

# TRAFFICKING FROM CAUCASUS

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# TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN AND CHILDREN FROM ARMENIA

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## ***Case study 1 (Trafficker)***

“I had been a prostitute here in my small town. There was no work. People could not buy my services or even give me some bread in exchange. Imagine in that dark and cold year of 1993 my friend who had already travelled to Dubai and was a “good friend” of an Arab man, came to my house proposing to do the same work in Dubai, in a warm beautiful place for a lot of money. Of course I agreed. Five other women and I received an invitation from her Arab friend’s company. In Dubai I found my own connections. Now I am travelling back and forth taking women from here. Money can open any doors. I am a respected person among my relatives and community in Vanadzor.”

“Soon I’ll travel again. I am now preparing a group of women to take them to Dubai. Most of the women I have taken with me live much better now. I prefer not to take minors, but sometimes I cannot resist. To take them is more expensive, as one has to give bribes for every step: document preparation, crossing the border, and so on. Of course the profits are higher. The new regulations in Dubai make our work more complicated. But you can always overcome difficulties by means of bribes and creativity. Once I took my father with me, he stayed there four months and left, and I stayed longer to do my job. The next time I took my cousin with me, he also stayed for a certain period of time and left. I think as long as there is no job in Armenia this is a good way of earning money.”

## ***Case study 2 (Trafficker)***

“I have been condemned to one-year prison term. I was arrested when I was sending five girls. I usually send five on each flight to Dubai. I recruit them here. My girl-friend is there and she and her friend send invitations from Dubai and take care of the girls there.”

“When they arrested me 27 other girls were being sent to Dubai on the same flight. They said that all of them were my responsibility. Everybody was released except me. As a compensation for serving one year imprisonment term I received some money from my friend in Dubai (pimp) and bought an apartment.”

“I started two years ago when my friend who was travelling back and forth to Dubai called me to ask for help. I was very happy. I had neither money nor a perspective to get it. It seemed to be a well-paid job. She was sending me the names of women whom I was supposed to recruit in Armenia. She was also sending me money to pay the families, to buy some clothing for the women and to take them to hairdresser and dentist. The invitations were coming from the company of her friend and I was organizing all the work in Yerevan. She was sending me money to give bribes for preparation of documentation and procedures at the airport. I had an informant who was telling me when something was wrong or was warning me about police searches. Usually we were recruiting women between the age of 20 and 24, but sometimes also younger girls.”

“I think we were helping many families. Most of the women thought that they were going to do house work, cleaning or management at homes of wealthy Arabs. Sometimes mothers asked to take their daughters so that they could help the family. We thought that we were doing charity, helping these families out. I sent five to six women to Dubai in each flight. Over the past years we had established a special border crossing mechanism for our clients. For example, if there were minors in the group they boarded at the very last moment so that the officials had no time to examine the documents carefully. The day when the police arrested me I felt that something was wrong at the airport. The informant gave us a sign that there was a danger, but it was too late. The police was there and arrested me as well as three other members of our group. That day I had only five women, but women recruited by others were all attributed to me. I found this out at the court hearing.”

“The pimp I was working with took good care of all women she recruited and paid them well. We rarely took minors, only when mothers offered them to us. I know what it means for the family to get additional sources of income. We find our informants among government officials in Armenia and Dubai. Yes, the pimp makes a lot of money, but she is not as greedy as the other pimps are, she shares with all of us. Depending on a case or situation we paid US\$ 100 to 150 per flight to officials.”

### ***Case study 3 (Victim – U.A.E.)***

“I met my boyfriend at my girl-friend’s house. He had been dating me for a month already when he told me he was going to marry me. My boyfriend told me we could earn some money for our wedding if we went to work in Greece at his friend’s company. We would stay for three months there to earn enough money and come back. I was extremely happy. I could not believe all that was happening to me. He took my passport and all necessary papers and said that he would take care of visa and travel arrangements. I was so happy and careless that I did not even ask to see the tickets or documents. The day of departure came. We took the plane and instead of Greece we landed in Dubai. As I had not been abroad before I could not really understand where I was. I could only recognize the Arabic signs and people dressed in Arabic robes. When I asked why we landed in Dubai he said we would have to stay for a couple of days in Dubai, and then later we would go to Greece. He took me to a hotel and said that he was going to see his friend and would be back soon. Two hours later a man came to take me to another hotel saying that I was his property. I could not understand, I kept saying that it was a misunderstanding and that my friend would come soon. I had come to Dubai for another purpose. The man told me that my friend had sold me to him, that from now on he would have my documents and I had to do whatever he told me to. He said that the next day I had to move to another place and serve all the clients he would send to me. I was shocked by what was happening. The next day he came and took me to another hotel. He said that every day I had to give him \$500, no matter how many clients I would serve. He was so violent. It was a continuous hell. Each day I served around 30 to 40 clients. I was not able to move or think. It went on for weeks. I was living between clients and tears. That was the rhythm of my life. I could not even realize what they wanted from me. The intensity of the process lasted for a couple of weeks. One day I got terribly sick. He left me alone and sent another Armenian woman to visit me. That day I understood that it was an organized enterprise and that there were many women from many countries who shared the same fate.”

“Meanwhile the pimp refused to give back my passport because of the debts he said he had incurred on account of me. I had to work and earn money if I wanted to go back home. Then he introduced me to another man telling that he had sold me to him and that I had to take my passport from him. The next day I was beaten like for the first time. He was an extremely cruel man. He came every morning to pick up his money and beat me terribly. I had no right to speak or express my concern, everybody knew him well for his cruelty. I did not receive any money from him. He did not even buy food. It all depended on the client’s will. I was resold four times.”

“One of my clients was trying to kill me. If it were not for the women in the next room I would have been killed. In his frenzy the man was beating me. He squeezed my throat.”

“Luckily enough there was a police raid in the hotel where I was working and I was taken together with other women to a police station and detained. My pimp did not do anything to release me from prison. I spent four months there. Though it was prison and the conditions were terrible, it was incomparable with what I had gone through before that. Nobody was cruel or rude to me there and I had to wait while my temporary documents from Armenia and the ticket for deportation were arranged. I came back without any money. All I had before remained with the pimp, I could not pick up anything. The most shameful thing happened at Yerevan airport. Everybody was treating me as if I were a prostitute, saying bad words. My life has changed since that time. Now you see me here in the street. I have become a real prostitute.”

#### **Case study 4 (Minor)**

We met her at her grandmother's house when she had just arrived from Dubai. She could not talk in front of her grandmother and uncle. The conversation took place outside in a café.

“I was twelve when my mother died. My father and my uncle had been using drugs for many years. Soon my father was imprisoned, I do not know for what offence. My uncle sold everything in our house to buy drugs. When I was 13 he forced me out to the street. I was living in the streets, sleeping under benches in the park. He told me to sell myself if I was not able to find money in another way. I went to the police and they sent me to Vartashen orphanage. Once my classmate told me that there was a woman in her neighbourhood helping young pretty girls to go to Germany to work for a fashion magazine. I could not believe it. I was so happy. Later the woman told me that after she had arranged documents for me and other persons we would all travel together to Germany. After a short while the papers were ready and we could to start off. There were 14 of us, girls of different ages between 13 and 23. We went by taxi to Tbilisi, from there we travelled to Moscow and from Moscow to Dubai, as we found out later. The woman who had recruited me had 27 children ‘employed’, mostly from orphanages, or from the streets. She deals in this business for 12 years already.”

“The hell I lived through at home continued in Dubai. They placed us in a hotel. They had special interest in young virgins. They were selling them at enormous prices to rich Arab sheikhs for one night, after which they were working with clients like other ordinary girls. We received only a fraction of what the sheikhs gave to the pimp. In some cases the girls received some special presents from the sheikhs. My friend who was 13 was taken to a wealthy man. In the end the man asked her what she wanted from him as a present. The girl asked for two sacks of flour. Even the money given to the girls as a gift was confiscated by the pimps.”

“Two days later they took us to a night-club and explained the nature of our work and the amount that we should pay them every day. They explained that they had paid a lot of money for our passports and travel, in total US\$ 6,000 for permission to fly and tickets. They were also paying for our room and food. Almost all the children were crying. They could not understand what was expected from them and how they were going to do it. The Arab partner of our pimp was getting angry when he was not getting the amount of money they were expecting us to provide. He was beating children with a belt and was very violent. I was also crying at the very beginning, but what could I do? Sometimes there were rich businessmen who hired us every time they came to Dubai. I was very happy when one businessman called me and said he was coming to Dubai. He spent his time only with me. He rented a room for me where I stayed and sometimes we went shopping together. The pimp also placed children with us when they were not able to earn enough money and requested the businessman to pay for them too, although at somewhat cheaper price.”

“After nights of work we were getting so tired that we could not do anything else but sleep. We did not communicate with each other. We were living in different hotels, even though we were from the same country and were together on the same flight. When our visas expired we travelled with our pimp to Iran to extend the visas. We stayed there for no more than two hours. Our passports were usually given to us at the airport and taken away after passport control. We could not run away or complain to the police since they assured us that they were bribed. .”

“One of my clients who was working for the immigration police threatened my pimp and took my passport back. Later on I was caught by the police again and deported through Moscow. As I was deported I could not even bring the small things that the clients had given to me. My Arab client promised to send those presents to me.”

“I have twice been in UAE. As soon as I came back home, I decided to buy a small one-room flat because I had spent most of my life in the streets and I wanted to have my own home. As I was under eighteen I could not register property on my name, so I did it on my uncle's name. A month later he needed money for drugs so he sold my flat and everything I had in it. ”

### **Case study 5 (Victim – U.A.E.)**

“I was working as a waitress in a café. When the café closed one of the regular clients saw me in the street and said that she was going to Dubai. She said there was a lot of work in cafes, bars and restaurants where I could get a better job and salary. The proposal seemed very attractive and I agreed to go. When I went to her house I met another women there. The woman told me that she was taking a group of women while it was easier to arrange. As I did not have money she paid the ticket for me and gave me US\$ 200 to leave behind for my family. She also took me to the hairdresser and dentist and bought me a dress. She said that I needed to look good in order to get a high salary. We travelled directly from Yerevan. All our documents had been changed. She paid the officials at the passport agency to get new passports for us, because all of us were younger than 30. One was even 17. At the airport everybody knew her, the police, customs and border guards.”

“When we arrived in Dubai one of the women had a problem with her invitation. After a conversation of ten minutes and a phone call to some place all problems were settled and they let us out of the airport. She took us to Sharjah to a small hotel that allegedly she had completely reserved for us. We stayed there for three days. Our documents were given to the receptionist at the hotel .On the fourth day she said that she could not keep us in this hotel, as it was too expensive. She moved us to a very cheap hotel and told us to stay there and receive our clients. When I heard the word “clients” I was so surprised. I was prepared to work as a waitress. I asked the other woman what they thought about it. Nobody wanted to talk.”

“The next day our ‘organizer’ came accompanied by an Arab man. They explained to us that we had been sold to him and if we did not do what we were told he could do with us whatever he wished. It is his country and everybody would believe him. Police or immigration officials would not accept complaints. Everybody used his services and they were all his friends. From that day on my misery started: he was sending around 50 clients a day, sometimes even more. I did not understand what was happening. I had no right to be sick, I had no right to refuse or choose. I do not know how he had established the terrible conveyor but the line did not stop. Though we lived in the same hotel with other women from Armenia who had come at the same time, we almost did not communicate. When we had couple of minutes in the morning everyone was telling the horrible situation they went through and more horrible stories of other women, especially those from Russia. They told that they had found one young beautiful girl who had committed suicide in her room. The body disappeared the same day. No police came. Next day another woman was living in her room. Nothing happened. Later our ‘boss’ always presented her example to us, telling that other pimps were so merciless. Once I got so sick that I could not even move, but the pimp wouldn’t pay attention to me and kept on sending clients to me. I do not know how I got through that day. I was feeling so hopeless that I decided to die. I thought that whatever I would tell at home, whatever kind of excuses I would offer to my parents and son, nobody would believe and forgive me. I went to the balcony, thinking that throwing myself out would solve all problems. Immediately I was called in as the next client came. If I did not get terribly sick I would never see my home. I told the pimp that I needed to see a doctor, but she said that it was very expensive and I could not afford it. The next day I was so weak that I could not even stand. I asked the receptionist to call the pimp. She came with a doctor, who said that I needed some medicines for the moment and an operation later on. I asked for my documents to go home but the pimp said that I could not go and would take care of me there. Time passed by and she kept sending more and more clients to me, so that my health condition became worse. I had no choice, I called my mother and told her to go to the house of the pimp together with police, and tell her relatives that if she did not give my passport to me in Dubai the Yerevan police would put her relatives in jail. That threat worked out, she gave me my passport and a ticket and I came back home.”

“Once I heard that my child in Yerevan was sick. I tried to hide \$100 in a piece of chocolate butter. Somebody reported to the pimp. I was terribly beaten and my money was taken away...”

“I thought of going again to earn some money to do an operation. I would be clever this time and would not be trapped. I have no right to be deceived again, I have a child and need to take care of him.”

### **Case study 6 (Victim - Turkey)**

“When my husband died I was left alone with my four children. I did not have money and the children’s needs were increasing, they needed education, clothing and so on. I could not find a job in Armenia. My neighbour who was also looking for a job told me that many of her friends had found work in Turkey through bus operators. We went there together and were very happy when the agency told us that upon arrival in Turkey people would be meeting us at the office of the travel agency. When we arrived in Turkey we went directly to the office and found a man waiting for us. He proposed us a job at the canteen of a factory he owned. We agreed that he would pay us US\$ 200 a week for ten hours of work per day. We also rented a room in a three-room apartment that we shared with two other groups: one group of three young men, the other three women from Russia. A week passed and when we asked for the salaries the man said that we had to work more and that he had to reconsider our salaries. We worked for a month and got no salary. We found another job in order to cover our accommodation. Every night we worked for four additional hours to get some more dollars to cover accommodation, food expenses and the delay in our salaries. At the end of the second month he told us that he didn’t need both of us anymore and that he was going to keep only me. At the beginning of the third month he gave me US\$ 100, but only when I asked him. I needed to send money to my son. He was serving in the army at the border of Armenia. My neighbours informed me that he was sick and that my children did not have money to buy medicines. I sent the money through a Turkish bus agency to Yerevan. Later when I asked for my pay he threatened me to report to immigration police about my expired visa. I was scared. Everybody knew what “Yabanja Shube”, the immigration detention centre, meant. One of my friends was there. Later in Yerevan she told me what had happened to her. A group of policemen raped, beat and humiliated her for four days in a row. She said that there were three more women at the immigration prison who shared the same fate. She was deported in an almost unconscious state. We agreed to everything, every kind of humiliation, but not to go to this place. Every day when I came to work asking for the money the man requested additional favours from me: to serve in his family, to clean his house. I was doing all the work hoping that at last he would pay me. Once he told me that he would be very favourable to me if I agreed to have sexual relations with him. The next day he was more persistent. When I asked again about the money he said that he would immediately call the immigration police and imprison me for violation of the visa regime. I did not know what to do: I could not go back home because I had no documents and was afraid of the immigration police. So I had to accept his rules in order to get my passport. As soon as I received it I immediately bought a bus ticket to Yerevan. I heard from my roommates many similar stories. None of the migrant workers who lived in the apartment with me were satisfied with the working conditions, payment and attitude. None of them had a contract and none of the bosses wanted to legalize their work and stay.”

“I do not know what to do now. When I heard about jobs in Turkey it seemed to me the best solution. Now I am back. I have the same debts, the same problems and four children to take care of.”

### **Case study 7 (Victim – U.A.E.)**

“Now I live with my two children and mother. I am an engineer. Who needs my knowledge here? It was my neighbour who told me about an agency that recruits women to do cleaning work at families in Dubai. I was very happy when I found that they were going to buy my ticket and pay me a small advance to get there. When we arrived in Dubai my passport was taken away and I was told to prostitute myself. I cried for two months. I was forced to do it because of the debts imposed on me. The pimp was coming to collect money every day. I could not hide a cent. There was no place in the room, and the clothes we were given had no pockets. Neither could I hide the number of customers I was attending, because a man at the hotel reception received money to report to the pimp on the number of clients. I was lucky that the police raided the hotel where I was staying and I was deported back. I heard that there are many real jobs in America, but I cannot go there because I have a deportation stamp in my passport.”

### **Case study 8 (Victim – U.A.E.)**

“My friend told me that we could earn money by doing trade in Dubai. I sold my house to get money for the trip and to buy some stuff from Dubai to sell in Armenia. I had done the same before, in Turkey. This time I was cheated. We travelled with my friend. Her friend from Dubai sent us an invitation. When we came to Dubai we were immediately taken to a hotel. Our friend who was married to a local Arab man told us that they had sent us the invitation not for shopping but for doing sex work. She also said that we had to serve as many men as they would propose and pay her a daily rate. I had been involved in sex work for many years; nevertheless I could not stand the pressure. They were forcing us to have sex with at least 40 men a day, sometimes even more. You had no right to reject the customer, even when he did not want to use condoms. Of course I understood that I was at risk to contract a disease, but I had no right to turn the client down. They were beating us awfully and we could not refuse a client even if we were feeling terribly sick. If someone spent more on food than we were supposed to (food is expensive in Dubai and in many cases we were hungry and thirsty), the Arab partner of our pimp would beat us with a belt. It was so painful. There were many cases when the clients were also violent. You were between two extremes: the violent client and the more violent pimp, who would terribly beat you or refuse to pay out if you disobeyed. The younger ones were crying all the time; they could not get used to all they were forced to do. They were like senseless objects after almost 24 hours of work.”

“There are many Armenian women in Dubai, including my friends from Echmiadzin and Hrazdan. They are still coming. I am sorry for the young girls; they cannot stand this. They get sick quickly and are sent back home. It depends on the pimp, there are ones that never pay even one dollar to children, but I have heard of those also who gave \$1000 when a child was returning home. As I did not have any documents and knew very well how corrupt the police was all over the world and their attitude to prostitutes, I did not even think of running away. I had no money, and was collecting the few dollars she gave to me to bring home for my son. He needs money to go to college. I want him to be an educated person and hold a high position in society. I got sick in Dubai and she had to send me back. Now I am here and do not even have a cent to buy bread. We live here from hand to mouth. I’ll try to get some money to do trade in Turkey.”

### **Case study 9 (Dancer – U.A.E.)**

Unlike the others the subject was interviewed at her home in front of many neighbours, relatives and children. Everybody was saying how good she was and how much she helped them.

“I am travelling to Dubai every year. I am a dancer and perform at Howard Johnson hotel in Dubai every evening together with a group of musicians.”

“I was very happy to get this job that helps me support my large family. Nobody works, neither my brother nor my other close relatives. I found this job through my friend when I was at a dance tour in Arab countries. I joined the team of musicians and we were performing in various restaurants.”

“I do not know how we could all survive if I had not found this job. I will stay here for one month and wait for my friend, an Arab man, to send another invitation for me. The hotel pays well, but we can earn more money when they invite us to perform at wedding parties. Two or three times a month we are invited to such parties. My invitation came from the Howard Johnson Hotel and it said that I was invited to dance. We have a good group. Of course it happens sometimes that they delay the payment or pay less, but in most cases they pay us regularly.”

### **Case study 10 (Victim - Turkey)**

“When the war started I decided to go to Karabakh to help wounded soldiers. I was there during the whole period of military activities. After the cease-fire I came to Armenia, but there was no work and no means to live. My neighbour was going to Turkey to do trade. She said that the Turkish agency could help us in getting a job that would allow us to earn some money to buy products to sell in Armenia. This was a very good way out for me; at least I thought so. We went to the Turkish bus agency and bought tickets.

The bus operator said that it was always possible to get a job in Turkey and their agency could help us there. Everything was going very well. In Istanbul the agency recommended us to a man who introduced himself as an owner of a sewing factory. He said that that even if we did not know how to sew clothing he could still arrange a job there. He always needed helping hands. He also advised us to rent a small apartment of somebody he knew well. That day he asked us to give him our passports for registering us as temporary residents. We did not object. The next day he took us to his 'factory'. It was not a factory at all, it was a massage parlour or brothel, we could not understand. He told us that we should clean up there and prepare coffee and drinks to serve to customers. He told us that we should wear short dresses and other pieces of very vulgar clothing. We did not want to do that, but we realized that we had no choice. At the end of the month we asked for the salary, but he said that we had not earned the promised amount of US\$ 400, but that he could give us only US\$ 100 to cover the rent for the flat. We could earn the rest by providing sexual services to men. If we did not agree we would never receive our passports. As our visas had already expired and we were staying illegally in Turkey they could send us to prison. I could not believe that it was happening to me: that somebody could use my vulnerable situation and threaten me. Next day I went to him and said that I would agree to his proposal if he gave back my money and passport. He agreed to give me money, but he said that he needed my passport to extend the visa. Two weeks later he gave me only US\$ 200 instead of US\$ 700, and explained that it was due to costs related to food and expenses for visa extension. We worked 12 to 14 hours instead of the agreed ten. He said that he had also bribed the police to leave me unpunished for working illegally in Turkey. I realized that this man was going to create big problems for me if I did not take some steps. The next day we told him that we would go to the police if he did not pay us and give back our passports. He said that the next day he would have the passport and money ready. When we came home that night our landlord said that he could not let us in anymore because we were illegal. He refused to let us in and we could not even take our belongings. We had no other choice than go the police department. We were unable to make ourselves understood nor did we have any documents, so they kept us one night at the police station. The next day we were taken to the immigration police for deportation. Thanks God our stay was not long: we had to stay there for one night, as the bus to Armenia was leaving in the morning and the drivers agreed to take us to Armenia on the condition that we would pay them in Yerevan. I do not want to remember again the night that we spent in the immigration police. Even though I have seen the horrors of war, that night was unimaginable."

### ***Case study 11 (Victim - Turkey)***

"I am living in Vanadzor and used to work as prostitute together with my friends. When our neighbour returned from Turkey and told us about the perspectives of work there it seemed attractive to us. Our neighbour said that she knew people there and that she could arrange our trip and job. If we did the same work in Vanadzor why not try to do it in Turkey for a better salary? We gave her our passports and money to buy the ticket. A week later she told us that everything was ready and we travelled by bus to Istanbul. When we came to the border to apply for visas we both got it very easily, but the Turkish immigration police refused to provide a visa to our organizer due to the fact that she had been deported once from Turkey. We had no other choice than to travel on our own. Our organizer told us whom to call when we arrived and gave us further instructions. As soon as we got from the bus in Istanbul a man came up to us and said that our organizer had called him to meet us. He took us to a place that was either a private house or a pub in the suburbs of the city, and said that we would be living there. We were supposed to meet clients and talk to them in the bar on the first floor and then take them up to the second floor. He would take 30 per cent of the money we earned to cover food and lodging expenses. It looked reasonable to us. The next day he brought us some clothing and told us that we needed to look better and that the clothing we wore was not good. We could not imagine that he would be sending so many clients. We remember it as an incessant flow. It was like he was selling tickets for short meetings with us. It was impossible to handle. When we complained he said that this was the only way to earn good and quick money for ourselves on top of the amount that we needed to pay back to him to cover the money he had spent on us."

"In reality he was collecting money from the clients and as it came out later was not giving money to us. A month later we made him give us US\$ 200 each, but of course he had earned much more. As we had



the documents and already knew the environment to a certain extent we decided to find another place and do the same job on our own. It was not so easy as it seemed. Soon it became clear to us that in a foreign country you cannot work without a 'roof'. There should be a pimp who is familiar with the local traditions and situation. A couple of times when we were trying to get clients on the road we were terribly beaten, cheated and robbed. We realized that we needed to go back before it was too late, considering the many stories of prostitutes from Russia and Ukraine who had been raped, beaten and killed. We took a bus back and are working home now. We have been told that people are kinder in Dubai and it is more profitable to work there, so we think we will be going to Dubai.”

### ***Case study 12 (Victim - Greece)***

“I met a woman in the store, who used to be our neighbour a few years ago. She learned that I was looking for a job, but could not find one. She said that she was working in a labour recruiting company and that they were sending people abroad to work in cafés and restaurants or as babysitters. It looked like a good opportunity and I agreed. She said that usually they were sending people to Greece. Jobs are well paid there and all depends on a person’s ability to communicate. She told me that for preparation of documents, visas and other papers, I had to pay her US\$ 1,500. Of course I did not have so much money, so I sold some of my jewellery and borrowed the rest of the money from a friend. She arranged documents within ten days and explained that I would not be going alone, but with five other women. We took the bus from Yerevan and went to Turkey, from where we took a plane to Athens. In Athens the representative of the company met us and the first thing he did was asking for our documents, which he needed, as he explained, for obtaining work permits. He helped us to rent a room, where three of us were staying. Two days later he told us that he had found jobs for us. Two women were supposed to work in a bar and I was proposed a job of helping an elderly invalid woman. He promised to pay me at the end of each month, but I actually never received anything. The old woman was very nervous and it was extremely hard to take care of her. When I complained to the mediator he said that he could propose me another job in a bar as a waitress, but I was actually forced into prostitution. My roommates told me that they had been forced to do that as well. I tried my best to run away, but I did not have enough money. We all tried to collect money for return tickets, but we did not have documents. Once we met an Armenian family and told them our story, and they proposed to help us. In the end they talked to our mediator threatening him with the police. He gave us our documents, but no money. We could hardly buy our tickets to return home. Until the very day of our departure the man was threatening us to tell to all our friends in Yerevan that we were prostitutes. Nevertheless, we did not listen to his threats. We came home, without the money that we had earned, humiliated and ashamed of what had happened to us.”

### ***Case study 13 (Commercial Sex Worker – U.A.E.)***

Interview in a nightclub/bar in Dubai

“I came here a year ago. I was a prostitute in Hrazdan and knew what I was going to do. When a friend asked me to join her in travelling to Dubai to make some money, I happily agreed. I have to take money home to take care of my parents and child, and as soon as I earn enough I’ll go back.”

“So far I have not been able to send money home, because that woman (pointing at a pimp in the bar) is not giving me any money, she is terrible. There are many Armenian women here. If you wait until midnight around 30 girls from Armenia will come. The children are working separately in special nightclubs; we are going to other bars. There are some young girls in our bar who came when they were very young, and now they are with us. Do not tell at home about us. Things will improve and we will get out of this situation.”



## **SHATTERED DREAMS Report on Trafficking in Persons in Azerbaijan**

### **CASE STUDIES**

#### ***CASE STUDY 1. Deceived by her cousin***

Although a medical college graduate, 23-year-old Solmaz discovered that it was incredibly difficult to find a suitable job in Baku. Amongst all of the relatives and friends from whom she asked assistance, only her cousin Ulviya offered to help. Moreover, she promised to take Solmaz to the UAE where, in Ulviya's words, employment opportunities were much better. Solmaz was hesitant, as she knew that her cousin was making money by organizing trips of young women to Dubai. However, Ulviya swore that she had no intention of involving Solmaz in her business.

"She told me that I shouldn't worry, as she wouldn't let anyone offend me. She assured me that she had good contacts there and that she'd be happy to help a relative. I thought I could trust her, since my parents did," recalls Solmaz. From the moment they arrived in Dubai, it was clear that Solmaz had been lied to. Her caring cousin became a cynical woman who immediately told Solmaz that she must work as a prostitute. "There is no other job for you here, and you should be grateful for my help," said Ulviya. Solmaz was then locked in a cheap hotel room, where Ulviya brought the hotel owner.

"I was shocked and probably didn't realize what was happening," relates Solmaz. "I was severely beaten and forced to sign a paper in English, which I didn't understand." Then both Ulviya and the hotel owner softened and told her that all of her earnings would be transferred to a special bank account and that Solmaz could withdraw her money later. Ulviya returned to Baku, and Solmaz stayed in the hotel with other girls brought not only from Azerbaijan, but also from Georgia, Russia and Ukraine. Some of them came to Dubai of their own accord, but others were deceived like Solmaz, who to this day is ashamed of her life there. "I still feel humiliated and embarrassed," she says. "Among our clients were Arabs, Indians, and tourists from Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union. I didn't know when the horror would end or how to escape."

After a few months, the hotel owner gave Solmaz a ticket to Baku and some money. When she dared to ask whether she could get the promised earnings, she was merely told: "Be grateful you're alive." Solmaz never told anyone what happened to her in the UAE. She tried to talk to her cousin, but the conversation ended up in a quarrel. As Solmaz put it, "She couldn't even understand why I was so horrified. Moreover, she offered to take me to Dubai again and told me that I could still make some money there. She also said that my only option in life is to be a prostitute. I hate to think this may be true."

### ***CASE STUDY 2. “I feel exhausted.”***

Murad, a seventeen-year-old schoolboy, lives with his parents and three younger sisters in the Sharur district of Nakhchivan. He worked in Turkey for a short period of time, when he was fourteen, and managed to bring home some money (he did not disclose what type of work he performed). Quite naturally, Murad happily agreed to return to Turkey when the opportunity presented itself: a relative brought a stranger to the house, and asked Murad’s parents to send the boy with him. He can now barely discuss his experiences, and not only because he prefers not to. Cruel treatment and a lack of proper food and rest undermined his health, both physically and psychologically, and he almost lost his voice. Although he has been back home for several months, he has not yet recovered and starts whispering when he gets tired.

According to Murad, the first person, who was an Azerbaijani citizen, took him to Turkey, where he sold him to another Azerbaijani. Finally, Murad was given to a rich Turkish citizen, who had a large house and a nice garden. Murad cleaned the house and the yard and guarded the place from six o’ clock in the morning until midnight. “ I dreamt of having a nap or enough to eat, but I knew I had to obey. I was paid, and however little it was, I sent it all home.” Murad was paid about US\$12 a week, but not regularly. He was often beaten and abused, and was not allowed to leave the house. After seven months Murad returned home, as he could no longer work. “At the end I felt exhausted and very weak. I still feel exhausted and weak,” he says.

### ***CASE STUDY 3. Fifteen-year-old girl forced to obey her traffickers***

Fifteen-year-old Valida, from the Jabrayil district, was working as waitress in a restaurant in Baku until a taxi driver she knew invited her to go to Dubai. He told her that she could earn more than US\$1,000 per week there. Valida agreed, as the money promised to her would help support her mother and two young brothers, aged five and ten. It later became clear that the driver sold her to a trafficker, who then took her to Dubai and resold her to “mama Rosa.”\* Valida was never charged for her trip. She does not know how they managed to cross the borders, but thinks that the woman accompanying her on the flight prepared false documents, as Valida does not possess a passport.

When they arrived in Dubai, Valida was placed in a hotel. Although none of the people involved in her trafficking told her what work she would be offered, Valida realised that she was trafficked for prostitution. As she was occasionally involved in prostitution before, she did not expect any difficulties, but the experience was dreadful. It was her first trip to a foreign country and she saw “mama Rosa” as her protector and patron. The ‘protector’, however, beat Valida, threatening to kill her if she tried to disobey, and took away more than half of the approximately US\$200 Valida was earning a night, because, as “mama Rosa” kept saying, she had to pay for food and accommodation.

Valida admits that she had to reconcile herself to the situation and stay with her patroness. She did not speak any foreign languages and could not go out into the city, as she was afraid of getting lost. Valida stayed in Dubai for two months, until “mama Rosa” told her that her visa had expired and sent her home. Valida came back with the very small sum of money (she did not report how much she managed to bring with her). She is again working in the restaurant and will soon travel to the UK with a British citizen. According to her, he is very nice. When asked whether or not she is afraid of being trafficked again, Valida nonchalantly answers: “Let it happen. What is awaiting me here?”

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\* For unknown reasons, owners of the trafficked victims are referred to by them as “mama Rosa,” regardless of the destination country or status of those “mama Rosas.”

#### ***CASE STUDY 4. Story told by Larisa, deported from Turkey for prostitution in 2002***

I made my first trip to Turkey in 1995. My mother was very ill and I wanted to earn money for her treatment. I was looking for somebody who could help me find a decent job abroad, and a woman named Nigyar invited me to join her on her trip to Trabzon. I didn't know much about her business, except that she was making money from small trade. It is difficult to imagine now how removed from reality my understanding was of what my work there would entail!

Two other women and I accompanied Nigyar to Turkey by bus via Georgia. Nigyar kept our passports for the trip and in order to arrange our accommodation. As soon as we arrived and were placed in a cheap hotel, Nigyar sent us to the hotel bar to look for clients. I was appalled by her proposal but thought I had no other options: I was without documents or money to pay for my food and accommodation, and I knew nobody to ask for help. I began thinking of escaping that very first day. It was not easy, however, and it took me three months before I had the courage to ask one of the clients for help. Some clients are very sympathetic towards the girls, but others can be very dangerous. We've heard many stories of women taken to isolated areas or the mountains and then disappearing. Who would look for them? Once there was news on a local TV channel about an Azeri girl, murdered in Trabzon, whose corpse was found in a bag. I was so scared that I decided to get away from there as soon as possible.

The man I dared ask for help paid Nigyar to return my passport and even bought me a ticket to Baku. I badly wanted to go home, to see my mom and to lead a normal life. It never happened, though. After I returned, I worked at different places as a cleaning lady and as a labourer, but my wages never rose above US\$70 a month. Then my mom died and my stepfather sold our flat. You may disapprove my decision, but I got tired of staying at friends' places and being poor. I again went to Trabzon, where I had contacts.

This time I was there for more than two years working independently. Although I had to deal with doctors, policemen, hotel owners, and clients myself, I think it was better than being under a pimp's control. Just seeing what was happening to other girls made me suffer. I've witnessed a lot and feel pity for young women who are trapped by women like Nigyar and pimps. They often beat the girls and never protect them if there is a threat of arrest or deportation. We were arrested several times, but they couldn't prove I was a prostitute. The police officers are very rude. They beat the girls and rape them. They don't even let you telephone to anyone. I remember when a group of Ukrainian girls demanded to call their embassy; they were just laughed at.

I've seen numerous women from Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, and Ukraine coming to Turkey. Although many of them know what is awaiting them, there are still quite a few who have been trapped by traffickers. Some of the girls are trafficked by their parents. I knew one woman who sold her daughter for US\$1000 when she was only fourteen. The girl was then forced to become a prostitute and was earning huge sums for her mother and pimp.

Finally, I was deported with fourteen other women, and they put a stamp in my passport. I'd try to go there again, but in order to do so I would have to obtain a new passport. If I could only find a good job in Baku, I'd never think of going anywhere else.

#### ***CASE STUDY 5. "They control everything" says a trafficked victim***

Lala was recruited in her native Ujar in 2001, when she was seventeen. A woman visiting this and other regions outside Baku was telling everyone that a big company in the capital was hiring girls to work in their office. Instead, Lala and two other girls were brought to Sumgayit and handed over to the woman's sister, Sveta. It appeared that the sisters and Sveta's son were all traffickers. Too scared to protest, Lala blindly obeyed them. New documents, including passports, were arranged for the girls. Moreover, when Lala was transported to Baku, she was accompanied not only by Sveta, but also by a man in his early

thirties. He kept her passport and said that he was her husband. They went to the UAE, raising no suspicions from the immigration services either in Baku or in Dubai.

What Lala tries not to remember, but cannot forget, are her first days in Dubai. Her passport and visa were given to a Syrian national, who appeared to be her boss. He raped her and forced her to stay with him for three weeks. Afterward she was returned to Sveta, who by that time had brought another underage girl from Jabrayil to the same man. As for Lala, she was placed in a flat where three other girls from Azerbaijan were living and forced to service eight to nine men a day. Sveta arranges meetings with clients, and an Azerbaijani taxi driver takes the girls to their clients and then home again.

When asked why she had not sought assistance in either country, Lala said that she had never thought to. In her words, Sveta and the others are so dominant, that she is afraid of them. Then she adds: “After all, what was I going to do after that? How could I return home? What would I say to my parents?”

Lala says that only recently has she come to realize how powerful and dangerous is the criminal network in which she trapped: “Look, who am I to these people? Everything is under their control. Sveta and her relatives bring girls from rural areas to Sumgayit. Then they arrange documents for the girls and bring them here, to our boss. The taxi driver is not an outsider, but works for them. Even the money we try to send home is controlled by them. When I asked Sveta how I could send money home, she introduced me to another Azeri woman, who charges us 6% for every dollar she transfers to Azerbaijan. Once she told me that she sometimes transfers about US\$10,000 a month. I know that our families receive the money, although some of it disappears before they get it. I have no idea, though, whether it’s a bank transaction or whether she sends the money with somebody. Somebody always delivers the money to our relatives. I’ve never called home: I want them to believe that I’m working in Baku.”

#### ***CASE STUDY 6. From victim to trafficker***

In 1983 Dinara, then a 22-year-old widow, could not even imagine what her life would be like fifteen years hence. In the late 1990s, when the economic and living conditions in her native Daghestan<sup>52</sup> worsened, she went to Turkey and joined her sister’s family in Istanbul. Dinara’s life changed dramatically after her sister’s husband acquainted her with Alper. Dinara still does not know whether or not her brother-in-law was aware that Alper was making money as a pimp, but very soon she ended up being repeatedly sold by Alper to different men.

Although the pimp was taking almost all the money she was receiving from clients, Dinara finally managed to accrue some savings and even rent an apartment in Istanbul. After a few months, Alper offered to make her his partner. This meant luring young women from the former Soviet Union with the promise of a well-paid job in Turkey. He also agreed to defray all related expenses and to pay Dinara a commission for each girl transported to Istanbul. Dinara agreed without hesitation. “In the last few years,” she boasts, “I’ve trafficked several hundred women to Istanbul from Azerbaijan, Daghestan, Moscow and other Russian cities. I’ve earned enough money to buy homes both in Daghestan and in Azerbaijan. Recently I opened a beauty salon in Daghestan, which makes the search for young women even easier. The youngest ones are under fifteen. All of them are so eager to leave their homeland and escape poverty that they become easy prey.” Dinara admits that, in some cases, travel agencies help her select young women who apply to them for job opportunities abroad. Last year Moldova and Ukraine were added to the list of countries she visits in her quest for new victims.

According to Dinara, the trafficking scheme is relatively simple. The issuing of passports, including fraudulent ones, may cost from \$20 to \$300 (depending on the country and age of the woman). In Istanbul the women are immediately deprived of their documents and sent to a jewellery factory whose director is Alper’s companion. A small percentage may work at the factory as illegal migrants and receive very little compensation, while the majority are forced to become prostitutes. For some of the trafficked women

Turkey is only a transit country; the youngest and most attractive girls are sent on to Cyprus, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, and Sweden, in all of which Alper and the director of the jewellery factory have contacts with brothel owners. Dinara does not interfere in their business, but knows that the factory director prepares travel documents for the girls, who are then escorted to the West by his employees.

Although in her early forties, Dinara looks much younger. Self-confident and well dressed, she is easily mistaken for a businesswoman, which in her view she is. She does not seem to care much about the girls she deceives or about their futures. In a conversation with an IOM researcher, who did not reveal her identity, Dinara says that she is going to Moldova and Ukraine and would not mind the researcher joining her. “If you pay both of our travel expenses, I can even help you find girls and transport them to Turkey,” claims Dinara. “I would be happy to have a companion on my trips. We can both earn enough money to not be in competition with one another: there are so many naive girls to be fooled.”

### ***CASE STUDY 7. Want a job abroad? Are you a virgin?***

In order to examine the services of agencies offering employment abroad to young women, IOM assigned a university student, Aida, to respond to some of their advertisements. Aida arranged a meeting with representatives of one such agency and paid a visit to their office. She was the only visitor at that time, and was met by three people. The interview was conducted by a man, while two women, who introduced themselves as a psychologist and a lawyer, took notes and asked additional questions. The man enquired whether Aida was married, had a job in Baku and could speak any foreign languages. She was also asked about her age, educational background and financial situation.

Aida explained that she had neither an international passport nor money to obtain travel documents or pay for a ticket but she was assured that there was nothing to worry about. The man told her that the agency would bear all necessary costs, take care of the documents and help her to obtain a visa. He also said that her debt would be withheld from her first paycheck.

Aida learned that only the best candidates would be selected for a second interview and offered a job contract. After she said (with as much enthusiasm as she could muster) that she was willing to work as a waitress, a salesperson, a nurse or a receptionist, the man smiled and told her that their selection would be made from many female candidates applying to their agency, as they help people find different types of jobs in Italy, Turkey and the UAE. Apparently satisfied with the results of the conversation, he immediately invited Aida to have her photograph taken, which, he noted, was necessary for the selection process.

Although Aida said that she could bring in a photograph, the man insisted that she go to the next floor where a picture of Aida dressed in special clothes would be taken. At this point a bit frightened, Aida requested that they excuse her and promised to return the following day. The man looked surprised and said that he forgot to ask her a very important question: “Don’t you want to have a nice picture of yourself? Are you a virgin? If you want to work abroad and want us to help you, you have to tell us. You know, our final decision may depend upon your answer.”

## **HARDSHIP ABROAD OR HUNGER AT HOME. A Study of Irregular Migration from Georgia**

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### ***Case summary of trafficking to the USA [1]***

“I was 17 years old when my family contacted a well-known and reliable mediating agency, which arranged for me a study tour to New York. A certain Member of Parliament was involved in order to enforce the idea that we were dealing with trustworthy people. In America two Georgian representatives of the well-known and official agency, Mr. J. T. and S., picked us up. They sent us indeed to a college. I signed a contract that said that I would work parallel to my studies. Three happy months went by. I had however little money left, not even enough to go out. They did not give me more money and instead told me that there could be no talk about study any longer. In short, they created such conditions that made it difficult for me to refuse their suggestions. They sent people to me who talked me slowly and in a delicate way into prostitution (they used this tactic not to raise any objection from my side). However, I preferred to go back to Georgia instead of agreeing with their suggestions. After this they frightened me by saying that I had to do everything they wanted, and if not, they had people who would oppress my family members, and they would never get a good job. Also they said they would beat up my family members or even gas them, and me too, and that I had no choice here on the other side of the ocean. Probably they were lying, but when you are a 17-years-old child you do not realize many things. I took it at its face value. After one month they persuaded me. I was taken into a beautiful, two-floor house in the countryside woods, which was guarded by many armed people (mainly by Russians and Georgians). In the hotel there were 200 girls, 60 Georgian girls and the rest were from Yugoslavia, the Czech Republic and Russia. They promised US\$ 2,500 per month and rich clients such as bank managers and hotel owners. We lived in separate rooms that were equipped by video cameras and bugs to overhear our conversations. The girls did not get friends, but indeed we were afraid of each other and had very formal relations. We were always under the influence of drugs, such as cocaine, cracks and marihuana. They administered these drugs by force and we felt very free and strange. We served clients every five hours (everything that happened during the process was registered by video and then probably sold). Security people accompanied us everywhere. I thought that people made a lot of money in this kind of business, because that hotel was equipped in a modern way and was protected very reliably.”

### ***Case summary of trafficking to the USA [2]***

“I thought about escaping from that place. I didn't trust anybody to tell about my intentions. Somebody could speak about my plan under the influence of drugs, and there were also cases when girls disappeared without leaving a trace, or some of them committed suicide.

Once when they changed the security team at three o'clock in the night I escaped from the hotel. I was running in the forest for a long time. I got to a road, but I was afraid that the police would not believe me, and there was also the possibility that they would call the traffickers to come and get me. I stopped a car driven by a married couple and I explained my hardship. They advised me not to go to the police, because they might catch me and deport me back to Georgia. They advised me to change my name and I started working in a bar. After a while I decided to call my family to ask for help to return to Georgia (I didn't tell them in what kind of work I was involved). My mother contacted Nugzar Sulashvili and his organization helped me to return home. I was stressed and did not sleep well. I returned to Georgia in October, but could not escape from the phantom of my hellish stay in the USA.”