

**Expert Group Meeting on**  
**“Trafficking in women and girls”**  
**18-22 November 2002**  
**Glen Cove, New York, USA**

## **Journey to a “developed” country to be exploited**

Prepared by\*

Tammy Quintanilla Zapata  
Director  
Movimiento El Pozo  
(Peru)

\*The views expressed in this paper, which has been reproduced as received, are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.

## Trafficking in women

### ***Journey to a “developed” country to be exploited***

*Tammy Quintanilla Zapata*

Trafficking in women is a social phenomenon that is spreading around the world, across every region. Trafficking in women or “white slave trade” consists of the movement of people from one country to another for prostitution. The person who recruits, as well as the person who accompanies and the person who receives them in the place of destination are traffickers. Generally, the people who travel come from developing countries and they go to developed countries looking for better opportunities.

#### ***Much more than illegal migration***

At present, there is a high migration rate from Asian, African, Latin American, Caribbean and Eastern European regions towards Western Europe, in order to participate in the sexual services market. This market is under the control of those who obtain economic benefits from the prostitution of others. Those who represent the demand of those services, i.e. the clients of prostitution, fund it. States also intervene in this problem. However it is only the women who constitute the supply in the sexual services trade. That are considered to be responsible for the problem.

The problem of trafficking in women tends to be seen only as a modality of illegal migration. At present, 8% of the world population lives as migrants; over half of them are women. There is a feminization of migration. Many women in the world are away from their places of origin looking for income generation opportunities for themselves and their families. This is considered to be due to the feminization of poverty. The countries of origin do not have sufficient resources to provide them with the necessary employment for a life with dignity.

#### ***Factors promoting traffic***

The factors that sustain traffic are not the same as those that lead women to migrate. The main reason for the maintenance and growth of traffic is the demand on the part of clients, most of whom are men. They look for women who prostitute themselves in order to satisfy their supposedly uncontrollable sexual need. In this regard, the contact with exotic women from other parts of the world becomes an attractive product to offer in the sex trade.

The international mafia has found in trafficking a source of income that is more profitable than it would appear. In the universe of illicit businesses at the international level, such as arms trafficking, drug trafficking and trafficking in human beings, the latter has achieved the second place, up from the third, in the past years. The investment made by traffickers

involves no expenses in raw material to produce or purchase; it only requires the availability of people to migrate.

Trafficking in women is formally an international crime, detected by INTERPOL for nearly a century and susceptible of prosecution by the International Criminal Court.

### ***Recruitment modes***

Pimp traffickers use different modalities to recruit their victims, using advertisements or through verbal communication among known individuals. Opportunities are offered through false advertisements posted by travel, employment and marriage agencies. The network of traffickers convince recruited individuals that they will assist them with all they may need to travel; they cover their expenses for paper work, documents, passport, taxes, etc. They may even provide them money to pay back some pending personal or family loan, since they are in a state of urgent need; that is, to cover payment for basic services, their children's education, medicine or food for the family. All these expenses are charged to the account that will be covered with the promised job that they will obtain in the country of destination.

Individuals accept the conditions posed by traffickers in view of the difficult situation in which they live in the country of origin, since they consider that it is better to have a chance to produce money, than to have nothing. This is the "decision" they make, assuming serious risks of exploitation, isolation and violence. This means that the decision is not so in fact, since no choice is involved because they have no other alternatives.

### ***Prostitution: neither forced nor voluntary***

Trafficking in human beings is a crime even if trafficked individuals exercise prostitution in a forced or voluntary manner. However, this distinction is made in order to identify the seriousness of the illegal action. Forced prostitution occurs when the victim finds out she will be involved in prostitution only when she arrives in the place of destination. Voluntary prostitution occurs when the victim knew she would be involved in prostitution before leaving the country of origin. There are three determining factors that show that there is no difference between these two recruitment modes.

One of them is the situation they find themselves in before approaching the service or assistance that traffickers who recruit them offer them: they are pushed to accept what is being offered. Another determining factor is that, in no case, is there full awareness of the risks implied in the exercise of prostitution in the country of destination. The third is that the conditions in which the prostitution activity is developed are as difficult for the woman who arrived in the country of destination knowing that she was going to work as a prostitute as for the woman who did not know; both are equally exploited. Thus, the distinction between forced prostitution and voluntary prostitution, with respect to trafficking, makes no sense.

### ***Violation of human rights***

The availability of women for migration is not always achieved through violence, coercion or deceit. On the contrary, due to economic need, many women accept migration knowing that in the country of destiny they will exercise prostitution. Upon arrival, conditions are highly disadvantageous. Traffickers demand many hours in prostitution in order to obtain the estimated profits that the women must produce. In addition, they demand a reimbursement of the investment, that amounts to exorbitant debts when transportation costs, traveling expenses, room and board in the locality, clothing they require to wear as prostitutes, among other concepts, are added up. Most of the time, their passports are taken away in order to exert greater control over them.

If the business were institutionalized, making it legal, the crime of pimping would be decriminalized, since trafficking is a form of pimping. When States deal with trafficking in women as illegal migration, they are only looking at the more superficial aspects of the phenomenon. Only the illegality of their stay is made visible, overshadowing the violence of which they are victims. The result of the lack of detection of the true nature of the problem is punishment of the women through deportation. This attitude that becomes state policy towards trafficking in women is blind and wrong. For that reason, it does not contribute to diminishing trafficking, since women do not accuse their exploiters for fear of being sent back to their countries of origin, without money, unsuccessful, without opportunities. It is highly probable that the women do not want to return to their native countries.

The main nucleus of trafficking is the violation of human rights. Women who are trafficked do not exercise their right to freedom, since they do not decide on multiple aspects of their lives. The clients with whom they will have sexual relations are imposed on them; they do not choose their clients. In addition, they have to cover a certain number of clients in order to reach the quota demanded by their pimps, among whom are those who rent them the rooms. Under those conditions, the quality of their lives, their health and their integrity are seriously deteriorated.

Prostitution attempts against human dignity because it turns women into sexual objects. Dignity consists in human beings as ends in themselves, who do not serve as a means for other ends. In prostitution, women's bodies (the persons themselves) are used for another person's pleasure. Women's pleasure is not an essential element in prostitution, since it can be present or absent; it is irrelevant.

### ***Trends in recent years***

In recent years, a great increase in Eastern European women who migrate to the West has been detected. For them, migration laws and procedures are less restrictive than for women from other regions. It is also less expensive due to the geographic proximity. And lastly, it is easier because their physical characteristics are similar to those of other European women. However, all these supposed advantages are so for traffickers and not for women, because they are exploited through prostitution, in the same way as African, Latin American or Asian women. Trafficking mafias obtain multiplied profits after investing in their transportation.

Many women whose language is different from that of the country where they exercise prostitution tend to limit their circle to a group of their own language, if possible. Thus, they do not become integrated in the community of that country and they have a greater dependence on pimps. This is more convenient for the pimps' interests, and thus, they prefer that women do not relate with people outside their circle.

The United Nations established an international commitment entitled the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which in its Article 6 establishes that "States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women." However, the attitude adopted by many States has become detrimental for women because they wish to remain in the country of destiny or the damage caused by sexual exploitation on their lives are not taken into account. Whether they want it or not, the procedure is to send them back to their country of origin.

There must be concrete and broad measures to provide the necessary and essential services to people subjected to traffic. The Beijing +5 Document recommends that States "Consider preventing, within the legal framework and in accordance with national policies, victims of trafficking, in particular women and girls, from being prosecuted for their illegal entry or residence, taking into account that they are victims of exploitation."<sup>1</sup>

Another interesting measure adopted by States is the commitment of the Protocol to Prevent, Repress and Sanction Trafficking in Human Beings, specially Women and Children that complements the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

### ***Movimiento El Pozo and trafficking***

Movimiento El Pozo, a Peruvian institution dedicated to the struggle against the sexual exploitation of women, for 26 years, carried out a campaign on trafficking of Peruvian women to overseas locations. With support from Ford Foundation, this campaign was basically directed to Peruvian embassies and consulates overseas as well as foreign embassies and consulates in Peru.

The result was the confirmation that most States have restrictive practices in the cases of women who have been trafficked. There are no adequate policies that confront the other actors of the phenomenon, such as pimps and, much less, the clients.

No special service has been foreseen for these cases because, in general, there is no information about them. It is highly probable that they are concealed and that Peruvian women do not go to their embassies to avoid being returned to the country. Ten percent of the Peruvian population lives overseas (2% more than the world average); of this group, 68% are women. Thus, it is important to find out what are their living conditions.

---

<sup>1</sup>. "Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action", Paragraph 70c, outcome document of the Beijing +5 review, New York, 2000, carried out 5 years after the World Conference on Women to review the fulfillment of the Platform for Action elaborated in Beijing, 1995.

## ***Prevention***

Prevention is fundamental. We want to reinforce the messages of self-care, self-worth and self-esteem, i.e. that women are not so willing to risk their health, their integrity and their lives.

Campaigns aimed at frightening people in order to persuade them against being convinced by traffickers are not effective. It is important to make people aware of the levels of exploitation because traffickers obtain benefits for themselves, based on damages to prostituted women.

Prevention policies must address all the actors who participate in trafficking: traffickers, pimps and clients, and not only women.

## ***Possible policies***

Possible policies that States and international bodies can apply require an effective investigation and punishment of pimps, whether they are traffickers or not. The present penalties should be increased. Legal restrictions must not be focused only on the migratory aspect, but in the promotion given to sexual services trade. In every form of trade there is a demand and a supply. The demand represented by the clients to buy the sexual use of a person's body has a wide social, judiciary and economic acceptance. This attitude is so widely disseminated that the real social, judiciary, and economic responsibilities in prostitution and trafficking are not visible. Trafficking in women is in fact the business of "imported sexual services". If States have the political will to combat trafficking in human beings, they must question their own attitudes towards prostitution and identify the responsibility of those who buy such sexual services.

Another aspect to take into consideration is that change requires a long term policy. In other words, it calls for a change in the approach towards sexuality, promoting an education in sexuality based on equity among individuals, particularly, gender equity. With effective gender equity, there is no room for prostitution in society, since the centre of this activity is the imposition of power of one person over another, where the sexual aspect is just the form., but not the essence. If prostitution is no longer acceptable, trafficking would not have the opportunity to be so lucrative. Its success is based on human devaluation by society specially women's devaluation: who are "valued" according to their attractiveness and/or possible sexual uses. In trafficking, not only gender discrimination is applied, but also discrimination towards people coming from disadvantaged regions. Thus, an education based on human rights is vital.

States and international bodies should guarantee protection to the victims of trafficking and the opportunity to obtain legal residence. As long as the threat of deportation to the country of origin continues, trafficking in human beings will continue unabated for the international mafia, because this is the main argument of the exploiters in order to control these women. Women do not appeal to authorities to denounce abuses - on the contrary, they evade them - due to the fear of deportation. This situation clearly shows that trafficked women have no real options; if they stay in the country of destiny they have to keep suffering exploitation; if they return to the country of origin, they go back to the

deficiencies that forced them to migrate. States have to provide another alternative to these women, or they will continue to be exploited and the states will promote impunity of the traffickers. If the concern regarding granting legal residency is an economic concern , there should be a calculation of how much money is being handed over by the governments to the international mafia for trafficking in human beings.

*Lima, October 2002*