

United Nations Secretary-General's in-depth study on violence against women
Contribution by: Diana Segovia
Latin American Branch of Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI, Brazil)
Local Agenda for Community Security: The Situation in North East Brazil

Brazil is a source and destination country for men, women and children trafficked for sexual and labour exploitation as well as for organ trafficking. It is estimated that as many as 150,000 Brazilians today are held in servitude, forced labour or sexual exploitative situations. The North and North East of Brazil, including Pernambuco, belong to the poorest regions of the country, and are also the most affected by trafficking with the majority of internal trafficking routes originating there. However, these regions are also a source for trafficking persons for sexual exploitation to the US and Western Europe. Recent research suggests that about 241 trafficking routes exist in 20 states of Brazil. More than half of these routes lead to international destinations (Pesquisa Pestrat-Brazil 2002).

Traffickers make use of various methods to recruit from vulnerable groups, such as for example convincing parents to allow their minor girls and boys to move to bigger cities in order for them to receive proper education. Upon reaching the cities, however, contrary to the original promises, the minors are forced to work in slavery-like conditions or are being sexually exploited. Most of the victims have only poor education, and many are of African descent.

Local Strategies to Prevent Trafficking in Persons

Even though trafficking in persons is a global phenomenon, it originates and takes place in cities and local communities. Therefore, to prevent trafficking, especially in women and girls, local governments must take action to overcome the high degree of inequality, gender disparity and social exclusion existing in many of those communities. This means providing social and legal support and protection to vulnerable groups, protecting human rights as well as promoting equal opportunities.

In 2004 in Pernambuco, Brazil, the Latin American branch of Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) in cooperation with the Government of Pernambuco developed the project "Local Strategies to Prevent Trafficking in Persons (LOST)" in response to the local authorities concern about trafficking in persons in their cities and communities. The aim was to support local governments to combat trafficking in an integrated, collaborative and participatory manner as well as in close cooperation with different levels of government, police and civil society. Additionally, the venture intended to promote a regional policy dialogue with other governmental institutions to replicate the initiative in other states of Brazil and the rest of Latin America. The project was implemented with the support of the German Government through the Sector Project.

Conceptual Framework of the Project

The project was integrated in ICLEI's Just, Peaceful, and Secure Communities Program, which conceptualises human rights and community security as a condition for sustainable development of countries. The Local Security Agenda is the instrument for local governments to approach insecurity, injustice and conflict using the Local Agenda 21 methodology. This includes, among others, participatory governance, stakeholder involvement and cooperation between administration and citizens. The goal is that the local government initiates and facilitates a process in which the relevant local actors, including police or other security forces, are involved. The common task is to take stock of the situation in order to define goals for improving security at the local level. Initiatives on Local Security Agendas address the causes for violence, insecurity and conflict, identified by the stakeholders, as well as appropriate measures. An additional goal is the active inclusion of

security forces – also coming from the regional or national level – into local actions and into the civil society. The LOST project was inspired by the participatory local agenda methodology and aimed to create conditions that reduce trafficking by implementing the following activities: public awareness raising, information exchange and capacity building especially for at-risk groups.

ICLEI's participatory approach follows a range of key principles:

- The integration of issues and interests of a wide range of stakeholders, such as community groups, NGOs, governmental agencies, professional groups and companies to achieve multi-sector planning based on local concerns.
- Action plans formulate a shared vision and identify local priorities for measures.
- The diffusion of information in form of awareness-raising activities, monitoring and evaluation procedures, such as indicators, are major tools in the process and help to keep track of the progress.
- Measures and projects are oriented towards long-term objectives.
- The impact of local action on global issues is taken into account

Pernambuco's Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Trafficking in Persons

In 2003, the State of Pernambuco established a programme to prevent and combat trafficking in persons through a decree-law. The multi-dimensional programme aims to develop preventive measures, to improve the prosecution of traffickers and to protect trafficked victims. The main components of the programme are:

- promotion of partnership and cooperation on different levels of government and civil society;
- enhanced participation of all stakeholders;
- promotion of integrative and integral preventive strategies;
- capacity building and education of trainers;
- prosecution and law enforcement;
- legal and social assistance to protect and support victims.

The State of Pernambuco followed a 5-step planning and implementation process in order to achieve its goals:

Step 1: Creation of an Inter-Institutional Commission to Combat Trafficking

Before formalised as an inter-institutional commission, the expert group working on trafficking issues in Pernambuco was based on voluntary efforts that were mostly facilitated by the Latin American Institute for Human Rights (ILADH). The group advocated for a national anti-trafficking programme in Brazil. The goal was to bring together different governmental agencies, political leaders, police, international organisations, law enforcement agencies and NGOs to lobby for the inclusion of anti-trafficking measures into the Government Agenda. These efforts resulted in an integral and collaborative programme called "Pernambuco State Program to Prevent and Combat Trafficking in Persons". In July 2003, the commitment of the political body and the official support was reflected in a state law. The bill endorsed the creation of an inter-institutional commission whose work is supported by an executive board consisting of government agencies and civil society as well as a Special Secretary within the police department.

Step 2: Generating Baseline Data through Local Assessment

Initially, the assessment of the local challenges and community concerns as well as the collection of baseline data was carried out by the expert working group. They used multiple methods such as observation, document analysis, interviews, consultation, questionnaires and focus groups in order to gain a more detailed overview of the situation and generate statistics. However, the absence of reliable indicators and registers complicated the quantification of

trafficking and trafficking victims. Following this process, the stakeholders, including the commission, government agencies from the regional and federal level and NGOs, were invited to verify the joint assessment. The community assessment revealed a narrow understanding of what defines trafficking, focussing on topics such as prostitution, sex tourism or illegal migration.

Deriving from the baseline data, the commission organised an international seminar in March 2004 to discuss findings, exchange experiences, share knowledge and clarify concepts.

Step 3: Development of a Code of Conduct

Building on the experiences and research provided by the expert working group, ILADH and the Commission organised a planning workshop in August 2004, with more than 100 institutions and community representatives taking part.

The outcome was the joint elaboration of a Code of Conduct (CoC) as an ethic instrument to promote human rights and the drafting of an anti-trafficking action plan. The CoC aims to inform and to raise awareness. However, the main goal is to commit different sectors such as education, arts, business, mass media, government and tourism to get involved in the activities formulated in the programme plan of action. In December 2004, the CoC was officially adopted by the Government of Pernambuco and then published and promoted through media, Internet and public presentations.

Step 4: Formulation of a Plan of Action

In the entire process there were no ready-made solutions as the participatory and consensus-based approach put emphasis on the joint assessment, planning and implementation of activities. They were carried out in the areas of prevention, victim support and protection, and prosecution, including e.g. information campaigns and capacity building activities; establishment of free telephone hotlines; creation of a special centre for social and health assistance; establishment of a special commission (with federal police support) to investigate cases.

Step 5: Monitoring and Evaluation

The commission has set up a monitoring and evaluation system to analyse the impact of the activities and to review the plan according to failures and success of the implementation. Based on the CoC an overall assessment of the activities will be undertaken and made available to the general public. The first report of the programme's performance and impact was submitted to the government of Pernambuco in March 2005.

Lessons Learned

In the case of Pernambuco, political commitment and strong participation of the most relevant actors was a prerequisite for the overall success of the programme. Participation in decision-making, planning and action were key elements for the stakeholders to identify their own needs, realise synergies and resolve conflicts. Identifying a long-term vision to approach the complex issue of trafficking in persons is essential. The stakeholder approach including the participation of international organisations helped the actors to cooperate rather than to compete as well as to empower them to incorporate a regional and global perspective. The inclusion of vulnerable groups themselves (not just through isolated consultation) contributed to a better understanding and increased knowledge of the problem, stimulated learning and empowered the community.

Furthermore, the experience has shown that reliable data on trafficking dimensions, a clear definition of the phenomenon and the assessment of local needs are crucial for the design of a plan of action.