



## LA STRADA INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN 2016 -2020

*Recognise. Respect. Realise. RIGHTS*

### I. La Strada International

#### *Vision*

La Strada International believes in a world where every person is free to migrate and work in the labour sector of their choice and is free from trafficking, exploitation and abuse, knowing that they have their rights respected at home, abroad and on the way.

#### *Mission*

The crime of trafficking in human beings can only be stopped if every person's rights as human being are recognised, respected and realised. La Strada International promotes women's, labour, migrants' and human rights to ensure people are protected by law from exploitation and abuse. We protect and realise trafficked persons' rights by providing access to adequate assistance and support, justice and effective remedies.

#### *Our values*

- We work from a human rights perspective to trafficking in human beings, meaning that we oppose all anti-trafficking measures that undermine or adversely affect the human rights of the groups concerned. We understand trafficking in human beings as both a (root) cause and a consequence of the violation of human rights.
- We believe every person should be free to choose the work that fits their situation best, whether in a regular or irregular setting, and have their rights respected. We accept that sex work is an occupation in which adults can choose to engage. We consider exploitation and abuse in the sex industry a form of labour exploitation.
- We believe in the power of people. Our services are focussed on supporting people to regain that power after a situation of exploitation. We recognise that trafficked persons are victims of crime and their status as a victim means that they are claimant of rights according to international law. However, their victim status routinely leads governments and non-governmental organisations to treat them as powerless and without agency. Consequently, rather than label them as 'victims' in this anthology, we refer to them as 'trafficked persons'.
- The experiences and needs of trafficked persons and affected groups determine our activities, actions and advocacy.

#### *What we have learned*

Working for over 20 years with trafficked persons and on the international stage to combat human trafficking and protect and promote human rights, La Strada has learnt that:

- The needs that trafficked persons have in order to realise their rights are not static and not universal. Services provided should be assessed on a regular basis to ensure they continue to

meet these needs. Therefore we need to include the voices of trafficked persons in the development and practice of our services, to ensure they are based on needs.

- The law is the first step to recognise rights – respecting and realising rights is about implementation. NGO monitoring of states' obligations is therefore essential.
- Counter-trafficking policies can have (unintended) negative effects on the rights of trafficked persons and affected groups. Impact assessment of all counter-trafficking and related policies by grass-roots NGOs is needed to bring those effects to light.
- Grass-roots experiences provide input for advocacy for evidence-based policies.
- The criminal justice framework is far too exclusive to address all the aspects of trafficking in human beings. Therefore, also a social agenda is needed.
- The criminal justice framework is too limited to address the complexity of trafficking in human beings. A social agenda to address root causes and destination factors is needed to develop strategies for structural change.
- Businesses need to be addressed and involved in their role to prevent exploitation in their sector and in their supply chains.
- Rights-based civil society organisations in the field of counter-trafficking need good cooperation and interaction to ensure that our voices are heard.
- Building bridges to other social movements is crucial to make structural changes happen.
- Independence from both governments and donors is crucial to stay critical.
- Financial sustainability is important to guarantee independence and needed to ensure continuity in our core work.

### *How we see the world*

In the past decade awareness of the problem of trafficking in human beings has significantly increased and has gained the attention of governments, international organisations and the media. However, the way in which human trafficking is portrayed and discussed in the media, but also by civil society and governments, is often very one-dimensional and primarily focussed on the sex industry. As a result, trafficking in human beings in the public eye is often over sensationalised, hyper sexualised and depoliticised.

La Strada International recognises trafficking in human beings as a very complex phenomenon. It has its roots causes in global inequality, (gender)discrimination, oppressive social structures, exclusion, poverty, political instability and (armed) conflicts leading to large groups of people, including migrants and refugees, to seek work, safety and stability away from home. The demand for cheap labour and products, globalisation and deregulation of labour have made workers more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. The growing anti-migration sentiments and even xenophobia by both public and politicians in many countries could cause further discrimination of migrants leading to condoning situations of exploitation and abuse. Although there is more awareness amongst policy makers and politicians about these root causes or destination factors, policy measures are often still only focussed on fighting crime, restricting migration and repressing prostitution. The criminal justice framework often harms the rights of trafficked persons and vulnerable groups and its scope is far too limited to deal with the complexity of trafficking in human beings.

The counter-trafficking movement needs a social agenda to address all the factors that create vulnerability and to develop new strategies to protect rights.

To end trafficking in human beings the structural root causes need to be addressed. We understand that by doing so we are also targeting powerful economic, political, social and cultural structures and interests. Being critical does have its effect on the independent position of NGOs in certain parts of the region, who often find themselves under attack.

On the other hand we see more and more businesses and consumers being critical about exploitation in their supply chains and in the products they buy. It is crucial to embrace these efforts for (corporate) social responsibility.

We are looking for ways to engage in these movements for structural change.

#### *How the world sees us*

La Strada is characterised by stakeholders in the counter-trafficking field as a long-standing and reliable partner with a clear and efficient leadership in anti-trafficking and human rights, based on expertise and experience of providing direct services. We are acknowledged for our broad understanding of the intersections of migration, development, labour market and social policies in trafficking in human beings. Our pro-active and critical but constructive approach is considered powerful in identifying key issues in relation to rights of trafficked persons and developing effective strategies to put these issues on the international agenda and for advocating for respecting rights.

#### *How we work*

While we address all above-mentioned issues in our advocacy work, both on the national and the international level, we are also realistic about our sphere of influence and about what we can contribute to make changes. Therefore, our core work is dedicated to the rights of trafficked persons and affected groups through awareness raising, prevention, assistance and advocacy.

The La Strada International network works from a bottom-up approach. The member organisations work with and for trafficked persons. The international secretariat works for the members and coordinates the network. We connect with partners of likeminded human rights based counter-trafficking NGOs in the LSI NGO Platform 'United against trafficking in human beings'. The focus of our work is in Europe, in and outside the European Union.

The member organisations and the partners strengthen rights through hotlines, education and campaigns to prevent people from being exploited and having their rights violated, provide access to assistance and justice to trafficked persons, monitor on the ground the implementation of international legislation and advocate for changes to have rights realised.

La Strada International secretariat facilitates cooperation and expertise sharing among national grass-roots organisations and provides support in setting standards, building capacities and incorporating international developments into national actions.

La Strada members and partners provide the international secretariat with the grass-roots experiences on whether rights are recognised, respected and realised. La Strada international secretariat collects and analyses this information for evidence-based advocacy and invites international organisations and other social movements into partnerships for change.

#### ***Our strategies***

1. Providing access to services and justice

People who have been trafficked are, according to international law, entitled to effective remedies. La Strada International member organisations provide direct assistance and support access to justice in order for trafficked persons to realise their rights. La Strada International supports grass-roots organisations and service providers by capacity building and setting standards.

## 2. Advocacy for change

Realising rights, both to prevent trafficking in human beings and to ensure effective remedies for those who have endured exploitation and abuse, is not just about good laws, but also about the implementation of those laws. La Strada International advocates for legislation that fully recognises and respects the rights of people and we monitor the implementation to ensure those rights are realised. We advocate for the changes based on evidence of the experiences of trafficked persons.

## 3. Building partnerships and movements

We believe in the flexibility and stability of grass-roots work of independent NGOs and the strength of joint actions and active cooperation. We build partnerships with likeminded organisations through our NGO Platform and we build bridges to social movements and donors working on women's, migrants and labour rights. We are critical and determined in our advocacy for rights and we are open and inviting to seek opportunities to work side by side with international organisations in a collective efforts for change for a just and fair world.

### ***Our organisation***

La Strada International is formed by eight member human rights organisations from Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Macedonia, Moldova, the Netherlands, Poland and Ukraine. Next to the members organisations, La Strada works with numerous partners in the field of anti-trafficking who are united in the LSI NGO Platform - United against trafficking in human beings. With these organisations, we share values such as the human rights approach to anti-trafficking strategies and a non-abolitionist view on sex work. We cooperate on projects on specific rights issues, such as compensation and awareness raising. The international secretariat also provides services to partner organisations such as capacity building and trainings.

By many stakeholders LSI is identified as a leading organisation in the field of anti-trafficking. We believe we can take on this role even more, by representing grass-roots organisations at the international political platform and ensuring the experiences of trafficked persons are heard on the international level. In order to ensure a strong and critical voice of rights-based anti-trafficking organisations at the international platform, we intend to intensify our work with and for the NGO Platform. Closer cooperation will also ease common work in joint projects and in our efforts to build bridges with other social movements. In the future we see the network and platform to be more and more integrated, with LSI as the international secretariat providing services for members and partners and conducting representation and advocacy on their behalf at the international level.

## **II. Strategic Plan 2016 - 2020**

*The overall goal of La Strada International for the period of this Strategic Plan is that the rights of trafficked persons and affected groups are better recognised, respected and realised.*

*In order to be able to reach results we need to be a sustainable, learning and leading organisation.*

### *Introduction*

The past 20 years have brought many developments in the counter-trafficking field. Important international legislation has been adopted that obliges States to take measures to prevent people from being trafficked, to protect the rights of those who have become victims and to prosecute the perpetrators. Especially the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and the EU Directive of Parliament and of the Council on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Protecting its Victims, include important protective measures that support the rights of trafficked persons, such as the right to legal aid and compensation, the rights to a reflection period and a (temporary) residence permit and the right not to be punished for crimes committed as a result of exploitation. In many countries, the role of grass-roots NGOs as service providers to trafficked persons has been acknowledged as partners in a National Referral Mechanism or equivalent measures and their services are financed by the state.

The inclusion of protective measures in international legislation addressing trafficking in human beings has been a major step in the recognition of trafficked persons as bearers of rights. However, several of these rights are not (yet) fully transposed to national legislation and when they are, they are hardly implemented in practice. The recognition of rights has not led yet to respecting the rights in all national laws and realising the rights in practice. Moreover, many of the people supported by La Strada International members and partners, who have experienced exploitation, violence and abuse are not officially identified as victims of trafficking and are therefore excluded from those rights.

The recognition, respect and realisation of the rights of trafficked persons and affected groups, are the focus of the work of La Strada International in the coming five years, through our direct services, our advocacy and our strategic partnerships.

## **Strategies**

### **1. Providing access to justice: Realising rights**

#### *Issues to address/challenges*

- The support for trafficked persons that is provided/financed by states, is conditional on the cooperation of trafficked persons with the authorities and only for people who have been officially identified as trafficked persons. It is difficult for NGOs to obtain funding for the services provided to clients who are not officially identified as trafficked, either because they do not 'tick all the boxes' or they cannot or do not want to cooperate with the authorities. How can we continue to maintain fully inclusive support to all our clients?
- "The one who pays the piper, calls the tune"? Governmental funding for the services provided to trafficked persons can lead to state interference with the work of independent NGOs or states selecting those NGOs who best serve the state's interests. How to stay independent and ensure that the interests of clients are always leading in our work?

- The status of trafficked persons as victims of a violent crime makes them claimants of rights. The focus of governments when addressing the needs of trafficked persons is mainly on social and psychological support, while access to justice and compensation through legal support and representation is still less available for them. How to strengthen access to justice through our services?
- The growing awareness that human trafficking can occur in all economic sectors and the identification of victims of trafficking for exploitation in the regulated labour sectors or for criminal activities, confronts services providers with new and different service needs. The needs of trafficked persons are not static and can change in time and in circumstances. NGOs need to respond to these ever-changing needs.

### *Objectives*

- Support grass-roots NGOs to stay independent and critical and continue providing high quality services based on the needs, the experiences and best interest of trafficked persons and affected groups.
- Integrate the voices of trafficked persons in our services through self-monitoring and the participation of trafficked persons into our daily work.

### *Activities*

- International assessment of the needs of trafficked persons in all forms of labour exploitation.
- Development of new and adequate, qualitative and sustainable services based on needs.
- Structurally include participatory methods into our work by using the tools and guidelines developed in the GAATW participatory research project.
- Revise and disseminate our standards for services, ensuring independence and inclusiveness.
- Capacity building for service providers (members and partners) on issues such as data protection, compensation, helplines and monitoring.

## **2. Advocacy for change: Respecting rights**

### *Issues to address: Challenges*

- Most evaluations of the states' efforts to implement counter-trafficking legislation, are based on the information that is provided by the governments and focussed more on the implementation in theory, and less on the implementation in practice. NGOs are able to access a wide range of data not available to other institutions and have the knowledge and experience on the implementation and impact of counter-trafficking policies. However, grass roots NGOs feel that they lack the knowledge and expertise on international legislation and the skills in monitoring. Also, grass-roots organisations feel that the responsibility of monitoring will create extra workload next to their core work which is direct assistance to trafficked persons and affected groups.
- Trafficking in human beings is a phenomenon that is well researched and over-written about, but often the stories about trafficking do not reflect the reality of the crime, nor the reality of the experiences and needs of trafficked persons. In order to get closer to the reality of trafficking, and therefore to addressing the root causes, grass-roots qualitative and quantitative information of trafficking is needed.

### *Objectives*

- Grass-roots NGOs are equipped with tools, skills and capacity to include monitoring of the implementation of international legislation and the impact assessment on the rights of trafficked persons into their daily work.
- Developed evidence-based advocacy for respecting and realising rights and provide monitoring.
- A broad understanding on trafficking in human beings, the root causes and consequences in relation to policies on migration, sex work, women's rights, labour etc based on the experiences of trafficked persons, affected groups and grass-roots NGOs.

### *Activities*

- Develop a Europe-wide NGO monitoring system on implementation of rights.
- Capacity building for NGOs on human rights laws and monitoring bodies.
- Annual shadow reporting.
- Reporting to monitoring bodies of international organisations.
- NGO Data collection system based on privacy and consent.
- Conduct research and analyses and publish reports.
- Launch of a campaign on respecting rights.

## **3. Strategic partnerships to develop social agenda for change: Recognising rights**

### *Issues to address/challenges*

- Human trafficking is not a stand-alone phenomenon. We acknowledge that the intersections of migration, development, labour market and social policies in trafficking in human beings should be addressed on the international political platform in order to bring about the structural changes that are needed to really deal with the root causes of human trafficking.
- While we strive to address the broad spectrum of human trafficking, on the European political level, addressing trafficking seems to be more and more narrowed down to repressive prostitution policies. These policies do not only severely harm the rights of sex workers, they also neglect the experiences and needs of people trafficked in other industries.
- Decent work and social inclusion are important ingredients for structural social change for which we need to seek cooperation of progressive and willing businesses and the awareness and support of consumers.

### *Objectives*

- The international debate and agenda for action on counter-trafficking is based on the intersections of migration, development, labour market and social policies in trafficking in human beings.
- Established cooperation with other social movements.
- More political support for sex workers' rights as a strategy to end trafficking into the sex industry.
- A social agenda for structural change developed in partnership with international organisations.

- Development of guidelines on decent work and (corporate) social responsibility, together with international organisations, businesses and the public.

#### *Activities*

- Ally with other social movements working on women, children and human rights, labour, migration, development and the environment to address the intersections based on broad stakeholders assessment and strategy.
- Conduct evidence-based advocacy against abolitionist policies through cooperation with sex workers rights movements.
- Engage with international organisations and other social movements in developing the social agenda for addressing trafficking in human beings.
- Develop strategies to engage with businesses and public on corporate social responsibility.

## ORGANISATION

### **1. Financially sustainable and independent organisation**

#### *Issues to address/challenges*

- We recognise that to be able to be critical, the independence of the network is of main importance. The best way to guarantee independence is to have various donors supporting our work. At this moment the organisation leans too heavily on the EU for funding for both core work and projects.
- The large majority of the money spent on anti-trafficking is still on projects/activities on criminal justice and only a small percentage goes to trafficked persons. A human rights approach to trafficking should also be reflected in the funding opportunities.
- Donors have a tendency to want to follow new trends, which is good but it often leaves grass-roots organisations with funding for projects but not for their core work: providing shelter and legal and social aid.

#### *Objectives*

- Core work secured through funding by various donors.
- Cost effective organisation.
- Increased donor awareness on human rights based funding for anti-trafficking efforts.
- More donors aware on the intersections with labour, migration and development and human trafficking and willing to fund intersectional solutions.

#### *Activities*

- Analyse and adapt fundraising strategies.
- Explore opportunities for restructuring the organisation to achieve maximum cost effectiveness.
- Build fundraising capacity and explore new funding opportunities.
- Invest in developing and fostering donor relationships.
- Influence donors to guarantee enough funding for rights based counter-trafficking work.
- Fundraising activities/strategy for joint projects with other social movements.

### **2. Learning organisation**

#### *Issues to address/Challenges*

- La Strada International is known for its advocacy and the services provided by the members. However, it is often not that easy to measure the effectiveness and impact of our work, both on grass-roots level and on the advocacy level. In order to stay on top of changes in the needs of trafficked persons and to be able to respond to new emerging trends on the international level, we need better monitoring and evaluation of our activities as an integrated part of our work.
- In the past years, LSI has invested much in the cooperation within the LSI NGO platform in order to give more voice to the human rights based anti-trafficking approach and to enforce our strength. This has also lead to some confusion of the role of the secretariat in the smaller LSI network and the growing LSI NGO Platform. In order to remain effective, flexible and responsive to the needs of civil society and the trends on the international level, a new cooperation structure between network, platform and secretariat needs to be developed.

#### *Objectives*

- A clear understanding of the effectiveness and impact of the work of LSI through ongoing monitoring of our work.
- LSI is in a position to react quick and effectively on trends and changes.
- Transparent, strong and flexible internal structure for members and partners.

#### *Activities*

- Develop an internal Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning system.
- Develop a new cooperation structure for LSI, together with members and partners.
- Develop a strategy on staff and volunteer policies.
- Evaluate the implementation of the developed standards for service providing.

### **3. Leading organisation**

#### *Issues to address/challenges*

- La Strada International is recognised by many stakeholders as a leading organisation in the field of anti-trafficking, but not always is our work and our vision and mission known in a broader field.
- Due to the very outspoken human rights approach and the open critique of the abolitionist policies on prostitution, the working relationships of LSI with some international organisations or national governments are sometimes tense. In order to be able to have effective advocacy and represent a larger number of grass-roots NGOs, LSI must ensure that our critical voice is always combined with a cooperative approach and open communication.
- In order to fulfil its position as a leading organisation in the anti-trafficking field, LSI must act as an information channel between grass-roots organisation and IGOs. This ensures that actions and activities of LSI and the Platform are an immediate response to grass-roots needs and trends and on the international level.

#### *Objectives*

- Visibility for LSI and human rights based anti-trafficking policies in a broader field (donors, other social movements).
- Good working relations with international and intergovernmental organisations

- (Grass-roots) NGOs in the field of anti-trafficking can respond to international developments and are familiar with the work and activities of IGOs and other NGOs.
- New trends and developments are analysed and responded to by LSI and members of the Platform.

*Activities*

- Develop new and interactive communication strategies.
- Invest in working relation with international and intergovernmental organisations and governments.
- Share information among civil society organisations.
- Develop new ideas/avenues/strategies.