concerning the processes, as well as the main activities, the products of the project, and main managerial decisions, be included in the CRS reports to its donors.
- Projects like META are not meant to change the labor market in a country. Its short duration and the limited funds should be a further incentive for the management team to avoid building up systems that run parallel to the public ones; thereby contributing to better access to and improvement of the existing services offered by the public institutions, and building long-term sustainability.
- Whereas civil society is able to react faster to local needs and propose innovative solutions, the reform of a public system is a slow process. Grantees should focus more on activities like advocacy and lobbying for more efficient and effective services in the public system (as CRS has suggested), or on developing activities like vocational training or placement to impel the reform process of public services. Special attention should be paid to the participation of the trade unions, companies, and employer organizations in this process.

⁴⁷ A good example in this sense is the publication *Reintegration Plan for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings—Good Practice and Recommendations*, published by the International Center for Women Rights Protection and Promotion “La Strada,” Chisinau, 2008.

- The clear design of quantitative and qualitative outputs would help the donor, the grantee, and the implementing partners to establish clear goals, to plan the activities, and to measure the results. Outputs and indicators should be defined so as to ensure a common understanding and accurate reporting.
- Introducing a performance indicators system (measurable quantitative and qualitative indicators) will bring information about the beneficiaries' satisfaction and the work quality of the implementing partners.
- Cooperation with and between the partners should be improved, especially among those involved in the same type of activity; standardized agreements, procedures, and rules would reduce the conflicts and the competition.
- Documenting and promoting the best practices, especially among NEA offices and employees, would contribute to the sustainability of the project's activity beyond the life of the project. NEA is an important contributor and the most important institution regarding the labor market in Moldova, and they can adopt and promote these best practices into their activities.
- Introducing resources into the project proposals for capacity building of the local partners and direct support for local NGOs, companies, and the NEA by pooling resources to reach a common goal would increase the impact of the project and develop its sustainability.
- Creating ownership of the project and the results by building local capacity, promoting best practices, and improving communication will ensure sustainability beyond the project's life.
- Finding innovative ways to involve NEA funds and support implementing partners to find alternative funding will resolve the problem of the project's sustainability.
- For future similar projects, it is recommended that the letters of agreement be accompanied by direct support and follow-up activities.

To USDOL

If similar projects are expanded or multiplied, USDOL should consider the following recommendations:

- The direct beneficiaries of the project include women victims of trafficking of any age and young women (16 to 25 years) considered at risk of being trafficked and who participate in project activities. The META project was allowed to enroll 10% of their beneficiaries from outside the 16 to 25 age range. According to evaluation findings, from a prevention perspective, the limitation imposed on the project to offer services only to young women between 16 and 25 is not justified; the economic factors and the domestic violence is common for both genders and all age groups (men are increasingly becoming

victims of trafficking for labor exploitation). This opinion has likewise been expressed by many stakeholders and beneficiaries. USDOL might consider allowing both genders, and also allow the age of the beneficiaries included in the project to exceed the above-mentioned limit to a larger extent.

- The project promoted partnerships between national and local NGOs, promoted the development of networks (of teachers and NGOs), and increased the visibility and the institutional capacity of the NGOs involved in the project. It also encouraged volunteering and developed leadership among youth. This is an important achievement that should be strengthened.
- USDOL might consider allocating more resources and/or activities for capacity building, coordination efforts, and knowledge management, as well as for documenting and dissemination of good practices and various products (manuals, brochures, films, etc.) in its future projects.
- Grantees should be encouraged to work according to national legislation/procedures and avoid parallel systems (for personnel recruitment and vocational training).
- Clarify the general goal of the project (META was a prevention project, not a combating one).
- Reconsider the sex and age limitations of the target group, and introduce other criteria so as to reach the most vulnerable persons (income, number of children, family situation, family history, education, among other factors).
- Define quantitative and qualitative outputs, as well as performance indicators systems in the cooperative agreements.
- Reconsider the definition of a sustainable job. All the stakeholders agree that a job paid according to the minimum salary is not sustainable and is not diminishing the risk of illegal migration or human trafficking.
- Allocate resources/activities for capacity building, coordination efforts, and knowledge management for documentation and dissemination of best practices and for project products (manuals, brochures, films, etc.). It is not necessary to create a website for each project, but the best practices should be available on the Internet (in META's case, the website developed by Winrock International, which is trying to develop a "community of practice" element, would be a perfect instrument).
- Reshape the technical and progress reports and introduce chapters concerning procedures, activities, managerial decisions, and those project activities that would lead to sustainability (the CRS reports presently focus only on the outputs).

- Consider direct support (through funding low-level initiatives or grant schemes) for projects of local (Moldovan) institutions, NGOs, and companies. Even though they are more costly for the donor, these projects would better contribute to local development, encourage partnerships between local actors, develop the knowledge and capacity to implement such interventions, contribute to the sustainability of civil society and to the reform of the Moldovan institutions, and would be more effective in the long term. Another solution would be to encourage the grantees to apply for the projects in partnership with local NGOs and/or public institutions.
- Consider projects for technical assistance to reform the existing public systems, before or parallel with the projects developed by grantees in the field.
- Encourage the grantee to hire local project coordinators that can build local capacity, manage complex projects, and comply with donor expectations. This will increase the ownership of the project, will facilitate access to direct information, and will avoid problems caused by language and culture barriers.
- Encourage the grantee to develop standardized procedures and rules valid for all staff and partners involved, to avoid problems related to staff turnover and competition between the partners. Many delays and communication problems appeared because these procedures did not exist or their interpretation was in flux.
- Consider the use of baseline studies or impact studies (at least for the larger projects).