

# **A Comparative Study of Women Trafficked in the Migration Process**

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**Patterns, Profiles and Health Consequences  
of Sexual Exploitation in Five Countries  
(Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand,  
Venezuela and the United States)**

**Janice G. Raymond, PhD – International Coordinator  
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## **DEDICATION**

In Memory of Raquel Edralin-Tiglao

Friend, Brave Spirit, Political Prisoner, Woman Warrior in the Struggle Against Violence Against Women, Insightful Counselor, Founder of the Women's Crisis Center, Manila in the Philippines, and Co-Founder of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, Asia Pacific

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank all the women who agreed to be interviewed for this project and gave of their time, experience, and insights. Many of these women who are survivors of trafficking and prostitution consented to be interviewed in spite of the difficulties they experienced in talking about some of these issues. We also thank those NGOs, service providers, advocates, and law enforcement and governmental personnel who spoke with us.

In the process of completing this study, several individuals worked on the project who are not named in the country reports. We thank Jan Dahms who investigated the health literature relating to prostitution and trafficking, participated in the first planning meeting, and who also assembled the bibliography; and Russ Lopez who investigated the U.S. migration background information and who also formatted the figures that document the quantitative results. Maria Boniface was a superb translator and labored tirelessly through many versions of this study and at each of our planning meetings.

Finally, we acknowledge with gratitude the support of the Ford Foundation who funded this project. We thank especially Reena Marcelo, our former Program Officer, who believed in this project and had the foresight and courage to support it.

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## INTRODUCTION

by

Janice G. Raymond

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Trafficking in human beings – mostly women and children – has become a global business that affects almost all countries and reaps enormous profits for traffickers and their intermediaries. Human trafficking is not new. What is new is the global sophistication, complexity and consolidation of trafficking networks, and the increasing numbers of women and children who are trafficked from/to/in all parts of the globe.

Researchers differ on the numbers of women trafficked. United Nations (UN) reports estimate that 4 million women have been trafficked from one country to another and within countries (Arlacchi, 2000: 7). U.S. reports cite 700,000 to two million women and children internationally trafficked each year into the sex industry and for labor (Richard, 1999). All estimates, however, are preliminary. The most prevalent forms of sex trafficking are for prostitution, sex tourism, and mail-order bride industries. Women and children are also trafficked for bonded labor and domestic work, and much of this trafficking concludes with their being sexually exploited as well.

The lack of quantitative data and the enormous difficulties in producing accurate assessments of trafficking have resulted in many commentators repeating statistics from groups or governments that are often extrapolations from other crime contexts or unverified numbers. There are a variety of direct and roundabout methods that governments and researchers use to produce numbers of those trafficked. These include NGO and governmental surveys, extrapolation from other statistical indices, quantitative inferences drawn from related populations (e.g., legal and illegal immigration statistics where available), and comparisons between different data sources. Governmental and non-governmental organizations cite divergent numbers, often depending upon differing definitions of trafficking, the tendency of governments to underrepresent the problem, and extrapolations from limited case studies.

Numbers are always difficult to obtain, but the revenue collected from the trafficking in women and children often reveals what the demography of trafficking cannot tell us with precision – that trafficking in women and children is a big business. The United Nations estimates that trafficking is a 5-7 billion U.S. dollar operation annually (Arlacchi, 2000:7). In contrast to penalties for drug and arms trafficking, the penalties for human trafficking are lower in many countries (Budapest Group, 1999: 10).

Child sexual exploitation has grown exponentially in all countries, but especially in Asian and Latin American countries. Travel agencies, hotels, airlines, businesses, and so-called child “protectors” are often involved in sex tourism, playing a part in organized sex tours. Some child sexual abusers seem to think that they can avoid AIDS if they have sex with children but, more often, they seek out children because children are more pliable and can be made to fulfill the abusers’ demands.

Millions of women worldwide are trafficked into the sex industry. Many women who are trafficked for domestic labor end up being sexually exploited as well. It has been estimated that at least 8,000 Nigerian women have been trafficked into street prostitution in Italy. Another 5,000 Albanian, Moldavian and Ukrainian women have also been trafficked into Italy where they are made to prostitute out of rooms, apartments, small hotels, massage parlors and even exclusive clubs (Vecellio, 2000, “New Slaves:” 23).

In the border areas between Thailand, Burma and Cambodia, children sold to recruiters often

end up in brothels catering to international sex tourists. In Brazil, Venezuela and Colombia, traffickers abduct young girls from the streets to supply the brothels in the mining centers of Amazonia (Vecellio, 2000, “Children...:” 20).

### **Conceptual Framework**

This study was undertaken by an interdisciplinary cross-cultural research team from Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Venezuela and the United States who came together three times during the course of the 2 year project to discuss the scope of the study, methods, and data analysis. One of our goals has been to push the boundaries of narrow disciplinary and governmental thinking on trafficking and sexual exploitation. The conceptual framework that guides this research has its roots in a multidisciplinary approach informed by the researchers’ fields of Women’s Studies, economics, public health, law, sociology, medical ethics and the experience of the researchers in working with victims of violence against women, immigrant and refugee women, urban poor, and in an NGO with 13 years of advocacy on behalf of trafficked and prostituted women. All of the researchers are also activists and advocates in the campaign against violence against women.

Within this framework the researchers began by examining the *structural factors* responsible for the increase in sex trafficking worldwide including:

- **Economic policies.** Promoted by international lending organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, these policies mandate “structural adjustments” in many developing regions of the world, pushing certain countries to export women for labor (the Philippines) — making them vulnerable to trafficking— or to develop economies based on tourism (Thailand), with a huge dependence on sex tourism. Under the “old” regime of structural adjustments imposed by international monetary agencies, and under the “new” regime of globalization, countries continually reduce or withdraw state support for public services like health, education and social welfare. Many of these services have been privatized and thus the cost has not only increased but has been shifted — mainly to women — who must supply these services themselves, work harder or migrate overseas for family survival under worsening economic conditions. Traffickers move into this gap.
- **Globalization of the sex industry.** Globalization of the economy means globalization of the sex industry, which becomes an industry without borders. Prostitution is not only a consequence of industrialization but is itself industrialized. Like multinational industries, sex industries become autonomous economic forces. Large (as well as small) scale organized trafficking networks operate across borders, actively recruiting girls and women, especially from villages, city streets, and transportation centers. Hotels, airlines, and charter companies, often with direct and indirect government collusion, are involved in the trafficking of women for, for example, sex tourism. Also influential are global advertising, via the Internet, magazines, and tourism brochures.
- **Male Demand.** The so-called “customer” has been the most invisible factor in promoting prostitution and the trafficking of women for prostitution worldwide. Myths about male sexuality, reluctance to problematize the supposed male “need” for commercial sexual exploitation, male sexual expectations, and the way in which sex has been tolerated as a male right in a commodity culture are all part of this demand.
- **Female Supply Based on Women’s Inequality.** Gender-based social and economic inequality in all areas of the globe assures a supply of women, especially from developing countries and new independent states (NIS) in Eastern Europe. The sex industry is also built on expect-

tations and myths about women's sexuality, the cultural sexual objectification and commodification of women, and a history of childhood sexual abuse of women in prostitution.

- **Racial Myths and Stereotypes.** Trafficked women are eroticized and sexualized on the basis of stereotypical racial and ethnic features. Sexual advertisements on the Internet, such as those found on the World Sex Guide, also cast prostitution as “natural” to certain groups of women. “It’s their way of life; they are made for sexual services.”
- **Military Presence.** War, armed conflict and civil strife have helped generate trafficking in many parts of the world. Sex industries have been set up around military bases, e.g., in Okinawa, the Philippines and Korea, for the rest and recreation of U.S. troops. UN peace-keeping forces have trafficked Vietnamese and Chinese women into Kampuchea for prostitution.

Another structural factor implicated in the rise of human trafficking is *restrictive immigration policies*. It is normal in many countries to consider trafficked women as migration criminals – i.e., as illegal migrants who should be deported from a country when police raids are conducted on brothels or clubs. Victims of trafficking are often treated as “undesirable and criminal aliens” in countries to which they are trafficked. This perspective is often reflected in national legislation in destination countries that makes immigration more restrictive, thus obstructing the flow of migrants seeking to enter countries legitimately.

Ironically, these restrictive immigration policies tighten up border controls that often are used to harass vulnerable migrants but have little effect on the traffickers. What we are seeing in many industrialized countries, particularly in “Fortress Europe,” is a mentality promoting globalization of capital, but not globalization of humane and regular migration. Countries want cheap labor, and sex industries want a new and fresh supply of exotic women for prostitution, but in most parts of the world, the possibilities for legal migration have decreased substantially. As immigration becomes more restrictive and discriminatory, and ineffective border controls are utilized in receiving countries, traffickers become the major international players who facilitate international migration because the legitimate channels are so restrictive.

Although this project locates sex trafficking within the migration process, it is the *exploitation* and not the movement of women across a border that is the essential violation of trafficking. We do not accept emerging arguments that redefine and seek to legitimate prostitution as “sex work,” promoting the view that regularizing “migration for sex work” is one antidote to sex trafficking. Likewise, it is our contention that trafficking cannot be separated from prostitution. Anti-trafficking policies and programs must address organized prostitution and domestic trafficking. As Jean D’Cunha writes:

*“In the effort to decriminalize prostitution and endorse ‘migration for sex work,’ the links between trafficking and prostitution are blurred by emphasizing the range of purposes for which trafficking occurs, while down playing sex trafficking; and de-linking trafficking from prostitution. Proponents of this view seek to achieve these goals by advocating for the introduction of criminal laws against trafficking that are separate and distinct from labour laws governing prostitution” (p.125)*

Although this report examines trafficking within the context of both international and national migration trends, this does not mean that trafficking should be viewed simply in the context of migration. Rather, as this report documents, trafficking is an issue of violence against women, a human rights violation, an economic and development issue, and a crime in which the traffickers

— not the women — are the perpetrators. Anti-trafficking legislation, based on a human rights framework, must apply to both international and U.S. women, otherwise there is a risk of stereotyping trafficking as an immigration problem, and depriving all women of recourse, remedy and recourse.

Any definition of trafficking must be broad and inclusive enough to represent the reality of what happens to all women who are trafficked — in our study, for purposes of sexual exploitation--across borders and within countries, into or in a country, with or without their consent, and through force, fraud, deception, or abuse of the vulnerability of a victim.

Throughout this study, the research team uses the definition of trafficking (Art. 3) from the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*.

FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS PROTOCOL:

- (A) “TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS” SHALL MEAN THE RECRUITMENT, TRANSPORTATION, TRANSFER, HARBOURING OR RECEIPT OF PERSONS, BY MEANS OF THE THREAT OR USE OF FORCE OR OTHER FORMS OF COERCION, OF ABDUCTION, OF FRAUD, OF DECEPTION, OF THE ABUSE OF POWER OR OF A POSITION OF VULNERABILITY OR OF THE GIVING OR RECEIVING OF PAYMENTS OR BENEFITS TO ACHIEVE THE CONSENT OF A PERSON HAVING CONTROL OVER ANOTHER PERSON, FOR THE PURPOSE OF EXPLOITATION.

EXPLOITATION SHALL INCLUDE, AT A MINIMUM, THE EXPLOITATION OF THE PROSTITUTION OF OTHERS OR OTHER FORMS OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, FORCED LABOUR OR SERVICES, SLAVERY OR PRACTICES SIMILAR TO SLAVERY, SERVITUDE OR THE REMOVAL OF ORGANS;

- (B) THE CONSENT OF A VICTIM OF TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS TO THE INTENDED EXPLOITATION SET FORTH IN SUBPARAGRAPH (A) OF THIS ARTICLE SHALL BE IRRELEVANT WHERE ANY OF THE MEANS SET FORTH IN SUBPARAGRAPH (A) HAVE BEEN USED;
- (C) THE RECRUITMENT, TRANSPORTATION, TRANSFER, HARBOURING OR RECEIPT OF A CHILD FOR THE PURPOSE OF EXPLOITATION SHALL BE CONSIDERED “TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS” EVEN IF THIS DOES NOT INVOLVE ANY OF THE MEANS SET FORTH IN SUBPARAGRAPH (A) OF THIS ARTICLE;
- (D) “CHILD” SHALL MEAN ANY PERSON UNDER EIGHTEEN YEARS OF AGE.

## **Health, Migration and Trafficking**

Migrating women are especially vulnerable to sexual exploitation, and to *the health consequences* of sexual violence, having moved outside their social and cultural safety nets into quite different societies where they may not understand the language and are easier to abuse, and often receiving little or no medical attention until it is too late. The health effects of trafficking are associated with the sexual exploitation and violence that trafficked women suffer.

For victims of trafficking, the perilous conditions of the journey may produce illness and injury. Many trafficked women face the threat of injury and death, even in the migrating process. In 1985, 28 Dominican women bound for the sex industry in Western Europe, died of suffocation in a closed container while being transported by traffickers by sea. Trafficked women are particularly vulnerable to violence and sexual exploitation by officials such as police, immigration authorities, and border guards. Because they are undocumented, have little knowledge of the language of the country to which they are trafficked, and no legal knowledge of their rights, many are raped and forced to service men sexually. Police routinely violate women in prostitution. In Mumbai, police detained 447 women in prostitution, subjected them to testing for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases without their consent, and provided no subsequent medical treatment (UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, 1997: 24).

Once within a country of destination, the trafficked woman’s existence is enclosed by a life of extreme dependency, clandestine conditions, and exploitation, often comparable to being a hostage. One recent survey of prostituted women in the United States, South Africa, Thailand,

Turkey and Zambia, conducted in association with the Kaiser Permanente Health Services in the United States, found that prostitution can be as traumatic as going to war, with over 2/3 of the women in prostitution suffering from what the researchers designated post-traumatic stress disorder (Farley and Barkan, 1998: 37-49).

The health consequences to women who are prostituted and trafficked into the sex industry are often the same injuries and infections suffered by women who are subjected to other forms of violence against women such as battering. For the most part, in the case of trafficking and prostitution, these health effects have not been documented. Our study focuses on these physical and emotional health consequences.

The Platform of Action that emerged from the 4th World Women's Conference in Beijing integrated violence against women, sex trafficking, female migration and women's health as key issues affecting women worldwide. The United Nations conferences in Vienna in 1993 and Cairo in 1994 both called for a similar *integration* of these issues. All these international United Nations conferences noted that, for women, it was inadequate to address one issue without addressing the other. Likewise, the World Health Organization (WHO) definition of health has always insisted that effective action directed to a person's health must address her/his "complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." Thus, it is important not only to look at women's health as a moment in time (pregnancy) or even a process in time (migration), but rather from an intersectoral approach where constructive action to address women's health must also involve action to change basic policies and attitudes toward women.

### **Methods and Organization**

A major goal of this study was to interview women in the sex industry who had been trafficked for sexual exploitation in 5 countries: Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Venezuela and the United States. These 5 countries represent diversity of world regions (Asia, Latin America and North America) and also make possible comparisons and contrasts across cultures, ethnicities and nationalities.

Another goal of the project was to gather primary information on trafficked women, with a focus on the health effects of sex trafficking. In obtaining this information and in assessing the scope of the problems of trafficked women, it was also our aim to address protection of victims, prosecution of traffickers and prevention of trafficking.

Researchers conducted comprehensive oral interviews, using a structured questionnaire, composed of open and closed-ended questions, with a targeted population of women who had been trafficked and sexually exploited in the sex industry. The questionnaire was designed to elicit information about the backgrounds of trafficked women; methods of recruitment, movement and initiation into the sex industry; recruiters, traffickers, pimps and "customers;" violence against women; the health burden of trafficking; and the respondents' opinions and recommendations for change. Questions were refined for cultural specificity in some cases.

Although researchers used a structured questionnaire, we also drew on "elite" models of interviewing in which the interviewee is considered the "elite" or expert, with more knowledge than the interviewer about the area being studied. This approach was also used in one of the few studies that exists on undocumented women in the United States, *Dreams Lost, Dreams Found: Undocumented Women in the Land of Opportunity* (Hogeland and Rosen, 1990).

This elite approach was particularly useful to researchers who chose not to use certain parts of the questionnaire in a systematic way when the instrument was difficult to use or did not fit the

context. In these situations, women were encouraged to define the situation, structure their own account of the situation, and introduce their own notions about what was relevant, rather than relying on the interviewer's notion of relevance (Dexter, 1970, cited in Hogeland and Rosen, 1990).

The data analysis concentrated on providing qualitative information, often in the women's own words, while at the same time quantifying information about violence against women and the physical injuries and emotional consequences experienced by women who had been trafficked and sexually exploited. Each country report, with the exception of Thailand, also uses selected figures and graphs to quantify the qualitative descriptions of violence reported by women, the physical injuries sustained by victims of sexual violence, and the emotional consequences of sexual exploitation and how these affected women's well-being. The Thai country report combines a narrative and analytical style. This was determined by the sample size, difficulties in quantifying experiences and perceptions, and the potential of this style to convey the richness and depth of experience and analysis.

The sampling method used in this project is a purposive non-random sampling method. It has been noted that random samples of undocumented individuals are extremely difficult to obtain (Cornelius, 1982). How much more difficult to obtain such random samples for an even more clandestine population such as trafficked women. In addition to the difficulties in access, there is so little knowledge about the numbers of women trafficked that it is unclear to whom randomized results would be compared. If researchers want answers to questions about trafficking, they will have to accept something other than the traditional methods of random sampling. For it is only in a non-random sampling method that we will find the answers to many empirical questions that are at the core of the sex trafficking problem.

We also utilized a "snow-ball" sampling method. This method uses previously interviewed women who then provide subsequent contacts within their networks of women who were subjected to having been trafficked. Also, as our country researchers increased their own levels of credibility and trustworthiness vis à vis the women being interviewed, essential ingredients in any interviews with such a clandestine and vulnerable population, more trafficked women came forward.

We interviewed 146 victims of sexual exploitation, most who had been trafficked both across borders (internationally) and within borders (domestically). This total of 146 survivors of trafficking includes women who had been trafficked from and within Indonesia; from and within the Philippines; from, to and within Venezuela; and to and within the United States. Ten other Thai interviewees are not included in this total for reasons discussed above. Researchers in some countries also interviewed law enforcement and immigration authorities, as well as NGOs who assist migrants, refugees, trafficked women and women in prostitution industries.

Each country report is divided into 2 parts. Part I is a literature review of migration trends in each country; women's migration patterns; the national and regional political and socio-economic context for women's migration; and the gendered dimensions of migration. Part II contains the results, analysis and discussions from interviews with victims of trafficking. And in Part III, the recommendations of this report are summarized.

*PART I*  
*THE NEXUS BETWEEN MIGRATION, TRAFFICKING AND*  
*SEXUAL EXPLOITATION*

## INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN MIGRATION AND TRAFFICKING

by  
Janice G. Raymond

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We can learn much about trafficking for sexual exploitation by examining female migration patterns. It is instructive to see which countries women are migrating to and from, and to examine these trends with reports and documentation about which groups of women are drawn into the sex industry in respective countries. It is also important to assess the factors promoting female migration and, in some cases, to understand how such factors facilitate women's entrance into the sex industry. These are the points where migration and trafficking intersect and where it is necessary to take stock. There are other ways, however, in which speaking about migration and trafficking in the same breath is fraught with problems.

Governments have viewed transnational trafficking as a crime of illegal migration in which trafficked women are often treated as the criminals. In this view, trafficking is a crime against the state, and victims become the perpetrators of the crime of trafficking. Viewed from a human rights perspective, however, trafficking is a *crime against migrants* in which women's desire to migrate is preyed upon. Within the context of migration, trafficking is *exploited migration*. Even legal migrants can be trafficked as we see in several of the country reports on migration. For these reasons, trafficking needs to be addressed as a problem of exploitation.

Most countries are confronting the problem of migrant trafficking for labor and for sexual exploitation. For example, the United States, which in past years was not concerned about trafficking, is now faced with trafficking from the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Asia and Latin America. The United States, like most other countries, has a large domestic trafficking problem as well, in which both international and U.S. women are transported for sexual exploitation — mainly for prostitution — from state to state and city to city.

Trafficking has become a transnational and intra-national industry that affects mostly all countries, although not all equally. There are sending countries, transit countries and countries of destination, with some countries in all of these categories. In general, the flow of trafficked women and children moves from North to South or East to West, or from poorer countries or countries in economic, social and political crisis, to richer and more socially and politically stable countries.

This project is committed to principles and policies that foster regular and unexploited migration. As Resolution 923 (LXXI-November 25, 1995) of the International Organization of Migration (IOM) states: "IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society...(IOM, 1999: 4-5)." We investigate the ramifications of migration patterns, trends and the gendered aspects of the migration process because trafficking oppresses many of the world's migrant women. Sex trafficking, in particular, tyrannizes women and children. In analyzing migration trends in these five countries, it is our intention to expose the problem of migrant and domestic trafficking, to aid in the prosecution of traffickers, and to protect the rights of women migrants caught in the complex web of trafficking networks. We believe that an investigation of migration trends, factors promoting female migration, the socio-economic context in both sending and receiving countries, gender inequality and the gendered dimensions of migration policies, the means of exit and entry by which women leave and arrive in various countries, and use of travel documents can tell us much about how specifically traffickers exploit migrant women and also the migration process.

As Jean D’Cunha writes:

*“Trafficking involves the violation of migration rules and procedures, and in that sense can be categorized as a manifestation of irregular migration. However at the core of trafficking lies the will and intent on the part of intermediaries to exploit the individual from the very outset of the operation, and the intimate linkages between trafficking networks and crime syndicates. It is in the deliberate intent to exploit, that trafficking differs from irregular migration in the general sense of the term. The boundaries between regular and irregular migration shift at different points and junctures in the migration process.”*

### **Migration Trends: Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Venezuela**

Indonesia is a sending countries for those who migrate; the Philippines is a sending and a transit country; Thailand is a sending, receiving and transit country; Venezuela is a sending and receiving country; and the United States is primarily a country of destination for migrants. Countries such as the Philippines and Thailand have a long history of out-migration while Venezuelan and Indonesian migration is more recent. Indonesia and the Philippines both promote migration as a state-sponsored employment strategy and, as in the Philippines, what was originally an interim economic solution has become a long-term official mechanism for keeping the economy afloat. Labor export is also encouraged by Thai government policy.

State encouragement of the economic role of Indonesian migrant workers has been explicitly written into recent National Development Plans. Sending migrant workers abroad has helped Indonesia to confront the national problem of unemployment, boosting national income and potentially aiding national stability.

Countries such as Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Brunei Darussalam, and Taiwan are major destinations for Indonesians seeking employment, with Malaysia and Saudi Arabia being the most attractive endpoints. Official statistical data reports that after 1997/1998, there were 900,000 Indonesians who migrated to these countries for work and income.

The Philippines has set up a specialized agency to encourage and regulate Filipino migration for work. The latest statistics from the Philippines Overseas Employment Agency (POEA) show that of the 7.29 million overseas Filipinos, 1.94 million are reported to be undocumented, representing a high percentage of Filipino workers abroad (Battistella, Asis and Abubakar, 1997; Beltran and de Dios, 1992). Although it is difficult to ascertain the number of women who have been trafficked in the migration process, it is easy to see how backdoor agents of migration, or smugglers, can abuse the vulnerabilities of undocumented women, even making use of official authorities and processes, to make trafficking easier.

Over the last twenty-five years, the Latin American and Caribbean region has experienced a massive movement of peoples, migrating to North America, Western Europe, and within the Caribbean. The transformation of former French colonies into overseas *departements* and then into independent states, the dictatorship periods in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, the Cuban Revolution, the political-military confrontations in Central America during the 1980s, “dirty wars” and armed conflict, para-military groups, drug trafficking, and immigration legislation in countries of destination such as the United States, have all contributed to population displacement and migration in Latin America.

### **Migration of Women**

In Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Venezuela, the number of women as compared to men who migrate for income has steadily increased over the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the Philippines, for example, the percentage of women overseas contract workers (OFWs) has

steadily increased from a low of 12 percent in 1975 to an estimated 60 percent in the late 1990s. The majority of women who migrate from the Philippines for labor and income end up as domestic workers and “entertainers,” a euphemism for women in the sex industry (POEA, 1998).

Although Indonesian women have migrated for many years, the Indonesian government only acknowledged in 1998 the existence of many overseas Indonesian female migrant workers when it distinguished between male and female in its official migration categories. Some studies on Indonesian migration indicate that female migrants are mainly employed as housemaids and cooks. Some are recruited into prostitution. Numerous stories about the success of migrant workers abroad have attracted poor women to leave the country. The increase in women working and sending back money from abroad has made a significant contribution to families, and to national and regional development.

Venezuela is a sending, receiving, and a bridge country for migrants. Venezuela’s location and its comparatively more favorable economic status in Latin America allows for migration into and out of the country. When Venezuelans migrate out of the country, they usually go to the United States, Canada, Spain, Portugal and Italy. Women arrive in Venezuela mainly from the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Columbia. Venezuela’s economic development, resulting from oil revenues and the growth of small and large-scale industries, has been a pull factor for many from other parts of Latin America and the Caribbean migrating to Venezuela in search of a better life.

Until recently, it has been difficult to ascertain how many migrants are women, due to the fact that Venezuelan government statistics have not or still do not disaggregate migrants by gender. Gender must be inferred from the categories/jobs/activities into which women are admitted in countries of destination. Although it has been reported that women constitute the largest group of migrants from the Caribbean region (Organización de Mujeres, 1993; Segundo Seminario Latinoamericano [Second Latin American Seminar] 1985), Venezuela does not provide specific data about the gender of migrants. This invisibility of women thwarts an accurate assessment of women’s participation in the international migration process.

Thai women, as with other Asian migrants, are mostly migrating as young, independent, economic agents, not as dependents of men, for short periods of time and as a family survival strategy, rather than for personal advancement or fulfillment. Studies on Thai migration to Japan reveal that, although men comprise a larger share of migrants in most age groups, in the 15-20 year-old category, women and girls outnumber men and boys by 5 to 2 (Matsuda, 1992). While the largest migrant group for men is the 40-49 year old age bracket, 70 percent of all women migrants to Japan are between 20-24 years old. Within Asia, Thai women predominantly migrate to Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and Hong Kong. Outside Asia, the most frequent destination countries for Thai women migrants are Germany, Holland, Switzerland, the United States and Australia.

### **National and Regional Political and Socio-Economic Context for Women’s Migration**

Aida Santos in her chapter on migration trends in the Philippines provides a list of 11 push and pull factors that promote female migration from her country. Many of these factors could be applied to the out-migration of women also from Indonesia, Thailand and Venezuela.

- 1) Official migration policies of the Philippines government in which recruitment of women is actively promoted through its various government units, with the collaboration of recruitment agencies.

- 2) Gender stereotyping of women in work situations which traditionally echo their roles as caregivers and “entertainers,” i.e., sexual objects.
- 3) Growing poverty in the context of structural adjustment programs that produce landlessness and impoverishment among rural populations, and push more women to join the labor force;
- 4) Rise in female-headed households, much of it due to breakdown in traditional family structures and support systems.
- 5) Lack of opportunities for local employment that would allow women to explore better jobs, acquire greater skills, and obtain a more secure future.
- 6) Growing family dependence on women for income, especially among poorer households.
- 7) Demand for female migrant workers in more developed economies.
- 8) Economic boom in destination countries.
- 9) Women’s expanding sense of financial/economic and personal autonomy, both in origin and destination countries.
- 10) A growing number of women and men in destination countries who relegate domestic work to hired help from abroad.
- 11) Normalization of prostitution and other activities in the sex industry such as stripping, often disguised as “entertainment” jobs in destination countries (Lim, 2000; Santos, 2000; Tanton, 2000; Ateneo de Manila University and WEDPRO, 1999; Abrera-Mangahas, 1998; Battistella, Asis and Abubakar, 1997; Yang, 1996; Santos and Lee, 1992; Beltran and de Dios, 1992; Villalba, 1992; Institute of Women’s Studies, 1988).

The devastating impact of the financial crises of the 1990s in both Asia and Latin America has precipitated women’s migration. In Thailand and the Philippines, a woman’s decision to migrate is often a family survival strategy. With the return of many Thai and Filipino male migrant workers due to a dwindling need and reduced labor demand in West Asian countries of past destination, women have stepped in to fill the gap. At the same time that cultural traditions oblige women to take care of their families by migrating abroad for income, greater levels of independence and mobility for women are also influencing large numbers to migrate elsewhere.

As Jean D’Cunha writes, globalization and structural adjustment have resulted in export-oriented, decentralized, flexible and sub-contracted production, the consequences of which are women’s recruitment in the export industry or as home-based workers. As most of the country reports on migration illustrate, governments in sending countries must “structurally adjust” their economies and welfare sectors to pay down foreign debt, which in turn precipitates the rise in unemployment, high cost of living and reduction of social services and which in another turn fosters out-migration. Thus governments are keen to support this migration since migrants – especially migrant women — send much-needed foreign remittances and hard currency back into the country.

Additionally, authoritarian regimes have come under scrutiny in both Latin America and Asia. For example, in Indonesia and the Philippines, recent military interventions, wars of liberation and removal of governments from power have created conflict situations, civil strife, and movement of people from one region to another. Severe weather disturbances such as the 1999 floods in Venezuela and volcanic eruptions in the Philippines have added to the economic, social and

political burden in these countries. Thus it is not only poverty that drives women migrants to seek better opportunities abroad but a whole complex of natural, economic, social and political circumstances that unscrupulous recruiters take advantage of to draw women into trafficking networks. It is the *gendered dimensions* of most of these push and pull factors that accounts for the increased numbers of women who migrate, many of whom are trafficked into the sex industry.

### **Gendered Dimensions of Migration**

The situation of Thai women's migration is temporary in nature, rather than for women's own personal advancement or fulfillment as compared with the Philippines — where more women migrate for nursing, teaching, and office jobs that are “feminized” but, nonetheless, require better training and skills and are more high-paying. Thai women who migrate want to earn and save for family survival and to improve family living standards.

In Asia, the gendered nature of skills and jobs result in Thai women migrating for domestic work and “entertainment.” In 1998, 95 percent of Filipino female “entertainers” who had migrated to countries in Asia ended up in the sex industry of Japan (POEA, 1999).

In developed countries, the social security system is the traditional safety net for unemployment and financial crises. Countries such as the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand that are handicapped by limited funds, cannot even provide for the emergency health needs of their citizens. In such circumstances, additional burdens are placed on women, burdens that remain invisible because women are expected to be “domestic keepers and saviors,” find ways to satisfy basic needs and even travel overseas to send money back to families. Traffickers take advantage of such situations. And government policies, such as in the Philippines that promote migration for labor, without protection and enforcement of women's rights as migrants, put women at risk for being trafficked.

It is the plight of overseas Filipino domestic workers and women in prostitution that has captured public attention and the call for better protection of women and their rights as migrants. In 1998, 84 percent of OFWs assisted for repatriation by the Philippines Overseas Workers Welfare Administration were women. The women had experienced maltreatment, physical and mental disintegration, imprisonment, and death (Battistella, Asis and Abubakar, 1997; Beltran and de Dios, 1992; Kanlungan Center Foundation, 1992). The Philippines Overseas Employment Agency estimated that in 1994, 68 percent of women overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) had been subjected to physical and sexual violence and exploitation.

In Indonesia, women migrants who are working as domestic helpers abroad often face physical and sexual abuse during the recruitment process, and later by employers. Indonesian women recruited to work as domestic helpers or factory workers have been induced or forced to engage in prostitution in countries such as Singapore and Malaysia. Migrant women in transit areas, such as Batam with its large sex industry, are induced or forced into prostitution while awaiting travel documents to other countries. Media reports chronicling the intimidation and torture of 20 Indonesian women migrant workers who refused to engage in prostitution while waiting in Batam, for example, do not deter women who have little choice from migrating abroad.

There are unique factors fostering female migration to Venezuela that are not accounted for in traditional economic or political explanations of migration causes. Zoraida Ramirez Rodriguez relates that popular culture and media portray Latin American and Caribbean women in terms of beauty, body and sexuality. Displays of the female body in the media, in beauty contests, and in stripping are often couched in the language of women's rights and become standards by which women measure their attractiveness, personal fulfillment and development in society.

Foreign women who watch Venezuelan soap operas, for example, often state that “If I get to Venezuela, I will be able to learn” how to be beautiful (Interview with Colombian Woman in Prostitution, October, 1994). Advertising and consumerism take the place of real information by which women could be empowered. Advertising and media sexual objectification of women create sexually objectifying standards and sexually exploitative activities to which women aspire, and reinforce migrant trafficking for sexual exploitation in Venezuela.

### **Migration, Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation**

There are specific correlations between migration, trafficking, and sexual exploitation. A recent survey done in Sarawak, Malaysia in the year 2000, found that the majority of men who buy women in prostitution in this area are Indonesian migrant workers in the plantation fields. This same phenomenon occurs in the Malaysian Peninsula, especially Johor, where Indonesian workers are concentrated. Relatively similar numbers of women and men migrate for labor and income to Malaysia (*Kompas*, 5 January 1998, as cited by Keban, 2000).

Trafficking of Indonesian women and children often involves several layers of recruitment: the traffickers who hire local recruiters to look for young women in the villages; the local recruiters themselves; and the local people who assist recruiters and who are trusted neighbors, friends or even relatives. Women are promised “good jobs” but instead, are drawn into sex industries abroad or in other parts of Indonesia, such as Batam. Recruiters take advantage of hardest times, prior to the harvesting period or during the drought season, when many locals must look elsewhere for income to survive. Recruiters often pay parents a sum of money for their daughters that becomes a debt that bonds women into sexual servitude, and from which there are few means of escape.

Internal migration plays a significant role in the industrial region of Batam that is also a magnet for tourism. “Sex services” are used as part of the package of business opportunities that attract men to these areas. The availability of cheap “sand, sun and sex” in poorer countries such as Indonesia serves as a magnet which draws tourists to places like Batam. Indonesian women migrate to Batam thinking that they will be employed in the tourism sector but having no idea that this means the sex industry.

Indonesian and international police report that they have identified at least 8 trafficking syndicates that operate in Sabah and Sarawak in Malaysian territory. These syndicates recruit women from small towns in East Kalimantan, Java and north Sumatra who are then sold in Malaysia.

The demand for unskilled migrant labour in Japan has continued to outstrip legal limits on the supply, and the majority of unskilled migrant workers in the country are undocumented. Thai women are recruited into unskilled jobs in Japan, dominating the entertainment sector and working as hostesses and waitresses in restaurants and snack bars (Human Rights Watch, 2000). Additionally, undocumented women are more vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Even if Thai and most other Asian women work legally in Japan as domestics, for example, they are not allowed to change jobs in the first two years of employment and thus become highly dependent on the whims of employers. In Singapore and Malaysia, women domestic workers are banned from getting pregnant and are subject to pregnancy tests every six months (Lim and Oishi, 1995).

Despite negative reports of the risks and problems of overseas contract work, Filipino women migrate abroad largely because of financial pressures on families who must increasingly rely on women’s remittances from income earned in other countries. Recruiters take advantage of these situations to draw women into sex trafficking networks. Women are both legally and illegally recruited for work abroad at a younger age than their male counterparts. Many of the respondents

interviewed in studies on migration and trafficking who had been illegally recruited were under 18 years of age, or in their early twenties, when they were recruited and eventually trafficked (Interviews with women in the cities of Legazpi, Dumaguete, Davao and Cebu, March 2000-March 2001; Tanton, 2000; Ateneo de Manila University and WEDPRO, 1999; Gonzales and Sanchez, 1996; Beltran and de Dios, 1992).

Government policies on migration put Filipino women at risk for trafficking when government agencies promote jobs for women overseas that carry low pay, low status, and exposure to sexual exploitation. Most Filipino overseas women workers are employed either as domestic helpers or “entertainers.” Regulating the “entertainment”-oriented employment of Filipino women in Japan (POEA, 1998), for example, essentially sanctions the racist and sexist stereotypes and treatment of Filipino women who perform what are widely regarded as exploitative, demeaning, socially unacceptable and economically non-viable activities (Ateneo de Manila University and WEDPRO, 1999; Tyner, 1994; Beltran and de Dios, 1992).

Traffickers use Venezuela not only as a destination country but also as a bridge country to traffic women from, for example the Dominican Republic and Colombia, to other countries such as Mexico, Canada, the United States, Spain and Greece. Those involved in trafficking in women also promote sex tourism. Venezuela was the venue for “The Latina Connection” in 1999 when women from Mexico, Panama, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, and Venezuela were advertised abroad for sex tourism packages.

Traffickers often use legal tourist visas to bring women into Venezuela for domestic work. Ultimately, many women are exploited as domestic workers and then also sexually exploited within the sex industry in Venezuela and abroad. Many women are trafficked to the Caribbean islands, North America, Europe and other parts of the Mediterranean, and Asia.

### **The United States**

Because the United States is a “first world” and primarily a receiving country, migration trends tend to be very different than in Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and in Venezuela. The nexus between migration and trafficking has its own distinct patterns that cannot be compared to sending countries.

Research on sex trafficking into the United States, until recently, was relatively scarce. The clandestine nature of trafficking, and conditions of isolation and confinement in the sex industry in the United States have made it almost impossible for trafficked women to seek assistance, and for NGOs to speak with trafficked women (Raymond, Hughes and Gomez, 2001). Limited legislation, light penalties for traffickers and long complicated investigations to obtain trafficking convictions have made trafficking cases unattractive to U.S. attorneys (Richard, 1999). With the passage of the U.S. Victims of Trafficking Act in the year 2000, it is hoped that more traffickers will be prosecuted and more victims protected and assisted.

In examining migration trends of women into the United States, several things are apparent that have potential implications for trafficking. Like other receiving countries for migrants, the United States has favored a policy of “family reunification.” This means that women immigrants predominate in categories such as spouse, fiancée, or are admitted as relatives of citizens and other immigrants. Because family reunification enjoys such favorable status, it may mask the extent to which these categories may be used to traffic women into the United States – e.g., as brides of U.S. servicemen who are trafficked into the sex industry.

The current complicated system of immigration gives preference to immigrants with U.S. relatives, those with specialized skills, and refugees/asylees. An estimated number of one million

immigrants enter the United States each year – legally and illegally – mainly from Latin America and Asia. Of the nearly one million immigrants per year, about 700,000 are legal; and an estimated 275,000 enter illegally (Martin and Midgley, 1994; 1999).

About 40 percent of undocumented migrants are visa or nonimmigrant overstays. Most undocumented migrants, except those from Mexico and Central America, enter the United States in this way. The other 60 percent from Mexico and Latin America cross the United States-Mexico border, usually between official entry crossings (Statistics Illegal Alien Resident Population).

Twenty-five million persons enter the United States annually with temporary visas, such as tourist and student visas. Traffickers, using forged or legal documents, make use of the “temporary nonimmigrant” visa process as a way to bring women into the United States (Richard, 1999; Raymond, Hughes and Gomez, 2001). Once women are here, they can be moved from place to place, overstay the temporary visa time period, and kept in prostitution until they get caught or leave the country by other means.

Additionally, there are a number of exceptions to the visa process, such as the Visa Waiver Pilot Program (VWPP), that may facilitate trafficking. The VWPP allows visitors from 26 countries, most of which are European, to enter the United States without visas for up to 90 days provided they have a roundtrip ticket and a passport. Organized crime has long recognized the advantages of using stolen or fraudulent passports, or genuinely stolen passports from VWPP countries, to bring smuggled or trafficked persons into the United States (Cronin, 1999:15).

There are 350 million nonimmigrants who enter the United States each year with border crossing cards. No arrival and departure data is currently collected on the great majority of Mexican and Canadian citizens. It is also possible for persons from other countries to leave the United States without submitting a departure form, known as Form I-94. Traffickers may bring women into the United States from Mexico and Canada, using border crossing cards, and women may leave via the same borders. Even if women exit the United States after overstaying temporary visas, they can leave relatively undetected since the United States has never had a formal system of monitoring departures (Cronin, 1999: 5-6).

These are common ways in which traffickers can exploit the migration process so that women can be sexually exploited in domestic sex industries, once they arrive in the United States. We now turn to each country report for a fuller explanation of the nexus between migration and trafficking in these five countries studied.

**INDONESIA:  
MIGRATION AND TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN**

by  
Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin and Hartian Silawati

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**Introduction**

Little official data exists on the trafficking of Indonesian women because the Indonesian government has neither collected nor disclosed any information on trafficking. Some argue that the lack of acknowledgment or denial about trafficking in women is due to Indonesia's national pride as a religious nation. Others tentatively assert that cases of trafficking are complicated, and information is difficult to elicit due to the control of syndicates in which police and immigration officials are involved.

Although no official numbers are available, some of the mass media report that the increasing incidence of Indonesian women who are recruited into the sex industry is alarming. Sex trafficking in Indonesia is both internal (domestic trafficking) and external (international trafficking). In 1994, Solidaritas Perempuan, a non-governmental organization that advocates for women migrant workers, collected data from various mass media, noting one example of 319 female migrant workers deceptively recruited into the sex industry in Malaysia. Of that 319, six women were deported, 25 escaped and reported themselves to the Malaysian authorities, 88 women were arrested at the Indonesian border with their traffickers during the trafficking process, and 200 were arrested in several police operations in the red light areas in Malaysia (Missiyah and Solidaritas Perempuan, 1997).

*Harian Surya*, 14 February, 1996 (as cited by Missiyah and Solidaritas Perempuan, 1997), reported that 1,101 women had been trafficked into the sex industry in Malaysia. Of this number, 595 were Indonesian. Another daily newspaper in March 2000 reported that in operations undertaken by Malaysian immigration authorities to combat syndicates smuggling illegal migrant workers into Malaysia, 48 Indonesian women were arrested who had been illegally trafficked into the Malaysian sex industry.

Human Rights Watch reported other instances in which a total of 24 women from East Java were trafficked for prostitution between 1991-1994. These Indonesian women were forced to prostitute in various sex industries in Malaysian territory. The Human Rights Watch Report specifically found that:

- 1) In 1991, there were 10 cases of trafficking in women to Tawau (Malaysia)
- 2) In June 1992, 9 young women were trafficked into prostitution without any payment. Their recruiter was an agent from Tuban, East Java, who sold them to brokers on their arrival at a hotel. These women were able to escape and reported to the police that 40 other women were still held by 8 pimps in the same hotel.
- 3) In 1992, Tarakan Police officers arrested two traffickers who were trying to smuggle two young women, aged 17 and 15, from East Java.
- 4) In 1994, three women in their twenties (2 from Lumajang, and 1 from Malang, East Java) were arrested before being trafficked.

The trafficking of Indonesian women became nationwide news when a number of young women from Solo (central Java) were recruited as entertainers to take part in a supposed cultural exchange with Japan but, instead, were recruited into the sex industry. As reported by the *Jawa*

*Pos* (20 June 1993), the “Khar Company” sold 11 Indonesian women to the “Daichi Entertainment Company” of Japan. These women were promised that a wage of 50,000 Yen, a bonus of Rp 400,000 (US \$41), a daily food allowance of Rp 8,500 (Less than US \$1), health insurance, a return ticket, local transport and accommodation facilities would be provided by the company. In reality, the women were only paid Rp. 390.000 (US \$ 40) a month, and none of the promises were kept.

In 1998, people were shocked by a report in *Gatra* magazine about trafficking in women for prostitution in the Riau Islands (*Gatra*, 3 October, 1998). This report revealed that 13 young women from West Java were trafficked into the sex industry on Karimun Island. These women had been recruited into prostitution and were “employed” by a company called “Golden Million,” which operates the “entertainment” industry in the Riau islands, especially in Batam and Karimun. These two islands seem to be the most common receiving places for prostituted women, sent there by trafficking syndicates operating in Indonesia. Given that the geographical position of these two islands is relatively close to both Singapore and Johor, Malaysia, the 2 islands have become favored locations for the trafficking of women into the sex industries of these 2 countries. The geographical position of Batam and Karimun, with their proximity to Singapore and Malaysia, are also attractive tourist destinations.

In 2000, *Gatra* magazine (25 March, 2000) reported that five young girls from Medan, North Sumatra, had been released from ‘*Buangan Sampah*’ in Oumai, a harbor city in the province of Riau. They were promised jobs in the province but were instead tricked and sold by brokers into brothels.

### **Migration Trends**

Countries such as Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Brunei Darussalam, and Taiwan are the major destinations for Indonesian migrant workers (Keban, 2000), with Malaysia and Saudi Arabia being the most attractive endpoints. Official statistical data reports that up to 1997 /1998, there were about 900,000 Indonesians – 308,319 women and 591,303 men — who migrated to the above countries for work

There is a correlation between the increased flow of migration and the increased trafficking of women. From a recent survey done in Serawak, Malaysia, in the year 2000, it was found that the majority of men who buy women in prostitution (buyers or “customers”) in this area are Indonesian workers in the plantation fields. This same phenomenon occurs in the Malaysian Peninsula, especially Johor, where Indonesian workers are concentrated. Relatively similar numbers of female and male migrant workers go to Malaysia (*Kompas*, 5 January 1998 as cited by Keban 2000).

However, out of 319,444 workers who have migrated to Saudi Arabia, 295,038 have been women. The opportunity to perform *hajj* (*the Islamic pilgrimage*) is an attractive factor that influences those who migrate for work to Saudi Arabia. To Muslims in Indonesia, performing *hajj* is almost the final destiny of their religious journey; and being a *haj* in the villages will elevate one’s social status. *Hajj* is only a dream for poor people due to the costs from Indonesia. Thus, there is not merely an economic but a religious reason that encourages Indonesian migrant workers, mostly women, to go to the Middle East and especially to Saudi Arabia. (Bandiyono and Alihar, 2000).

In the 1980s, because of the increasing number of international Indonesian migrant workers, the government began to take a more active role in sending migrant workers abroad. In 1988, the Minister of Manpower passed a Ministerial Decree (No. 5) that outlined procedures for sending migrant workers abroad. Another Ministerial Decree (No. 1307) was issued that same year that

specified technical requirements for the large number of Indonesian workers migrating to Saudi Arabia. In 1994, a new Minister of Manpower, Abdul Latif, formed PT. Bijak, which helps organize the sending of skilled Indonesian workers to Malaysia (Tirtosudarmo, 2000).

State encouragement of the economic role of Indonesian migrant workers was explicitly written into the General Guidance of National Development (Repelita) V. Sending migrant workers abroad has helped the State to overcome the national problem of unemployment which potentially threatens national stability. Migrant workers boost the national income (Tirtosudarmo, 2000).

### **How Are Women Trafficked?**

Certain *patterns of recruitment* cut across geographical boundaries in Indonesia, although there are differences in trafficking arrangements that occur in different regions. Women in Indonesia become trapped in sexually exploitative situations in several ways: when they are encouraged to migrate as domestic helpers, as mail order brides, into the “entertainment/performing artist” industry, and when women in local prostitution are targeted by traffickers. In these situations, the role of recruiters who work for local or international traffickers is crucial.

#### *Domestic Helpers*

Some studies on Indonesian international migration indicate that Indonesian workers are mostly characterized by low education, limited knowledge and skills, and are between the ages of 15 and 40 (Bandiyono and Alihar, 2000). Male laborers are mainly employed in unskilled jobs such as in plantation and lumber industry work, while female laborers are mainly employed as housemaids, and cooks. Some are recruited into prostitution (Bandiyono and Alihar, 2000). Numerous stories about the success of migrant workers in improving the economic conditions of their families have attracted more poor women to leave the country. The increase in women workers has made a significant contribution to their families, and to regional and the national development. (Bandiyono and Alihar 2000).

Women migrating across Indonesian borders for domestic work has been going on for many years. However, the Indonesian government for the first time acknowledged the fact that many overseas migrant workers are women when it distinguished between Indonesian male migrant workers (TKI) and Indonesian women workers (TKW) in its 1998 official migration categories.

Unfortunately those migrating for work, especially women, do not get the sufficient protection from the State. The majority of women migrants who are working as domestic helpers often face physical and sexual abuse during the recruitment process perpetrated by brokers and agents, and later by employers where they are placed (Kompas 13 March 2000). Such nightmares do not prevent women from migrating as they have little choice if they want sustain their families.

The violation of women’s human rights continues when women who were previously recruited as domestic helpers or factory workers are forced to engage in prostitution in countries such as Singapore and Malaysia. Women also face sexual exploitation in transit places like Batam, while awaiting travel documents to other countries. Often, they must remain in these transit areas for weeks or even months and are induced or forced into prostitution. In March 2000, 20 female migrant workers were intimidated and tortured by their agents because they refused to engage in prostitution (Kompas, 13 March, 2000 ).

#### *Mail-Order Bride Industries*

The mail order bride (MOB) industry is a way by which women are drawn into sexually exploitative situations. More and more women are trafficked as mail-order brides to Malaysia, Hong Kong and Taiwan, especially young girls from Singkawang, West Kalimantan. In 1993, the

*Jawa Pos Daily* (15 July 1993), estimated that 34,000 young women between the ages of 14-18 were sold to Hong Kong, their “price” being between HK\$45,000-65,000. *Harian Surya*, 18 and 19 April 1994 (as cited by Missiyah and Solidaritas Perempuan, 1997) also reported that 25 women from East Java were recruited for marriage to Taiwanese men.

Some women, recruited for marriage, use this as a short cut through immigration channels. Others are promised good husbands but instead, they are locked up and forced to give sexual services to buyers in prostitution. Away from home, hampered by lack of ability to speak the local language/dialect, and not able to find help, young girls and women become dependent on brothel owners, pimps or “quasi-husbands” (Missiyah and Solidaritas Perempuan, 1997).

#### *“Entertainment” Industries*

The big room looks empty. The chairs are all turned over, but the lights are still on. In the corner of the room, there is a Christmas tree without any decorations. A number of women, advertised as “massage girls,” sit near the windows with only numbers identifying them. If customers want to buy their services, they can simply select the women through the glass. These women remind us of the “jugun ianfu,” the women who were trapped in the so-called “comfort houses” and forced to give sexual services to Japanese soldiers during World War II (Hartono & Juliantara, 1997).

Every year, thousands of women and young girls around the world are trafficked and sold to “entertainment” industries. Prostitution is the most flourishing sector in these industries. According to one study, prostitution has become a major source of female employment in Southeast Asian cities (Jones and Manning, 1992). Studies on prostitution in Indonesia have indicated that the income of women in prostitution is relatively higher compared to the income of women with the same low-level education (Hull, Sulistyarningsih, and Jones, 1997).

Police records in West Java (*Polda Jawa Barat*) show that trafficking for prostitution involves several layers of recruitment. The first layer is the agent/trafficker who hires recruiters to look for young girls in the villages. The second layer is the recruiters who collaborate with local people familiar with the girls, and assist the recruiters in convincing the girls and their parents that girls will be getting good jobs in the cities. The third layer is the local people who help the recruiters and are trusted neighbors, friends, or even relatives, and who are seen as a personal guarantee of promised jobs and good payment in the cities. The promised jobs that are usually offered to attract women are waitressing in restaurants, nightclubs or ‘karaoke’ bars. However, when the young women arrive in the cities they are forced into prostitution instead. A young woman named Lilis (25 years old) who arrived in Batam three years ago explained: “I was tricked into coming here. Somebody I knew promised to find me a good job here. But while waiting for the job, I was forced to work in karaoke bar as prostitute” (*Gatra*, 3 October 1998).

Usually, the recruiters take advantage of the hardest economic times, prior to the harvesting period or during the drought season, when jobs are scarce for poor or landless families in the villages, and many must look elsewhere for money to survive. Because of this lack of money, girls often agree to a recruiter’s arrangements, or parents themselves may seek out recruiters looking for young girls and offer their daughters. In return, the broker will give parents an amount of money as a deposit. The deposit is, in fact, the debt that the girls have to pay upon their arrival in the cities. In this situation there is little chance, if any, to escape from a syndicate. This type of recruitment is the most common way to entrap women into prostitution, and to indenture them into abusive and bondage conditions. The recruiters receive high payments of not less than Rp 1 million (around \$US100) for each woman they bring in, with added compensation if the girl is a virgin (*Gatra*, 3 October 1998).

Another strategy of recruiters is to go to places where young girls usually get together. These places could be shopping malls, cafes, and discotheques. This strategy has proven to be an effective way to attract young girls, especially when the recruiters portray themselves as well-off young men who are looking for girlfriends. Lenny (18), Wida (16) and Dewi (20) were three young girls who were prostituted after being recruited in a shopping mall in Medan, North Sumatra, where they met three good-looking, charming and generous young men who offered them job opportunities elsewhere. The three young women did not suspect anything wrong when they were invited to have dinner in a café and were offered promising jobs as bar tenders in a discotheque in Dumai, which is close to Singapore. When they arrived in Dumai, they were forced to engage in prostitution. The three young women refused to do so and tried to escape but were repeatedly beaten by the bodyguards. They were made to sign contracts indicating that they had consented. Along with 600 young women, they were locked in “barracks.” “I cried one night when I had to give my virginity to a fat Chinese man for the price of Rp 50.000. And I had to give that money to *Mami* “ (the brothel owner) (*Gatra*, 25 March 2000).

A similar tragedy happened to Fifin (14) and Erni (18) who are also from Medan. While hanging out in Medan Baru Plaza, a man met them and offered them good jobs. Tragically, their destination was a brothel called “Ibuangan Sampah” in the Riau Islands. Once recruited, these women are trapped in debt bondage. The initial debt is the payment for their travel costs and the interest that accrues on it. Additionally, the brothel owners also charge the prostituted women for food, clothes, healthcare and other expenses. Escape is virtually impossible due to the debt bondage system and the bodyguards who escort them day and night.

Meanwhile, the involvement of Indonesian women in migration for prostitution has been accelerated by the growth of tourism internationally. The development of tourism was reinforced by international financing institutions in the 1970s to pursue economic growth as a development strategy of poor countries (Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, 1996). The foreign exchange obtained from tourism is a significant contribution to the economic development of these countries.

In the new industrial region, such as in Batam, tourism plays a significant role. After the industrial sector, the tourism sector makes the second largest contribution to the economy (*Gatra*, 3 October, 1998). The development of the tourist industry in poorer countries is a result of the economic development of richer countries in the North in which “the need for leisure” is one of the highest stages of economic development. Tourism responds to the needs of people from developed countries. Poorer countries such as Asia and Latin America are considered “paradise,” as they offer cheap and exotic entertainment. The availability of cheap “sand, sun and sex” in the poorer countries is attractively advertised by travel agents (Hull, Sulistyaningsih and Jones, 1997).

Asian Women, including Indonesians, are preferred by European, American, and tourists from neighboring countries, especially from Singapore. More than 80 percent of tourists who visit Batam, for example, come from Singapore. These visitors occupy hotel rooms on weekends. “Sex services” are increasingly used as part of the negotiations or “rules of the game” in business circles (Hull, Sulistyaningsih, and Jones, 1997). In addition to their cheap price, Indonesian girls and women are considered by sex tourists to be more obedient and submissive. As a security guard of a hotel often heard male customers say: “What else do we look for in Batam, but girls?” (*Gatra*, 3 October, 1998).

The rapid growth of sex industries is also reinforced by the lack of legal sanction and the involvement of police and legal authorities. According to a Human Rights Watch report (1995),

many police officers and other government officials facilitate and benefit from “selling” women. They even protect traffickers, brothel owners, pimps, and buyers, often for example, arresting traffickers or pimps for a couple of days and then releasing them after the press has covered their rhetorical action. “Even if they [offenders] are brought to court, they won’t be punished accordingly,” states Katja Sungkana, a women’s rights activist (*Gatra*, October 3, 1998).

Regional police in East Kalimantan and international police of Indonesia/Malaysia have identified at least eight trafficking syndicates that operate in Sabah and Sarawak (both in Malaysian territory). These syndicates continue recruiting women from small towns in East Kalimantan, Java, or north Sumatra, to be sold in Malaysia, or in the new industrial regions of Batam and Karimun close to Malaysia and Singapore.

**THE PHILIPPINES:  
MIGRATION AND TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN**

by

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**Migration Trends**

The Philippines has had a long history of migration. During the American colonial years, Filipinos worked the plantations in Hawaii and other parts of the United States, and Filipino intellectuals and professionals entered foreign universities for higher degrees and specialization. It wasn't until the 1970s under the Marcos administration, however, that Filipinos were deployed as overseas contract workers (OFWs) with official state sanction.

Overseas contract work was promoted as a supposed "interim strategy" to address two major problems: unemployment and the balance of payments (CIIR 1987; Beltran and de Dios, 1992; Villalba, 1995; Battistella, Asis and Abubakar, 1997; Institute of Women's Studies, 1998). Since then, through the administrations of Corazon C. Aquino, Fidel V. Ramos and Ejercito Estrada, overseas contract workers have been called the "new heroes." Their remittances keep the Philippines economy afloat, and support millions of households affected by the economic hardships of the country. As the country enters the new century, hundreds of thousands of Filipinos, now predominantly female, continue to leave the country in search of proverbial greener pastures. Migration, which was originally planned as a short-term economic alternative, has now become a major economic strategy that continues to be promoted as an official mechanism for addressing under- and unemployment of millions of Filipinos.

In the period 1991-1995, an annual average of 700,000 Filipinos were deployed for overseas work, bringing those migrating abroad (hire and re-hires) to a total of 3.5 million. Two thousand overseas contract workers are legally processed daily in the Philippines, and women account for approximately 60 percent of all these legal migrants (POEA, 1998; Duran, 1999). As of December 1999, overseas Filipinos (OFs) reached 7.29 million, scattered in 187 countries and destinations around the world (POEA, January 2000).

"Overseas Filipinos" is the general category to describe Filipinos who are either temporarily or permanently living and working abroad. OFs also include undocumented Filipinos abroad, as well as brides or spouses of foreign nationals. Overseas Filipinos make up 13.4 percent of the country's total population, aged 15 and above, and 19 percent of its labor force (POEA, January 2000). Sixty-six percent of overseas Filipinos are in the United States (2,083,517). Other countries having large populations of overseas Filipinos are: Saudi Arabia (855,230), Malaysia (594,682), Canada (302,172), Australia (202,223), Japan (197,701), Hong Kong (160,484), Taiwan (141,505), Italy (121,319) and Singapore (120,154). (POEA, January 2000). The United States, Canada and Australia are the three top countries of choice for Filipinos wishing to migrate

Statistics from the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) show that there has been a steady increase of female OFWs from 12 percent in 1975, to 47 percent in 1987, to 58 percent in 1995 (POEA, 1998; Lauby and Stark, 1987; Abrera-Mangahas, 1998). From January -December 1999, women constituted 64 percent of new hires abroad, with only 36 percent being male (Kanlungan Center Foundation, 2000). Service workers comprised the biggest number (35.46 percent) of deployed land-based (as opposed to sea-based) new hires in 1999 (Kanlungan Center Foundation, 1999).

The latest statistics from the Philippines Overseas Employment Agency (POEA) show that of the 7.29 million overseas Filipinos, 1.94 million are reported to be undocumented. Undocumented Filipino migrants constitute a large percentage of Filipino foreign workers abroad (Battistella, Asis and Abubakar, 1997; Beltran and de Dios, 1992). For example in Singapore, 95 percent of Filipino migrant workers — mostly women domestic helpers — did not have permits from the POEA in 1995.

Estimating the number of undocumented workers leaving the Philippines is a difficult task. The archipelago of the Philippines has many ports of exit and entry, and its wide shoreline is nearly impossible to monitor. Undocumented workers leave the country by various means, some acquiring tourist visas and others utilizing “backdoor” migration routes through the southern Philippines and then traveling by sea to Sabah, Brunei and Malaysia.

International migration has been the anchor of trafficking, not only for labor, but for sex as well. Although it is difficult to ascertain how many women have been trafficked, it is easy to see how both undocumented and documented migrant women are especially vulnerable to sex trafficking, as mechanisms for the sex trade become more sophisticated, even making use of official channels and processes. The complicity of some government officials and agencies has made trafficking easier and monitoring more difficult (Ateneo de Manila University and WEDPRO, 1999; December 1997; Beltran and de Dios, 1992).

### **Factors Promoting Female Migration**

The percentage of women OFWs steadily increased from a low 12 percent in 1975 to an estimated 60 percent in the late 1990s. An estimated 600,000 documented female OFWs are domestic helpers in 19 major worldwide destinations (POEA, 1998). In 1998, at least 47,017 Filipino “entertainers,” a euphemism for women in the sex industry, were in five countries: namely Hong Kong, Macau, South Korea, Saipan (U.S.) and Japan, with Japan accounting for 95 percent of Filipino “entertainers” in Asia (POEA, 1999).

The rise in female overseas migration has been a historical product of the following factors:

- 1) Official migration policies of the Philippines government in which recruitment of women is actively promoted through its various government units, with the collaboration of recruitment agencies.
- 2) Gender stereotyping of women in work situations which traditionally echo their roles as caregivers and “entertainers,” i.e., sexual objects.
- 3) Growing poverty in the context of structural adjustment programs that produce landlessness and impoverishment among rural populations, and push more women to join the labor force.
- 4) Rise in female-headed households, much of it due to breakdown in traditional family structures and support systems.
- 5) Lack of opportunities for local employment that would allow women to explore better jobs, acquire greater skills, and obtain a more secure future.
- 6) Growing family dependence on women for income, especially among poorer households;
- 7) The demand for female migrant workers in more developed economies.
- 8) Economic boom in destination countries.

- 9) Women's expanding sense of financial/economic and personal autonomy, both in origin and destination countries.
- 10) A growing number of women and men in destination countries relegate domestic work to hired help from abroad.
- 11) Normalization of prostitution and other activities in the sex industry such as stripping, often disguised as "entertainment" jobs in destination countries (Lim, 2000; Santos, 2000; Ateneo de Manila University and WEDPRO, 1999; Abrera-Mangahas, 1998; Battistella, Asis and Abubakar, 1997; Yang, 1996; Santos and Lee, 1992; Beltran and de Dios, 1992; Villalba, 1992; Institute of Women's Studies, 1988).

### **Regional Socio-economic Context: Impact of the Asian Crisis on Migration**

Currently, Asia-Pacific is one of the most dynamic regions of the world. New democracies are on the rise, as authoritarian regimes come under scrutiny from citizens. In some cases, popular uprisings and/or military interventions have removed governments from power, such as in Indonesia and the Philippines, although the contexts and causes may not be the same. Conflict situations, including wars of liberation, abound in the region, e.g., in East Timor, Indonesia, and the Southern Philippines.

The Asian economic crisis in the late 1990s affected the Philippines, although in a less a dramatic sense than in neighboring countries. One of its first immediate impacts was unemployment. In 1998, there was a substantial increase in company closures, retrenchment and layoffs. Young male workers in both urban and rural areas, and young female workers in rural areas had the highest increase in unemployment rates (Ateneo de Manila University and WEDPRO, 1999; Duran, 1999). At the same time, more young people were pushed by financial need into entering the labor force earlier, especially in the age groups of 15-19 and 20-24. In the 20-24 age group, it was mainly females in both urban and rural areas who entered the labor market in increasing numbers (Beltran and de Dios, 1992; Ateneo de Manila University and WEDPRO, 1999; Duran, 1999).

The effects of severe weather disturbances and other environmental disasters joined with the financial crisis of the 1990s to cause severe economic and social dislocation. When Bicol's Mount Mayon in the Southern Tagalog region erupted in 1998, the worst hit were women and children. Interviews with Bicolano women revealed that families encouraged young daughters, as young as 13 and 14, to obtain employment as domestic helpers in nearby Legazpi or Albay or in Manila. (Interviews with women in Buang, Albay, March 2000).

In developed countries, the social security system is the traditional safety net for unemployment and decline in incomes. The Philippines, handicapped by very limited funds, cannot even adequately compensate the emergency health needs of its citizens. Extended families are expected to provide social safety nets. The contributions of overseas contract workers to family incomes become even more urgently needed.

During such times, additional burdens are placed on women. These burdens are often invisible because women are traditionally expected to be domestic keepers and saviors, finding ways to provide for more people and satisfy basic needs, with meager resources. A woman's childcare and household work multiplies because additional members of the clan rely on her.

Overseas contract work becomes an attraction for women, despite negative reports of risks and problems. Pressures mount on women to work overseas as family members increasingly rely on their remittances (Ateneo de Manila and WEDPRO, 1999; Kanlungan Center Foundation,

1997; Jocano, in Beltran and de Dios, 1992; Institute of Women's Studies; 1988). Unscrupulous recruiters take advantage of these conditions to lure women into sex trafficking networks.

However, opportunities and wages are dwindling in East Asia, the Middle East and Europe. Remittances to the Philippines from the three world regions are decreasing, compared with the last decade, and the number of OFWs going to the Middle East has also declined in the last few years. The only increased remittances are from North America, and these come not from contract workers but from immigrants and Filipino Americans already residing in the United States (Kanlungan Center Foundation, 1999).

The massive corruption and cronyism under the Estrada administration has emptied the coffers of the Philippines. Millions of pesos are being spent to pursue several economic sabotage and corruption cases against the ousted administration. The aborted impeachment trial cost millions of pesos. Estrada also launched an all-out war against the Muslim separatists that diverted resources from other sectors, especially from social services. A national election in May 2001 further burdens the already sagging economy.

### **Gendered Dimensions of Migration Policies: a Profile of Filipina Migrants**

Government policies on migration put Filipino women at risk when government agencies promote jobs for women overseas workers that carry low pay, low status, and exposure to sexual exploitation and trafficking. Most Filipino overseas workers are employed either as domestic helpers or "entertainers." Regulating the "entertainment"-oriented employment of Filipino women in Japan, for example (POEA, 1998), essentially promotes racist and sexist stereotypes and treatment, since mainly Filipino women perform what are widely regarded as demeaning, socially unacceptable and economically non-viable activities (Ateneo de Manila University and WEDPRO, 1999; Tyner, 1994; Beltran and de Dios, 1992).

Most women new hires in 1999 took jobs as domestic helpers and caretakers, reflecting the sociocultural biases against women (Tanton, 2000; Ateneo de Manila University and WEDPRO, 1999; Gonzales and Sanchez, 1996; Beltran and de Dios, 1992). These categories constituted 48.3 percent of the total women new hires totaling 73,329. Ironically, the number of households without mothers in the Philippines is increasing at the same time that Filipino women are migrating for care taking jobs abroad. "Entertainers" constituted 28.4 percent or 43,092 of the total women new hires.

Women OFWs are generally younger than their Filipino male counterparts (Ateneo de Manila University and WEDPRO, 1999). Data show that more than three out of five women OFWs are between 20-34 years old, while the majority (52.6 percent) of male OFWs are between 30-44 years old (Kanlungan Center Foundation, 2000; Boer, 1988). Sarah Balabagan, the girl whose Saudi employer attempted to rape her and whose story attracted international attention, was only 14 years old when she was recruited for work as a domestic helper.

Women are also illegally recruited at a younger age. Many of the respondents interviewed in several studies were under 18 years of age, or in their early twenties, when they were illegally recruited and eventually trafficked (Interviews with women in the cities of Legazpi, Dumaguete, Davao and Cebu, March 2000-March 2001; Tanton, 2000; Ateneo de Manila University and WEDPRO, 1999; WEDPRO, 1998; Gonzales and Sanchez, 1996; Beltran and de Dios, 1992).

Even legally documented women migrants have been able to fake their real ages and make themselves appear older than they really are (Interviews with women in the cities of Legazpi, Dumaguete, Davao and Cebu, March 2000-March 2001). In the "entertainment" or sex industry, women in their late 20s or early 30s are generally considered old for the trade.

## **Conditions of Work and Sexual Exploitation**

The conditions of overseas Filipino migrant workers in destination countries are fraught with problems and risks. In general, the literature refers to “culture shock” (Jocano in Beltran and de Dios, 1992) to cover a wide range of problems faced by migrants, including language barriers, differential expectations between employer and OFWs, and actual maltreatment and sexual abuse (CIIR, 1997; Santos and Lee, 1992; Beltran and de Dios, 1992; Gonzales and Sanchez, 1996; Battistella, Asis and Abubakar, 1997; Abrera-Mangahas, 1998; Ateneo de Manila University and WEDPRO, 1999). Imprisonment, contraction of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, and death are other tribulations that OFWs face.

Women-specific abuses have been documented, and a growing number of non-governmental organizations and academic institutions have begun to focus on preventive strategies to address this abuse and exploitation (Abrera-Mangahas, 1998; Gonzales and Sanchez, 1996; Beltran and de Dios, 1992; Santos and Lee, 1992; CIIR, 1997; Institute of Women’s Studies; 1988). Handbooks, manuals, and other information materials have been published especially to assist female migrants as they leave the country and are on site abroad, addressing labor violations and trafficking (Ateneo Human Rights Center, 1999; Ateneo Human Rights Center, 1998; Kanlungan Center Foundation, 1998; Kanlungan Centre Foundation, December 1997; Conspectus, KALAYAAN and WEDPRO, 1998).

In 1998, 84 percent of OFWs assisted for repatriation by the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) were women (POEA, 1999). The women encountered problems of maltreatment, physical and/or mental illness, sexual abuse, early termination of contract, over-staying, becoming runaways, imprisonment, death, and family troubles (Battistella, Asis and Abubakar, 1997; Samonte, 1993; Beltran and de Dios, 1992; Kanlungan Center Foundation, 1992).

In the 1980s, a survey found that most of the 46,000 women domestic workers in the Middle East suffered from “extreme degradation, humiliation, sexual harassment and even rape.” They were faced with “hazardous working conditions, including contract substitution, wage discrimination, ill-treatment by employers, and other form of harassment” (Institute of Women’s Studies, 1988)

Among migrant workers, it is the women who are most vulnerable to violence. In 1994, the Philippines Overseas Employment Agency (POEA) estimated that 68 percent of women OFWs had been subjected to physical and sexual violence and exploitation. These POEA figures do not include cases of sex trafficking, because official mechanisms are not able to monitor backdoor trafficking via Mindanao, for example, where transport to neighboring countries of Sabah, Indonesia and Malaysia is easily facilitated, costs around US\$100, and requires no official documentation (Interviews with women respondents, Dumaguete City on March 2000, and in Davao City in December 2000; Battistella, Asis and Abubakar, 1997).

Twenty-two percent (22 percent) of Filipinos with HIV/AIDS were OFWs. Out of 1,336 HIV/AIDS victims in the National AIDS Registry from 1984 to 1999, 298 were former OFWs (Kanlungan Center Foundation, 2000).

## **Income**

The national coffers benefit enormously from income generated from overseas contract workers. From 1995 to 1999, 2,360,011 OFWs contributed US\$59,002,750 or PhP2.06 billion (US\$1 = PhP 35) in membership fees to the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration alone. Additionally, the POEA is estimated to have collected US\$ 83,702,000 from OFWs it has de-

ployed in 1999 alone, based on a US\$ 100 processing fee per worker (Kanlungan Center Foundation, 2000)

Remittances from OFWs that pass through official channels of designated banks are not included in the estimates given above. Door-to-door remittances using private financial outfits, and through relatives or friends coming home to visit, as well as money brought home by the OFWs themselves, are difficult to ascertain since these are private transactions beyond official monitoring mechanisms.

Women OFWs who are employed as domestic helpers earn between US\$300 to US\$500 a month. Those in the entertainment industry in Japan earn from 3,500 yen and higher (Interviews with women respondents in Davao and Cebu Cities, October 2000-February 2001). OFWs have bought several small businesses for their families and households. Especially in the 1970s-80s, migrants' earnings from the Middle East enabled Filipino relatives to buy pedicabs, jeepneys, and set up convenience stores. More recently, Filipinas who have worked in Japan are known in their communities as lavish spenders and, in some instances, for their ability to purchase a small property for their families.

### **Marriage Marketing**

The Philippines is one of the major sources of women for marriage marketing. Hundreds of marriage agencies advertise through pen pal columns, classified ads, the Internet and other means, peddling Filipinas and other Asian women as exotic virgins, innocent, submissive, "traditional and supportive...whose grandest dream is to meet, marry and make you (a prospective husband) the happiest man on earth" (Haduca and Alba, 2000; Tapales, 1993).

Filipino culture tends to see unattached, maturing women as "*kawawa*," or pitiful. Women are expected to be married, have children and grow old with a family. The pressure to marry before their mid-twenties, the stigma attached to spinsterhood and the remnant of a long colonial mentality that regards marriage to foreign men as a good choice have all contributed to the growing number of Filipino women seeking foreign spouses (Yang, 1996; Tanton, 2000). Many Filipino brides have admitted that marrying foreign spouses assures them of a more materially comfortable life overseas, not just for themselves but also for their families of origin. They expect that their husbands would understand the Filipino culture of married children helping out their elderly parents and siblings who are in less fortunate circumstances.

1989-1996 data revealed that the average age of a Filipino fiancée/spouse is 29, while that of the foreign partner is 37 years old. Only 35.2 percent of the Filipino fiancées/spouses belonged to the 30 and above age bracket, compared to 74.6 percent of their foreign partners in the same age bracket (Commission on Filipinos Overseas Annual Report, 1996). 93.5 percent of Filipino fiancées/spouses of foreign nationals were single prior to marriage, whereas 63.1 percent of their male foreign partners were single. One-third of foreign partners had been divorced prior to marrying Filipino women (Commission on Filipinos Overseas Annual Report, 1996).

From 1989-1996, the CFO provided guidance and counseling to 130,972 Filipino fiancées/spouses of foreign nationals. Of these emigrants, 41.4 percent went to the United States while 30.5 percent went to Japan. Other destination countries for fiancées/spouses of foreign nationals were Australia with 9.1 percent, Germany with 4.1 percent, Canada with 3.6 percent, and the United Kingdom with 1.6 percent (Commission on Filipinos Overseas Annual Report, 1996).

### **Violence against Mail Order Brides**

In 1996, an Australian report on "Violence Against Filipino Women" revealed that many Filipino women between the ages of 20-39 who emigrate to Australia are victims of domestic

violence. They are six times more likely to be killed than Australian women of the same age group. The report also found that over 70 percent of women who migrated to Australia have been sponsored as the fiancées or spouses of Australian male residents. A 1992 study of Australian male sponsors shows 111 serial sponsors: 53 men sponsored twice; 57 men sponsored on three occasions; and one had sponsored over seven women. Furthermore, the Australian Immigration Department found that 80 of the 110 serial sponsorship cases involved domestic violence (Haduca and Alba, 2000; Barrowclough May 1995).

More often than not, results are disastrous for the women who become victims of violence. Foreign men are quoted as saying that Filipino wives are subservient and exotic, and that getting them into their countries on six month visitors' visas is cheaper than using women in prostitution (Haduca and Alba, 2000; Barrowclough May 1995).

Racism and sexism predominate in many mail-order bride arrangements. In an article in the *Manila Chronicle* (Feb. 4, 1996), a Philippines governmental representative said that when Filipinas are married to Korean men, they do not "...assume their place as wives of their Korean partners, but rather as domestic helpers, factory workers or even prostitutes, but not before satisfying the sexual needs of their husbands and their friends. Worse, they are denied the use of telephone, letters and all forms of communication to tell authorities of their plight." To some future foreign husbands, getting a Filipino wife is no less than a commercial transaction.

More documentation on Filipino mail-order brides is necessary. However, the level of physical and emotional violence that is currently reported by women calls for national and international interventions.

**THAILAND:  
MIGRATION AND TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN**

by  
Jean D’Cunha

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**A. Migration Trends Among Thai Women**

International out-migration from Thailand is by no means a new phenomenon. Consistent with migration trends in the rest of contemporary Asia, large-scale out-migration from Thailand was first witnessed in the 1970s and early 1980s to West Asian countries. These booming oil-rich economies in need of both skilled and unskilled labour, drew in a predominantly male Thai labour force denied adequate economic opportunities back home. However, changes in the pace, magnitude and trends in migration induced by globalization in the last two decades, in Thailand as elsewhere in Asia, beg urgent attention.

A new marker of overseas migration trends in Asia since the late 1970s has been its feminization. While in 1976 women constituted less than 15 percent of the 146,400 Asian overseas workers, by 1995 there was an aggregate outflow of 800,000 women migrants per year (Lim and Oishi, 1995). Migration data compiled by the Department of Labour in Thailand for the years 1978-88, and presented in the table below indicate that data for the period 1978-85 on women migrants are either not available or not separately reported (disaggregated). This is perhaps because of the pervasive stereotype that migrants are men, thus rendering migrant women invisible. The sex of migrants thus had to be inferred from the category into which they were admitted in the country of destination, assuming that dependent spouses are mostly women, and that certain jobs such as teaching, nursing, domestic service or entertainment would be dominated by women migrants. This lack of available data thwarts an accurate assessment of the magnitude and nature of women’s involvement in the international migration process. It conceals the specific needs and concerns of women migrants and preempts the formulation of legislation, policies, programmes and interventions that are responsive to poor, ethnically marginalized women.

However, available data on women migrants for the years 1986-1988, presented in table 1 below, indicates an increase in the numbers of Thai women migrants.

**Table 1**

Annual Number of Migrant Workers and percentage Female from Thailand: Numbers in Thousands

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total No. Of Migrants (in Thousands)</b>	<b>% Women</b>
<b>1978</b>	<b>14.7</b>	...
<b>1979</b>	<b>10.6</b>	...
<b>1980</b>	<b>21.5</b>	...
<b>1981</b>	<b>26.7</b>	...
<b>1982</b>	<b>108.5</b>	...
<b>1983</b>	<b>68.5</b>	...
<b>1984</b>	<b>75.5</b>	...
<b>1985</b>	<b>69.7</b>	...
<b>1986</b>	<b>112.4</b>	<b>6.4</b>
<b>1987</b>	<b>106.0</b>	<b>9.2</b>
<b>1988</b>	<b>118.6</b>	<b>12.7</b>

(Source: Compiled by the ILO from Reports received from the Department of Labour, Thailand).

*Note* (...) indicates that data are not available or are not separately reported.

According to official records in 1993, although women accounted for only 19.4 percent of Thai migrants for overseas employment, the undocumented flow of women migrants through clandestine means is known to be significant, and the number of Thai women migrating has increased faster than men.

In the 1990s, there was a shift in Thai migration from West Asian countries to emerging new destinations within Asia. As indicated in Table 2, these countries are: Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and Hong Kong. Outside Asia, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, the United States and Australia are frequent points of destination.

**Table 2: Estimates of Thai Migrant Workers According to Countries of Destination (1991-1995)**

<b>Destinations</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1993</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1995</b>
Saudi Arabia	39, 600	25, 000	15, 000	10, 000	6, 000
Qatar	3, 000	3, 000	3, 500	32, 500	3, 000
Bahrain	3, 500	3, 000	3, 500	3, 500	2, 000
United Arab Emirates	2, 000	2, 500	2, 500	2, 500	2, 500
Kuwait	2, 800	5, 500	3, 000	3, 000	3, 000
Israel	2, 300	3, 000	3, 500	7, 000	15, 000
Other West Asian countries	2, 000	2, 000	2, 500	3, 500	2, 000
Libya	18, 000	25, 000	20, 000	17, 000	4, 000
Other African countries	0	0	1, 500	1, 500	1, 000
Malaysia	10, 000	25, 000	30, 000	38, 000	40, 000
Singapore	27, 000	50, 000	50, 000	50, 000	50, 000
Brunei	11, 000	20, 000	21, 000	25, 000	26, 000
Hong Kong	15, 000	20, 000	25, 000	26, 000	26, 000
Japan	25, 000	76, 000	100, 000	80, 000	80, 000
Taiwan	7, 000	20, 000	80, 000	150, 000	180, 000
Other Asian countries	10, 000	10, 000	10, 000	10, 500	10, 500
<b>Total</b>	<b>178, 700</b>	<b>290, 000</b>	<b>371, 000</b>	<b>460, 000</b>	<b>451, 000</b>

(Source: Mekong Study Centre and IOM. “Return Home: Thai Women. Experiences in Migration through International Trafficking Networks to Japan and Reintegration to Their Villages in Phayao and Chiangrai Provinces.” Research Paper funded by IOM, Bangkok, Thailand, 1998.)

Key markers of the feminized migration process are that Thai women are generally migrating as young, independent, economic migrants for short periods of time and as a family survival strategy, rather than for personal advancement or fulfillment. Studies on Thai migration to Japan reveal that, although men comprise a larger share of migrants in most age groups, in the 15-20 year-old category, women and girls outnumber men and boys by 5 to 2 (Matsuda, 1992). While the largest migrant group for men is the 40-49 year old age bracket, 70 percent of all women migrants to Japan are between 20-24 years old. (Human Rights Watch, 2000). In destination countries listed above, the majority of Thai women migrants tend to be concentrated in gendered occupational categories. At the higher end of the skill ladder, Thai women migrate to work as nurses or in office jobs – “feminized” occupations – but their numbers are fewer than Filipinas migrating for similar jobs. At the lower end of the job hierarchy, Thai women are employed in factories and sweat shops, but the number here too is relatively small. However, the heaviest concentration of women at the lower end of the occupational hierarchy is in the service sector as domestic helpers, as restaurant and snack bar workers including cashiers and waitresses, and as entertainers, a euphemism for prostitution.

According to the Japan Immigration Association’s statistics, 46.5 percent of women undocumented migrants apprehended in 1993 were working as hostesses or in direct prostitution, with 22.9 percent in other service work. The 1995 arrest statistics compiled by the Ministry of Justice show that 36.9 percent of undocumented women migrants were working as hostesses, 15.3

percent as waitresses, 8.1 percent as domestics, 4.8 percent as cooks, and 3.4 percent were engaged in prostitution. Only 18.3 percent were employed as production workers or manual labourers; and 13.2 percent are listed as “other.” By contrast, the Japanese Ministry of Justice statistics on the occupations of undocumented male migrants apprehended in 1995 indicated that 37.4 percent were construction workers, 25.2 percent were production workers, and 9.5 percent were manual labourers. The remaining 27.9 percent were employed in the service industry as cooks, bar tenders or as domestic helpers (IOM, 1997). What causes women to migrate for these jobs?

## **B. Factors Propelling Thai Women to Migrate**

A host of complex socio-economic, political and ideological push and pull factors interact in a certain configuration to prompt Thai women to migrate.

### **Push Factors**

Among the most important push factors are structurally induced poverty and culture of socio-economic deprivation in Thailand. A woman’s decision to migrate to richer destinations in search of better jobs, higher wages, and better living standards is often a family survival strategy to ameliorate conditions of impoverishment. In part, the return of Thai male migrant workers from countries of West Asia, in the early 1980s as a result of slackening economic conditions, drove women to migrate overseas to fill this vacuum. The desire to maintain competitive lifestyles is another cause for migration.

In more recent times the impact of structural adjustment policies, and the economic crisis of 1997 in Thailand, as elsewhere in Southeast Asia, have heightened the phenomenon of overseas female migration for jobs. The crisis resulted in women being the first to be retrenched, a loss of women’s jobs in the formal sector, and a fall in women’s real wages. Women entered the burgeoning informal sector in large numbers as self-employed home-based workers or as subcontracted home workers located at the bottom of the production structure in low, piece-rate, temporary, unskilled jobs, marked by an absence of social protection or collective bargaining structures. Under the new regime of globalization, the withdrawal of state subsidies for public services like health and education has increased the cost of these now privatized services and has transferred to women the socio-economic costs and burdens of providing these. Women either supply these services themselves, work harder or are compelled to migrate overseas for family survival under worsening economic conditions.

Women’s overseas migration has been facilitated by the economically and politically motivated labour export policies of the Thai government (Stern, 1998). Foreign exchange remittances from overseas migrant workers are an economic contribution to immediate families and to source countries, enabling them to tide over fiscal and trade deficits. In 1995 remittances from overseas Thai workers in Asia was estimated at US\$1 billion, which included US\$100 million from Japan alone (Singhanetra-Renard, 1995). Overseas job placements diffuse social tensions and political upheavals generated by unemployment and economic deprivation back home.

The relative willingness and ease of Thai women to migrate in support of their families has been facilitated by a number of socio-cultural factors. North and northeast Thailand, in particular, have had a matrilineal tradition marked by lineage and inheritance passing through women and women’s ownership of landed property. The consequent absence of an obsession with biological paternity resulted in more or less flexible codes of sexual conduct for women. Historically Thai women, particularly poor rural women, have had greater degrees of independence, mobility, ease in interactions with men, higher labour force participation rates and participation in the public sphere. Traditionally daughters are obliged to maintain aged parents and families.

### **Pull Factors**

An important pull factor is the change in the nature of international labour market demand to a more woman-specific demand. This has occurred in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons. These are as follows:

- Globalization and structural adjustment that have resulted in export-oriented production and/or decentralized, flexible, cost-effective sub-contracted home-based production. Women are heavily recruited in these sectors both in their own countries and overseas in low wage, piece rate, casual jobs, with hazardous work conditions, and where social protection and mechanisms for collective bargaining are absent;
- Tight labour market conditions in newly industrializing countries like Singapore and Hong Kong that have drawn women, particularly urban, middle class, educated and skilled Singaporean women, into the workforce. This coupled with a scarcity of local labour for domestic work, has resulted in the hiring of cheap foreign domestic labour from poorer countries in the region to take over the domestic roles once performed by these women;
- Affluence in countries of West Asia that makes the employment of foreign domestic workers in elite households a status symbol for families who employ them;
- The growth of the service sector with “feminized” occupations in Asian and western countries, and the development of the entertainment industry (a euphemism for prostitution) in countries of the Asian region;
- The tourist industry in Asian countries, emerging as a new development strategy in the late 1960s, incorporated “sex tour” packages as an integral component. This caught the imagination of Japanese men (Singhanetra-Renard, 1995). By the mid-1970s, package tours were being advertised to Thailand, the Philippines, Taiwan and Korea, and many companies included “weekend sex holidays” overseas as part of employees’ yearly incentives (Hosoda, 1994). By the end of the decade, Japan came under scathing attack for its “sex tours.” The tide has now changed towards recruiting foreign women into the US \$33.6-84 billion entertainment industry in Japan, instead (Human Rights Watch, 2000). There are an estimated 150,000 non-Japanese women, primarily from Thailand, the Philippines, Taiwan and Korea, employed in the Japanese sex industry (Human Rights Watch, 2000);

Other pull factors include:

- The creation of contacts and consolidated migration networks as a result of increased transnational investments in countries of the South by corporate conglomerates from the North, and the latter’s increased overseas business activities. This has been facilitated by free trade policies, deregulation, and the development of new information and communications technologies in the contemporary phase of globalization;
- The development of a burgeoning “immigration industry.” This includes recruitment agencies, overseas promoters of employment, manpower suppliers and numerous intermediaries, engaging in both legal and undocumented out-migration of Thai women for jobs. Informal networks of family and friends also facilitate women’s overseas migration.

These push factors interact with assimilated images of “Asian Tiger” economies and countries of the west as the gold mines of the world, intensifying the desire of many Thai women to migrate for jobs to “greener pastures.” Discussions with NGOs reveal that women often dismiss

information and advice on the possible hazards and problems that await them with statements like “this won’t happen to me,” or “let me give it a chance.” Social networks of Thai family members, friends, and acquaintances who have migrated and returned often tend to reinforce these images, propelling Thai women to migrate overseas.

### **C. Conditions of Migrant Thai Women**

From the above it is obvious that the “feminization” of migration has occurred in the context of gender-based occupational segmentation, gendered perceptions of skills and value, and a perception of women as an exploitable source of cheap, pliable labour for the augmentation of capital. The overseas employment of Thai women, like other Asian women, is increasingly becoming an issue of concern. Despite their economic and social contribution to source and host countries, they have to simultaneously contend with and confront problems arising from the triple burdens of class, gender and racial discrimination at every stage of the migration cycle – at the pre-departure phase, on-site as a migrant worker and on return to their home countries. The following are some problems and violations faced:

*Problems and violations in the pre-departure phase in source countries:* These include pressure by family to migrate to ensure family survival needs and exorbitant recruitment fees charged by intermediaries. This results in the sale of assets, borrowing at usurious rates and indebtedness; illegal recruitment by non-registered agencies and mal practice, including trafficking in girls and women for bonded labour and/ or prostitution; lack of effective government monitoring, regulations and sanctions against exploitative intermediaries leading to the abuse of women migrants; and absence of or inadequate provision of information and training to departing migrant women.

*Problems and violations in transit and on-site in receiving countries:* These include ignorance of actual travel routes; physical and sexual abuse en route; tutoring and pressurizing women to make fraudulent claims before authorities; leaving the woman stranded en route in the event of a problem with authorities; low status jobs; no standard employment contract; contracts in a language seldom understood by the women; absence of a copy of the contract with the woman, or substitution of the contract by another less favourable one; retention of the woman’s travel documents, residence and work permits by the employer, rendering the woman dependent and vulnerable to arrest if she runs away; absence of protective legislation and regulations in host countries; long hours of work; no time off weekly; payment of wages below that defined in the contract; delays in or withholding of wage payment; inadequate health coverage; physical, psychological and sexual violence resulting in injuries, physical ill-health, mental and emotional trauma, suicides and mysterious deaths in host countries; racist cultural prejudices about the women and their country of origin (Thailand is, for instance, known as “the brothel of Asia,” and Thai women are considered “easily available”); physical confinement of the women; language and cultural barriers making it difficult to socialize and seek assistance with their limited language skills and limited social networks in destination countries, Thai women suffer considerable alienation in destination countries, and from restrictions on civil and political rights, including the failure of governments to negotiate and implement bilateral or multilateral agreements that protect the woman’s rights.

In addition, the social costs of migration to the family and community back home are high. When women with families migrate, children often become estranged from their mothers. The lack of paternal involvement in childcare and domestic responsibilities exacerbates adverse emotional impacts on children. Long periods of separation from spouses can result in marital instability and discord.

*Problems on return to country of origin:* These include inadequate savings, indebtedness, and inability to invest savings productively making re-migration an urgency; stigmatization of returnees, especially those suffering physical or sexual abuse and/or those who return before the expiration of contracts; inability of the woman to cope with marital tensions and problems arising out of alienation from children; inability of families to understand the on-site experience of exploitation of the woman; and absence of or inadequate provision by government and civil society of services facilitating the socio-economic and emotional reintegration of migrant women and their families.

#### **D. Discriminatory Legislation, Policies and Programmes**

The situation of Thai women migrant workers, as with other women migrants in Asia, is also affected by:

- An interaction of gender, class and race concerns underscoring immigration laws and policies in destination countries related to entry regulations for work, conditions for admission and stay and employment and welfare entitlements;
- Gendered emigration policies and the manner in which the Thai government reconciles labour export promotion policies with the need to protect vulnerable Thai women migrants;

Host country entry regulations for recruitment to specific occupational categories, or skill criteria for entry, generally do not specify sex, but produce gender-specific outcomes. For example, jobs for domestic workers, entertainers, or nurses do not specify male or female, but result in female selectivity, because of gendered occupational segmentation. So too, skill criteria for entry is apparently gender neutral but male selective when operationalized, either because of gendered access to skills acquisition/training in source countries, or simply because of gendered perceptions of skill and value in the host countries that associate women with unskilled and men with skilled jobs.

Although women are recruited into certain jobs, women are governed by a host of other conditions for admission and stay, which are often discriminatory both in relation to male migrants and local women. In Hong Kong, under the New Conditions of Stay Policy of 1987, foreign domestic workers are:

- (a) Prohibited from moving to other job categories; denied residence even after 7 years of stay in the country; and denied the right to be joined by their families;
- (b) Prohibited from remaining in the country 2 weeks after a contract termination, even if the woman has a valid employment visa. Expatriates and other migrants are not subject to this. Re-processing of a foreign domestic worker's contract in the 2-week period is permitted under special circumstances. But the woman faces special problems: finding a new employer, shelter, access to legal facilities while processing the contract, lack of money. If she fails to get a new contract, she is either sent home and has to try applying all over again – including the re-paying agency fees. If women obtain new contracts, they are often charged exorbitant fees by opportunistic agencies. These provisions increase dependence and vulnerability to employers.
- (c) Prohibited from changing employers in the first 2 years of the contract, except in special circumstances. Other foreign workers have no such restrictions (Discussions with staff of the Asian Migrant Center at the Seventh Asian Conference on Migration, 12-15<sup>th</sup> June, Jakarta, Indonesia)

In Singapore and Malaysia, foreign domestic workers are not allowed to get pregnant, are subject to pregnancy tests every six months, and cannot marry local men. Employers of foreign domestic workers in Singapore provide a security bond that is higher for domestic workers than for other types of foreign workers, and the employer forfeits the bond if the maid gets pregnant. The sexual management of foreign domestic workers, bans on long term or permanent residence, and family reunification are mechanisms to ensure class, cultural and racial purity of the host country and avoid competing claims for economic, political and social rights (Lim and Oishi, 1995).

While host countries recruit Asian migrant women for employment, they deny them protection under existing labour laws or other welfare provisions. In Japan, the entertainer's visa permits foreigners, effectively women, to work in Japan's entertainment industry for 3 months, with the possibility of renewal for another 3 months, on the basis of a contract with a Japanese employer. However "entertainers" are officially classified as "guests," rather than as workers and are consequently excluded from protection of labour laws. Immigration regulations do prescribe instructions on wages and job responsibilities, but these are routinely violated with impunity (Human Rights Watch, 2000). The Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare has eliminated social welfare for foreigners other than permanent residents and bars those staying in Japan less than one year from joining social insurance plans. Short-term foreign residents and most of those with entertainers' visas thus cannot be insured. As a result some medical institutions reject those in need of emergency medical care. Interviews by this author with Thai women in Japan's entertainment industry in a section that follows, shows how lack of access to medical and social services negatively impacts the health and well-being of women who are acutely at risk.

Languages permitted in interviews and outside correspondence for inmates of prisons or detention centers in Japan are very limited – largely restricted to English and Japanese – so that officials present at such interviews or censoring letters can understand them. In May 1992, six Thai women were indicted in Japan for killing the proprietress of a bar for forcing them to provide sexual services to clients. A supportive citizen's group visiting them in the detention center, carrying with them Thai-Japanese dictionaries, were cautioned by the authorities that the meeting would be suspended if even a word of Thai were spoken. The indicted women could hardly speak Japanese.

Emigration policies of Asian labour exporting countries, including Thailand aim to promote export of labour, protect migrant workers and maximize the developmental impact of labour exports by channeling remittances, skills and training to productive use (Lim and Oishi, 1995). However, conflicts emerge between the first two objectives for a variety of reasons. Richer host countries determine labour market demand, while poorer source countries with labour surplus economies compete stiffly to maintain their share of the market. This may result in compromising the rights and welfare of women migrants - such as reducing wage levels below the minimum wage level and reluctance to enter into bilateral agreements to protect worker's rights. Alternately, initiatives to protect and prevent women from abuse may assume the form of paternalistic restrictions on women's migration thus infringing on their rights and freedoms. Other initiatives to protect and promote the rights of women migrants may be of limited value due to problems in formulation and implementation.

Thailand addresses the reality of women's migration through a host of legal, policy and programmatic initiatives that regulate it at two levels. At one level these initiatives attempt to deter women's migration, and their entry into the sex industry, by introducing more long-term national development initiatives and public awareness campaigns. The National Education Act of

1999 extends compulsory education from 6 to 9 years for girls, with the objective among other things, of keeping girls in school longer and preparing them for local employment. The Thai government has also attempted to expand education and employment opportunities, especially for adult women, through vocational training programmes. The Occupational Assistance Division of the Department of Public Welfare operates seven provincial centers across the country, offering 3 to 6 month courses for women aged 14-35 years old. Large-scale information campaigns have also been launched in villages emphasizing both the dangers of seeking overseas employment and the risk of entering the sex industry. Messages have focused on the problems of living in a foreign country and specific violations that women face.

The efficacy of these programmes however could be greatly enhanced by:

- Offering education and vocational training that is gender responsive, suited to local contexts and consistent with market demand;
- Creating work opportunities that address both the practical and strategic economic and business needs and interests of women from a rights, gender, market and ethics-based perspective; and
- Including in public awareness campaigns, information enabling women to migrate safely, such as information on their rights as migrant workers, reference points when in crisis, services available and social networks that they may contact in destination countries, tips on the cultural practice and on what to expect in host countries;
- Providing this information not just on the eve of departure, so that the woman has time to digest the information, seek clarifications and additional information if required.

At another level Thailand has tried to reconcile its labour export policy and the rights protection of women migrants through restrictive policies for women migrants. In other words while promoting the export of labour in general, Thailand has been reluctant to wholeheartedly encourage women's migration, being aware of the risks and realities of abuse. Law as of 1980 banned emigration of female workers, although exceptions were made in respect of certain destination points such as Japan, Singapore and Macau. Aware of Thai women's entry into the entertainment industries in countries of the region, Thailand also regulates to some extent the overseas employment of entertainers. Entertainers must hold a diploma from a School of Arts and a license, and not perform in nightclubs (Abella, 1995). In the wake of increasing reports on Thai women in the sex and entertainment industries abroad, the Thai government has been screening applications for passports by women desiring to go overseas. If the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to whom the applications are made suspects that a woman or girl is likely to be abused or end up in the sex industry, it issues instructions to the Department of Public Welfare under the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare to investigate the case. The Department authorized to investigate the background of women and girls between the ages of 14 to 36 years of age, deploys provincial officials to undertake home visits and interviews with family members, especially the parents. Recommendations are made by the Department to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the basis of these investigations, with the final decision in the hands of the Foreign Affairs Ministry. Immigration controls at the airport in the form of screening of Thai passengers going abroad are also in operation (Human Rights Watch, 2000).

Reducing migration through the development of viable socio-economic opportunities is a good but long-term solution. However, if women migrate in the short run for lack of opportunities, the Thai government should:

- Encourage migration to countries that provide a better deal to migrants, especially women migrants;
- Equip women for better jobs by providing them with necessary skills;
- Allocate sufficient labour attaches, including women attaches in countries that have large numbers of Thai women migrants and provide gender responsive and human rights training, to handle concerns of women migrants sensitively;
- Convene consultations with women's groups, anti-trafficking, human rights and legal activists, returnee women migrants and women migrants associations and networks in the formulation of policies and procedures to protect and promote women's rights;
- Organize legal and socially-responsible training for all levels of management and staff implementing the regulations;
- Strengthen mechanisms to bring to charge and penalize erring enforcement authorities.

**VENEZUELA:  
MIGRATION AND TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN**

by  
Zoraida Ramirez Rodriguez  
with assistance from Xiomara Linares Gonzalez

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Since 1798, governments have analyzed migration in the context of lowering the population growth of countries to increase the rate of wealth accumulation. “To facilitate economic development, neo-Malthusian ideology proposed family planning and migration. After the World War II, such diagnosis of the ills affecting the Caribbean became more and more common”(Duany, 1993: 80).

**Migration: Latin America and the Caribbean<sup>1</sup>**

Migration tendencies differ both between countries in the region and between the region and the rest of the world. One key difference is that “Caribbean governments do not have policies on migration”(Duany, 1993:80). Some governmental officials acknowledge this situation publicly.

The Caribbean region shows a massive movement of peoples towards North America, Western Europe, and the inter-Caribbean flows. After 1940, migration from this region was affected by the transformation of the French colonies in the Caribbean into overseas *departements*, the dictatorial periods in Haiti and the Dominican Republic (1957-1986), the Cuban Revolution (1959), the British Commonwealth Immigration Law (1962), the independence of countries in the region (since 1962), the U.S. immigration law of 1965, the political-military confrontation in Central America during the decade of the 1980s, para-military groups, and the presence of drug trafficking (since 1960). “All these phenomena have contributed to population displacement; people are forced to quit their homes due to the systematic human rights violations, ‘the dirty war’, and the development of armed conflict” (Rodriguez, 1994: 25).

**Migration and the Regional Economic Situation**

The severe economic crisis, which affects the whole region, has accentuated the number of people migrating from the Latin American/Caribbean area.<sup>2</sup> The increase in foreign debt, rise in unemployment, high cost of living, and reduction of resources for public services have resulted in increased migration. Migrants have become the most exploited labor force. More migrants come from countries where governments tolerate or promote migration to reduce the demand for employment and public services. Countries of origin also benefit from migration because migrants strengthen the level of hard foreign currency reserves through the remittances sent back to their home countries.

**Latin and Caribbean Migrant Woman**

The feminization of poverty in the whole region forces women to migrate more towards the big cities of their own countries and other countries in the region. The majority of people afflicted by poverty in the region are female. In the last ten years especially, Latin American and Caribbean women continue to lack the basic necessities for living. The media increasingly marginalize and objectify women. All these factors contribute to the feminization of poverty.

The situation of migrant women is rarely included in international or regional agreements, or in official governmental statements about migration. Although migration is becoming a high priority issue on government agendas and at meetings of international organizations and NGO’s, and although local and regional realities are analyzed as part of a globalization process with the

purpose of finding solutions that do not de-stabilize collective security, nevertheless, women migrating from Latin America and the Caribbean continue to be defenseless.

Migrant women face a significant number of problems such as: feelings of insecurity, lack of stability, coping with new sources of stress that are ever present, feelings of not belonging, loss of support networks and identity, loss of expectations, as well as bereavement due to loss of country, family, properties and ideals. Often, they face death in order to live, fortified with the hope of a new life ahead. Many take to the sea in “yolas” (rubber dinghies), and “balsas” (rafts), or overland by “green routes” that are used to move migrants without legal documents.

In countries with large numbers of migrants there are also gender differences in migration. Women constitute the largest group of migrants from the Caribbean region (Organización de Mujeres, 1993; Segundo Seminario Latinoamericano [Second Latin American Seminar] 1985). When migrant women from the region are identified as coming from “third world” countries, discrimination often increases and exacerbates the inequalities for women. “In the migration movement it is possible to distinguish two directions: south and north; the south which makes her feel that she belongs to the continent of needy people and the north which makes her feel the supremacy of the holders of power” (Organización de Mujeres, 1993: 2).

### **Venezuela**

This report focuses on Venezuela. Venezuela is both a source country and a country of destination for migrants. Migrants arrive in Venezuela from the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia with the purpose of settling in Venezuelan territory or in transit to other countries. Migrants leave Venezuela mainly to go to United States, Spain, Canada, Portugal, and Italy.

The Republic of Venezuela occupies the northern part of South America, and covers an area of 916,445 km<sup>2</sup> or 353,839.76 square miles. It currently claims a further 143,000 km<sup>2</sup> from Guyana. It borders the Caribbean to the north, the Atlantic Ocean to the northeast, Guyana to the east Brazil to the south and Colombia to the west.

### **Venezuela’s Economic Situation and Migration**

Economic development within Venezuela accounts for the large numbers of migrants entering the country, both legally and illegally, especially from the Caribbean islands. Since the 1970s, the development of large, medium and small industries, and the growth in income resulting from oil revenues, have been pull factors for large numbers of people from the Caribbean countries migrating to Venezuela in search of a better life.

An acute economic crisis has engulfed the country since 1996. The level of unemployment has increased; the financial sector of the economy has witnessed the bankruptcy of many institutions, and many others are weaker than before. The public sector payroll has been cut resulting not only in reductions in health and education, but also in across the board cuts to address the fiscal deficit. Likewise there has been a flight of hard currency resulting in a diminishing amount in circulation. Due to high interest rates, many businesses have closed down. As a consequence the informal sector grows on a daily basis as more unemployed men and women join it in order to survive. At the same time, there is an enormous growth in the breakdown of law, order and social norms, manifested in prevalence of prostitution and sexual violence, trafficking in persons for the purpose of sexual exploitation, drug trafficking, delinquency, personal assault and other forms of violence.

## **Patterns of Trafficking in Clandestine Migration**

At the same time that poverty is becoming more acute in Venezuela, the legal or illegal displacement of people continues. Venezuela's geographic location, the fact that laws are not observed or are outdated, that government offices do not function properly, and the absence or weakness of official migration policies are all implicated in the rise of clandestine immigration. Additionally, the collusion between migrant trafficking and public officials makes it easy for Venezuela to become a host country for traffickers, a continental bridge for trafficking to other countries within the region or other parts of the hemisphere, and to accomplish this activity in an authorized fashion.

In Venezuela, many companies are involved in the legal and clandestine migration of persons hired to work as domestic servants. For example, in the state of Tachira on the frontier with Colombia, industrial development has been linked to population movement of foreign laborers who can be paid lower wages than nationals. Colombians come into Venezuelan territory to work and then return across the border at the end of their working day. The demand for female labor is great because women's wages are much lower than those paid to male foreign workers. The chain of exploitation, based not only on the worker's nationality but also on gender, combined with her undocumented status and her responsibilities for coping with a succession of familial, economic, political, social, educational, and health crises, puts her in a position of accepting "*cualquier cosa*" or "*just about anything*."

Traffickers organized for the sexual exploitation of migrants use some aspects of legal migration. They manage to obtain tourist visas for some of the women by which women are brought into the country for the purpose of domestic work. Many women and girls who are exploited initially as domestics are then sexually exploited and trafficked for the purpose of prostitution within the sex industry at both local and international levels. A large number of women are taken to the Caribbean islands, North America, Europe and parts of the Mediterranean, and Asia.

A new illegal migration trend, called the "green road via the Internet," has become a "virtual road" for trafficking. Congressman Walter Marquez alleged that Venezuelan passports are trafficked via the Internet and sold for about US\$1000 by an international trafficking network (Marquez, 1997).

## **Clandestine Migration and Government Corruption**

News accounts report that government corruption promotes clandestine migration into Venezuela. For example, one account alleged: "The Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Gerardo Ramirez...has been implicated as an accomplice with a group of Ecuadorians accused of trafficking in minors from Ecuador to Venezuela..."(Escalona, 1998). There have also been reports of employees of the Foreign Department at the International Airport of Maiquetia charging \$1,000 to grant legal status to foreigners. In 1997 Dr. Delia DaSilva, a governmental representative working against governmental corruption and migrant trafficking, stated: "A gang involved in altering Venezuelan passports with American visas for Colombian citizens was dismantled by the Organización Nacional de Identificación (ONI-DEX), or the National Identity Organization. Allegedly, gang members were paid six thousand dollars for each Venezuelan passport that included an American visa"(DaSilva, 9-17-1997). In another case, reportedly two persons accused of selling passports were found in possession of 6,774 new passports, blank and without marks (DaSilva, 11-19-1997).

Officials who are willing to confront this corrupt situation do not have a legal framework to operate from. "There are not enough mechanisms which guarantee one hundred percent that a

person holding a Venezuelan passport or identity card obtained such documents through the legal channels” (DaSilva, 7-11-1997). At best, such officials can only limit themselves to denouncing the networks of migrant traffickers and the collusion of government officials.

Well known “green routes,” or overland routes by which migrants are moved illegally, continue to be used. New routes are also generated, the result of the competition between the mafias. At border crossing posts on national highways, national border police and immigration officers exploit migrants being transported by organized criminals, as well as those traveling alone escaping poverty, political oppression, inequality and or intra-familial violence. Foreign women living in Venezuela have accused public functionaries of forcing them to pay either with money or sexual favors to cross the border, or to obtain documents necessary to remain in the country.

To a significant number of government employees, a foreign woman will always represent profits and sex. The belief that “*They are women, they are easily exploited*” is part of the extortion argument. Women are caught defenseless in the chain of sexual exploitation and become the prey of criminal traffickers in collusion with official representatives.

There are numerous testimonies of foreign women that describe the psychological pressure they experienced as undocumented migrants. There have also been cases of foreign women jailed by Venezuelan law enforcers, who received sentences of more than 6 years for not having legal papers when apprehended.

Since 1944 some of the media have exposed the active participation of government employees at embassies and consulates outside of Venezuela who are involved in issuing entry documents for profit. Allegations are made but because they are not followed up, these cases remain unsolved and continue with impunity.

### **Migrant Women in Venezuela**

Venezuela’s location in the continent allows for two categories of migrant trafficked women: those who are brought to Venezuela to be exploited, and those who are sent from Venezuela to North America, Western Europe and regions in Asia, the Pacific and the Mediterranean.

Regarding migration from the Dominican Republic it is said: “It is predominantly a female migration: in a ratio of two women for each man. It is mainly young. It originates in the rural areas going to large cities in other countries. They come from the countryside out of a situation of poverty and from unskilled backgrounds. They show considerable signs of economic and social deterioration. These women have at least two economic strategies which allow them to survive in greatly restricted circumstances to enter the market of regular and well paid work: activities in the tourism field or migration” (Rodriguez, 1994: 37).

When the economic crisis hit Latin America in 1996, marriage trafficking into Venezuela became a means for some women to obtain visas for countries abroad. For example, traffickers take women from the Dominican Republic to Venezuela in order for them to obtain Venezuelan nationality. Once this is achieved, the Dominican women can be taken to other countries. “For them it is much easier to obtain a visa by marrying a foreigner who will then claim her as his wife. Some women want to acquire Venezuelan nationality for requesting a visa to the United States, Canada or another country. Other Dominican women work as “bar-girls,” which in Venezuela is synonymous with prostitution” (Rodriguez, 1994: 77). From these groups of migrants, women are trafficked for sexual exploitation. “Venezuela, at this moment in time is being used as a bridge so that those women can be moved to countries such as Mexico, Canada, U.S.A., and some other countries like Spain and Greece more recently” (Rodriguez, 1994:126).

“Analysis of Colombian migrants’ legal status [in Venezuela] shows that the majority are illegal; just 11.2 percent of the total population hold Colombian passports, while 88.8 percent do not hold passports. The female population is at a greater disadvantage since only 8.6 percent are passport holders” (Rodriguez, 1994: 55). Migrants from Ecuador are trafficked into the sex industry, and the media often report on the break up of these trafficking networks. The former Ecuadorian Consul in Caracas revealed that about 150 Ecuadorian minors had worked in Venezuela effectively as slaves and had been brought via Colombia. These children were between 12 and 14 years of age, their parents having received money from the traffickers—about \$400 a year for domestic servant work done by their children, and the young girls might later be prostituted. Most of the youngsters found in Venezuela come from the Ecuadorian Andean region, in the provinces of Chimborazo and Cañar – an ethnic Indian area.

Those involved in trafficking in women also promote women for sex tourism. “Sophisticated prostitution and sex tourism networks were established to operate in Venezuela through mail order brides or sexual traps” (Ramirez, 1999). Venezuela was the venue for “The Latina Connection” in 1999 when women from Mexico, Panama, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, and Venezuela were offered as part of a \$995 sex tourism package, not including airfare and hotel. Advertisements gave men the opportunity to choose women from different nationalities so as to “take them anywhere in the world.”

One book entitled *The Romantic Zone* includes advice for women on how to go through immigration. Explaining the disadvantages that a Latin woman faces when entering the United States on a tourist visa, the book gives information about other options and necessary procedures for women to enter the country as fiancées or wives of U.S. men. If women enter the United States as fiancées, the book recommends that they obtain a 3-month visa to give themselves a margin of time in case the marriage does not take place. Another option is that the wedding takes place in the woman’s country and she then enters the United States as a wife (Aguirre, 1999).

### **Gender Inequality in the Media**

There are additional factors that foster women’s migration. In the past decade especially, popular culture and media portray Latin and Caribbean woman in terms of beauty, body and sexuality. Even the use of a word such as “dignity” is a euphemism for promotion of the female body. Often, women themselves do not reject displays of the female body in the media, because such displays are justified by the argument that personal development and women’s rights are being promoted in beauty contests and even stripping. On this point, Venezuela is an interesting case for foreign women. Sentiments expressed by foreign women who watch Venezuelan soap operas state that, “*All Venezuelan women are successful, they keep themselves beautiful, they keep up with fashion in their clothing, and make-up, they are known the world over, that is the reason why they are welcomed everywhere. If I get to Venezuela, I will be able to learn. I shall leave all...behind and I might even make it to another country*” (Interview with Colombian Woman in Prostitution, October 1994).

Advertising and consumerism are elements impeding gender equality. Advertising takes the place of real information by which women could be empowered. The image of a fashionable woman becomes the standard by which women measure their development or fulfillment in society. Traditionally migration has been caused by poverty, unemployment, salary inequalities, wars, political persecution, population growth and other factors. Now, some women are pushed to migrate by faulty standards of beauty, body and sexuality that lead them into sexually objectifying jobs and activities.

The media is complicit in the increased sexual objectification and exploitation of women. Sexual exploitation does not happen in a vacuum, and advertising and objectifications of women reinforce trafficking in migrant women for sexual exploitation in Latin American and the Caribbean countries.

### **Information on Foreign Migration**

It is acknowledged that Venezuelan official data on foreign migration cannot be considered reliable. For example, the official numbers of women entering Venezuela between the ages of 15 and 44 during the years 1994 to 1998 included only 483 women of Haitian nationality.<sup>3</sup> However, the numbers of Haitian women who can be seen on the streets of Caracas are far greater than these figures indicate. Haitian women have played a very active part in the informal sector as 'buhoneras,' or vendors of food, ice cream, sweets and fruit. The official sector has not quantified this population that grows on a daily basis. Discriminatory measures have been adopted against them with "Ninety-seven Haitian citizens deported to their country from the Palo Negro Air Force Base at Maracay. [This] was announced by the Mayor of the Libertador Municipality, Antonio Ledezma, who considered it a 'painful but necessary' measure to sanitize Caracas from a problem that is seriously affecting the city" (Ledezma, 1999).

The Information Directorate at the National Identity Office attached to the Ministry of the Interior includes no specific data on the age, sex and nationality of deportees. Only numbers are registered. "A total of one thousand and sixty two foreigners classified as undesirable illegals were deported from Venezuela by the National Office of Identification and the Foreign Directorate (ONI-DEX) throughout 1966"(Da Silva, 12-29-1996). "Some 2000 individuals who had stayed in Venezuela illegally were expelled during 1997 according to the Migration and Frontiers Office attached to the National Office of Identification and Foreign Affairs Office (ONI-DEX)" (Da Silva, 12-30-1997).

ONI-DEX's statistics do not include Venezuela's migrant population movement by sex on entry or exit from the country. The classification is done by profession, and under this category is a reference to homemaker from which can be inferred that this is a group of women. There is no official governmental or non-governmental register, which quantifies the total number of Venezuelan women leaving the country legally. It has been difficult to determine the number of Venezuelan women who leave their place of birth, since in other categories such as students, military personnel, professionals, employees, retired people and pensioners, there is no mention that women may also be included in these categories. Thus, women become invisible in the migration process.

During the period that is listed "1994-98," the only information in existence is that 194,345 Venezuelan women arrived in the country, and 117,181 Venezuelan women left the country. We know they were women, because they were classified under the category of homemaker.

For non-Venezuelan migrants arriving in the country, however, there is an official category of "female migrants." Official information regarding female migrants arriving in Venezuela is as follows:

### Movement of Female Migrants according to age and nationality

(Groups of 15 to 44 years of age)

Arrivals- Period 1994-98<sup>4</sup>

(In thousands)

Nationality	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	Total
Stateless	0	1	0	0	0	1
Bolivia	79	132	67	57	60	.395
Colombia	4558	5978	5423	3856	2673	22.488
Ecuador	1000	2157	1435	1026	687	6.305
Haití	117	93	211	99	56	576
Perú	3440	4806	3260	3006	2066	16.578
Dominican Republic	2461	2281	2289	1297	177841	186.169
Nationality not known	47	34	21	39	3	144

### Nationality/Type of Visa/Entry and Departure Statistics

Departures- Period 1992-98<sup>5</sup>

(In thousands)

	Temporary Migrants	Temporary Migrants	Tourists	Tourists	Total
Countries	Arrivals	Departures	Arrivals	Departures	
Stateless	0	0	1	2	3
Bolivia	795	997	4.026	5866	11.684
Colombia	41.754	46.358	73.330	100.731	262.173
Ecuador	5.369	5.673	13.104	17.443	41.589
Haití	289	495	1.057	1.753	3.594
Perú	9.226	10.273	24.385	35.180	79.064
Dominican Rep.	4.690	5.231	17.277	23.808	51.006
Nationality not Known	1.474	1.242	7.767	9.060	19.543
Total	63.597	70.269	140.946	193.841	

The status of the remainder of the migrant women who are not included in the official tables, either as temporary migrants or tourists, is not known. It could be assumed that they have left the country or remain in the country illegally.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Latin America and the Caribbean: Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Cuba, Jamaica, Bahamas, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Lesser Antillas, Leeward and Windward Islands, Trinidad, Tobago, Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, Brazil, Guyana, Surinam, French Guiana, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia y Venezuela.
- <sup>2</sup> The literature review on migration in the Latin American and Caribbean region has scarce information on the subject as it relates to trafficking in women. The web page of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Information Center on Migration in Latin America (CIMAL), contain information on the legal and institutional aspects of migration in various countries in the region, as well as on comparative legal studies on migration for countries in the Andean Group, and Cono Sur Countries. The publications in CIMAL's database which are in Spanish, English, French, and Portuguese are very recent, but with little information relating to female populations involved in migration and trafficking for sexual exploitation. Newspaper archives consulted on crimes relating to migrant populations highlight the direct correlation between the increase of foreigners involved in crimes with a high number of youngsters and women ending up in activities considered as illegal.
- <sup>3</sup> Entry numbers: Total of the migration figures in age groups according to year, nationality, age cohorts and gender. Information Directorate of the Foreign Relations Department of Internal Affairs.
- <sup>4</sup> M.R.I. Saldo Migratorio por Grupos de Edad según la Nacionalidad.(1999).DIEX..Dirección de Informática. Migratory Movement by Age Groups according to Nationality.
- <sup>5</sup> M.R.I. Estadísticas Nacionalidad/Tipo visa/ Ent-Sal. Desde 1992 hasta 1998. (1999) DIEX. Dirección de Informática. Nationality Statistics/Type of Visa/Entries and Departures from 1992-1998.

# THE UNITED STATES: MIGRATION AND TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN

by  
H. Patricia Hynes

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## Introduction

Until recently, trafficking of women in the United States was rarely acknowledged. It was not until Russian and Ukrainian women began to be trafficked to the United States in the early 1990s that governmental agencies and many NGOs began to recognize the problem. As many critics, including us, have pointed out, Latin American and Asian women were trafficked into the United States for many years prior to the influx of Russian traffickers and trafficked women. The fact that it took blond and blue-eyed victims to draw governmental and public attention to trafficking in the United States gives, at least, the appearance of racism.

The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) is increasingly researching and estimating numerically the trafficking of women into the United States by transnational sex industries. The U.S. government estimates that 45,000-50,000 women and children are trafficked annually from Southeast Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe and Newly Independent States to the United States for the sex industry, sweatshops, domestic labor, and agricultural work (Richard, 1999).

However, the documented incidents of sex trafficking in the United States have, until recently, been published in isolation and usually in newspaper accounts following an enforcement crack-down and prosecution. These accounts have generally lacked the structural analysis that accounts for women being trafficked into prostitution. Dynamics often omitted from the picture of trafficking in the United States are: the power of the global sex industry, the subordination of women, the gendered labor market, and the multiple economic crises and inequalities that underlie women's lives in many countries.

Many factors—including death threats to themselves and their families at home; conditions of isolation and confinement; the high power and mobility of the sex industry; fear of deportation; the lack of knowledge (and sometimes refusal to acknowledge) within many human rights and immigrant advocacy and service organizations who are struggling with a range of other problems; and the lack of “safe houses” and shelters—have made it nearly impossible for trafficked women to seek assistance and to testify against traffickers and other exploiters (Raymond, Hughes and Gomez, 2001). Limited legislation, light penalties, and long, complicated investigations to obtain trafficking convictions have made trafficking cases unattractive to many U.S. attorneys (Richard, 1999). Additionally, the current immigration and criminal justice system in the United States has been weighted against trafficked women, especially hampering undocumented victims of trafficking from coming forward who feared deportation. With the passage of the U.S. Victims of Trafficking Act in the year 2000, it is hoped that more traffickers will be prosecuted and this negative treatment of victims will change.

In order to obtain an overview of how women are trafficked into the United States, this analysis relies on indirect and secondary sources, as well as a review of the means by which migrants enter or are smuggled into the United States. We have pieced together a composite picture of the scope and methods by which immigrant women, migrant women with temporary visas, and women lumped into the INS categories of “undocumented aliens” and “illegal aliens” end up exploited in prostitution in the United States.

## **Migration Trends of Women to the United States**

Sex trafficking into the US is opportunistically bound up with migration; that is, it takes advantage of the fact that women are migrating across borders, as well as within their countries, in unprecedented numbers for purposes of labor and income.

### **Background on Migration**

In the mid-1990s, nearly 2 percent of the world's population, or about 125 million people, were international migrants, i.e., people living outside their country of origin, the highest number in history. In 1995, international migration was estimated at 4 million people annually, with about one-half of these, or 2 million people, entering the United States and Canada. This total includes permanent and temporary migrants, refugees, and "illegal" migrants. No one international or national data source identifies all of the people moving across national borders, but all data sources tracking refugees and migrant labor suggest that the numbers are on the increase (Martin and Widgren, 1996).

### **Women Migrants**

In the early 1990s, there were about 50 million international women migrants and 500 million internal women migrants (within countries). In 1993 women and children constituted 80 percent of the 19 million refugees in the world, higher than their proportion of the world population. Forty-eight percent of international migrants in the early 1990s were female; and the percent of women migrating that is documented in visas has been increasing for all categories, including labor (INSTRAW, 1994). In general, there is a higher percentage of male international migrants within developing countries while "developed countries attract more female than male international migrants" (INSTRAW, 1994: 66). This statistic is particularly notable because the transnational sex trafficking in women has a distinct pattern of women being trafficked from developing countries (Asia, Latin America, and Africa) and new market economies in crisis (Russia, Ukraine, and other former Soviet countries) to so-called developed countries, including Western Europe, Australia, Japan, the US and Canada.

### **Women Migrants in US**

From 1960-1980 in the United States, women migrants outnumbered male migrants, under numbered men during early 1980s (which may be due to data error) and have outnumbered men since (INSTRAW, 1994). The United States, like other major receiving countries, has favored family reunification. Thus, women predominate in categories of immigrants admitted as relatives of citizens and other immigrants. However, this category masks women's economic status in both the sending and receiving countries and perpetuates an underestimation of women's labor force and economic activity (INSTRAW, 1994). Because family reunification enjoys favorable status in U.S. immigration policy, it may be potentially easier for men to make use of the INS category "fiancé(e) of U.S. citizen"— which is included within the status of family reunification – to traffic women into the United States.

### **Dearth of Knowledge about Women Migrants**

Men and women migrate in virtually equal numbers. Yet, much more is known about the determinants and consequences of male migration than female migration. A study of the migration of women undertaken by the United Nations in 1994 concluded that the dearth of knowledge about women's migration is due primarily to four factors:

1. Experts see migration as motivated by economic opportunity (the "human capital model" in migration theory), the pull factor that has been attributed more generally to male migrants

than female migrants. This bias, combined with the chronic underestimation of women's labor force and economic activity, has resulted in a lack of information and analysis about women migrants

2. Women are neglected, in general, by scholarly social science
3. Most migratory research is done by men, who see women as "passive followers" of men
4. Inadequacies in data about women migrants exist at the micro and macro levels because of the above factors and in part because "male proxy respondents" are used. Males interviewed underestimate female migration and women's economic activity and, thus, generate bias in data and analysis (INSTRAW, 1994).

## **Sex Trafficking into the United States**

### **INS Estimates of Sex Trafficking**

The trafficking industry capitalizes on economic crises and poverty in the sending country or region and the surging demand in the receiving country/region for prostitution, utilizing arcane networks, falsification of documents, and the aid of corrupt officials. Other factors fueling the rise in migrant trafficking by criminals include civil war, lax U.S. border controls, and "a massive crackdown on drug traffickers," according to the National Worker Exploitation Task Force, created in 1998 by the Justice, Labor, and State Departments in response to growing numbers of migrant trafficking (Gordy, 2000: 5).

Compared to other less conservative estimates, the U.S. government currently approximates that 2 million women and children worldwide are trafficked each year into slave-like labor and prostitution by a growing international and domestic trafficking industry that rivals and feeds into drugs and arms trafficking (Secretary of State Website). During the Clinton administration, Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Labor, Howard Koh, told a U.S. Senate hearing that international criminals "are moving away from "guns and drugs" to marketing women because of "weaker restraints and growing demand"(Shepard, 2000).

Sex trafficking of women into the United States has been less well documented, less penalized, and likely more profitable than trafficking of drugs and arms. It is linked with sex tourism, the mail-order-bride industry, and the Internet, all growing enterprises capitalizing on male demand and female vulnerability (Raymond, Hughes, Gomez, 2001; Ralph, 2000). Thus, current government estimates of sex trafficking may seriously understate the extent and gravity of this abuse, as well as its expansion in the United States.

Of the total number of women trafficked annually into the United States, the majority from Asia, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and most of the remaining from Mexico and Central America (Secretary of State Website). How many of these are trafficked for prostitution, or end up in prostitution after being trafficked for domestic and/or sweatshop labor, is less clear from official figures.

In order to understand how women are trafficked into the United States, we have examined the means by which migrants enter the United States, with the assumption that traffickers use some of the same means that migrants do, at the same time that they maximize means that are more covert, least surveilled and most easily fraudulent. In doing so, we have examined the following data sources: demographic studies of U.S. immigration: INS reports and testimony on trafficking; an international study of mail-order brides commissioned by Congress; the Immigrant Public Use Tape published by the INS for 1996 on legal immigration; and the 1997 Statistical Yearbook of the INS.

### **Overview of U.S. Migration and Potential Means of Trafficking**

In the 1990s, four major types of migration into the United States occurred: permanent migration for labor and family reunification; refugee/asylee migration; temporary migration; and illegal migration, including undocumented entry, fraudulent entry, and visa overstay. An estimated million people per year—legal immigrants and illegal nonimmigrants—are entering the US, mainly from Latin America and Asia. They are both less and more educated than native-born. The current complicated system of immigration gives preference to immigrants with US relatives, those with specialized skills, and refugees/asylees. Of the nearly 1 million immigrants per year, about 700,000 are legal; and an estimated 275,000 nonimmigrants enter illegally (Martin and Midgley, 1994: 1999).

About 40 percent of illegal migrants (or 110,000) are visa or nonimmigrant overstays. For people from most countries of the world, other than Mexico and Central America, nonimmigrant overstays is the most typical way of entering the US. The other estimated 60 percent of illegal migrants—a majority of whom are Mexicans and Central Americans—enter across the US-Mexico border, usually between official entry crossings (Statistics Illegal Alien Resident Population).

#### **Nonimmigrant Visa Overstays**

An estimated 25 million persons enter the United States annually with temporary visas, such as tourist and student visas. Traffickers, using forged or legal documents, may use the “temporary nonimmigrant” visa process as a way to bring women into the United States. Once traffickers bring women into the United States on, for example, a “trainee visa” or “temporary visitor for pleasure” visa, they can move women from place to place in an underground network and keep them in prostitution for as long as women are marketable or they don’t get caught. Additionally, there are a number of exceptions to the visa process that may facilitate the smuggling of women by sex traffickers into the United States.

#### **Visa Waiver Pilot Program**

The Visa Waiver Pilot Program (VWPP) allows visitors from 26 countries, most of which are European countries, to enter the United States without visas for up to 90 days, provided they have a roundtrip ticket. All that is needed is a recognized passport (valid, stolen or fake) for the estimated 17 million who enter without visas each year under this program. “Organized criminal elements realize that elimination of the nonimmigrant visa application facilitates entry into the United States...The [Immigration and Naturalization] Service is seeing expanded use of genuine stolen passports from VWPP countries” (Cronin, 1999:15). Using stolen or fake passports, sex industries could set up operations in VWPP countries to traffic women from former Soviet Union countries (or other countries of origin) into the United States without surveillance at the airport of entry.

#### **Border Crossing Cards and Voluntary Departure Forms**

Although 25 million nonimmigrants were admitted to the United States in FY 1996 and documented as traveling temporarily on visas, and an estimated 17 million entered through the Visa Waiver Pilot Program, many more Mexicans and Canadians with border-crossing cards can enter and stay without being counted in the U.S. system. Most of the 350 million nonimmigrants that enter the United States come across the borders with Mexico and Canada. “No arrival and departure data is currently collected on the great majority of Mexican and Canadian citizens” (Cronin, 1999: 6).

In addition, citizens of other countries visiting the United States can leave across Mexican and Canadian borders without submitting a departure form, known as Form I-94. Thus, another likely route for traffickers to take women into and out of the United States are the borders between Canada and Mexico. Women brought in on temporary visas through United States airports can be brought across the Canadian and Mexican borders for departure from the United States relatively undetected, even after overstaying their visa, because the “United States has never had a formal system of departure inspection” (Cronin, 1999: 5). Rather the INS has left it up to air and sea carriers to collect I-94 departure forms.

According to law enforcement and immigration officials, traffickers are using the Akwesasne territory along the U.S.-Canadian border for strategic cross-border routes and entry points to bring women into the United States (Raymond, Hughes, and Gomez, 2001).

### **Smuggling**

Between 1996 and 1999, groups that smuggle migrants into the United States increased dramatically in “number and sophistication,” aided by public corruption and employing visa fraud (Nardi, 1999: 2). Smuggling in persons has grown into a multi-billion-dollar business—with fees as high as \$50,000 per person. Methods of smuggling have grown more “sophisticated, complex, dangerous, and desperate” as the INS has increased surveillance and personnel (Nardi, 1999: 3). According to the INS, migrant smuggling is high on the Southwest border, growing along the border with Canada, increasing in the Caribbean, and emerging on both coasts. Between the country of origin and the United States, smugglers are stopping in multiple countries, changing conveyances and creating fraudulent documents in a web of deceit that involves networks in those countries and money laundering.

### **Mail-Order Brides**

It is estimated that 100,000-150,000 women between the ages of 16-35 are being advertised for marriage, mainly from Southeast Asia, the Philippines, and the former Soviet Union countries. Since the early 1990s, the mail-order bride marketing of Newly Independent States (NIS) women—from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union—and international matchmaking organizations increased dramatically, especially in Russia and Ukraine. A documentary produced by the Global Survival Network (GSN) revealed that mail order bride businesses are fronts to recruit and traffic Russian women to Germany, Japan and the United States. A report to Congress on marriage marketing states that fiancé(e) visas are easily obtainable for immigrating into the United States, and that traffickers have determined that the fiancé(e) visa is an easy way to traffic women unnoticed (International Matchmaking Organizations, 1999). GSN estimates that 200 mail-order bride companies arrange between 2,000-5,000 marriages in the United States each year. Robert Scoles, a U.S. researcher, puts the estimate at 4,000-6,000 marriages per year, up to 4 percent of all immigrant female spouses (International Matchmaking Organizations, 1999:6).

### **Conclusion**

In summary, sex traffickers and smugglers can take advantage of those points in the immigration system with less surveillance:

1. **Borders:** Mexicans who hold border control cards (BCC) which allow the card carrier to travel 3 days and 25 miles within the border and Canadians, with a much less controlled system (6 months without visa), can smuggle women into and out of the United States with a BCC or Canadian passport.
2. **Native American lands:** Traffickers have made deals with the Akwesasne along the US-Canada border to traffic women across their land to elude surveillance by immigration and

law enforcement officials.

3. Carriers: Most are required to document the arrival and departure of nonimmigrants. “Certain exceptions are made for carriers operating from a contiguous territory” (Cronin, 5). This exception creates an opportunity to traffic women on a carrier from or by way of, for example, Mexico and Canada without surveillance.
4. Incomplete data collection: The INS collects arrival and departure data on approximately 10 percent of foreign visitors (25-35 million) mainly at airports and seaports, but not at borders. Thus traffickers could enter the United States and depart by way of Canada and Mexico with less surveillance.
5. Visa Waiver Pilot Program (VWPP): Persons from 26 countries, mainly European, are able to enter the United States without visas, comprising about 1/2 of documented nonimmigrants (17 million people). Thus, using legal and fraudulent passports, traffickers from VWPP countries can bring women into the United States with minimum surveillance.
6. Mail Order Bride Industry and Spouse/Fiance(e) Visa : Mail-order brides enter the country legally with “spouse” visas. Traffickers have identified this immigration category as a less surveilled means by which to traffic women into the United States.
7. Visa Overstay: The INS estimates that about 110,000 people remain in the United States on visa overstays annually. Visa overstay is likely to be one of the most common means which the sex industry uses to traffic women in the US.

In conclusion, the borders can be easier modes of entry than airports for traffickers who are smuggling women for prostitution because of their size, limited surveillance points, and the number of people who cross the borders per year (more than 300 million), most without surveillance. The Visa Waiver Pilot Program with 26 select countries would be another context within which trafficking would happen through airports more easily unnoticed. Fraudulent “spouse” visas, arranged by traffickers with U.S. citizens, would make use of a favored immigration class that is considered reunification of family and little scrutinized. Fraudulent visas and passports, as well as visa overstays, have also been reported, in the enforcement cases publicized in the news media, as a primary means of entry used by the sex industry for trafficking women.

***PART II***  
***INTERVIEW FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS***

# **PATTERNS, PROFILES AND CONSEQUENCES OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

by  
Janice G. Raymond

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## **I – GENERAL BACKGROUND**

Sites chosen for the Indonesian section of this study were either very close to Singapore and Malaysia, had a concentration of sex industry enterprises, or had been noted as prime centers of child trafficking. In the Philippines, investigators chose research sites where large numbers of women were migrating out of the country.

In Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, in addition to trafficked women, the research teams interviewed others, such as governmental officials and NGO advocates, who could provide background information on trafficking. Many women respondents in the Philippines indicated that government officials and agencies had colluded in some way in the trafficking process. Filipino women trafficked to Nigeria, for example, were adamant that immigration officials were allied with traffickers and recruiters since 8 of them were passed through immigration without question or examination of travel documents.

Prostitution and trafficking of Indonesian, Filipino, Thai, Latin American/Caribbean, Venezuelan, and Russian/NIS women is both internal and external to each of the 5 countries studied in this report. The trafficking of U.S. women is internal. In Thailand, women are trafficked internally from North/Northeast to Central and South Thailand; externally, women are trafficked in massive numbers across borders to West Asia, Germany, the Netherlands, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, Macau, Malaysia, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Belgium and Switzerland. However, the Thai sex industry also receives trafficked women from the Mekong region, as well as from Burma/Myanmar, Yunnan Province in Southwest China and, more recently, from countries in Eastern and Central Europe such as Russia. Thailand is also a transit country for trafficking through which women, particularly from the Mekong countries of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, are trafficked to other countries in Asia such as Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Malaysia.

Venezuela's geographical position in South America and the Caribbean, coupled with its fluctuating oil economy, has resulted in the country becoming a generator and receiver of trafficked women. The 1999 floods left a high percentage of Venezuelans, especially women, unemployed who were then prostituted and trafficked locally, with others being trafficked internationally. All countries in the region continue to experience severe poverty, exacerbated by gender discrimination and severe inequality. Along with economic and political destabilization in the entire Latin American and Caribbean region, these factors have made many women vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

Since most of the internationally trafficked women interviewed in the United States country report came from Russia and the NIS countries, it is important to note the factors precipitating trafficking in this region. By the mid-1990s, women constituted 2/3 of those unemployed in Russia, many of whom had held jobs in the former Soviet system. Female unemployment was exacerbated by active government support of male employment and increased sex discrimination and sexual harassment of women. The elimination of social service programs for unemployed, children and the elderly were also factors promoting trafficking. It is reported that the economic decline in Russia through the 1990s was much more severe than that of the Great Depression in the United States, with real per capita incomes having plummeted by as much as 80 percent (Zuckerman, 1999).

## II – PROFILE OF WOMEN INTERVIEWED

Aida Santos lists 6 factors in the backgrounds of trafficked and prostituted Filipino women that could be variously named as implicated in the trafficking of women to/from/in all countries of this study: 1) Poverty and lack of economic opportunities; 2) Low levels of education and lack of information about the processes of recruitment; 3) History of sexual abuse; 4) Family pressures; 5) Aspirations of the women, often accompanied by a growing sense of personal and economic autonomy; 6) Alleged success stories of those who migrate for income abroad

For all women interviewed, poverty was an overriding factor in their background. In Indonesia, the poverty experienced by all ethnic groups, but especially by large numbers of Indonesian Chinese, rendered them vulnerable to trafficking and sexual exploitation. The 25 Indonesian women interviewed were of Malay, Dayak and Chinese ethnic backgrounds – with ages between 14-29 at the time of interviewing. One-third of the Indonesian respondents never finished elementary school, and the majority only attained a 9<sup>th</sup> degree or junior high education. Seventy-six percent of the Indonesian interviewees had been in prostitution since leaving school. Three former mail-order brides were also interviewed who were of Indonesian-Chinese background, with marriage to Taiwanese men being a very popular trend in their villages.

Of the 49 Filipino women interviewed, 40 were internationally trafficked to Japan, Korea, Nigeria, Cyprus, Holland, Hong Kong, and Malaysia, 4 were trafficked locally, one had been in local prostitution, and another 4 had been mail-order brides. Since women trafficked to Japan were recruited by the Yakuza, women lived in constant fear, so much so that one woman who had left Japan to return to the Philippines felt obligated to return to Japan to fulfill her so-called contract, despite the severe violence to which she had been subjected. Fraud, deceit and inducement were elements of the recruiting process. The majority of women who were recruited to Japan had money withheld from them, received such paltry sums that they were forced to continue in prostitution, or received no payment.

When trafficked, most Filipino women were between the ages of 16-20. Twenty-two percent of the Filipino women reported that they were past victims of sexual abuse. Many Filipinas stated that their families were dysfunctional. With low levels of education and little information about the migration process, it was easy for traffickers to deceive these women. Although poverty was an overwhelming push factor, Filipino women also reported aspirations of personal and economic autonomy that influenced their desire to go abroad.

Key to the stories of Filipino victims of trafficking is that migration for income had become the only viable option to earn what women thought would be a decent livelihood. As Aida Santos states, “The normalization of migration as an economic alternative, not only for the poor but also even for those with some income-generating skills, has become the greatest economic myth of contemporary times for many Filipinos, especially women (p.98).” The majority of women trafficked out of the Philippines to other countries return still trapped in a hand-to-mouth existence. The trafficking of Filipino women also continues because many unsuccessful and sexually exploited women returning from abroad “do not tell their sad stories,” feel stigmatized for having been in prostitution, and do not want to be pitied. Thus the real picture of migration for work and income, which often results in women being trafficked, never emerges as a possible deterrent for others.

Although not included in the quantitative figures representing rates of violence, and the physical and emotional health consequences of trafficking and prostitution, ten women and girls were interviewed in Thailand. At the lower end of the hierarchically-structured Thai sex industry 5 of these respondents were trafficked to Japan, Singapore, and Australia, and 5 were trafficked

within Thailand. Although the number of women interviewed in the Thailand section was smaller than in other country reports, the interviews gave strong evidence of the ways in which trafficked and prostituted women are harmed and violated in the industry. Especially revelatory is the portrait of Nu, a Thai woman trafficked to Japan who, through her own words, defies the stereotype of the “naïve and innocent virgin girl kidnapped for prostitution” yet who endured a “cumulative experience of structural deprivation, a culture of violence and a battle for survival that began in babyhood and persisted through her life...” As Jean D’Cunha writes, Nu’s decisions and those of other women like her represent *survival strategies, not real choices* (p.133).

Forty-one women in prostitution were interviewed in Venezuela: 32 were from Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador and Cuba (24 who had been trafficked into the country), along with 9 Venezuelan women who had been sexually exploited in local prostitution industries, 6 who had been trafficked within the country. As in other countries, many of the women interviewed reported sexual, physical and emotional abuse that rendered them vulnerable to sexual exploitation, with these same conditions also influential in keeping women in prostitution. Police harassment, and abuse by government officials —because they were women and undocumented immigrants — enhanced their marginalization.

Half the women interviewed in Venezuela had never finished high school, and 6 attained only primary school educations. Forty-six percent of the interviewees had taken first jobs as domestic workers with many reporting that they endured sexual harassment, violation and violence perpetrated by men living in the houses where they worked.

In the United States, 34 women were interviewed who had been trafficked internationally or domestically. Eighteen women were from Russia and the NIS countries; 3 were Filipino women who had been trafficked to Saipan; and 13 were U.S. women, the majority of whom were African American or biracial.

Educational levels of Russian/NIS women trafficked to the United States ranged from middle school to community college level; those of U.S. women interviewed ranged from some who had only elementary school education to four who had some college level education. The age, at which U.S. women entered prostitution spanned 13-28, with over half of them drawn into prostitution between ages 13-18. Many had run away from home at a young age, been put out by their parents, and/or been placed in foster care or removed by others from the environment they considered to be their home. Twenty-eight percent of Russian/NIS women reported sexual abuse and assault in their teenage years. Forty-six percent of U.S. women were victims of childhood sexual abuse by family members, with 2 reporting additional stranger or acquaintance rapes in adolescence.

Forty-four percent of the Russian/NIS women had been in prostitution in their home country, before being trafficked to the United States. The three Filipino women interviewed were recruited to dance in the strip clubs of Saipan, with one who had been prostituted after working as a dancer. As the study was proceeding, she attempted suicide.

### **III RECRUITMENT, MOVEMENT AND INITIATION: RECRUITERS, TRAFFICKERS AND BUYERS**

#### **A. Recruiters, Traffickers, Pimps and “Bosses”**

Numbers of young Indonesian women were recruited from places where women come together to be with peers at beach parties, malls, cafes and restaurants. In Medan, for example, young, attractive-looking men, posing as potential boyfriends and operating in groups, recruit women in shopping malls through tactics of seduction and false promises. Other Indonesian

respondents reported that they were recruited by neighbors and relatives of friends, or women who had migrated or been trafficked abroad. Indonesian respondents indicated that they were influenced by the increased economic status of their friends' families, with these families able to buy a piece of land, build permanent houses, or buy more cattle. Women friends or acquaintances who returned from abroad often brought with them luxurious objects such as gold necklaces, blue jeans and perfume, goods that Indonesian respondents never could have afforded had they remained in their villages. Friends offered to find Indonesian interviewees similar work abroad, not mentioning that their "work" had been prostitution.

All recruiters of Indonesian women interviewed were native Indonesians. Most of the pimps/agents who control sex industries in West Kalimantan, Batam and Karimun Islands were Indonesian Chinese who operate in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. Other pimps were from Malaysia. In Batam and Karimun Islands, both Singaporean and Indonesian businessmen operate joint prostitution ventures.

Friends of families and neighbors recruited the majority of Filipino trafficked women. In many cases, recruiters were older Filipinas who were used by trafficking syndicates to gain the trust of potential recruits and their families. Since older Filipino women are treated with respect, the thought of these women bringing harm to younger women was inconceivable. Some of these older women had been in prostitution themselves and, ultimately, working as recruiters was a way out for them.

Filipino interviewees reported that some of their recruiters were gay men who were trusted by women because of their sexual orientation and who were not seen as sexually predatory. In Legazpi City, for example, these men in beauty parlors recruited women. One woman reported being recruited by the Moonies, and she in turn was told to recruit other women into Korean factories. Some of these Filipino women eventually ended up in prostitution in Korea.

When trafficked into prostitution enterprises, women rarely saw the real bosses, many of whom were thought to be foreign nationals. Filipino women trafficked to Japan suspected that recruiters and establishment owners knew each other and were connected in a network, making it more difficult for women to escape since there was a system of information operating among the different players. Police authorities in Tokyo red light areas, for example, were also friendly with establishment owners and employees and patronized the sex establishments as "clients."

Thai trafficking networks are highly organized, with global connections. They have contacts with local and global crime groups, as well as with legitimate corporate sectors – among them the tourist, entertainment and leisure industries, and the travel and transportation industries. Internet and other forms of advertising sell the promise of the exotic and sexual lure of Thai women "as a significant comparative advantage..." Human trafficking syndicates are closely linked to crime networks involving drugs and gun trafficking, car thefts, immigration crime, smuggling of migrants, visa and passport counterfeiting and money laundering. Asian and African drug cartels have long used Thailand as a transit and storage point for drugs. For the period of 1993-95, prostitution was the largest of the underground businesses in Thailand (Chulalongkorn University Political Economy Center), representing 15-18 percent of Thailand's gross domestic product (GDP) and accounting for 2/3 of the country's illegal income (p.140).

Recruiters and traffickers use a variety of methods to draw Thai women and children into prostitution from kidnapping, abduction and rape to material inducements for parents, relatives and guardians who sell their charges, to deceit about jobs, better quality of life, residency status (in Australia), or befriending, declarations of love, and fake marriages.

Recruiters, traffickers, pimps or “bosses” of women in prostitution in Venezuela were different persons. Women also used terms such as “supervisors,” “administrators” and “owners and managers.” Interviewees reported that almost half of the “bosses” were involved in other businesses, and that 20 percent of the “bosses” engaged in criminal activities such as drug selling and muggings that they forced women to participate in outside the brothels. Some of the “bosses” had international connections or networks and set up “special sexual services” for international clients from Canada and Japan who had been referred by their international associates and friends.

Russian/NIS women were recruited to come to the United States through newspaper advertisements and employment agencies offering jobs. None of these women knew at the time of application that they would be engaging in prostitution, but realized quickly upon arrival that they had been deceived. They envisioned success in the United States as a guaranteed conclusion. Seventy-seven percent of the U.S. women were recruited by individuals, including boyfriends, spouses, pimps and bar owners. A few respondents followed girlfriends into prostitution. However, a dominant difference between male and female recruitment, as Patricia Hynes notes, was that men actively recruited and deceived women in order to exploit them, whereas U.S. women paired up with girlfriends or followed their example into prostitution (p. 192).

Two patterns of traffickers and pimps emerge from the women’s descriptions. They were boyfriends and acquaintances of the women, and they were significantly older than they young women they exploited in prostitution.

Respondents provided descriptions of various levels of operators in the trafficking network: those who acted as recruiters in Russia, convoys or “travel companions” during the trafficking process, bosses, those who managed or collected the money, those who bought and sold women, and those who acted as drivers or security guards. Sixty-seven percent of the Russian/NIS women knew or believed that their traffickers were involved in a larger organized network.

## **B. The Processes of Recruitment, Trafficking, Movement and Initiation**

Women recruited for sexual exploitation to cities in Indonesia or abroad were usually trafficked in groups. The mode of entry into other countries was usually a legal tourist visa that was held by the agents, along with any financial resources needed. Women often stayed overnight in cheap hotels en route to their destinations, and were then transferred to bars, brothels and other entertainment areas and made to engage in prostitution.

Of the 40 internationally trafficked Filipino women, 32 were illegally recruited. For Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), there is a multi-step application process required in which the woman makes a request for processing from a recruitment agency, fills out a worker’s information sheet, signs a personal employment contract, and fulfills visa/entry requirements of another country. Nearly all Filipina respondents who were recruited and trafficked overseas did not fulfill any of these requirements.

Some Filipino respondents did not know the difference between legal and illegal recruitment documents. For example, they thought that when recruiters changed a name, an address, or birth date or picture on travel documents, that such a change was legal, especially if there was “only one change.” All of them reported that, despite the illegal documents, they were able to proceed undetected through immigration in the Philippines; some thought that immigration officials were in cahoots with traffickers who accompanied them abroad.

Some left the Philippines on tourist visas, and a few had proper documentation. Legal recruitment and documentation, however, did not prevent their sexual exploitation, nor did it render women safe. As Aida Santos concludes, making prostitution legitimate work and “protect-

ing” women with “sex work” contracts cannot solve sexual and physical abuse. To assume that sexual exploitation is simply a labor problem, or a violation of contract, is to ignore the experiences of thousands of trafficked women with legal papers who were harmed and violated.

Legal transit visas are often used to provide entry for Thai women trafficked to Japan. Police report that Uzbek and Russian women, trafficked into Thailand for prostitution, are also used by international syndicates as drug carriers. As Caucasian, they are less suspect than Asian or African women. Syndicates in Thailand and New Zealand exploit the visa exemption privilege to traffic Thai women into New Zealand for prostitution, also using New Zealand as a departure point for Thai women trafficked to Japan, Australia and Cyprus. One syndicate trafficked 40 Thai women into Australian brothels using protection visas to secure working visas. Australian protection visa data from 1997-2001, listing applicants from Southeast Asia, demonstrates that Thailand and Laos are the only 2 countries where the number of women applicants outstrips men (Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Australia, 1998-2001).

Traffickers exploit open transit points between Thailand and its neighboring countries, where no border crossing permits are required. Thai women are also trafficked with the passports of other nationalities, and the use of forged passports and visas is very common with Thai women trafficked to Japan. Other Thai women were taken to Japan by boat, bypassing border controls and immigration checkpoints. Similarly, women from Laos, Cambodia and Burma have been trafficked into Thailand through mountain and forest, and across the Mekong River by boat.

Women from Latin American and Caribbean countries interviewed in Venezuela reported being transported by plane, bus and car. Most traveled in a group, but a significant number traveled alone. Most women reported that they realized almost immediately that they would be involved in the sex industry. Twenty-six percent stated that they were not free to move around because they did not hold identification papers and were confined. Others were not allowed out of the sex establishments after a certain hour.

Most of the Russian/NIS women entered the United States on tourist, business, student and spouse visas. After arrival, half of them did not have access to their travel documents and were closely monitored. Sixty-seven percent of the Russian/NIS women and nearly half of the U.S. women reported that they were moved from place to place in cities, with stops in rural and suburban areas. They were prostituted in massage parlors, the pimp’s or customer’s house, bars, striptease joints, peep shows, escort services, brothels, and on the street. Half of the Russian/NIS women reported that they serviced male immigrants in various cities.

“Bosses” tried to get Russian/NIS women to recruit other women into prostitution in the United States. Although most women had endured much violence and suffering, they stated that they could not subject other women to prostitution for their own advancement.

### **C. The Buyers**

Buyers of Indonesian women in the sex industry came from many different nationalities, but most were from Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia, ranging in age from 18-60. NGO service providers who once lived in Batam and Karimun Islands reported that many men who bought women in prostitution in these areas were very old men who came from ethnic Chinese backgrounds. It was a common picture, they reported, to see a very old man holding hands with a young woman in the streets or the entertainment establishments, “looking more like grandfather and granddaughter than buyer and young woman in prostitution (p.81).” Some of these men were also reported to use medicine to achieve sexual function. Respondents reported that some older men died in the act of sex when the medicine they consumed (possibly Viagra) precipitated a

heart attack. Other “customers” were businessmen who came to the islands to do business with the locals. Compared to the educational levels of the women, the buyers had relatively high education. Respondents reported that 75 percent of their “customers” were married, defying the common Indonesian stereotype that men who buy women for commercial sex are unmarried.

Filipino women trafficked to Japan reported that many Japanese “customers” were demanding and violent. Filipino women trafficked to Nigeria found their Filipino buyers were generally well behaved. Although empathizing with their plight, many Filipino men nevertheless bought them for sex.

An estimated 4.6 million Thai men regularly, and 500,000 foreign tourists annually, use Thai women and children in prostitution. A German Health Ministry Survey revealed that in 1990 that about 30 percent or 50,000 of the German tourists who came to Thailand came only for sexual entertainment (p.140). With an emphasis on “differentness, exotica and mystery,” women of diverse ethnic groups and nationalities and children are incorporated into the Thai sex industry. As Jean D’Cunha writes, Thai and Japanese men demand fair skinned hill-tribe girls from Thailand, or from the Northeast part of the country, or from Burma; *farangs* prefer browner women from North Thailand; and Chinese buyers demand Chinese women from the region (p.138).

Buyers in Venezuela were between the ages of 17-80, the majority of whom were married. Women reported that clients came from different races and nationalities and that the educational level of buyers ranged from illiterate to PhDs. The majority of men had completed high school or university, and a significant number had attained a PhD degree. On average women reported that they had to engage in 1-10 paid sexual contacts daily, but stated that *other* women in the sex establishments had to service from 18-20 men daily. Some women, they said, had to service 20-40 men daily, but these women were found in marginal brothels.

Women in Venezuela reported that although some buyers used condoms, few did so voluntarily. Half of the women reported that many men, when asked, did not comply. Seventy-three percent of the interviewees stated that men paid more for sex without a condom. Ninety percent of women reported violence inflicted by clients who used fists, baseball bats, room furniture and guns to impose the violence. Forty percent of the respondents reported that they felt they would be killed by one of their clients.

In the U.S. country report, men of all ages and classes were designated as buyers, ranging in age from 15-90. The Russian/NIS women reported servicing between 3-30 men daily; U.S. women reported having to service between 3-7 buyers per day, with those who used drugs reporting that the number could rise to as many as 20-30 buyers daily. Both Russian/NIS and U.S. women reported virtually no protection against contracting disease from male customers, and stated that no screening or policy of condom use was enacted in the sex establishments where they were in prostitution.

#### **IV VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

The reported results of violence against women in prostitution are particularly significant because they indicate high levels of violation, harm and trauma, and the fact that prostitution – although not often recognized — is a form of violence against women. The ambivalence, on the part of many researchers, NGOs and governments, to view prostitution as violence against women parallels an earlier disregard and neglect of the harm done to battered women on the part of those who believed that if women made the “choice” to stay in abusive relationships that “it couldn’t be that bad.”

Trafficked and prostituted women in the sex industry suffer the same kinds of violence and sexual exploitation as women who have been battered, raped and sexually assaulted. The difference is that when women are subjected to this same kind of violence and sexual exploitation in prostitution, it is viewed as “sex,” and often tolerated as part of the “job.” The findings of this study reveal that violence is endemic to the “sex” of prostitution and traps women in the system of prostitution.

As Jean D’Cunha writes, to fully grasp how integral violence is to prostitution, it is necessary to understand the sex and sexuality of prostitution and its determinants. Traditional rationalizations of prostitution argue that male sexuality that is repressed can result in the rape of “good” women and erode the family structure. Therefore, a class of women is needed who are paid and publicly sexualized, as a kind of venereal safety valve for men who would otherwise violate other “innocent” women.

“Women in prostitution report that even the standard act of prostitution – coitus with a range of strangers – is violating (p.147).” Unwanted, alienated and abusive sex is the dominant reason why women in prostitution must dissociate from their bodies during the act of sex and often use drugs and alcohol to cope, as well as other diversionary tactics. Such dissociation and diversions also function as “an assertion against male arrogance and domination, as well as a defense against fusing their emotional lives with prostitution (p.147).”

Women were asked specific questions about the forms and frequency of violence in prostitution. Each country report quantified their responses to these questions, and these results have been combined for “All Surveyed Women” from Indonesia, the Philippines, Venezuela and the United States in Figure 1 below.

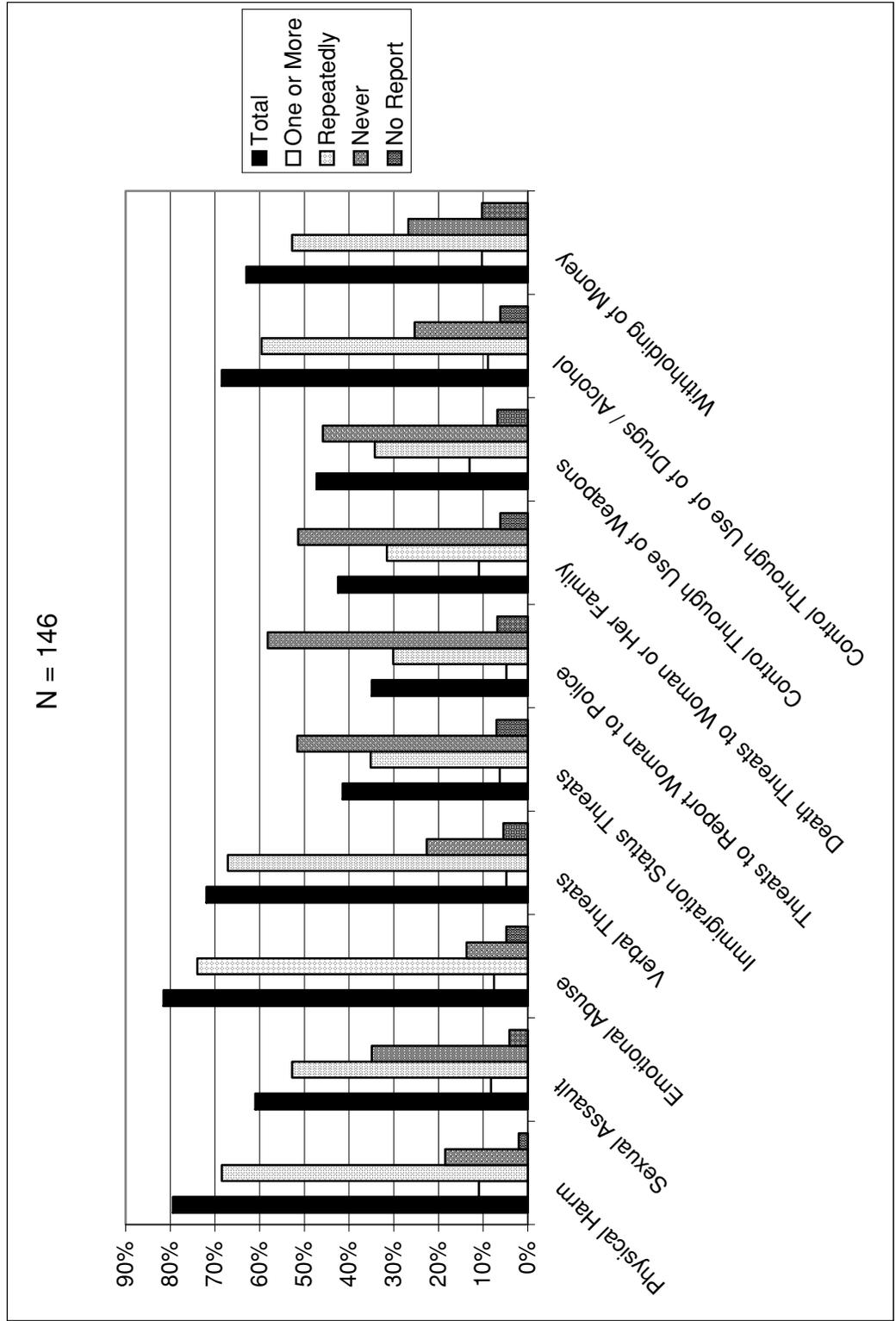
Rates and frequency of violence and control are extremely high, with physical harm (almost 80 percent), sexual assault (over 60 percent), emotional abuse (over 80 percent), verbal threats (over 70 percent), and control through use of drugs/alcohol (almost 70 percent) leading the indicators.

Indonesian respondents reported the highest rates and frequency of violence of the four country reports that were quantified. Ninety to 100 percent of Indonesian women reported that they experienced physical harm, emotional abuse, immigration status threats, death threats to themselves or their families, and control through the use of weapons. Seventy to 90 percent of Indonesian respondents reported enduring sexual assault, threats to report them to the police, control through use of drugs/alcohol and withholding of money. Additionally, the frequency of violence, means of control, and threats was very high.

Indonesian respondents said that they also suffered physical punishment when they made mistakes or tried to run away, with pimps and bodyguards using belts, wooden baseball bat-like sticks, fists and hands. Some of the Indonesian sex establishments enlisted military men and police officers to safeguard their businesses. Methods of isolation were part of Indonesian respondents’ daily lives in the sex industry, along with withholding of money. Women only received 1/3 of the money they earned, and even this share of their earnings was collected and retained by the pimps who held it for them. Some of the Indonesian respondents reported that they had been raped by pimps and family members of pimps.

Indonesian women reported that they had to service men throughout the night, even when they were ill or did not feel well. When women reported violence from buyers, however, they often did not define these acts as violent since they had been instructed to do anything the buyers wanted. Most Indonesian women reported feeling violated by the buyers when the men de-

All Surveyed Women Figure 1 - Violence, Means of Control and Threats by Recruiters, Traffickers, Pimps and "Clients"



manded oral or anal sex. As strategies of avoidance and survival, women plied the buyers with alcohol until they were drunk and sleepy. Most of the respondents also reported that they had tried to leave the sex industry but received little help.

Filipino women were told to do whatever the managers/owner told them. Their movement was highly controlled, and most were not allowed to leave the premises and were tightly guarded. Apart from “entertaining” the buyers, women reported that they had to clean the establishments before they could go back to their sleeping quarters. Some had to receive clients where they slept. Most of the Filipino women reported that buyers photographed them nude or during the sex acts.

Over 70 percent of Filipino women reported that they had experienced physical harm, sexual assault, and emotional abuse *repeatedly*. Over 60 percent reported that they had endured verbal threats, control through use of drugs/alcohol and withholding of money *repeatedly*.

Acts of violence reported by Filipino women included having objects thrown at them, hit with a leather whip or objects, kicked, hand tied with barbed wire, burned with cigarettes, slapped, thrown off a stage, dragged, pinched, and forced against a hard surface. Sadistic sexual assault included biting of nipples, forcible use of underwear to hurt a woman’s genitalia, and being bound with stockings before forced sex. Weapons used included guns, truncheons, batons and knives. Women also reported that they were forced to use shabu (methamphetamine hydrochloride) or cocaine by customers or managers. Some women were punished with detention and lockup, and were held naked in a cold, padlocked room for one week with no ability to communicate with anyone.

During the interviews, it was apparent that Filipino women had more adverse reactions to the sexual violence perpetrated against them than to other forms of violence. Like the Indonesian respondents, however, many of the Filipina respondents had only a vague notion that this violence was rape, since there was an assumption that sex that was paid for could not be rape.

Although the rates and frequency of violence to Filipino women are high, interviewers reported that Filipina respondents were reluctant to detail the violence and abuse they experienced. Many respondents could not remember the details of the violence committed against them, and a number of women were detailing their abuse for the first time. Some respondents requested that interviewers not ask these questions, since they wanted to forget the violence done to them. Others exhibited a high degree of denial that became obvious when women were asked about the violence experienced not only by themselves, but also by other women in the sex industry. Many women reported that *other women* had sustained more intense and frequent acts of violence than they themselves had divulged.

The Thai country report especially notes that seasoning women and girls to prostitution — through changing women’s names, denying them money, confiscating their travel documents, threatening to report women to the police or to turn them over to gangsters, and selling them again at double their debts — is a well-established practice of violence, control and enslavement. Physically confined and hidden, women in prostitution lose all external points of reference. “Once in prostitution, a woman realizes that she has no control over the choice of client, the pace or price of work, or the nature of the sexual activity. She is the shared property of any male who can pay a price for sex and for her body (p. 141).”

All the women interviewed in the Thai country report said they had no control over the number of clients they were made to service. In Thai brothels, women must service an average of 7 buyers daily during the week, and double that on weekends. Nine of the 10 women interviewed reported that they had been raped in prostitution repeatedly. Some stated that they had been

dragged into vehicles, while prostituting on the streets of Bangkok, and gang-raped multiple times. None of the women went to the police or sought assistance because they believed that they would be regarded as “asking for it.” One of the Thai respondents stated: “Even when you knowingly enter prostitution, or don’t have violent clients regularly, it is very difficult to get used to your body being touched and prodded by a series of strange men each day (p. 143).” Thus some of the women insisted on condoms not only to protect themselves but also to avoid skin contact, ensuring physical and emotional separation from the clients and preservation of some shred of bodily and mental integrity.

The Latin American/Caribbean and Venezuelan respondents trafficked to/in/through Venezuela reported especially high rates — ranging from 55 to over 90 percent — of physical harm, emotional abuse, verbal threats, and control through use of drugs or alcohol. Fifty-six percent of Latin American/Caribbean women also reported that money had been withheld from them multiple times. In general, the rates of violence, control and threats reported by Latin American/Caribbean women were slightly higher than those reported by Venezuelan respondents. Acts of violence included being pushed, hit with objects, punched, being isolated and confined on a country farm, and having weapons such as firearms and knives used against them.

When asked if they had witnessed violence done to other women in the sex industry, Venezuelan respondents reported that 78 percent of *other* Venezuelan women suffered physical violence, as opposed to 56 percent when they reported about themselves. As in the Philippines, women had great difficulty when they reported the violence done to themselves.

All women interviewed in Venezuela stated that their daily lives were controlled in various ways, and that they had to give an accounting to the person in charge of the establishment. In some establishments, the owners made women sign forms, registering everything that had happened and the money they received. Some women were promised extra money for recruiting women into the clubs and brothels.

Of the 71 percent of Venezuelan respondents who took drugs and alcohol as a survival strategy to escape the reality of their lives in prostitution, 60 percent of them began abusive use of drugs and alcohol *after* entering the sex industry. “Perico,” a mixture of different drugs, was most frequently mentioned. Some women were promised jobs as madams or supervisors, one of the few ways for women to move up and out of prostitution. Seventy-three percent of respondents interviewed in Venezuela did attempt, at some point, to escape from their sex establishments.

A number of women in Venezuela reported that police had financial and other kinds of deals with the brothels, clubs or bars. Women also stated that they were forced to have sex with policemen, and 2 Latin American/Caribbean women reported that they had sex with immigration officers who promised them immigration papers. All 41 women interviewed in Venezuela had been arrested at some point by the police and interrogated about trafficking and drug use. The reasons for their arrests included lack of identity papers or a health certificate, and simply being arrested in the process of a raid on the particular establishments in which they were prostituted.

In the U.S. country report, both Russian/NIS and U.S. women suffered extraordinarily high rates of physical violence (84 percent and 100 percent respectively); sexual assault (67 and 85 percent respectively); emotional abuse (73 and 76 percent respectively); and verbal threats (73 and 92 percent respectively). Women reported acts of physical violence that included being beaten, bit, burned, chased, choked, crushed, dragged, hit with objects, pinched, punched, scratched, shoved, smacked, strangled, stripped, thrown out of a car, twisted, and hair pulled.

Sadistic sex acts included being beaten and urinated on, pinched in the breasts, sodomized, objects inserted in anus and vagina, bestiality and filmed in pornography. Instruments and weapons used against women in these acts of violence included being strangled with a bandana, burned with cigarette butts, bound with extension cords, assaulted with sticks, knives and guns, hit with shoes and a liquor bottle.

Eighty-four percent of Russian/NIS respondents also reported that money had been withheld from them, and 61 percent of the Russian/NIS women stated that drugs and alcohol were used to control them. They were given forcible injections of drugs in order to exact their compliance, make them lose inhibitions, and encourage dependency. Over half of both Russian/NIS and U.S. women stated that pornography was made of them, and/or used against them, while in the sex industry. Russian/NIS women were further controlled by a layer of economic and immigration-related threats used by perpetrators in the sex industry to prey upon their vulnerability as migrants trapped in an illegal underground.

Like women's reports from Indonesia, the Philippines, and Venezuela, Russian/NIS and U.S. women also witnessed higher incidences of violence perpetrated by buyers and brothel owners, towards women other than themselves. However, some women interviewed in the U.S. country report found it *more difficult* to speak about the violence suffered by other women in the sex industry.

When asked what they hated most about prostitution and how they survived, the Russian/NIS women consistently described hating that they had been broken spiritually and physically by degrading sexual acts and abusive conditions. Many still carry an excruciating burden of humiliation and shame. Some tried to ply men with drugs so buyers "would forget about sex altogether." Others used drugs and alcohol to dull and deaden their feelings. Women who reported drug use before entering prostitution also reported a history of sexual, physical and mental abuse prior to as well as within prostitution. Thus, their drug use must be seen in the context of this accretion of abuse. Respondents interviewed in the U.S. country report also stated that prostitution worsened their drug habits, ultimately trapping them further within the sex industry.

When asked how they coped with the violence, Filipino women seemed not to even consider that this was a realistic question. Most respondents seemed to survive in a passive way, accepting their situation. Many mentioned that they prayed. Drugs and alcohol were certainly used as coping mechanisms, although most of the women were also forced to take drugs by pimps and managers as a means of control.

All Filipino respondents who were in exploitative situations wanted to leave their sex establishments, and some had tried to escape. Two respondents told the story of trying to escape twice from a Yakuza-controlled brothel in Japan. The ferry owner whose boat they boarded to bring them outside the brothel area was controlled by the Yakuza, and they were subsequently brought back to the brothel and punished severely. They promised not to attempt escape again when they were shown the bodies of 2 murdered Filipino women that had been mutilated and kept in a closet.

## **V – CONSEQUENCES TO WOMEN'S HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**

Historically, the medical and public health literature on prostitution has emphasized the role of women in prostitution as vectors of disease. One comprehensive annotated bibliography of studies on prostitution, from 1900-1990, published in the international medical literature is almost exclusively focused on the epidemiology of sexually transmitted diseases, and the role of prostituted women in disease causation (Kantha, 1991). Many of these studies have functioned to

medically monitor and control women in prostitution but rarely, if ever, to medically monitor and control the clients who buy women in prostitution, nor the sex industry in which sexually transmitted infections thrive. Few of these studies document and address the burden of physical injuries and illnesses that women in the sex industry sustain from the violence inflicted on them, or from their significantly higher rates of hepatitis B, higher risks of cervical cancer, fertility complications, and psychological trauma. With the exception of several exceptional recent studies (e.g., Farley and Barkan, 1998), most medical and public health researchers have largely ignored and thus not documented the full-scale health effects of harm to women in the sex industry.

Women in prostitution suffer from pulmonary tuberculosis, anemia, hepatitis-B, as well as sexually transmitted infections such as chronic syphilis, gonorrhea, and herpes; pelvic inflammatory disease, inflammation of the uterus, vaginal irritation and bleeding caused by multiple sex partners and soreness, and cervical cancer; physical injuries such as broken bones, cut, bruises and sometimes mutilation or severance of body parts – all related to their status in prostitution (p. 144). If girl children are involved, there is a greater likelihood that they will suffer rectal fissures, poor sphincter control, lacerated and ruptured vaginas, perforated anal and vaginal walls, peritonitis, mutilated bodies, chronic choking from gonorrheal tonsillitis, and asphyxiation from oral penetration. Little girls who become pregnant are often unable to sustain a pregnancy or childbirth. They are also more susceptible to HIV infection because their thinner genital tract mucous membrane is a less efficient barrier to viruses (p. 144).

#### **A. Injuries**

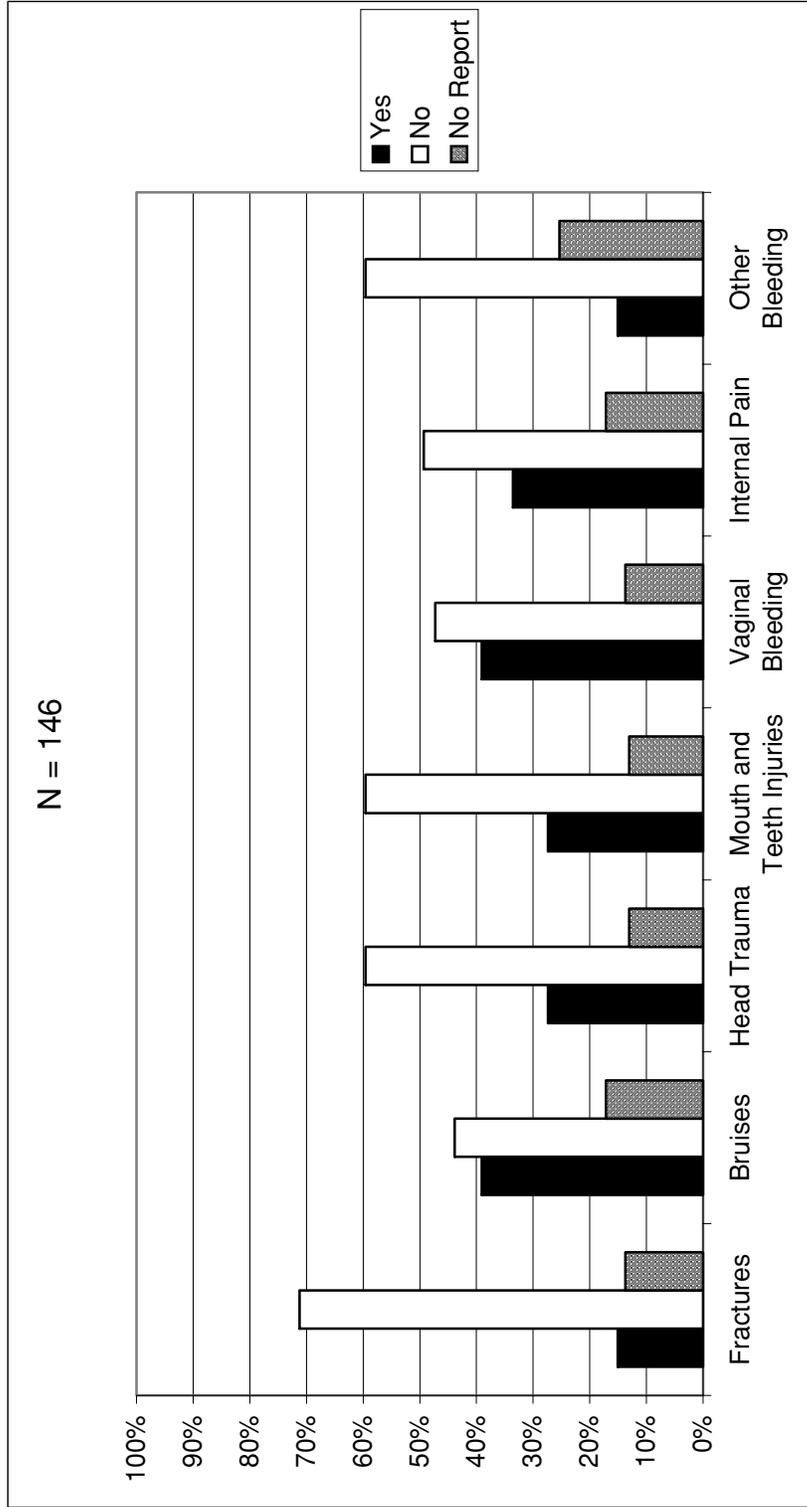
The U.S. country section reports the highest number of injuries. Both Russian/NIS and U.S. respondents sustained serious physical injuries as a result of the violence and sexual exploitation of prostitution, including bruises from being hit and beaten (78 percent of Russian/NIS women and 77 percent of U.S. women); vaginal bleeding (61 percent of Russian/NIS women and 23 percent of U.S. women); head trauma (33 percent of Russian/NIS women and 54 percent of U.S. women); internal pain (67 percent of Russian/NIS women); and mouth and teeth injuries (44 percent of Russian/NIS women and 38 percent of U.S. women).

So-called safety policies in U.S. brothels did not protect either Russian/NIS or U.S. women from injury and harm, even where brothels and clubs supposedly monitored the buyers or used “bouncers.” Half of the Russian/NIS women, in fact, thought that they might be killed by one of their clients.

Since most Russian/NIS women arrived in the United States by plane, they were not subjected to the health impacts of the migration process comparable to women in other countries where the migrating/trafficking process was long and arduous and involved dangerous transport and living conditions. Sixty-seven percent of the Russian/NIS women, however, did state that as a result of prostitution, their health had considerably worsened, citing drug and alcohol dependencies, depression and HIV/AIDS.

Rates of injuries to Indonesian women are highest in the categories of vaginal bleeding (60 percent); followed by bruises, head trauma, and mouth and teeth injuries (29 percent). Indonesian women reported specific physical injuries of broken bones to all parts of the body; bruises from being hit, gripped firmly, beaten up and from injections; being choked until they passed out, concussions, ruptured blood vessels in the eye, nosebleeds, teeth knocked out or broken, lip scars from beatings, sores from smoking crack, bleeding and bitten lips; soreness and swelling from frequent sex, miscarriage from violence, and sudden bleeding after violent intercourse. Women also reported other health problems of head and heart pain, liver problems due to drugs, kidney

All Surveyed Women Figure 2 - Injuries Suffered by All Surveyed Women Exploited in the Sex Industry



problems, stomach and back aches, throat and face pain after multiple successive oral sex acts, rectal bleeding from rape and anal sex, and self-inflicted cutting and wounds.

For Filipino women, highest rates of injuries are in the categories of internal pain, vaginal bleeding, head trauma and bruises (all above 30 percent). Filipino women reported specific injuries of broken bones fractured by clients; head injuries from having their heads banged by clients; pain before and during menstruation; rib injury; pain during sexual intercourse, abnormal bowel movements, back pain, episodes of blackouts/fainting, difficulty in breathing, eye infections and heart problems, all related to their experiences in prostitution. The majority of women were fed only once or twice a day, ostensibly to keep their weight in check and to make them more attractive to buyers, and thus there was a high degree of malnutrition among Filipino respondents.

As Aida Santos notes in her country report on the Philippines, although the lower percentage of injuries demonstrated in Figure 2 (p.112) seems to signal a discrepancy, given the much higher percentages of violence reported by respondents, this may be due to several factors. A number of women did not accept that they were injured or ill because they coped with their own health problems. Other women could not remember specific injuries they suffered but spoke generally about these injuries. The interviewers hypothesized, from the contexts of the interviews, that some women were psychologically unprepared to examine specific and concrete injuries done to them. Still others who had less difficulty in reporting actual violent incidents perhaps minimized the effects of this violence when they were asked to cast the consequences to themselves in terms of physical injuries.

Zoraida Ramirez Rodriguez makes a similar point in stating that the rates of injuries to Latin American/Caribbean and Venezuelan women trafficked into prostitution were lower than expected. Women “possibly felt shame in reporting the actual physical burden of the violence as it required them to reveal the intimate bodily nature of their injuries (p. 179).”

Latin American/Caribbean women reported the highest rates of injuries in the categories of internal pain (37 percent), bruises (28 percent) and vaginal bleeding (25 percent). Venezuelan respondents reported the highest rates of injuries also in the categories of internal pain and vaginal bleeding (44 percent) and mouth and teeth injuries (33 percent). The Venezuela country report documents that women with leg fractures were forced to “work” while wearing a cast and that, during a brothel raid, a policeman fractured a woman’s ribs and legs. Bruises were caused by blows from clients, from falls, from fights with other women in the brothel, as a result of being beaten with objects and furniture in the establishments, from attempted strangulation by clients, and from beatings inflicted by pimps. Vaginal bleeding was caused by frequent sexual intercourse, and anal bleeding from anal penetration. Clients cut respondents’ hands and arms with sharp knives, scissors, and razor blades, and women were also cut during fights with other women in the brothels.

The Venezuelan researchers speculate that lower reported rates of injuries as compared with higher rates of violence could also be due to the fact that respondents blamed themselves for some of their injuries, or minimized the nature and extent of these injuries. For example, it is interesting that women reported higher incidence of injuries in mostly every category listed when they were asked if they had witnessed injuries to other women (see page 179). Although the rates of documented injuries to trafficked and prostituted women are certainly high in Indonesia, the Philippines and Venezuela, these country reports demonstrate that, compared to the much higher rates of violence documented, the physical injury numbers are lower than expected.

During the actual process of migration from their countries, many Latin American and Caribbean women reported that the conditions of the journey caused health problems, including headaches, colds, diarrhea, chicken pox, asthma, stress, high blood pressure, stomach ulcers, and road accident injuries. Almost half the Latin American/Caribbean women reported that their health worsened in the migration/trafficking process. Women also described conditions of walking continuously without a break, threats from the traffickers, and no access to washing facilities. Indonesian respondents also listed headaches, stomachaches and typhus as health problems occurring in the migrating/trafficking process.

Half of all women interviewed in Venezuela also reported that their health had deteriorated since being in the sex industry. Many were taking medications to alleviate health problems.

### ***Sexually Transmitted Infections***

Women in the various country reports found it difficult to answer questions about sexually transmitted infections. Some Venezuelan respondents reported multiple bouts of syphilis or gonorrhea, or other symptoms of STIs including vaginal discharge, itching, bleeding and infections in the genital area. Almost 1/3 of the Venezuelan respondents had received creams, sprays and pessaries either from the Health Ministry or private gynecologists.

Filipino respondents described symptoms of sexually transmitted diseases, including itchininess, soreness, lacerations, bleeding and pain in the vaginal area, but were not sure how to identify specific infections. The interviewers believed that the majority of respondents had little knowledge about sexually transmitted infections.

The Thai country report found that the level of Thai women's awareness of STDs and HIV/AIDS is superficial, rendering them vulnerable to sexually transmitted and HIV infections. Thai women also suffer from other factors related to actual or perceived HIV status such as stigmatization, and mandatory HIV testing that is intrusive, ineffective and discriminatory. Thai women who have been tested for HIV find it very difficult to obtain test results, even when they request them, yet the results are readily made available to brothel owners, pimps and public officials (p. 145). Thai brothel keepers then exploit this knowledge to expel those who are infected and maximize profits by bringing in "clean girls." Effectively, official policy in Thailand dictates that mandatory testing sanitizes women in the sex industry for the buyers, with men not being subjected to mandatory screening, although male-to-female transmission is much higher than female-to-male transmission (p. 145).

### ***Condoms***

In the U.S. country report, Russian/NIS women reported that the percentage of buyers willing to use condoms ranged from 30-80 percent. Where the rules of the establishment required buyers to use condoms, these regulations did not stop them from offering to pay more for sex without a condom. In fact, 67 percent of Russian/NIS interviewees stated that men would pay more for sex without a condom. Additionally, women's physical and economic vulnerability could nullify any "policy" on condoms.

A very high number of Russian/NIS women (61 percent) reported that condoms broke, with the frequency ranging from one time to at least 10 times. Twenty-three percent of the U.S. women reported condom breakage. Together with reports of vaginal irritation as a result of condom use (94 percent of Russian/NIS women and 38 percent of U.S. women) and bleeding from multiple condom use (28 percent of Russian/NIS women), the high incidence of condom breakage throws into question total reliance on condoms. As Patricia Hynes states, "Public health programs which promote 'safer sex' and condom use in the sex industry are more likely to protect

male prostitute users than to protect women from men who engage in ‘risky’ sex...Condom promotion programs in prostitution are the counterpoint of gun lock promotion in gun safety programs: They do save some lives; they don’t eliminate the source of the harm (p. 209).”

Seventy-five percent of Indonesian respondents reported that almost all of their buyers refused to use a condom, stating that condoms reduce their sexual enjoyment. Efforts to influence buyers to use condoms were generally ineffective since buyers would become angry and threaten to report women to pimps.

In the Philippines, respondents were not forthcoming about condom use. They did report, however, that few buyers used condoms. Filipino women who reported that men used condoms also stated that condom use was inconsistent because it always depended on the buyers and women’s ability to negotiate with them. Some respondents stated that condoms were the rule in some sex establishments, but that women might not use them with their “regulars” or their boyfriends. Some women signaled that if they liked a client, they also might not ask that he use a condom.

Most Thai clients, with the exception of some *farangs*, do not use condoms. As in Indonesia, men insist that it diminishes sexual pleasure. Thai women report that they do not have the power to ensure that men use condoms, and the sex establishments do not enforce a condom policy. Thai women also report a high level of condom breakage due to poor quality and improper usage.

A few Indonesian respondents used the female condom but reported that these were of low quality and caused irritation and vaginal bleeding. Thai women reported that female condoms are not used because they are uncomfortable, inconvenient and expensive. In Venezuela, publicity about the female condom is relatively recent and not widespread. Most women believe that the female condom is uncomfortable, and it is not widely for sale in pharmacies or other venues.

### ***Contraception and Abortion***

The majority of Filipino respondents reported that they used contraception. Recruiters and managers forced contraceptive injectables on women in some sex establishments. Most likely, this was Depo-Provera although women did not know with what they had been injected.

The subject of abortion was very difficult for Filipinas to discuss since it was clearly an emotional and religious matter, with most stating that it was a “sin” to have an abortion. Most women stated that if they became pregnant as a result of prostitution that they would continue the pregnancy to term.

Interviews with Thai women revealed that they routinely take pills provided by the establishment or bought over the counter to suppress menstruation and avoid pregnancy so that, as Jean D’Cunha writes, “they can toil continuously, repay debts faster, save, and avoid the owners’ wrath (p. 144).” Thai women also reported that they have undergone unsafe and self-induced abortions using abortifacients, or by physically stamping on or punching their stomachs.

### ***Health Services***

All women interviewed in Venezuela, including trafficked women from other countries, had received certificates from the Health Ministry. Thus 34 women reported that they had been tested for HIV/AIDS at the Health Ministry, since it is compulsory for women in prostitution to have a test every 6 months to renew their health certificates. Of significance was that the major health concern of respondents was not about contracting HIV/AIDS, but whether they would recover from the injuries and illnesses reported above. Four women interviewed reported that they had been diagnosed with HIV. Others stated that they had knowledge of HIV/AIDS prevention.

Although foreign women in Venezuela can attend the state-run hospitals, maternity clinics and emergency services, this did not mean that they utilized these services, especially for injuries incurred while in the sex industry. In fact, most of the respondents rarely sought help from medical professionals, instead using traditional or alternative means of healing such as herbs or medicinal plants.

Most respondents in Venezuela stated that they took care of themselves, and that they did not have the money to pay for medical consultations and prescriptions. Nor did they have the time, since most had children and had to be on call at the sex establishments. Women who did make medical appointments were frequently unable to keep them for many reasons, including their lack of self-esteem and fears that they would be stigmatized and treated badly by health professionals.

As in Venezuela, most Thai women reported treating themselves. Thai trafficked women had poor access to health services for various reasons: their illegitimate status and that of the prostitution establishment, the expense, the pressures of engaging in constant sexual activity, the disparaging attitudes of health providers, and women's own lack of health information. Some Thai women did seek treatment through inexpensive medical centers, private practitioners and government hospitals.

In Indonesia, the medical services that women received were limited to STD testing and sometimes treatment, and birth control. Some women reported that they were given blood tests for HIV/AIDS, antibiotic injections for STDs, and pills and injections for birth control.

U.S. respondents in the sex industry had access to some clinics, counseling and service organizations such as Breaking Free, mentioned by those interviewed. But Russian/NIS women reported no access to similar services, having no idea of where to turn for help, and no resources.

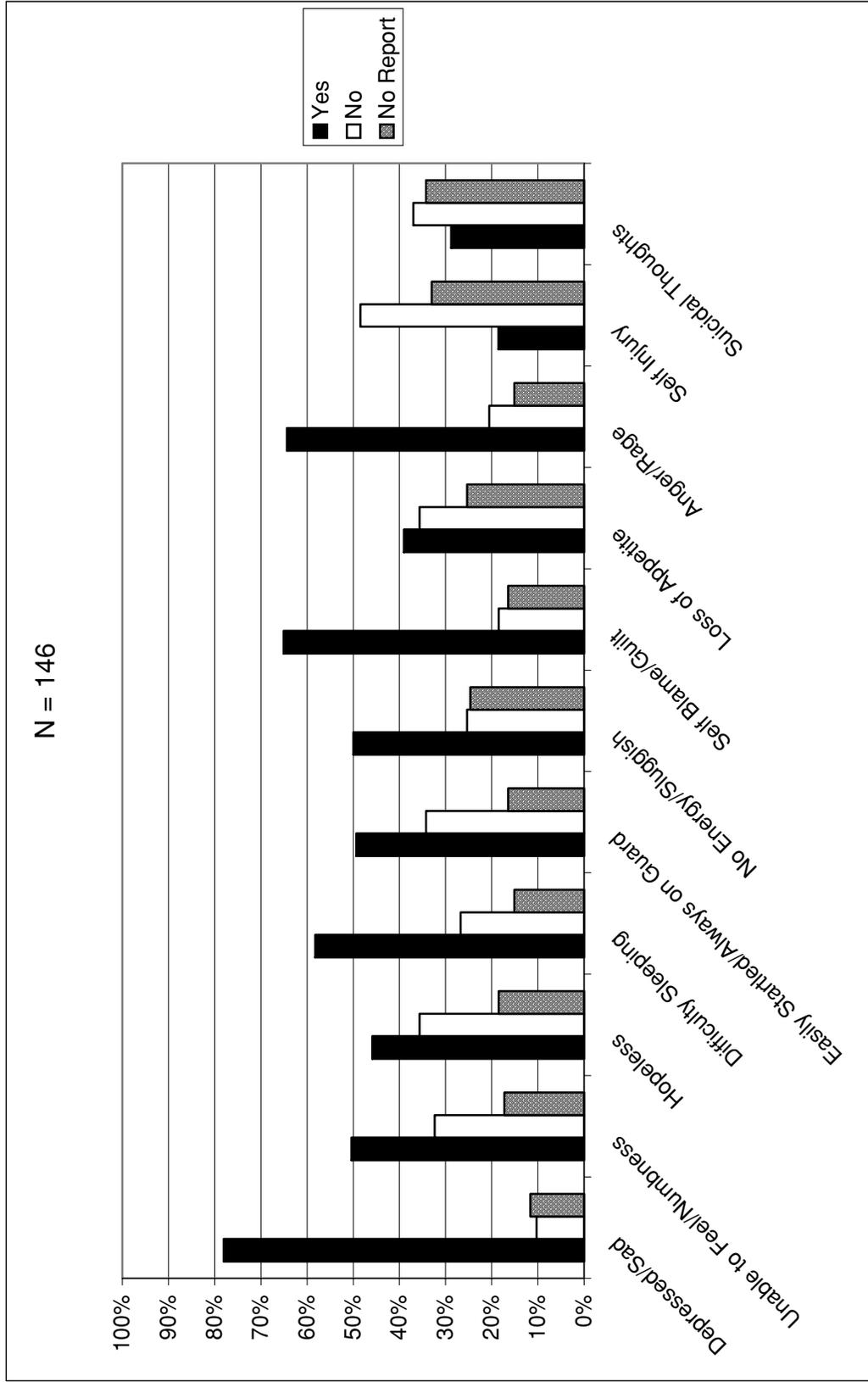
## **B. Emotional, Behavioral and Psychological Effects**

Compared to the rates of physical injuries, there are higher percentages of emotional, behavioral and mental problems reported by respondents, and represented in Figure 3. The highest rates of emotional, behavioral and psychological effects occur in the categories where women reported depression/sadness (78 percent), self-blame/guilt (65 percent), anger/rage (64 percent), and difficulty sleeping (59 percent).

The Venezuelan country section reports the highest rates of emotional, behavioral and psychological problems experienced by respondents as a result of sexual exploitation (see pp.?). These rates are especially high among Latin American/Caribbean women. For example, 84 percent of Latin American/Caribbean women reported being depressed/sad, 78 percent reported being hopeless and having difficulty sleeping, 75 percent reported being easily startled/always on guard, 72 percent reported anger/rage, and 69 percent reported self-blame/guilt. Fifty percent or above of Latin American/Caribbean women also reported being unable to feel or experiencing numbness, having no energy or being sluggish, and loss of appetite. Rates of emotional effects reported by Venezuelan women in the sex industry were also high, with 89 percent of Venezuelan respondents stating that they experienced depression and sadness, and 78 percent reporting anger and rage.

Women interviewed in the Venezuelan country project reported that these feelings were the results of intra-family violence that they had experienced, the perils of migration and of being trapped in the sex industry. Women also reported living in wretched and harmful conditions, never dreaming that they would end up in prostitution. One respondent in the Venezuelan report stated her feelings in this way: "They say that I was born to this, but I have dreamed of doing other things in my life."

All Surveyed Women Figure 3 - Emotional, Behavioral and Psychological Problems of All Surveyed Women As a Result of Sexual Exploitation



The emotional, behavioral and psychological problems resulting from trafficking and prostitution were acute and extreme for both Russian/NIS and U.S. women interviewed in the U.S. country report. Sixty-one percent of Russian/NIS women reported being depressed/sad, unable to feel/numbness, hopeless, easily startled/on guard, and experiencing self-blame and guilt. Fifty percent of Russian/NIS women stated that they had no energy or were sluggish.

Eighty-five percent of U.S. women in the sex industry reported feelings of depression and sadness; sixty-nine percent reported having anger and rage, as well as having difficulty sleeping; sixty-two percent experienced loss of appetite; fifty-four percent were unable to feel and experienced numbness, as well as having no energy and feeling sluggish; another fifty-four percent had tried to injure themselves and experienced suicidal thoughts.

Women interviewed in the U.S. country report described the range of emotional consequences of sexual exploitation in various ways. Some stated that they felt angry at the world, “like the world owed me something, and they weren’t giving it to me.” African-American women in the U.S. sex industry expressed hatred of white men. Many women had engaged in multiple attempts at self-injury through drug overdoses, abuse of pills, high risk behavior, not using condoms, attempting to get run over by walking in the middle of the street, self-cutting and wrist slitting, “smoking myself to death,” “tried to bust my heart,” not taking care of themselves, and attempts to poison and hang themselves. Many expressed feelings of worthlessness, being trapped, paranoid, self-identity “shot,” dissociated, disgust, and shame. Others stated that they felt superior, with high motivation only for doing drugs. One said: “I have big gaps in memory of my life.”

Filipino women reported high rates of emotional, behavioral and psychological problems in the categories of depressed/sad (82 percent), anger/rage (76 percent), self-blame/guilt (69 percent) and no energy/sluggish (63 percent). Fifty-five percent also reported that they had difficulty sleeping (see p.115).

The Philippines country report notes that although Filipino women often made no distinction between physical and emotional injuries, this could be seen in a positive light. It could indicate that women’s physical and emotional sense of themselves and their health was more integrated, and that the consequences of the violence against women are not always easily separated into distinct physical injuries and emotional trauma. Thus health services for women in the sex industry need to offer both physical and emotional assistance.

Indonesian respondents reported high rates of emotional, behavioral and psychological problems in the categories of depressed/sad (68 percent), self-blame/guilt (60 percent), and difficulty sleeping (52 percent). Forty-four percent of Indonesian respondents also reported that they experienced anger and rage (see p. 89). Other feelings expressed by Indonesian women in the sex industry were that they felt they had committed an unpardonable “sin” in the eyes of God, they had dishonored the names of their families, and they blamed themselves for their inability to recognize and reject the false promises of the recruiters.

The Thai country report provides more nuanced descriptions of the emotional, behavioral and psychological consequences to women in the sex industry. Interviews with Thai women, as well as with service providers and advocates in Thailand, reveal effects of severe psychological trauma on women, manifested not only in the behaviors listed in Figure 3, but in excessive emotional attachment, attention-seeking behaviors, and disorientation. Other manifestations of emotional trauma are impaired learning ability, short attention and memory span, forgetfulness, lack of concentration even in the process of performing simple tasks, and lack of motivation to consider alternatives and to make future decisions.

Thai women also report dreams, nightmares and hysteria about being resold, attacked and chased, fear and revulsion of men and the sex act, distrust and suspicion of people in general, difficulties in confiding, and a strong desire to punish those who tricked, abused, and sold them. Other Thai respondents were obsessed with physical appearance, beauty aids, clothes and other accessories. Some women constantly pandered to men and yearned for male reassurance, love and stable marriages. Others shifted identity from being a “straight respectable mother” by day, to a clandestine woman in prostitution by night. All of these behaviors affected the well being of Thai trafficked women.

As for the emotional effects of prostitution on trafficked children, one Thai girl stated the problem most poignantly: “I feel jai haay – that my heart has gone from me.” Some children who had been sold by parents into the sex industry said: “If my parents loved me, how could they have sold me into this life (p. 146).”

**INDONESIA**  
**INTERVIEW FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS:**  
**A SURVEY OF TRAFFICKED WOMEN, WOMEN IN PROSTITUTION**  
**AND MAIL-ORDER BRIDES**

by  
Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin and Hartian Silawati

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## **I RESEARCH SITES**

The Indonesian team selected 4 research sites in 3 provinces for interviewing trafficked women: West Kalimantan Province; the city of Medan in North Sumatra Province; and Batam and the Karimun islands in Riau Province. West Kalimantan was chosen because it is situated on the border between Indonesia and East Malaysia. The main cities in East Malaysia of Sarawak and Kuching can be reached by commuting buses from the Indonesian cities of Pontianak, Sambas, Benkayang, and Sanggau. The city of Sanggau is the closest to Malaysia, and it is the legal entrance for people and goods to and from East Malaysian territory. From Sanggau, Indonesian migrant workers from West Kalimantan, East and Central Java, and West and East Nusatenggara enter Malaysia. Legal Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia are estimated to comprise 83 percent of the total foreign workers in Malaysia and are found mostly in three sectors: plantation work, domestic services, and construction. Indonesian female migrant workers are a significant part of the overall migrant population.

West Kalimantan is considered one of the poorest provinces in Indonesia. This area is inhabited by large numbers of Indonesian Chinese who, especially in rural areas, are employed on palm-oil plantations. However, the downturn of the Indonesian economy in the 1990s, and stiff competition in the international palm oil markets, caused a massive number of employees to lose their jobs, placing them below the poverty line. Others earn only U.S.\$10-25 monthly, an amount that is hardly sufficient to fulfill the basic needs of large families often comprising 11-12 children.

The poverty experienced by all ethnic groups has pushed daughters in families to enter the labor market as soon as possible. Working abroad or out the town is considered to be a great opportunity for daughters to earn income to support the family, or to lessen the family economic burden. Although poverty affects all ethnic groups, the poverty of the ethnic Chinese is worse compared to that of others. Recruiters use this situation to deceive poor young women into prostitution, recruiting them for local sex industries, and for abroad.

Medan was chosen as a research site because cases of child trafficking in this area have been highlighted in the local and national media. For example, a local newspaper reported that 30 children under 17 years old stated that they were sold as prostitutes to Dumai (*Harian Berita Sore*, June 3, 2000). Originally attracted by advertisements of a glamorous lifestyle, which are mushrooming in Medan — a center of administration, trade, industry, and tourism in the western part of Indonesia — these children became trapped in the sex industry. Medan is considered a city of origin where many young women are sold as prostitutes to Riau Province.

Batam and Karimun were chosen as research sites for 2 reasons. First, these islands have been a transition place for both legal and illegal Indonesian migrant workers entering Malaysia and Singapore. Geographically, Batam and Karimun islands are very close to Singapore and Malaysia and within a few minutes, these islands can be reached by speedboat from both countries. Second, these islands are also weekend resorts for Singaporeans and Malaysians. During the last two decades, Karimun Island, for example, has attracted tourists by giving free exit permits. Since July 1994, the number of tourists from Singapore and Malaysia has increased dramatically. In

1993/1994 the number of tourists was only 550; however in 1994/1995 the number increased to 91,000. In addition to its old-China atmosphere, this island offers various kinds of night entertainment as its main industry

Many Singaporeans and Malaysians own houses in Batam. In recent years, however, government regulations limit the time that non-Indonesians can stay in Batam, even those who own property there. As a result of these government regulations, many houses belonging to Singaporeans became uninhabited or rented to Indonesians from Batam and elsewhere in Indonesia. Some of the houses have been converted into brothels by independent Indonesians or joint venture operations. These establishments can be accessed by anyone from any country or city who wants to buy sex.

## **II PROFILE OF WOMEN INTERVIEWED**

The project team interviewed 25 women who had been trafficked into the sex industry, with several of the 25 having been trafficked for domestic labor and sexually exploited as well. Three additional women had been mail-order brides, but the results of these interviews are treated separately from the 25 women who had been trafficked into the sex industry, and for domestic labor, and they are not included in the totals and quantitative figures. In addition to the women interviewed, the project team also interviewed 16 others, among them police and immigration officers, NGO workers, and health care providers. Information from these 16 interviews was used to support or clarify the information from the women respondents.

At the time of interviewing the 25 women, 15 were in prostitution, 8 had escaped from the sex industry, and 2 were domestic helpers who had experienced sexual exploitation. A field research associate who was working at the Legal Aid Foundation for Women and Children interviewed ten women from West Kalimantan. The interviews took place in Pontianak City, the municipalities surrounding Pontianak, and in Kuching, West Malaysia. Kotamadya Pontianak, the capital city of West Kalimantan, has been one destination where women from rural areas are trafficked into prostitution. The interviews were conducted mostly in bars, restaurants, cafes, and at the Indonesian consulate in Kuching. In some cases where the respondents were still in prostitution, the interviewer had to “book time” with the respondents so that they could leave the brothels. The interviews were semi-structured, open-ended, and in-depth.

The respondents identified themselves as being of Malay ethnic background (40 percent), Dayak ethnic background (40 percent), and Chinese ethnic background (20 percent). Malays and Dayaks are known as “indigenous people” and are the largest ethnic groups in the province. Most of trafficked women came from small towns called “kabupaten” (municipality), spanning the areas of Pemangkat, Landak, Sambas, and Siantan Hilir, where the main industry is palm-oil plantations.

Eight respondents from the City of Medan in North Sumatra were interviewed in their residences by volunteers from the Center for Research and Child Protection (Pusat Kajian dan Perlindungan anak- PKPA), an NGO that focuses on combating trafficking in women and children. At the time of interviewing, all 8 women had escaped from prostitution in Riau province. These 8 respondents identified themselves as Batak, Javanese, and Malays. Bataks are the main ethnic group in this area.

Seven respondents, all of them in prostitution at the time of being interviewed, were from Batam and Karimun in Riau province. They were interviewed by local researchers belonging to an NGO working on HIV/AIDS issues. The respondents identified themselves as Javanese (28 percent), Sundanese (29 percent), Dayak (29 percent), and Indonesian Chinese (14 percent).

## **A. Education and Work Experience**

Thirty-two percent of the women interviewed had never finished elementary school; 52 percent had attained, on average, a 9<sup>th</sup> degree or Junior high school education; and only 16 percent had attained a 12<sup>th</sup> degree or senior high school education. It is a common assumption in the community that girls do not have to attend high school because as soon as they are married, they will spend all their time at home engaging in work that is considered to have no economic value. Additionally, when families face economic problems, more girls are forced to terminate their education.

Girls are encouraged to gain income as soon as they leave school, both to become financially independent and to support their families. Having little formal education, many can obtain only low paying jobs, mostly as waitresses, sales girls or karaoke singers. Four percent of respondents, in addition to being in prostitution, had been sales girls, and 16 percent had been karaoke singers. Seventy-six percent of those in prostitution had no past work experience, and they had been in prostitution since leaving school. The remaining 4 percent of respondents were domestic helpers who had never been in prostitution but who had been sexually exploited in their domestic situations.

The main reason why respondents in these three provinces were trapped in the sex industry was poverty. Most of the respondents were raised in very poor families. The family income of the respondents, on average, was only Rp. 100.000 (\$US 10) per month. Many other young women were drawn into prostitution, especially those from Medan and some from Batam and Karimun, to escape mistreatment or other problems at home such as violence perpetrated by fathers against mothers, divorce of their parents, and responsibility for alcoholic fathers or brothers.

## **B. Age of Respondents**

The age of respondents ranged from 14-29 years old at the time of interviewing, with 40 percent under 20 and 52 percent over 20 years old. Eight percent did not provide this information.

## **C. Prostitution Establishments**

At the time of interviewing, most women reported that they had never been in the sex industry before being trafficked. When asked how they learned what to do in prostitution, most stated that their “education” came through watching movies and reading novels.

Types of establishments where the women were trafficked into prostitution in West Kalimantan were hotels, clubs, beauty salons, karaoke bars, discotheques, massage parlors, and boarding houses. There are more than 50 entertainment establishments in this area. The respondents from Medan said they were lured into prostitution at cheap brothels called “Buangan Sampah” in Batam, Riau Province.

Respondents from Batam and Karimun said that they were trapped in cheap brothels, clubs, hotels, bars, and massage parlors. There were more than 20 sex establishments in this area.

## **D. Mail-Order Brides**

Another way to traffic women is through the mail-order bride business. For the purpose of this research, the team interviewed 3 former mail-order brides. All mail-order bride interviewees had attained a low-level of education, only completing elementary school. Their ages ranged from 18-22 years. Interviewers reported that questioning former mail-order brides was a difficult process because women in this group often distrusted people that they did not know.

All the interviewees in this category lived in West Kalimantan, and they were all of Indonesian-Chinese background. All three women interviewed reported that marriage to Taiwanese men is a very popular trend in their villages. And all had female relatives who had been involved in mail-order marriages.

The marriage of West Kalimantan *amoy* (women of Chinese background) to foreigners, especially from Taiwan and Hong Kong, is considered to be a way to reduce the severe poverty among Indonesian-Chinese families. Although poverty is experienced by all ethnic groups in Indonesia, the poverty experienced by the majority of ethnic Chinese is worse than that experienced by other ethnic groups.

Wherever they settle, the Chinese in Indonesia are stereotyped as rich and dominating the local economy as producers and distributors of goods and foodstuffs, or as bankers. Indonesian Chinese are depicted as having luxurious cars, large houses and shops, and private companies. The Indonesian Chinese in West Kalimantan, however, do not conform to this stereotype. Their social reality tells a different story of severe poverty. Unable to survive the hard living and dire poverty, some Indonesian Chinese in this area have committed suicide. Just recently, it was reported that one family with their 4 children killed themselves by taking poison because they could not tolerate the poverty any longer. Some parents have sold their babies in order to lighten their burden.

In 1983, hundreds of *amoy* were sent to Taiwan as migrant labors. During their stay in Taiwan, some of the *amoy* married retired military personnel. Taiwanese men consider Indonesian *amoy* more servile than Taiwanese women, because they are assumed to be more obedient and skillful in looking after the household. When government of Taiwan terminated temporarily the practice of mixed marriage, many migrant laborers were sent back to Indonesia. Taiwanese men, however, continued to marry Indonesian-Chinese wives despite the government policy. Desirous of the well-known services of *amoy* from West Kalimantan, Taiwanese men have been willing to spend large sums of money to obtain *amoy* wives, and thus the mail-order bride traffic has flourished since the 1990s.

*Cangkau*, or recruiters, capitalize on the enthusiasm of Taiwanese men for Indonesian Chinese women by recruiting *amoy* from all over West Kalimantan. These recruiters develop networks that operate in Taiwan, Jakarta, and Pontianak. Recruiters organize the travel of Taiwanese men to West Kalimantan, and arrange their meetings with potential *amoy* wives. The recruiters also arrange marriage ceremonies in the places where women live. All the costs are paid by the Taiwanese men who usually spend Rp 35-40 million (US \$350-400).

The *amoy* who marry Taiwanese men usually transfer money on a regular basis to their families in West Kalimantan. Money sent by women in Taiwan to their Indonesian families is estimated to be around Rp 250-750 million (\$2500-7500) per month. Those who, for some reason, fail to transfer money are judged as disobedient daughters by the community.

### **III RECRUITMENT, MOVEMENT AND INITIATION: RECRUITERS, TRAFFICKERS AND BUYERS**

#### **A. Recruitment**

Trafficked women whom we interviewed were usually drawn into prostitution and trapped by the false promises of recruiters or agents who promised to give them jobs out of town. In West Kalimantan, recruiters promised most of the women work as domestic helpers, as sellers of clothing, and as karaoke singers in other towns within the province of West Kalimantan, or in

Malaysia. The respondents were told that they would earn amounts of money between Rp.100.000-Rp. 3 million (\$US 10-300).

In recruiting their potential victims, the recruiters usually approached young women in places where they came together to be with their peers. In West Kalimantan, for example, the recruiters operated at the “beach parties,” events held every Saturday night where teenagers gather to meet, have fun and chit chat with their peers.

In the city of Medan, women were recruited in malls, cafes, and restaurants. In suburban areas of Medan, such as Medan Tembung, Medan Amplas, and Medan Deli, women were also recruited for prostitution. In Medan Tembung, which was formerly noted for its coffee and cacao plantations, most of the population is of Javanese origin. However, with the recent expansion of the city of Medan, the district of Medan Tembung was converted into a residential area. The emergence of this new residential area was then followed by the growth of a shopping and entertainment center called “Aksara Buana Mall.” Every Saturday night, this mall is flooded with teenagers hanging around to simply have fun or just to window shop. Teenage girls come to the mall in groups with same-sex peers, for the purpose of making new friends. Without the girls knowing, young, good-looking men posing as potential boyfriends are actually on the make to recruit these young women as prostitutes.

Tactics used by these recruiters to recruit young women into the sex trade include:

- *Seduction*— recruiters will seduce young girls by posing as potential boyfriends. The recruiters pretend that they are interested in the young girls and want to get know the women. The recruiters ask the young women’s names, addresses, and people they know. When the women become comfortable with the poseurs, the recruiters offer to treat them at restaurants nearby. As the recruiters gradually gain the women’s trust, they will ask the women to accompany them on a visit to a relative in another town, or attend a party in towns nearby.
- *False Promises*— the recruiters promise the young women good jobs with high salaries in other provinces. The women usually see this offer as an opportunity to be financially independent from their parents, and the recruiters then bring the women with them to the other towns.
- *Group Operations* — In deluding young girls into prostitution, the recruiters do not work alone but usually operate in groups of 3-4 young men. Thus, when they approach their potential victims, they seem to be simply another group of teenagers who are looking for some fun in the malls and cafes, instead of recruiters.

## **B. Movement**

Women recruited to work in other cities or abroad usually do not travel alone in the process of being trafficked. Ninety-eight percent of respondents said that they traveled in groups with 1-20 other women. The mode of transport was airplane or cars, depending on the destination. Usually, the agents or recruiters accompanied them. The agents paid the cost of their travel.

For those women who were trafficked abroad, they usually entered the country of destination legally with tourist visas. However, the women did not have access to their travel documents, as the agents held them. Nor did they have access to financial resources, as the agents also handled money.

In the process of traveling, women often were not taken on direct-destination flights. For example, women from East Java who were recruited to be prostitutes in Batam traveled by plane and then for days by car through Kalimantan or North Sumatra, prior to Batam. Many women had

never traveled out of their towns of origin and, given the distance and far-away nature of their destinations, it was almost impossible for them to return.

Respondents from Medan said that in the process of traveling, the recruiters first took them to transit places in cheap hotels surrounding Medan, known by the locals as “hotel kelas melati.” The hotels are located in the areas of Nibung Raya, Padang Bulan, Medan-Tanjung Morawa road, and Medan- Binjai road. The women stayed overnight at the hotels before being taken to Riau province. Arriving at these hotels late at night, the women had no choice but to follow instructions. If women asked to return home, recruiters threatened women that they would be kidnapped or killed if they ventured outside the hotels. Upon arrival at the hotels, one woman was paired off with one recruiter, and each pair shared a room. In order to keep the women’s trust, the recruiters usually did not force any sexual activity on the women.

Very early the morning of the next day, the recruiters placed the women in taxis, saying that they were supposedly going to the houses of the men’s relatives. Instead, the recruiters took the women to a bus station in a small town usually in the area of Kisaran, but still in the province of North Sumatra, from where most women were put on buses to Dumai in the province of Riau. Some women were taken to local brothels in North Sumatra Province. The women who continued on to Riau asked the recruiters to bring them home, but the recruiters insisted that women would be safer going with them to Dumai, and threatened the women with getting lost, kidnapping, rape, or even murder if they tried to make their own way back to Medan. Thus, the women were terrified into believing that they had no better options than to continue traveling with the recruiters. Moreover, as the women retained no money to buy bus tickets back to Medan, they were subject to whatever the recruiters stipulated.

### **C. Initiation**

When women arrived in the cities/countries of destination, they usually spent weeks in transit houses while awaiting the promised jobs. However, after one or two weeks the women were taken to bars, brothels and other entertainment spots and made to engage in prostitution. They were instructed to sign a contract without knowing what they are signing. Women reported being kept in these bars, pubs, so-called beauty salons, and brothels from 6 months to 5 years.

Other women from Medan who were not placed in transit houses reported being picked up as soon as they arrived at the Dumai bus station. These women were taken immediately to brothels that are geographically spread out in Dumai, Batam, and Tanjung Balai Karimun. When women arrived at these brothels, the pimp or “the boss” informed them that they would be taken to Riau to engage in prostitution. They were forced to sign a contract saying that they consented to prostitute in the brothels. If the women refused to sign the prepared contract, the pimps demanded that they pay back all their travel expenses and the fee that the pimps had already paid to the recruiters. These fees became “the debt” of the women.

Most women did not move from place to place once they arrived at their destinations and were forced into the sex industry. Others, who were placed in a syndicate of brothels, were moved from one brothel to another in different cities/provinces. The pimps/agents who ran the brothels and entertainment venues in other towns/cities rotated the women from one brothel to another every few months, so the men who buy women in these brothels were offered “new stocks” of women regularly.

### **D. Pimps/Recruiters/ Traffickers**

Respondents from West Kalimantan said that their recruiters were well known to people in their local areas. Respondents from Medan reported that they met their recruiters in malls and

restaurants, and also sometimes through relatives. Respondents from Batam and Karimun Islands said that their recruiters were both known and unknown to them.

Some respondents reported that their recruiters were neighbors and relatives of female friends, or women they knew who had already traveled abroad. These respondents stated that they were interested in working abroad or out of town because of the “success” stories told by their friends. Friends offered to help women find jobs in the cities where they themselves had worked, not mentioning that their “work” had been prostitution. Rather, women were told that they could find work in beauty salons or restaurants, and that they would be able to be independent and manage their own income. Respondents were also influenced by the increased economic status of their friends’ families, once their friends returned from abroad. These families often were able to buy a piece of land, build permanent houses, or buy more cattle. When their friends returned to their home villages, they brought with them luxurious things such as gold necklaces, blue jeans and perfume, goods they never could have afforded if they remained in their villages.

In Medan, the age of recruiters who operated in the malls or other places where teenagers gather was between 19-22 years old, relatively the same age as their victims. Recruiters who operated in villages are usually older than those operating in the malls. All of the recruiters were native Indonesians, and most of the pimps/agents who controlled sex industries in West Kalimantan, Batam and Karimun Islands were Indonesian Chinese who operated in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. The citizenship of pimps was both Indonesian and Malaysian.

Persons who controlled sex establishments were called “Boss” and usually were in charge of one domicile in the downtown area. There were other bosses who spread out to other parts of the region. Pimps usually worked independently and managed one enterprise by themselves. However, some pimps had joint prostitution ventures with Singaporean businessmen, with the Singaporeans usually investing the money in hotels, restaurants, and karaoke clubs while the local pimp-businessmen were responsible for the management. In Batam and Karimun Islands, both Singaporean and Indonesian businessmen operated joint prostitution ventures.

Pimps were usually men and dominated the prostitution industry. Where women were involved, they usually had been former prostitutes who managed individual brothels or clubs. A small number of pimps were husbands or intimately involved with the women as boyfriends.

### **E. The Buyers**

Respondents reported that buyers varied in terms of nationality, age, occupation, and marital status. Respondents also stated that most of the buyers had Malaysian, Singaporean, and Indonesian citizenship, followed by buyers from China, the Arab countries, Brunei, India, Taiwan, and from the West (USA or Europe). The age of buyers ranged from 18-60 years old, with the average age being 39.

Although most buyers in the three areas studied were relatively young in age, service providers who once lived in Batam and Karimun Islands told the researchers that some of the buyers are very old men who usually come from ethnic Chinese backgrounds. Providers reported that it was a common picture in Batam and Karimun Islands to see a very old man holding hands with a young woman, both on the streets or in the entertainment establishments, looking more like grandfather and granddaughter than buyer and young woman in prostitution. Some old men did not engage in sexual activities with the young women but rather bought their time, attention and “appreciation.” Older men who did insist on having sex with young women used “traditional medicine” to achieve sexual stamina. However, some of these older men died in the act of sex, as the medicine they consumed (possibly Viagra) precipitated heart attacks.

For other men who came to these islands, buying women for sexual activity was considered cheap and exotic entertainment, not affordable in their countries of origin. Respondents said that for the amount of US\$100, these men could afford to pay travel costs, stay in 3 star hotels, take all meals in restaurants, and book young women for 2 nights.

Some of the buyers were businessmen who came to the islands to do business with the locals. It was considered normal for men who worked hard during the day to take their “pleasure” at night while they were away on business in Batam. These buyers usually booked women to come to the hotels where they stayed. Other buyers worked as government officers and shipmen.

The buyers had relatively high education, ranging from those who had completed Senior High School to those with University education, compared to the educational levels of the women whom they used in prostitution. Respondents also reported that 75 percent of the buyers were married men, whereas the common assumption among Indonesians is that it is unmarried and not married men who buy women for commercial sex.

#### **IV – VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Once women were recruited into prostitution, they were quickly exposed to a range of violence. The perpetrators of violence were usually pimps or “bosses,” bodyguards paid by the pimps, and also buyers. In some cases, the women were beaten not only by the pimps or bodyguards, but also by members of the pimps’ families. In terms of frequency, some women experienced violence almost everyday. Perpetrators also used violence as a method of punishment and control of women.

In the sex industry, women experienced physical violence such as punching, slapping, biting, being hit with objects, being coerced to take alcohol, and other forms of violence and control. Respondents said that they suffered physical punishment when they made mistakes or tried to run away. At these points especially, pimps and bodyguards who used belts, wooden sticks like baseball bats, and fists and hands, often beat them. Anytime the women tried to run away they would be hit and abused by the pimps and bodyguards. Some sex establishments used military men and police officers to safeguard their business.

In addition to physical violence, respondents reported that they also experienced emotional violence, such as isolation, withholding of money, and verbal threats to report them to the police. Pimps threatened to report them to the police when the women tried to run away from the brothels or other sex establishments. The mere threat of reporting them to the police was in itself a disincentive since “police” meant “punishment” or “jail.” Women would think: “What happens if I am sent to the prison? Who will take care of me? Who will earn the money for my family back in the town of origin?” By using these kinds of threats to control the women, the pimps created an atmosphere of fear.

Another kind of emotional violence was to isolate the women. In this situation, a woman would be isolated by pimps in a room upstairs in the brothel where she could not communicate with friends and other people. During the isolation, the women had to order meals and everything they needed from the pimps. The duration of isolation was usually 5-7 days and at the end of this period of isolation, they were told that they owed a lot of money to the pimps for the meals they consumed. The women realized that once they were in isolation, they had to struggle harder and longer to pay back their debts.

Methods of isolation were not only used against women when they made mistakes, but were part of their daily lives in the sex industry. Once they arrived in a city or country of destination they were not allowed to move freely as they pleased. The women were not allowed to tell

relatives and friends where they were, their addresses, or what they were doing. Any letters that they wanted to send to relatives or friends had to be checked by the pimps before being sent. Women were instructed to write that they worked in restaurants as waitresses. Bodyguards paid by the pimps/agents monitored the bars/pubs/beauty salon/ brothels where women were forced to engage in prostitution. In some cases, the “bosses” themselves functioned as bodyguards.

Withholding of money from women was another form of violence. Most women reported that their money was withheld several times by the pimps. The pimps usually withheld or cut the women’s wages if they thought women did not follow instructions, or if there were complaints from the buyers that the women did not service the men, as they wanted. Pimps also cut wages if a woman broke any household utensils such as plates or cups, or if they forgot to turn off the gas hose used for cooking in their boarding houses. If the pimps discovered these infractions, they did not pay the women, or they paid them less.

Women had to service men for entire nights, even if they did not feel well. However, the women only received one-third of the money they earned. For example if the women were paid Rp.180.000 (US \$18) for a night, the women themselves would only receive Rp. 60.000 (US \$6). However, even this share of their earnings was retained by the pimps who collected all their money and held it for the women. Every week, women were told that Rp 50.000 (US\$ 5) was deducted from their earnings to pay for 2 meals a day that were served in their boarding houses. Additionally, each woman had to pay Rp 20.000 (US \$2) a month for a bedroom that she shared with another woman. The size of the room was 3 x 4 square meters.

Weekly, women were given only Rp 5000 (US \$0.50) for purchasing sanitary napkins, snacks or soft drinks. This amount of money was also deducted from their earnings. However, the women could not freely spend even this paltry amount of money outside the brothel. If they wanted to buy snacks or soft drinks, they could only do so in small shops owned by the pimps and their people in the brothel areas.

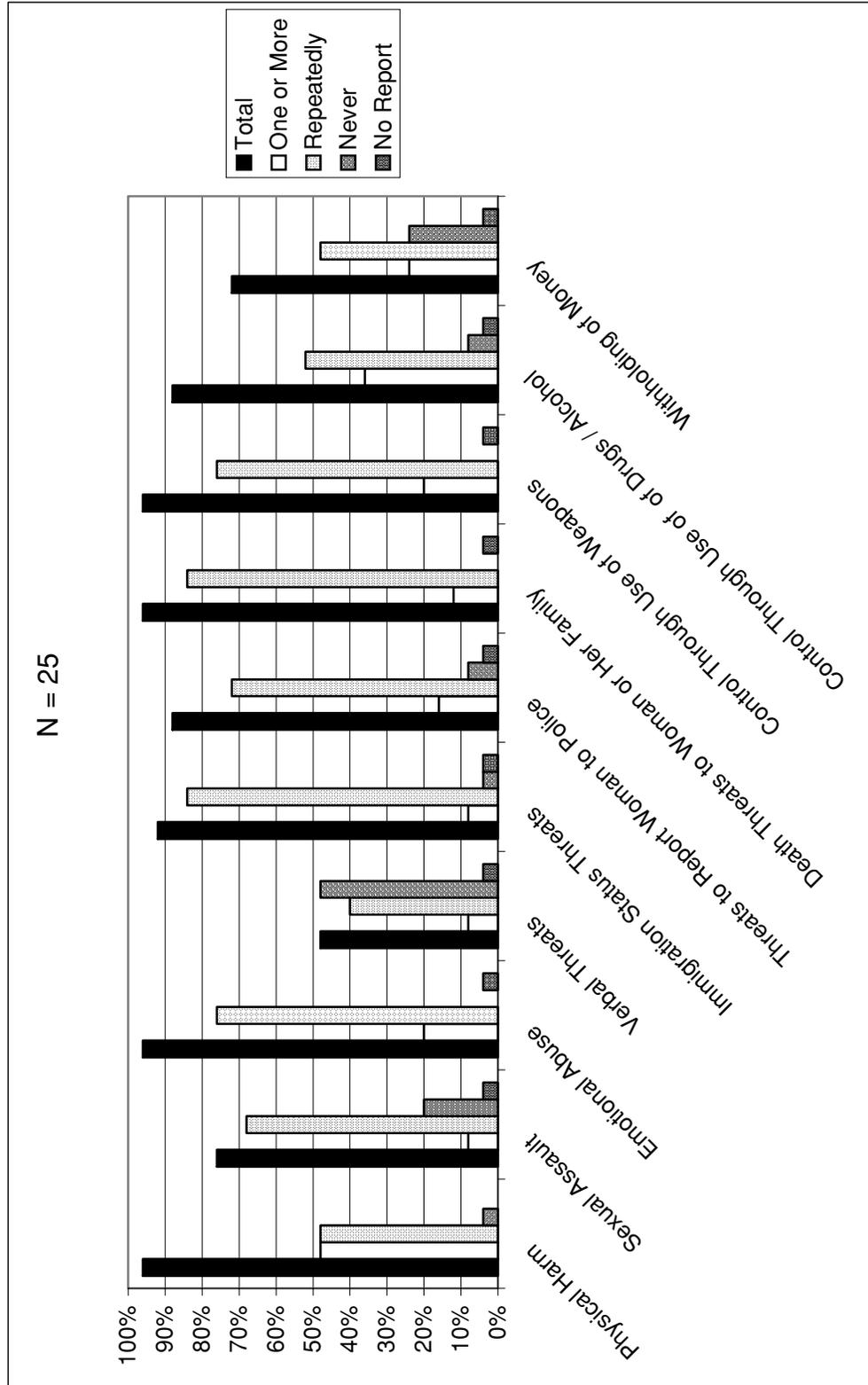
Acts of violence reported by Indonesian women included being beaten, bit, choked, crushed, dragged, hit with objects, pinched, punched, scratched, shoved, smacked, strangled, stripped, thrown to the floor, twisted, and having one’s hair pulled. Women had objects inserted into their vaginas and anuses.

The violence experienced by the women was not only limited to physical and emotional violence, but also included the violence of sexual abuse. Some respondents reported that pimps and family members of the pimps had raped them. Pimps tried multiple times to rape the women before they actually succeeded. Some women experienced severe physical violence that accompanied the rape, with some being thrown forcefully to the floor or into the wall.

In some cases, recruiters raped respondents before the women were handed over to pimps. A woman from Medan who was trafficked to Tanjung Balai Karimun, Riau Province, was taken to a brothel in that area. For some unknown reason, the pimp refused to accept the woman because she was still a virgin. Any women sold to this particular pimp were checked by a medical doctor to insure that they were *not* virgins. If women were found not to be virgins, the recruiters would be instructed to return the women to their towns of origin, and the recruiters would lose a sum of money. Thus in some cases, the recruiters locked the women in rooms and raped them themselves so that the pimps would accept them, and the recruiters would not lose money.

The women also experienced violence from the buyers. However, most of the women did not define violent acts with buyers as violent, since they had been instructed to do anything the buyers wanted. Most respondents said that they felt violated by the buyers when the men asked them to

Indonesian Women Figure 1 - Violence, Means of Control and Threats by Recruiters, Traffickers, Pimps and “Clients”



perform oral or anal sex. If the women refused, the buyers threatened to report them to pimps, police, and immigration authorities.

### **A. Strategies of Survival**

Once women were trapped in brothels, they were kept there all day in buildings that traditionally comprise 2 floors. The first floor was usually used as the place where sexual activity took place, and the women were instructed to service the buyers in prepared rooms on this floor; whereas the second floor was used as bedrooms for the women. The women were not allowed to go out without the boss's permission.

Mechanisms used by women to cope with and resist violence and control of the bosses were:

- Pretended to be happy
- Chatted with friends (other women in the brothels)
- Tried to be patient
- Accepted their conditions
- Followed all instructions
- Used drugs and alcohol
- Said that they were experiencing their monthly periods

Most respondents reported that the acts they most hated to do in prostitution were related to the buyers' demands, especially when they asked the women to engage in certain sexual activities such as oral sex. To cope with these problems, the women:

- Rejected the buyers politely
- Said that they were ill
- Asked the buyers to drink as much as possible until they were drunk and sleepy

Most respondents also stated that they tried to find ways to leave the sex industry but met with great difficulties because no one helped them. Some reported that buyers once tried to assist them by providing return tickets to their town of origin, or by providing rented houses outside the brothels, but the women did not want to take the risks of going, as pimps and bodyguards would beat them. They also had seen other women who were beaten when they tried to escape the brothels.

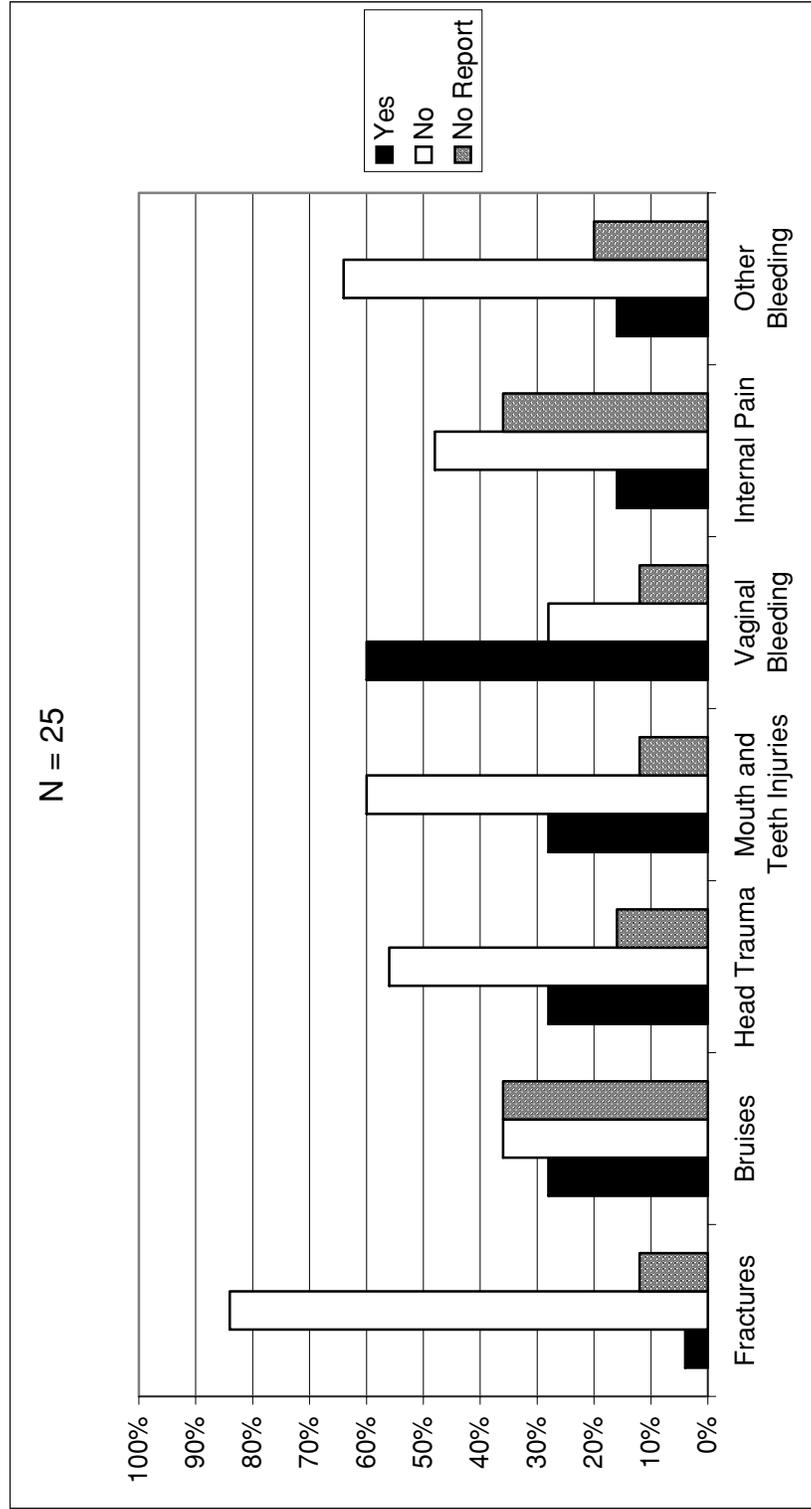
### **V – CONSEQUENCES TO WOMEN'S HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**

Prostitution caused health problems for many respondents. Health problems were initially experienced by women in the process of migration to other cities/countries, with women reporting headaches, stomachaches, and typhus.

Indonesian women reported specific physical injuries of broken bones to all parts of the body; bruises from being hit, gripped firmly, beaten up and from injections; choked till they passed out, concussions, ruptured blood vessels in the eye, nosebleeds, teeth knocked out or broken, lip scars from beatings, sores from smoking crack, bleeding and bitten lips; soreness and swelling from frequent sex, miscarriage from violence, and sudden bleeding after violent intercourse. Women also reported other health problems of head and heart pain, liver problems due to drugs, kidney problems, stomach and back aches, throat and face pain after multiple successive oral sex acts, rectal bleeding from rape and anal sex, and self-inflicted cutting and wounds.

Although women received various kinds of injuries, most respondents did not get any medical treatment from hospitals or clinics. Some women themselves paid for treatment of injuries incurred, or when they became ill. If they asked the pimps for money to buy medicine, pimps treated the money as loans and demanded that they pay it back. The only medical treatment that

Indonesian Women Figure 2 - Injuries Suffered by Indonesian Women Exploited in the Sex Industry



women obtained was limited to STDs testing, treatment and birth control. Some women reported that they were given blood tests to insure that they were not infected with HIV/AIDS, antibiotic injections for treating STDs, and pills and injections for birth control.

### A. Condom Use

Seventy-five percent of respondents said that almost all of their buyers refused to use a condom. The main reason buyers gave for not using condoms was that condoms would reduce their sexual enjoyment. Efforts to influence buyers to use condoms were ineffective, because respondents had no power to demand that the buyers did so. Buyers would become angry and report the women to pimps. Some respondents, however, stated that they were not afraid of getting STDs because their buyers were “clean” persons, although they refused to use condoms.

A few respondents who used the female condom said this condom functioned as a method of birth control rather than to prevent STDs. However, women reported that because of the low quality of this condom, it caused irritation and vaginal bleeding. The low quality of female condoms was probably related to women’s financial capacity, as they had to buy these condoms themselves. Pimps did not supply condoms to the women.

### Condom Use, Breakage and Irritation

Indonesian Women (N=25)						
	Yes	%	No	%	NR	%
Use of More than 1 at a Condom Time	4	16	18	72	3	12
Breakage	2	8	18	72	5	20
Causes Irritation to Vaginal Area <sup>a</sup>	5	20	15	60	5	20
Causes Vaginal Bleeding	0	0	0	0	25	100
Use of Female Condom	5	20	15	60	5	20
Used by Intimate Partner	5	20	14	56	6	24

<sup>a</sup> Irritation includes reports of yeast infection, itching, allergic reaction, discharge caused either by latex and/or lubricant

### B. Emotional, Behavioral and Mental Problems as a Result of Sexual Exploitation

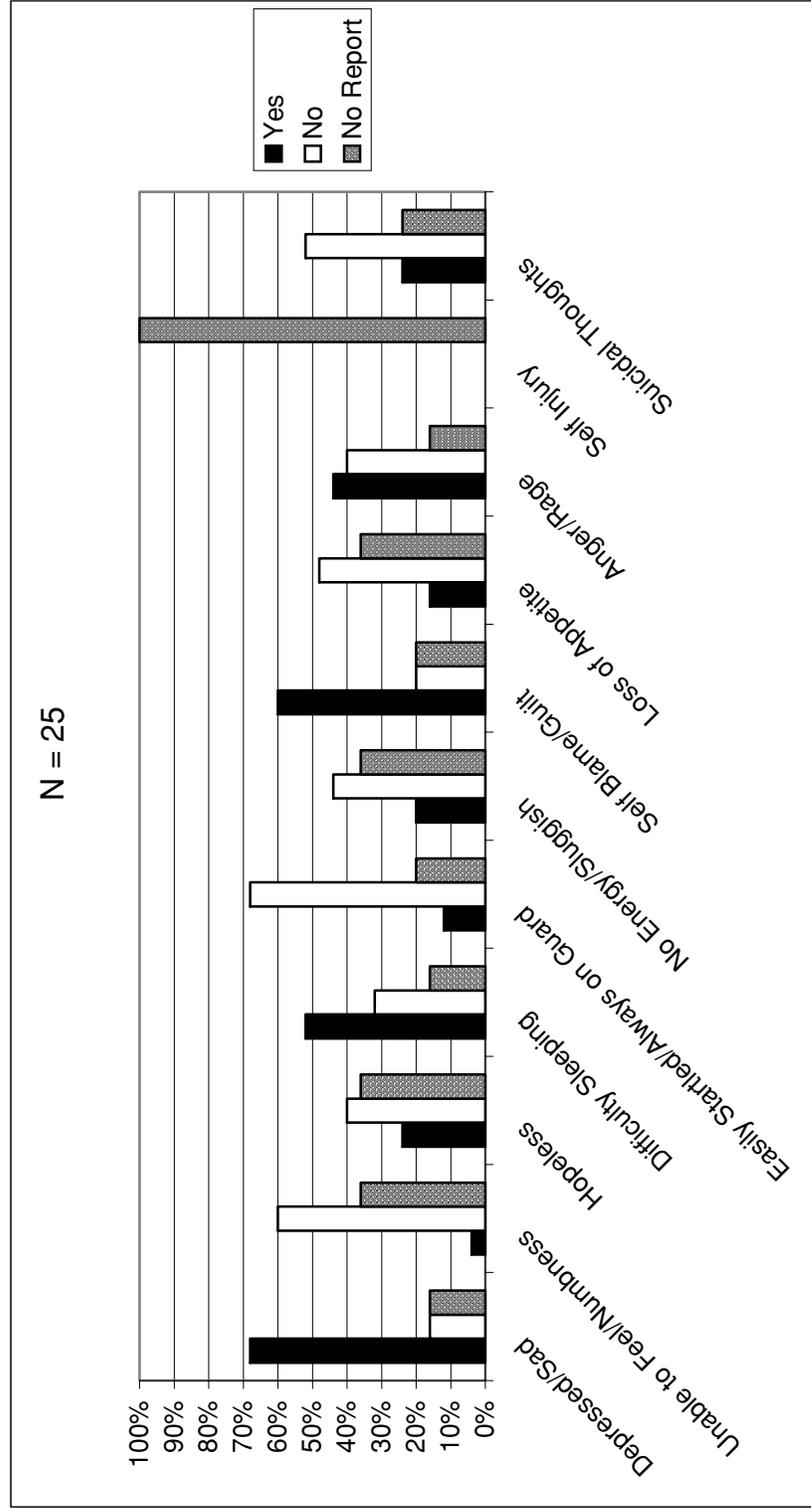
Sexual Exploitation caused the respondents to have difficulty sleeping, to experience self-blame, to become depressed, to experience anger and rage, as well as other emotional, behavioral and mental consequences.

Other feelings reported by respondents included:

- Felt that they had committed an unforgivable “sin” in the eyes of “god.” This feeling must be understood in the context of most respondents being raised in religious families
- Felt that they had dishonored the names of their families

- Feared that their families, relatives, friends, and neighbors would know that they had been in prostitution
- Blamed themselves for their inability to recognize and reject the false promises of the recruiters
- Feared that they would be punished because of their mistakes
- Unnerved because they were watched or monitored all the time
- Despondent that there was no way to escape

Indonesian Women Figure 3 - Emotional, Behavioral and Psychological Problems of Indonesian Women As a Result of Sexual Exploitation



## **VI RECOMMENDATIONS**

Because trafficking in women for sexual exploitation in Indonesia involves a range of actors — locally, nationally and internationally — the elimination of trafficking has to be a collaboration between community and government groups. Respondents, health providers, and legal services proposed the following recommendations.

### **At the Community Level**

- Communities should not blame women in prostitution, or those who have escaped from the sex industry, for their own victimization. In many cases, women must remain in prostitution because communities in which women's families live stigmatize the women and reject their return. Women who have been in prostitution are branded as “sinful and “dirty” human beings. People who control the sex industry — the perpetrators of commercial exploitation — must be targeted and made accountable.
- Communities must make themselves aware about recruiters who operate in their locales and with their tacit permission
- Communities must organize at the community level to combat the trafficking in women.

### **At the National Level**

- Governments must eliminate factors that push women into trafficking networks and prostitution such as poverty
- Governments must initiate laws and regulations that prevent and protect women from being trafficked. Among other legal measures, countries should ratify the international conventions and instruments that address prostitution, trafficking and the migration of peoples, such as the *1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others* and the new UN protocols on trafficking and the smuggling of migrants, supplementing the *UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime*
- Penalties must reflect the seriousness of the crimes of trafficking and sexual exploitation. Recruiters, pimps and traffickers must be more severely punished
- Legal sanctions must be instituted against buyers. It should be a crime to buy women for sexual exploitation
- Legal service providers, such as police, judges and attorneys, must be proactive in investigating and arresting recruiters, pimps and traffickers
- Government should not decriminalize or legalize/regulate sex industries as a way to obtain national income or for other reasons
- There should be a national campaign to eliminate the trafficking on women

### **At the International Level**

There must be a multilateral agreement among Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore to eliminate trafficking in women for sexual exploitation.

**THE PHILIPPINES**  
**INTERVIEW FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS**  
**A SURVEY OF TRAFFICKED WOMEN, WOMEN IN PROSTITUTION**  
**AND MAIL-ORDER BRIDES**

by  
Aida F. Santos with assistance from Noreen Belarmino and Raquel B. Ignacio

**I - METHODOLOGY**

**A. Population of Women Interviewed**

A total of 49 women were interviewed for this study. Originally, we contacted 51 women, but 2 of the interviews were omitted, one because her migration profile was not appropriate for the study and another did not complete her interview. Of the remaining 49 respondents, 40 were internationally trafficked for sexual exploitation, 4 of the 49 were trafficked locally, one woman was in local prostitution, and another 4 were “mail-order brides” (MOBs).\* Two of these 4 MOBs married European men, another was planning to marry a European, and one married an American. Of the 49 respondents, 29 percent (N=14) were children under 18 years of age, with 2 of the respondents being 12 years old, when they were recruited for sexual exploitation.

Category	Number of respondents
Internationally trafficked	40
Locally trafficked	4
Local prostitution	1
“Mail-order brides”	4
Children when recruited	14

Of the 49 respondents, 7 were from Metro Manila; 2 from Angeles City in Central Luzon—site of the former U.S. military base called Clark Airbase and one of the key sites of prostitution in the country; 5 from Dumaguete City in the Visayas; 10 from Cebu City in Central Visayas; 2 from Legazpi City in Bicol; and 23 from Davao City in Mindanao, out of which 3 came from General Santos City and Surigao.

Field Sites	Number of respondents	Destination/receiving countries
Metro Manila (National Capital Region)	7	Korea, Japan, Nigeria
Angeles City (Central Luzon)	2	Korea, Cyprus
Dumaguete (Central Visayas)	5	Holland, US, Malaysia
Legazpi City / Albay (Bicol region)	2	Domestic trafficking: Pampanga
Cebu City (Central Visayas)	10	Japan, Saipan, Hong Kong, Malaysia
Davao City / Gen. Santos City (Mindanao)	23	Japan, Saipan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Cyprus, domestically
Total	49	

Most of the respondents were born and are presently living in the area where they were interviewed. The locally trafficked women were moved directly from their place of residence to the area where they entered prostitution. All of the internationally trafficked respondents were directly transported from their place of residence to their foreign destinations. One respondent, who was trafficked through the backdoor, through Zamboanga in Mindanao, had to transfer from one mode of transport to another because of the fact that a sea route was used. Two respondents traveled to more than one country of destination, one in an attempt to find some way to return to the Philippines, and another because she was trafficked into a second country. The trafficking routes were direct and simple. There were no attempts on the part of the traffickers to use multiple routes en route to the final destination, and the trafficking required neither complex nor circuitous itineraries.

Eight of our respondents had recently returned from abroad. Of the 8, 4 were about to migrate from the Philippines again. Two were in the process of applying for exit documents for a second stint in Japan as “entertainers.” Another was desperately trying to sign with a “better” promotion agency to go abroad once more, despite the severe exploitation she had formerly experienced. One other woman, after having been in Korea, reported that she was leaving for Japan. As our project was ending, one of these respondents told us she had decided not to return to Japan.

Of the 49 women interviewed, 3 had filed cases against traffickers. One of our respondents subsequently filed a case against her traffickers after being interviewed, with the help of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW). Since there is no anti-trafficking law in the Philippines, the charge against her trafficker is illegal recruitment. Two respondents who were trafficked to Africa (Nigeria) filed cases against their traffickers several years ago and, to date, the cases are still pending and the traffickers remain at large.

Many of the women interviewed for this study speak Visayan, a local language, and have some basic ability to converse in English. The majority speaks Tagalog, or Filipino, the national language. Those who went to Japan eventually learned Nippongo, adapting quickly to their situation overseas. One respondent trafficked in her mid-teens to Malaysia easily learned Malaysian languages, as well as the local languages of Mindanao where she had also been trafficked.

## **B. Identification of field sites**

From the data gathered on the situation of migration in the Philippines, the project team chose interview sites where large numbers of women were migrating out of the country. In some high-migration areas, such as Northern Luzon, the project team was not able to access victims of trafficking due to the lack of NGO contacts in the area. Thus, another factor determining interview locations was the presence of local Filipino chapters of CATW, or of CATW networks and individual affiliates. Even with organizational partners, we found it a formidable task to find survivors of trafficking who were willing to be interviewed for the project in these high-migration areas.

In Davao City, the presence of a Filipino-Japanese association, ostensibly some kind of a social club, was mentioned as possibly contributing to the migration of women to Japan. During World War II, Davao was a stronghold of the invading Japanese army with many Filipino-Japanese children born as a consequence. These children, and their children’s children, have actively supported the Filipino-Japanese association. Annually a group of Japanese visitors come to Davao City, seemingly part of a regular exchange but also as part of a strategy to promote migration to Japan. Local women are encouraged by some parents to socialize with the Japanese male visitors because of the popular perception that marrying Japanese men improves the financial or

economic standing of the local women, and consequently their families. Davao City is also a key city in Mindanao for international trading and an entry point to the rest of the island, enticing a number of foreign companies to the area. Koreans, Japanese, Taiwanese, North American and Europeans are either locally based employees or regular visitors to the city. Davao is also aggressively promoted as a tourist destination in the southern Philippines.

In Cebu City, most of the respondents came from one community who had been resettled from the city's squatter area. Other respondents came from the port area, another poor district in the city. Within the squatter community, there is a network of information sharing about overseas work and recruitment. One respondent came from a family where three daughters had been in the "entertainment" industry, and had migrated at some point in their lives. One daughter is still engaged in local prostitution.

In Dumaguete, a port used for transporting recruits out of the city to Zamboanga and then to foreign destinations, there is a concentration of local prostitution industries. Lean-to food stalls are set up before sunset, and business goes on until the early hours of the morning. Foreign tourists make the city a destination in the Visayas, since Dumaguete is known for its beaches and affordable cost of living.

At the time of our trip to the Bicol region in May 2000, it was reported that a promotion agency would soon be set up in Legazpi City. Women applying to go to Japan from the Bicol region, Region 5, have had to process their papers in Manila, making it an expensive and tedious process. A promotion agency based in Legazpi would make the recruitment of women as "entertainers" from Bicol much easier, and trafficking more likely. Considering that Region 5 is a high-migration area, setting up a promotion agency there will also increase the potential for sex traffickers to use these migration routes for the trading of women and children.

### **C. Regional partners**

Several functions defined the role of local partner organizations or individuals who collaborated in this study with CATW-Philippines. Local partners provided the project team with a person or staff who worked closely with the team in: a) identifying and locating the potential respondents; b) ensuring the presence of the respondents during the actual interview schedule; c) providing liaison with local government officials, particularly with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), the Philippine Overseas and Employment Authority (POEA), the Overseas Workers Welfare Agency (OWWA), the Department of Social Work and Development (DSWD), the Philippine National Police (PNP), and other relevant agencies; d) identifying local NGOs that have programs or services for migrants and victims of trafficking and prostitution; and, e) conducting or assisting in interviews, and providing translation from local languages when necessary. The local partners also assisted in supplying logistic and technical support. In Bicol and Dumaguete, individuals rather than organizations played a pivotal role in establishing contacts with respondents.

The Philippine team traveled to field sites as follows: Dumaguete, Legazpi City, Davao, and Cebu. Interviews with the Angeles City respondents were conducted in Manila, as were those with the Metro Manila respondents. There were 2 field visits conducted along with the Davao interviews. Davao City proved to be "richest" in terms of availability and willingness of survivors of trafficking and prostitution who participated in the project.

### **D. Interview Procedures**

The respondents were asked to sign a "Confidentiality and Quit Claim Agreement" ensuring confidentiality of their identity and outlining the parameters of the interview. The interviews

ranged from a minimum of 1+ hours to a maximum of 6 hours. Interviews that were short in duration usually meant that women were unwilling and/or unable to talk about the details of their experience abroad and/or the violence inflicted upon them. Another set of interviews that were short in duration were with women who stated that all is/was well with their experience, i.e., that they had never or currently do not have any negative experience in their destination countries. In a few cases when the women were tired, the interviews had to be conducted in two parts.

## **F. Focus Group Discussions**

Originally, the project team had planned to follow up all interviews with focus group discussions. Time and resource limitations, however, proved to be constraints. In addition to the 49 women interviewed, we were only able to conduct two discussion groups. Overall, these two focus groups provided a good background on the mechanisms, processes and nature of migration and trafficking, specifically in the Bicol region, considered one of the top ten sending regions in the country for local and international migration of women. The first discussion was held with a group of ten (10) women from Tula-Tula Grande, a barrio more than an hour away from Legazpi City, near Mount Mayon. The second was another discussion with two women in Buang, a poor village at the foothill of Mount Mayon in the province of Albay that could only be reached by an hour's journey on foot.

When the project coordinator arrived in Tula-Tula Grande, it was planting season and the women were tending the crops. A few months prior to the coordinator's arrival, there were a series of volcanic eruptions caused by Mount Mayon, and families in the area had just returned from temporary resettlement sites. However, what was noticeable during the discussion with the Tula-Tula women was the stark absence of the men and young women in the community. During this time of the year, parents send their young daughters to the cities, mainly to Legazpi and Manila, to find jobs as domestic workers. According to the village women, most of the young women, their own daughters included, were either in Manila or Legazpi as domestic workers.

The men of Tula-Tula Grande also migrate to Manila during the planting season to work as taxicab and jeepney drivers. They return to help the women till the land to grow their vegetables, and go back to the city as soon as this is finished. The vegetable seeds and seedlings are provided by a non-governmental organization that acted as a partner organization for the project in the Bicol region.

During discussion with the women of Tula-Tula—all of whom are members of a women's cooperative — the case of a missing young woman, the daughter of one of the cooperative members, was raised. She had “disappeared,” according to her mother. The daughter had been earlier recruited by another Tula-Tula woman to work as a domestic helper for a Filipino-Chinese family in Manila. That family had moved, bringing with them the young Tula-Tula woman, and left no address. The distraught mother had an argument during our discussion with the mother of the woman who had acted as a recruiter.

Another Tula-Tula woman told us that she did not finish her two-year contract as a domestic helper in Saudi Arabia because she feared being raped by her employer. She reported that the employer was very candid about his intention to take her as a fourth wife, using the pretense of hiring her as a domestic helper. She always carried a knife in her pocket. Her departure from the country was also precipitated by the fact that the existing three wives of her Saudi employer kept her in the basement and attempted to starve her to death when the Saudi man left for a business trip. When she left Saudi Arabia, it was her employer who brought her to the airport and begged her not to tell her story to others. She had to pay back her airfare and other pre-departure expenses when she did not finish her two-year contract.

## **G. Information From/About Government Officials**

We spoke with 16 government officials for this report, although not using an extensive questionnaire, to ascertain their knowledge of trafficking, their recommendations, and possible government complicity in trafficking. These officials were from the Philippine Overseas Employment Authority (POEA), the Overseas Workers' Welfare Agency (OWWA), the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), the Department of Health (DOH), local Social Hygiene Clinics, the Commission on Human Right, the Philippine National Police (PNP), the Women's and Children's Desk of the PNP, and local government officials at the project sites. These interviews were used as background to the more extensive and structured interviews with women. In general, the government officials we interviewed had scant knowledge of trafficking. More often, we obtained information about government officials and agencies from interviews with the women.

Many women respondents indicated, through their descriptions of the trafficking process or more directly, that government officials and agencies were involved in some way in trafficking. Filipino women trafficked to Nigeria, for example, were adamant that immigration officials were allied with recruiters and traffickers since 8 of them passed through immigration without anyone questioning them or examining their travel documents.

Almost all women interviewed did not make contact with government agencies or officials. Forty-six women said they had no contact with agencies. Internationally trafficked women stated that they had no contact with government agencies or officials, as their recruiters were the ones enabling their documentation and travel, or they had no trust in whatever government services they knew to be available. There were exceptions to this rule when 2 domestically trafficked respondents, for example, were helped by DOLE and DSWD. One internationally trafficked woman reported being rescued from South Korea by agents of the Filipino National Bureau of Investigation, returned home, and placed in the Witness Protection Program of the Department of Justice. Unfortunately, after less than a year in the Program, she was dropped from it without any clear explanation.

One respondent reported contacting the Philippines embassy in the country to which she had been trafficked, after escaping from a brothel. An embassy official reportedly told her that the embassy had no funds to repatriate her as she was illegally recruited. She was told that she needed to raise her own funds to be able to return home to the Philippines, and he implied that she could do so by "selling" herself to another recruiter.

A DOLE officer reported that agency and unit responsibility for trafficking and illegal migration is confusing and conflicted. Although government agencies provide some services, such as temporary shelter to legal returned migrants, sometimes there is confusion about length of time that victims can remain in shelters, for example. Some shelters house returnees for 5 days and others for a maximum of 15 days.

A similar confusion affects prosecution of cases. Under Rep. Act 7610, the DSWD or the victim herself should do the filing, and DOLE is not empowered to do so. Sometimes victims give up the process of prosecuting the perpetrators, neglected by some of the collaborating government agencies. One official reported that some social workers are overloaded with cases.

## **H. Framework of Analysis**

This study adopts a human rights framework to investigate the exploitation of migrants under conditions of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. Although people must be accorded the right to migrate as guaranteed in international human rights documents, recruiters and traffickers have

exploited this right as they prey on the personal and structural vulnerabilities of migrants. Moreover, *legal migration or legal recruitment does not guarantee the absence of sexual exploitation, or effectively diminish the ability of traffickers to exploit the migration process for their own purposes.* Although legal migration does provide some mantle of protection, traffickers have obviously mastered the tricks of the trade, exploiting the gaps or weaknesses in the processes and mechanisms of legal migration. The personal vulnerabilities of those trafficked, originating in structural inequities and gender-based discrimination, also play a major role in the ability of recruiters and traffickers to exploit.

This study utilizes the definition of trafficking in the new UN Trafficking Protocol (Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime) within its framework of analysis.

(a) *“Trafficking in persons’ shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.*

*Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;*

(b) *The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;*

(c) *The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered “trafficking in persons” even if it does not involve any means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article;*

(d) *“Child” shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.”*

Using the new trafficking protocol as an analytical framework, our data demonstrates that the 40 internationally and 4 locally trafficked respondents were recruited, transported, and transferred through one or a combination of all the elements of the definition of trafficking in subparagraph (a), most notably that of exploiting various positions of women’s vulnerability, with many traffickers using fraud and deception.

Although a few of the respondents, e.g., the mail-order brides and three “entertainers” from Japan did not personally identify themselves as trafficked women, it was clear from the responses they gave that their vulnerabilities were also preyed upon by recruiters and traffickers. The mail-order brides were recruited into the bride system through organized efforts and intermediary agencies that utilized both formal and informal channels and gained profit from these arrangements. One MOB respondent ended up in prostitution in South Korea after recruitment for marriage by the Unification Church of Korea (Moonies). Likewise, one of the three “entertainers” had been a “sexy” model at the age of 15, a factor that decidedly normalized her path to being an “entertainer” in Japan. The one respondent designated in local prostitution was not trafficked but was subjected to severe sexual exploitation, having been gang raped twice and unable to file appropriate charges against the perpetrators for fear of her life and possible retaliation, apart from the fact that she could not afford the needed legal resources.

The 44 locally and internationally trafficked respondents were subjected to forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery and servitude, including illegal confinement/detention, withholding of money and food, debt bondage, deprivation of normal social life, and long hours of engagement in the establishments where they were deployed. They were compelled to engage in sexually exploitative situations because of the need to pay back debts incurred, including cash advances for the air ticket, pre-departure expenses and money left behind for their families. The majority of the women recruited to Japan were eventually given their “salaries” just before they flew back to the Philippines. Their money was held for them by their managers or *mama-sans*, and they could only get cash advances for some needed personal expenses during the time that they were controlled by the management of sex establishments (e.g., clubs, brothels). Others never received any payment, or were given such measly sums that they had no alternative but to continue in prostitution, as in the case of the women trafficked to Nigeria.

Fear was ingrained among the victims of trafficking interviewed for this study. One respondent, recruited by the Yakuza, was so fearful and had so assimilated the threats of retribution from those who controlled her life, that she felt obligated to return to Japan to fulfill her so-called contract, despite her previous severe trafficking experience there.

The elements of deceit and fraud were strongly present in the recruitment of respondents. A number of respondents were promised work in “decent” jobs, either as singers, dancers or waitresses. One reported: “...we were told that we would be waitresses, and that if our customers liked us, we would sit down with them, we would be given drinks, and then we would talk to them. After we gave our passports [to the recruiters], we were told to come back the following day for a briefing.” Another reported: “I was told I would be a dancer, but they never said anything about prostitution.” When they were eventually informed that the kind of “work” was prostitution, it was too late to back out.

From the data, it appears that respondents who had already been in local prostitution had a sense that instead of “decent jobs,” they would end up engaging in prostitution. Yet they held out hope that this would not be the case. One woman stated: “If we were exactly told, let’s go abroad and we’ll make prostitutes of you, do you think we’d go?” A few were told explicitly about the nature of their future “entertainment work.” One reported, however, that “...I didn’t think that I would be in danger because my principle is that it really depends on you if you would want to be [exploited]...” Most of the respondents had no or very little foreknowledge about the wide range of sexual services that would be required of them as “entertainers.”

Data from respondents in this study also points to a combination of racist and sexist dynamics that served as push-and-pull factors for women who were sexually exploited in sex industries both abroad and locally, and who sought foreign partners/husbands through commercial transactions. The promotion of Asian women, and in particular Filipino women, as “ideal” brides for foreign men, is underscored by racist and sexist assumptions about the women. This combined with a number of personal and familial, as well as social and economic, vulnerabilities such as poverty, served as push factors.

Filipino women who migrate as overseas contract “entertainers,” a euphemism for prostitution, are also, and perhaps much more, prone to racist and sexist attitudes and behavior from their male customers. The practice of hiring foreign “entertainers” in Japan is loaded with negative imaging of Filipino women as passive, compliant and exotic sexual creatures. Even Filipino female professionals are not free from these racist and sexist assumptions, as reports of sexual harassment and rape of these overseas workers have been reported. This racist and sexist imaging

of Filipino female migrants is itself a form of vulnerability that brings with it elements of abuse and exploitation from their employers and customers in the destination countries.

Key to the stories of most of the women is that in the midst of grinding poverty and, for some, a history of sexual exploitation and severe family problems, migration for income had become the only viable option to earn what they thought was a more decent livelihood and to make their lives better. The normalization of migration as an economic alternative, not only for the very poor but also for those with some income-generating skills, has become the greatest economic myth of contemporary times for many Filipinos, especially women. None of the women interviewed evinced any substantial change in their economic status after returning from overseas. In fact, for the greater number of them, migration for income resulted in being trafficked, harrowing tales of sexual abuse, and further economic, social and personal impoverishment.

## **II - PROFILE OF THE WOMEN INTERVIEWED**

There are at least six factors emerging from the background of respondents that made women vulnerable to trafficking and sexual exploitation: 1) Poverty and lack of economic opportunities; 2) Low level of education and lack of information about the process of recruitment; 3) History of sexual abuse; 4) Family pressures; 5) Aspirations of the women, often accompanied by a growing sense of personal and economic autonomy; 6) Alleged success stories of those who migrate for income abroad

### **A. Poverty and Lack of Economic Opportunities**

The majority of respondents came from poor families, with 38 respondents originally from rural and 11 from urban areas. Generally, respondents came from big families ranging from 3 to 12 siblings. Some respondents were “illegitimate” children. All of them came from financially strapped families, with parents who had little education, and who were either constantly under or unemployed. Families with employment mostly worked in the informal sector, or in small, low-income enterprises. Some had small farm lots that were nonetheless incapable of feeding the family. Most of the respondents’ mothers were employed doing domestic chores, or stayed at home to care for the children.

The majority of respondents had moved from place to place in search of better economic opportunities. They left their original birthplace and moved to urban areas where the trafficking syndicates often operate.

Most respondents started working at an early age, with one who began work at age nine as a cleaner in the local movie house and street food vendor. Others took odd jobs to augment the family income. Others having low levels of education, and thus no marketable skills, began working in adolescence at low-income jobs.

Some of the respondents had jobs before they went abroad. These included: factory worker, sewer, domestic helper, nanny, waitress, salesperson, gasoline attendant, bit player in a movie, and tending a small convenience store. Three worked in white-collar jobs. Five reported they were in the “entertainment” industry, and 6 stated they were in prostitution. Sixteen of the 49 respondents “worked” for the first time when they were recruited to go abroad. One respondent, whose mother was diagnosed with cancer was pushed to go abroad illegally at age 17. She reported that going to Japan, as an “entertainer” was the only way she could provide for her mother’s treatment.

A number of respondents could not recall how much they earned before being recruited for overseas work, but remembered that it was not enough even for their basic needs. Only one said that she earned the mandated minimum wage. The largest income reported among the 49 respon-

dents was PhP4,000 or \$US80 monthly. The income of most of the respondents was insignificant, and the concept of household income was alien, because a number of household members did not work.

Migration for work is now commonly perceived in Philippine society as a kind of a quick-fix solution to the growing impoverishment at the household level. With the peso plunging to its lowest level in many years, the dollar-peso exchange has given more impetus for many Filipinos to earn in foreign currency. Locally, a domestic helper earns an average of PhP2,000-4,000 per month (\$40-80); abroad, they are told that they can earn as much as PhP10,000 to PhP15,000 (\$200-300) monthly. “Entertainers” are supposedly earning much more than that, with the possibility of having good-paying regular customers, earnings from tips, or marrying a foreign suitor.

The greater number of respondents trafficked abroad returned to the Philippines, still trapped in a hand-to-mouth existence. A number of them came home with very little money: *“I only took home \$350 for six months work, because I had to pay what was supposedly my debts.”* Most of the respondents are now in the Philippines, taking care of their families, with partners or husbands who have very little income. The majority of them are doing odd jobs such as manicures or buy-and-sell. Some serve as volunteers or have intermittent income from a local organization of prostituted women in Davao City. The rest are dependent on their husband’s income, or constantly looking for work. The majority of respondents hoped that this project could give them some help, in the form of a loan to start small enterprises. A few others had managed create small businesses.

Because of their economic conditions, some of the respondents said that if they could be assured that they would not experience any more sexual and other kinds of exploitation abroad, and obtain legal documents, they would “try their luck” abroad again. The majority said they would never go back.

## **B. Education and Lack of Information about the Process of Recruitment**

There are correlations between age when trafficked, low level of education and lack of information about the recruitment process and systems of migration, which rendered respondents dependent on and vulnerable to recruiters. The majority of the respondents were between the ages of 16 and the early 20s when they were trafficked.

Two respondents attended elementary school, and 3 were able to complete it. Twenty-one of the respondents had some high school education, but were not able to complete their secondary schooling, and 8 finished high school. Two attended a vocational/technical school after finishing high school. Six attended college but did not complete it, and 2 obtained their college degree. MOBs were the ones with the highest educational attainment, either as college or vocational / technical school graduates. Five were not able to identify their educational background. The reasons given for not finishing school included financial problems, having to leave home and work, having to enter a promotion agency, and having no desire to study.

Given their low level of education and lack of access to good information, it was easy for the recruiters to deceive the women. Most respondents did not know how to apply for work abroad and were unfamiliar with proper procedures. When asked about her travel documentation, one respondent said: *“Wala. At hindi rin ako naghanap kasi wala akong kaalam-alam sa mga procedures, basta ang alam ko lang ay pupunta ako sa Japan .(None. And I didn’t look for one [documents] because I didn’t know anything about procedures, all I knew was that I was going to Japan).”* Another one said, *“Wala naman siyang hiningi sa akin kahit ano, siya na lang ang bahala sa mga papers ko (lahat fake). (He didn’t ask for anything from me, he said he’d take care of all my papers, which were all faked).”*

According to a police officer interviewed in the Bicol region, a group of 15 young women recruited in Ligao, were asked by their recruiter to appear at Manila international airport — having traveled 10-12 hours by bus — with their luggage but without any passport or other documentation. This happened twice, and the potential OFWs finally realized after the second time that they had been deceived. Two of the recruits had been abroad, and therefore could be assumed to know how the migration process worked.

The majority of respondents were told that they would have decent jobs abroad but were deceived and ended up in nightclubs and brothels. In most cases, recruiters gave verbal promises of money. Women were promised income beyond their dreams; e.g., US\$600 monthly in addition to tips and overtime, with a salary increase after three months based on performance evaluation. One respondent said: “*Sabi nila maganda daw doon, malaki ang sahod, tapos may bahay sila. At saka, yung itsura kasi nong mga recruiter para talagang mayayaman sila, sosyal. (They said that it was beautiful there, income is high, and they [women] would be given housing privileges. Also, the recruiters really looked like rich people).*” Another reported: “*They told us that we were going to Germany. We were brought to Nigeria, and not as waitresses. The salary promised us, US\$350, became \$50.*”

Some respondents received cash for the application process, or as an advance on their promised salary. Most of the respondents had a fly-now, pay-later scheme with the payment being deducted from their salaries. Those trafficked to Japan were told that their salaries would be given to them after finishing their contracts. Two locally trafficked respondents were given a cash advance, which they gave to their families. The system of cash advances served as a push factor for the women to agree to the recruitment, whether local or international.

Some respondents thought their marital status would be a prohibiting factor and therefore hid that they were married. “*I went to the Apo View [hotel, in Davao City], it was there that the Japanese was doing the interviews. There were interpreters who asked me if I have a child, I said none...Not all of us were selected, only 15.*”

Some respondents had to wait for months before their applications were processed. One reported that she waited for five months. Others were surprised that the processing of their papers only took a week or so.

### **C. History of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation**

Twenty-two percent (N=11) of the respondents reported that they were victims of incest or sexual abuse prior to migration, and often the perpetrators were their uncles or cousins. One respondent said that to stop the sexual abuse she was experiencing at that time, she ran away and ended up working in a nightclub in Manila. Another respondent was obliged to leave school because she was raped and became pregnant. However, the number of those who had been sexually abused may well be larger, since most respondents had no concept of forced sex with boyfriends or husbands, and therefore did not see this behavior as a form of rape.

Twenty-seven percent (N=13) of the respondents were drawn into prostitution locally as children, when they were between the ages of 12-16. One respondent reported that her older sister introduced her into the sex industry, after the respondent ran away from home at age 14 and followed her sister to Metro Manila. The sister had told the respondent that she was a “model,” but was in fact doing strip tease in a cheap Manila club. At age 15, the respondent was stripping in the same club.

The history of sexual abuse and exploitation that started during their adolescent years continued for some of the respondents even after their trafficking experience. Eight confided that they

were presently in abusive partner relationships. It was clear that despite the abuse in their current relationships, not one of them was contemplating leaving the men or doing something more active to change their situations. One of the respondents came to the interview bruised and blue. This same respondent said that she told her husband about the project and that he should change his abusive behavior towards her because she already confided his abusive behavior to the project team. Later on, she reported that he had stopped battering her. Whether this was true, or something that can be sustained in the relationship, was not clear to the project team.

#### **D. Family Pressures**

Some respondents stated that their families were dysfunctional, i.e., that they came out of families in constant conflict, and had left home between the ages of 12 and 17. Many of the respondents said that their parents had marital problems as the respondents were growing up, and some stated their parents had separated. At an early age, most of the respondents were forced to assume a good deal of responsibility for the upkeep of big households. Eight of the respondents, when they were quite young, had experienced the death of one or both parents. Nine lived with their grandparents or other relatives because their parents had died, were separated or were poor. Seeing so much poverty, many of the respondents felt compelled to do something about it. When they went abroad, most of the women ended up supporting their parents, the entire family and sometimes even distant relatives or extended family.

Thirty-one of the respondents were single parents before they were recruited. The fact that the majority of women were already assuming the sole responsibility of raising their children was another push factor that made them vulnerable to sex trafficking.

#### **E. Aspirations of the Women**

It is important to underscore the fact that while poverty was an overwhelming reason for migration for income, women also reported growing aspirations of personal and economic autonomy that influenced their desire to go abroad. One respondent stated: *“I also wanted to save some money so I can go back to school and continue my studies.”* Women also wanted their children to be better educated so that they could lead better lives. *“I wanted my children to be able to study, so that they would not be like us.”*

Some women felt that working overseas would give them the chance to travel and see another country. One of them said, *“They said Korea was beautiful, like Japan. I wanted a house of my own, [and to] save for the education of my child.”*

#### **F. Alleged Success Stories of Those Who Migrate for Income Abroad**

Families who have children or relatives abroad are perceived as lucky. The picture that is painted of overseas migration, especially when the value of the Philippine currency is very low, is that it brings in many dollars, the possibility of marrying a rich foreigner, and ultimately of residence abroad. The majority of respondents, including the brides, saw migration as the ultimate way out of poverty, access to social mobility, and a test of their abilities. To be a successful OFW means to bring home the “goodies.” For the MOBS, this means being able to sustain the marriage at all cost.

Many unsuccessful OFWs do not tell their sad stories, particularly women who have been sexually exploited. Prostitution is a stigma, and unsuccessful OFWs do not want to be pitied. Most of the respondents in this study did not realize, prior to migration, that many returned migrants who were allegedly successful brought home scars of abuse, violence and other consequences. Even in our focus group discussions in Davao City, one respondent admitted that she had never told anyone that she went to Saipan where she endured terrible abuse and violence.

This revelation came as a shock to her best friend who was in also in the discussion group and who thought that she knew all the details about her friend's life.

This tendency to paint a more positive story about migration for work serves as a push factor to other would-be women migrants. The stigma attached to prostitution and the embarrassment of being a failure as an OFW have effectively silenced the voices of survivors of trafficking and prostitution. If more survivors felt freer to speak out, then the real stories of abuse and exploitation of women who were trafficked would present a more honest picture of what happens to many who migrate abroad and possibly serve as a deterrent for others.

### **III RECRUITMENT, MOVEMENT AND INITIATION: RECRUITERS, TRAFFICKERS AND BUYERS**

Of the 40 internationally trafficked women, thirty-two were illegally recruited, 6 had legal papers, and 2 were not able to state clearly their legal status.

#### **A. Profile of Recruiters and the Process of Recruitment**

The majority of respondents reported that friends of families and neighbors recruited them. Other recruiters were strangers or new acquaintances, and siblings or relatives. One went to a promotion agency, and the Moonies recruited another. For those who did not state clearly who recruited them, it can be gleaned from their stories that the recruiters were persons they trusted. Recruiters came from various nationalities: Filipino, Korean, Japanese, Lebanese, German, Egyptian, and Greek.

The majority of respondents were recruited through informal channels, i.e., through neighbors, relatives and neighbors. One respondent stated: *"It was our neighbor who asked my mother if I wanted to go to Japan...We were brought to Manila, to a promotion agency."* In many cases, recruiters were Filipino women in their 40s and older who were used by trafficking syndicates to convince respondents and/or their relatives to work abroad. It was clear from the stories of the women that they and their families immediately trusted the female recruiters, especially if they were introduced to them by someone from the community, for example, a neighbor. *"The recruiter was the sister of my mother's friend. I was training to become a singer [and]...I was really looking for work abroad. My recruiter was a woman, more than 40 years old. At first, my mother didn't want me to leave, but eventually she relented."*

In Bicol, specifically in the province of Albay, the usual mode of recruitment for local trafficking is what is referred to as "house-to-house." Two locally trafficked respondents said that older woman who recruited eight young women, mostly minors from Albay, had first asked their parents whether they would allow the girls to work in Manila in a department store, or as waitresses for three months, since it was school break.

Many respondents mentioned the age of the recruiting women as a convincing element. To them, older women are regarded with respect, and the thought of these women doing any harm to the young women was something that was unimaginable. As one respondent put it: *"How could she lie? She was already an old woman!"* However, this same recruiter had been in prostitution in her younger years, then became a *mama-san*, and ultimately was employed by recruitment syndicates.

Mostly, Filipinos were involved as frontline recruiters. Since the majority of the women did not know exactly how the recruitment process worked in their cases, it could not be established whether licensed or unlicensed recruitment agencies were eventually used for the processing of their papers. What women remember most is that everything was taken care of by the recruiters.

One respondent who was recruited by her sister and her sister's Japanese boyfriend reported that she was recruited to replace her sister who was "retiring" and marrying her Japanese boyfriend-pimp.

One recruiter, who during the interviews was arrested for massive illegal recruitment in Albay, had lived temporarily as a guest of a prominent family when she was recruiting young women in Ligao, a district outside the city of Legazpi. The police officer in charge of the case said that this cover of legitimacy was a key factor that influenced why so many women were so easily recruited.

Some of the recruiters were gay men. Gay men were seen to be non-threatening to the women because of their sexual orientation. In Legazpi City, recruitment and pimping for local prostitution, according to a government respondent, seems to be done mainly by gay men who were employed in beauty parlors and similar establishments where women would come regularly. Some of the women recruited as "entertainers" for Japan admitted that their "papa-sans" were Filipino gay men who accompanied them to their destination and stayed with them as their supervisors.

A number of the respondents from Davao City in Mindanao were recruited Japanese nationals, aided by their Filipino contacts, in small-time pub houses where they started out either as singers or as "guest relations officers" (GROs). Filipino women who had been trafficked abroad were also used as frontline recruiters. One of the respondents who came back from Japan after her first six months recruited other women, whom she recommended in turn to become respondents to this study.

Some of the recruiters were complete strangers to the women, or someone they had just met. *"...I really don't know her, she just ate in my store, befriended me, and asked me if I wanted to go abroad. I've long wanted to leave. It's just that I could not tell my husband. She advised me that in the interview [with the recruiter] I should say that I am not married."* Some recruiters approached the women in their place of work: *"I became acquainted to my recruiter in the place where I worked as a waitress. She told me that she'd send me to Japan."* One convincing factor in the respondents' recruitment was the possibility of being in a group of friends or acquaintances. *"There would be many of us and we know each other."*

One respondent actively sought out promotion agencies. *"I voluntarily went to a promotion because I was such in a desperate situation in my life then, and I could not anymore bear the sexual molestation of my father. I was asked to leave the promotion when they could not find a placement for me. Then I worked in a club along Quezon Avenue. That's where I met my recruiter who eventually became my live-in partner."*

The respondent who was recruited by the Moonies was told to recruit other women, ostensibly to work in Korean factories. She could not be certain about how many women she recruited eventually ended up in Korea in prostitution, as she would turn over the process of negotiation to the Koreans after she had made the initial successful contact and gained the trust of the women.

Mail order brides were recruited through marriage agencies or informal channels. *"He [a foreign man] wrote me. He told me he got my picture, my name, from a pen pal club. When I got there, he showed me the magazine. Pictures only, then with serial numbers, then he told me that it was me he liked. He called up [the agency], then he told them that he liked this number. Then he had to pay more for the information about my name."* Friends who were members of pen pal clubs cajoled others. *"We had ourselves published in Brides Maid, we enjoyed this pen pal business. We were given a form, we had our pictures taken, then she [the recruiter] would mail it,*

*but we didn't know where she sent them.” Some were more circumspect about their experiences and would advise others to be careful about the mail-order bride business. “There are those who'd come to me asking for a form so that they could be published. I tell them my own experience. There are those who say that not all experience the same thing I did. I told them that others simply bear [their lives abroad] because they don't want to come back without money. Some who come home, you'd know whether they had a good life abroad or not.”*

The experiences of the respondents show that there exists an extensive network of recruitment that is in place at the community level, at the very least in the sites of this study. Moreover, for those seeking to go abroad, there were recruiters who came at this juncture of their lives when such a dream was uppermost in their minds. Recruitment through formal and informal channels made use of mostly older women and gays as the frontline recruiters, with foreign nationals or local club/bar/brothel owners behind the scenes. When recruited, the women then saw only saw the “employees” or the bar/club/brothel managers, the mama-sans or papa-sans, supervisors, and/or guards, but rarely the real bosses. However, respondents did not know with certainty whether the managers or supervisors are the real bosses.

Respondents also suspected that recruiters/managers/establishment owners are involved in other illegal activities, such as the illegal drug trade. Respondents who had been trafficked to Japan suspect that the recruiters/establishment owners know each other and are connected in a kind of a network, making it doubly difficult for them to escape, as there was a system of information sharing within particular areas of operations such as in Tokyo. Locally trafficked respondents in the Philippines observed that some local police authorities were friendly with the establishment owners and other employees of the bar to which they were brought and also patronized the bar as clients.

## **B. Documentation and Contracts**

For Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), there are several steps required for applicants to work overseas. When an applicant is hired through a recruitment agency, s/he has to make a request for processing from the agency, fill out a worker's information sheet, sign a personal employment contract, and fulfill visa/entry requirements. The applicant pays fees to the Overseas Workers Welfare Agency (\$25 or its peso equivalent) plus a Medicare fee (\$10 or its peso equivalent). The placement fee is equivalent to a one-month salary. For what are called *name hires* (except household workers), the following are required: a) original and photocopy of the employment contract; b) original and photocopy of visa/entry/work permit; c) original and photocopy of the passport; d) airline booking certificate or pre-paid ticket receipt; e) 2 passport size pictures; f) medical exam results from a Department of Health (DOH)-accredited clinic; g) pre-departure orientation seminar (PDOS) certificate; h) OWWA contribution of US\$25.00 or its peso equivalent; i) processing fee of US\$100.00 or its peso equivalent; j) payment of Medicare contribution of \$10 or its peso equivalent.

Nearly all our respondents who were recruited and trafficked overseas did not have to fulfill any of the requirements, as outlined above. Such documentation would be complicated and costly for the women we interviewed, and most had no knowledge about the official processes of migration. For the majority of our respondents, there were no contracts or other forms of documentation that were shown to them or their families. Others said they signed a contract but never read it, or did not have a copy of it, but did not go through any of the processes involved in applying for overseas work, and knew nothing about these official processes.

Some who signed contracts did not manage to finish their terms because of exploitative and abusive environments. “Yes, I signed a contract, it said that my contract was for three years, for

*six months each time. But I didn't finish it because of my fear. On my fourth time, something terrible happened to me. I was nearly killed in the place I was staying...*" Having contracts, therefore, does not necessarily mean being protected from danger.

From the stories of many women, it was obvious that they had no idea about how recruitment papers are processed. Some did not know the difference between legal and illegal documents. Recruiters would tell women that their documents were legal, even if items such as their names or ages had been altered. Respondents were told that it was not illegal to change merely one or two items in the documents. One said: "*Lahat naman ng nasa passport ko tama pwera lang yung place of birth.*" (*Everything in my passport were correct, except my place of birth.*) Others insisted during the interview that their migration was legal, even as the project team explained that minors were not allowed under the law to become overseas contract workers. "*Gamit ko ang pangalan ko sa passport, pero hindi ang tunay kong edad. 1974 ako, pero ang nilagay doon 1971, tapos yung place of birth, nilagay pinanganak ako sa Manila pero dito ako pinanganak.*" (*I used my real name, but not my real age. I was born 1974, but they put 1971, then my place of birth, they put Manila, but I was actually born here.*) Seventeen of the respondents clearly remembered that they were not holding their passports when they left the country. For most, their knowledge of the illegality of procedures came after their trafficking experience.

A few respondents who had prior knowledge about their illegal documents were told that the photos to be used were not their own — "look-alikes" in the lingo of the recruiters. One respondent was even shown some fake passports and chose which of the photos most resembled her. All of them reported that despite the illegal documents, they were able to proceed undetected through immigration in the Philippines. Persons, often men, who seemed to be in cahoots with immigration officials, often accompanied respondents. A few of the respondents said that when they were going through immigration, their escorts held their passports and they were not required to go through the normal immigration process.

Some respondents were undaunted by the knowledge that their migration papers were fraudulent. "*All my papers were illegal, nothing was asked of me, the recruiters took care of everything.*" One respondent was more direct and unwavering in her desire to work overseas, however it was going to happen: "*I knew, I didn't care at all, it was okay by me.*" Some registered a sense of desperation that led to making such moves. What they did not realize was that lack of proper documentation helped make their trafficking possible and easier.

Undocumented migration appears to be a commonplace option for the poor who seek income and sustainable jobs. Economic upliftment, a major theme in the government's promotion of overseas contract work, has been used quite effectively by unscrupulous recruiters and traffickers to prey on the economic vulnerability of would-be migrants.

Others left the Philippines on tourist visas. Still others were recruited legally and had proper documentation. However, legally recruited and legally documented women migrant workers are also potential victims of sexual exploitation. One respondent was legally recruited as a domestic helper for Malaysia. She had to keep changing her employers seven times because of the bad treatment she received. Her first employer raped her. She developed a urinary tract infection that required hospitalization. Her second employer maltreated her, got her to carry very heavy objects and made her work beyond reasonable hours; she developed unexplained anal bleeding. Her third employer was much better than the others, but her agency did not process her papers so she could transfer legally, and she was then deported. She went back to Malaysia and was employed on a monthly basis with different employers. In-between this domestic employment, when she had no employer, her agency sent her to a club to work as an "entertainer" on a part-time basis, with no salary. Her income was tips from customers. If she didn't obey, the agency threatened her. One

Tula-Tula woman who was legally recruited as a domestic helper was a victim of attempted rapes; she was also a victim of violence from her female employers.

The reports of respondents indicate that legal migration does not automatically render the women safe. To assume, therefore, that a violation of the contract, such as sexual and physical abuse, is simply a labor problem is to ignore the experiences of what can safely be assumed are hundreds or even thousands of similar cases.

### **C. Reasons for Migration**

For all the internationally trafficked respondents and the mail-order brides, the need to have a better economic situation was an overwhelming reason for wanting to go overseas. This was also true for the locally trafficked women who migrated within the country. For the brides, economic security was a much more dominant theme in their responses than any emotional reasons given for marrying foreign men.

Family concerns were also a consideration. One respondent said: *“There were a number [of men] who wrote to me, but I chose him because he said good things in his letter. He loves poor people, because he’s not rich either. He told me, I am neither poor nor rich. ...[I said:] the guy who would like me would have to also love my child so we could be happy. He told me, I know how to love your child... he’s got also a child of his own, he’s divorced.”* This particular respondent only stayed abroad for less than a week, returning when she realized how abusive her husband was to her and her child.

However, family concerns were predominantly economic. Almost all the respondents reported that going abroad seemed to be the only viable economic alternative given their poverty. *“Going abroad was the only way I could help my siblings, because I was the only one earning for the entire family.”* To them, having ambition meant material gains that would eventually benefit their family. *“I had big ambitions, I wanted to build a house, help my siblings, I didn’t want them to suffer.”*

Other respondents wanted economic independence from their partners or families, or to manage their own lives. A single parent-respondent put it this way: *“...to be able to send my child to school and give [him] everything he needed without being dependent on my parents, without being dependent on anyone. To be able to stand on my own. It’s embarrassing [to become dependent] because I already have a child of my own.”* Because many respondents had children, this was a strong impetus for them to try their luck in overseas work.

Others saw working overseas as an opportunity to escape from an abusive environment. *“I really wanted to leave so I could escape from the molestation of my father and my cousin.”*

Most of the respondents were oblivious to the risks that overseas work as “entertainers” would bring, and believed that all that was required of them was as simple as waiting on tables or dancing: *“They told me that it was good over there, I would earn money simply by dancing.”*

All in all, their dreams and aspirations, although material in nature, were bound to a dominant economic need to help their families. Nobody said anything about getting rich, but rather talked about what they perceived as basic requirements—a house, an education and economic security. All of them nurtured the hope of providing for themselves and their families from migrant income, or as wives to foreign men, as they thought had happened to their neighbors, friends and relatives who came back from overseas work — seemingly with improved economic situations.

### **D. Destinations and Numbers**

The majority of the respondents were trafficked to Japan, although a few of them were moved

from one country to another: *“I was in Nigeria for eleven months, then I was sold by Madam to Hanape in Lomi, Africa. In Lomi, which was a club fronting as a bowling alley. Mohammad owned it.”* Most of the respondents stayed in one club.

Japan seems to be a favored destination for many of the respondents. In Cebu, Davao, Metro Manila and Bicol, Japan was seen as the most accessible country where women could more easily find employment as waitresses and as “entertainers.” There is the popular notion, bordering on myth that working in Japan as an “entertainer” brings a windfall in a very short time. The level of male demand for “entertainers” is one of the strongest pull factors that have generated this Japan-bound obsession. This popular fixation shows that promotion of migration for “entertainment work” to Japan has been very successful, especially in the Philippines, also because it requires no educational background nor specialized work skills. In both the local and international “entertainment” industries, the only requirement for women was to appear attractive to male clients. Women needed only to be subservient to the wishes primarily of the customers, pushed by their traffickers and managers. Sexual servitude was part of this requirement.

Many respondents told stories of large numbers of women who constituted each group or batch of Filipinas who were recruited. One respondent said that there were 15 in her group, and another reported eight in her batch. In Dumaguete, a backdoor trafficking survivor said that there were 15 in her group. Most of the respondents traveled as a group, and very few respondents traveled alone. If these groups were added together, the groups would constitute hundreds of women who were recruited and trafficked with the respondents.

Respondents were also able to estimate how many women could be found in the establishments to which they were trafficked. At least three of the respondents said that there were around a hundred women – mostly Filipino and Thai women — in brothels to which they were trafficked.

#### **E. The “Customers” or Buyers**

For the internationally trafficked women, particularly those trafficked to Japan, most of their customers were local men, married, middle class and generally in their 30s to 50s. Some of the buyers were older. However, the assessment of the class status of buyers may not be precise because of the difference between the notion of middle class in Japan and in the Philippines. For poor women, men who are able to spend for their “leisure,” in the way that they found in Japan, seem middle class, or moneyed. Women reported that some of the clients were generally “well-behaved,” meaning that they wanted sex in the “normal” way, but the respondents also reported that many men demanded perverse or sadistic sex.

Some of the respondents reported that some buyers did not necessarily have sex with them but paid the women’s bar fines. Some buyers seemed satisfied talking with the women, eating in restaurants and simply having a “good time.” Some of the locally trafficked women reported similar experiences with some customers. For the respondents trafficked to Nigeria, their customers included Filipino seamen, and Japanese or Taiwanese businessmen, apart from local men. Regular customers were “good” customers according to some respondents, and some of the respondents became “girlfriends” to the men, although the majority of the women did not end up in such relationships.

The women trafficked to Japan seemed to agree during the focus group discussions that many Japanese customers were demanding and violent. For the women trafficked to Nigeria, they found the Filipino men were generally “well-behaved” and empathized with their plight, although this did not stop them from buying sex. Sometimes, the Filipino men would simply stay in the club to have drinks and talk to the women.

Some of the respondents talked about customers who wanted blowjobs, which seemed to be a common male demand that the women disliked immensely. The women said that they found younger clients generally easy to please, their demands being more straightforward. Some older men were too demanding because of their inability to reach orgasm easily. They could become violent if their demands were not met. Conversely, other older men were easy to cajole because they knew their sexual limitations.

#### **IV - VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Customers, managers and brothel keepers, including in some instances, *mama-sans*, were the perpetrators of violence against respondents. They also exerted stringent control over the lives of the women who were both internationally and domestically trafficked. Mechanisms of control were: withholding of food and money, physical and psychological violence, threats, isolation, and punishment for the slightest mistakes made by the women. In many cases, sheer fear of being punished, harmed, or killed was enough to make the women docile.

Filipino women's movement was highly controlled. Most were not allowed to leave the premises and were tightly guarded. They were either prohibited from having communication with their relatives or in cases when they were allowed to call home, they had to ask the permission of the brothel authorities.

Filipinas were compelled to do whatever the managers/owners told them. Women who were passed through promotion agencies were trained how to interact with customers, i.e., how to sit, how to cajole men to drink and eat more, how to influence men to stay longer in the clubs and, eventually, how to encourage men to pay for sex. For some, this "training" began even before they left the Philippines in agencies where they were told to practice "entertaining" potential buyers.

Many of the Filipino respondents said that apart from "entertaining," they also had to clean the establishments, e.g., wash dishes, sweep/mop floors, and scrub toilets before they could go back to their sleeping quarters. There were respondents who said that they had to receive buyers of paid sex on the very premises where they slept.

Every club had particular rules and penalties to control women if they didn't obey the management. Women had to wear "sexy" and provocative short dresses and makeup to attract men. For some of the locally trafficked respondents who had regular customers or "boyfriends," women would be penalized for talking to the "regulars" in the club unless the men bought drinks. If the "boyfriends" wanted to talk to the women during off-hours, they would have to pay PhP100 or \$US 2.50 per hour.

Themes of control that recurred in the respondents' remarks were the following:

- Forced to dance nude
- Told to go out with the customers.
- In Nigeria, commanded to stand up immediately once there was a customer
- Told to be good in sex so that customers would come back
- Compelled to mimic sex acts shown on TV or video
- Photographed without explanation

Most of the women reported that customers took pictures of them nude or during sex acts, but when asked about whether they had been used in pornography, they answered no. Rather, they viewed this picture-taking while naked or during sex acts with the customers as a perversion of

the male buyer. Only one respondent, who was photographed by a male Caucasian customer for which she was paid some money on a monthly basis, named these pictures pornography.

Many of the respondents protested certain behaviors of buyers that they found offensive. Several commented, *"I did not like being touched..."* Another reported: *"I didn't like being touched, my breasts being fondled, being kissed or hugged."* A number of women initially refused to have sex with men but eventually did, since there was nothing they could do: *"... being asked to dance naked, we were also forced to have sex with the customers, and we couldn't do anything."*

Verbal threats uttered as shouts and curses were accompanied by physical attempts to harm women. Respondents stated that such verbal threats had the effect of instilling fear so that they became subservient to most of the wishes of the perpetrators. This subservience was also a form of passive resistance that was the women's own brand of protecting themselves and, in many instances, it saved women from further harm. Even the few respondents who said that they were not physically hurt or verbally abused evinced that their compliance to the wishes of their managers or customers was deeply instilled by some catalyst.

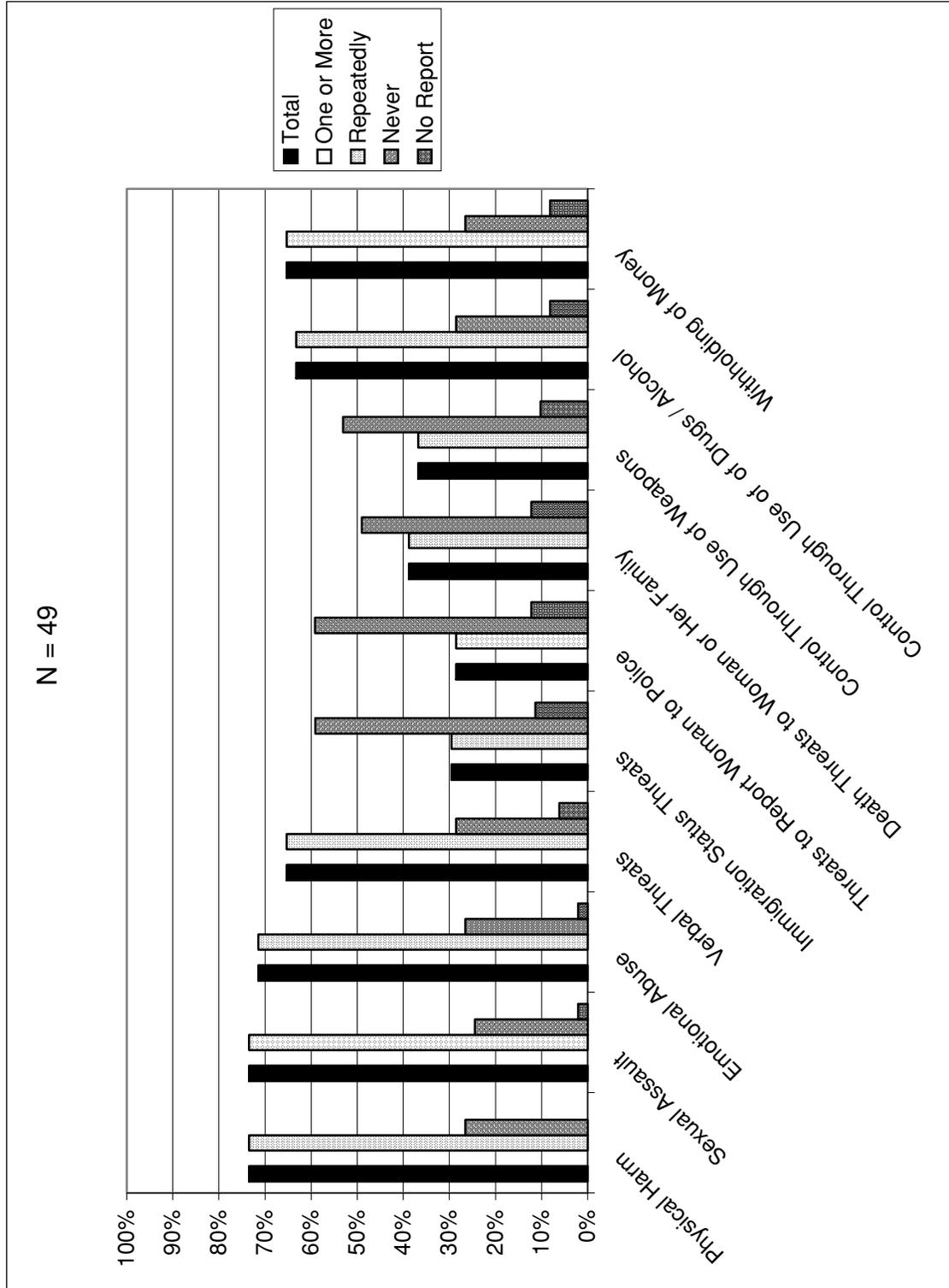
Numbers of respondents reported specific forms of violence and control: constant cursing (27); shouted at (25); threatened (20); scolded (18); padlocked every night (17); and given one meal a day (15). Some were both threatened and hit with weapons such as a truncheon, baton, samurai, gun, or knife (12); slapped (10); kicked (10); eyes blackened or injured (10); pinched (8); punched (7); hair pulled (7); dragged (5); legs boxed (4); hit with objects, such as a leather whip, bottles, ashtray, baton, footwear and towel (12). Three respondents reported threats of being sold to a brothel or being pushed from a tall building. Three had their hands tied with barbed wire, 2 their nails and hair cut, 2 were burned with cigarettes, and one had her nipples bitten. Women also reported that they were forced to use shabu (methamphetamine hydrochloride) or cocaine by customers or managers. When they disobeyed their traffickers and managers, 10 were penalized with withdrawal of food and detention/lock up in a cold-padlocked room naked for one week with no ability to communicate with anyone.

Sexual abuse, such as unwanted touching in sensitive parts of their bodies, was reported by 26 respondents. Fifteen reported being forced to perform blowjobs, and 6 reported hands and fingers being put into the anus. One woman reported forcible use of underwear to hurt her genitalia. A number of the respondents had multiple complaints and injuries. During the interviews, it was apparent that women had more adverse reactions to the sexual violence perpetrated against them than to other forms of violence. However, many respondents had only a vague notion that this violence was rape, since there was an assumption that sex that was paid for could not be rape.

Many respondents could not remember the details of the violence committed against them. A number of respondents were detailing their abuse for the first time. A few were hesitant to discuss the details, but appeared to be obviously disturbed by the questions about violence. Some requested that the interviewers not ask them about the details, since they would rather forget these.

During the interviews, it was clear that, among a number of the respondents, there was a high degree of denial about the violence committed against them. This became obvious when respondents were asked about the violent experiences of other women who were with them in the sex establishments. A number of respondents confirmed that *other* women had experienced many forms of violence, both from establishment owners and customers. They also reported that other women had experienced more intense and frequent acts of violence than they themselves had divulged. When asked why they were spared from these forms, intensity and frequency of violence, some women reported that they knew how to handle their managers and their customers.

Filipino Women Figure 1 - Violence, Means of Control and Threats by Recruiters, Traffickers, Pimps and "Clients"



Some of the respondents talked more about their experience of earlier abuse and violence, e.g., abuse by a boyfriend in teenage years, and rape by a caregiver and other persons in authority. Other respondents wanted to speak more about their current experiences of violence with their husbands/live-in partners.

Some women appeared to answer questions about violence in a lighthearted manner. The apparent lightheartedness belied the traumatic consequences that they still carry within them. Except for a very few who had some form of peer support or counseling, the majority of the locally and internationally trafficked women had no access to formal or informal counseling.

## **V - CONSEQUENCES TO WOMEN'S HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**

It was difficult to obtain data on health problems that respondents experienced while in sexually exploitative situations. A number of women stated that they were able to cope with their health problems, and/or the concept of being ill was something that women did not apply to the symptoms they experienced. Other women could not remember specific injuries they suffered.

For Filipino women, highest rates of injuries are in the categories of internal pain, vaginal bleeding, head trauma and bruises (all above 30 percent). Filipino women reported specific injuries of broken bones fractured by clients; head injuries from head banging's by clients; pain before and during menstruation; rib injury; pain during sexual intercourse, abnormal bowel movements, back pain, episodes of blackouts/fainting, difficulty in breathing, eye infections and heart problems, all related to their experiences in prostitution.

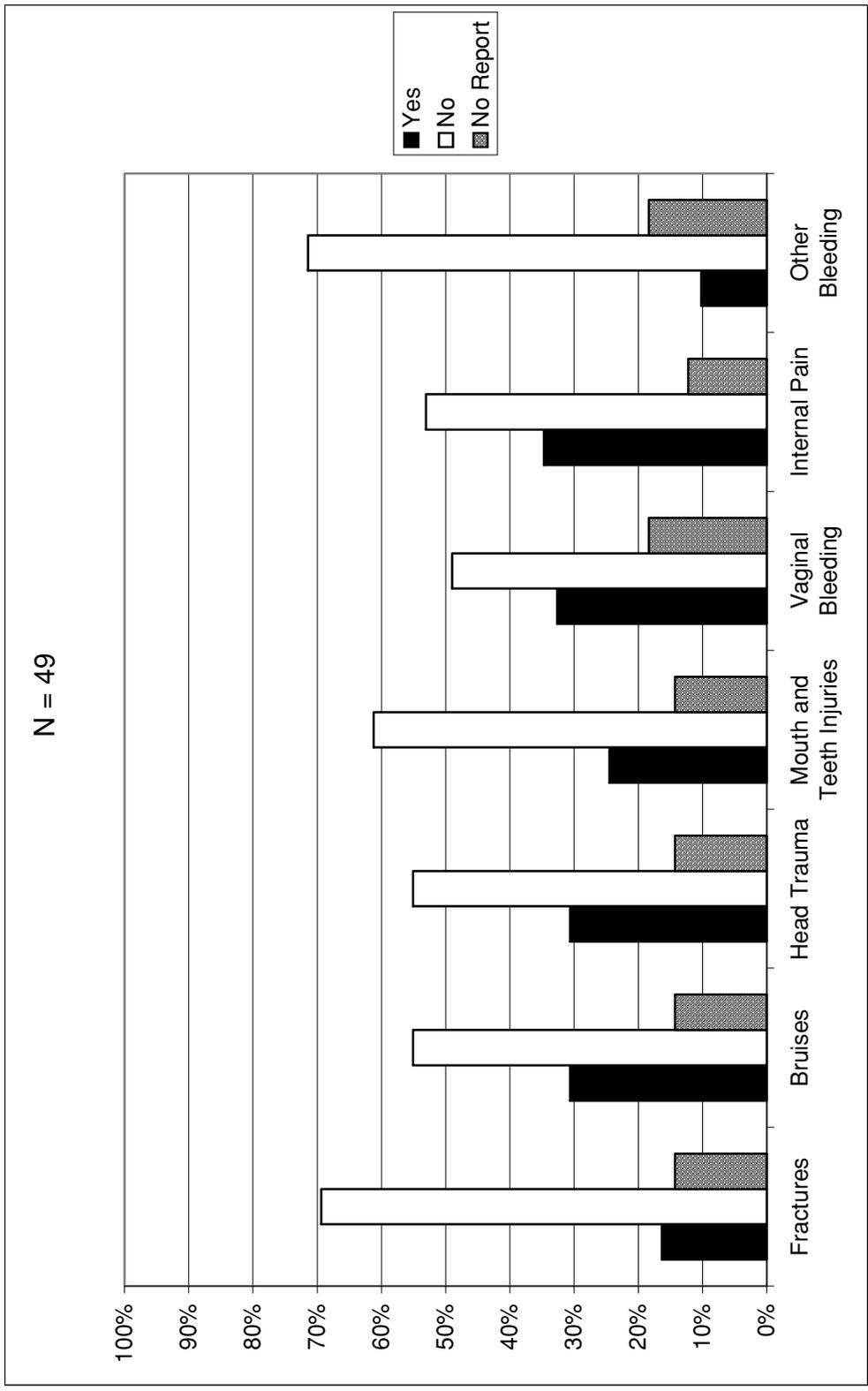
Compared to the high percentages of violence perpetrated against respondents and listed in Figure 1, the lower percentages of injuries reported in Figure 2 appear to signal a discrepancy. There are several possible interpretations for this apparent discrepancy. It appears that although many of the respondents reported high percentages and frequency of physical violence, they minimized the effects of this violence in terms of physical injuries (e.g., broken bones, bruises, head injuries, mouth and teeth injuries). Another interpretation is that survivors of such violence were psychologically unprepared to examine the specific and concrete injuries resulting from the violence and its ill effects. For example, women reported a relatively higher percentage of vaginal bleeding than other injuries, yet women could not state what precipitated the bleeding, or to what specific condition the bleeding was related. It is also possible that respondents had developed a high pain threshold as a coping mechanism for the violence.

Women were forced to take a variety of drugs but did not know the particular names of these drugs, or their possible effects, until the effects took hold. "*Pinapainom nila kami, tablets pero naha-high ako pag nag-take ako n'un.*" (*They would force us to drink some tablets that made us high*). "*Pinilit nila kaming mag-take para daw maging mas magaling kami.*" (*We were forced to take [the tablets] so that we would be even better [sexually]*)." Women had to take not only drugs but also alcohol on a regular basis. The majority complained of lack of sleep due to the use of alcohol and drugs, as well as long hours of sexual activity.

The majority of the women were fed only once or twice a day, ostensibly to keep them trim, and there was a high degree of malnutrition among the respondents. Some complained of being hungry after their time in the clubs.

Some respondents were denied health care. There were women who said that they were never allowed to see a doctor or have a check-up for sexually transmitted diseases or other health conditions. This could be one of the reasons why respondents found it difficult to answer later questions about sexually transmitted diseases. Since they did not have health check-ups, they could not give details about what illnesses they possibly contracted. One respondent told the story

Filipino Women Figure 2 - Injuries Suffered by Filipino Women Exploited in the Sex Industry



of a customer who mutilated her; he seemed thrilled with the blood oozing from her wrist while having sex. It was only after sex that she was taken by the brothel keepers — Yakuza men — to a nearby clinic. Not knowing the language, she never knew how they explained her wounds to the doctors.

## **B. Condom Use**

Respondents were not forthcoming about male condom use. However, we have culled some information about condoms from the narratives of the women.

Respondents reported that very few men used condoms. Most respondents who reported that men used condoms also admitted that this was inconsistent because condom use would always depend on the customers. Some women had mixed experience with condom use, reporting that some male buyers readily used condoms and some did not.

With internationally trafficked women, male condom use varied according to: a) the ability of women to negotiate with their clients; b) the rules of condom use within specific establishments. For example, some of the respondents said that there were establishments where condom use was the rule, which buyers strictly observed. The condoms were placed near the bed's headboard, and the women and/or men would automatically reach for the condoms and; c) the status of "regular" clients who, for some women, became their "boyfriends." Some of the respondents intimated that if they liked a customer enough, particularly those who were regulars, they would forego use of condoms. One woman trafficked to Nigeria did not use condom or contraception with a Taiwanese buyer whom she considered as her boyfriend, because he planned to buy back her passport so she could be released by her recruiters/traffickers and return home. She became pregnant by him and consequently was able to return to the Philippines where she gave birth. (Initially, the man sent her some support, but later on this completely stopped).

## **C. Contraception**

Thirty-nine percent (N=19) of the respondents said that they used contraception. Considering the length of respondents' time in prostitution, it is surprising that unwanted pregnancy was not a more common experience.

There were contraceptives that recruiters/traffickers/managers and customers forced on the women such as injectables. It is likely that the injectable was Depo-Provera since respondents who were injected said they used no other means of contraception and did not get pregnant.

One woman reported: "*Pag normal ka iineksyunan ka nila.*" (*If you're normal, they'd inject you*). However, the women never really knew with what they were injected and did not explain what they meant by "normal."

## **D. Sexually Transmitted Infection (STIs)**

Fifteen respondents reported that they had contracted some kind of sexually transmitted infections, although they were not sure about how to identify these infections with the exception of 2 respondents, one stating that she had contracted crab lice and another stating that she had gonorrhea ("*tulo*"). Mostly, respondents gave description of symptoms, which included itchiness, soreness, lacerations, bleeding, and pain around and inside the vaginal area. Other women reported pain in the uterus and cervix, although it was not clear how the respondents knew that it was in the uterus or cervix.

It appears that the majority of respondents had little knowledge about STIs. When asked if they had had STIs, a number said that they did not. Yet when the common symptoms of sexually transmitted infections were enumerated, they recognized some or all of the symptoms.

## **E. Abortion**

Of all the questions about sexual and reproductive health, the issue of abortion was the most difficult to discuss for the women. Four of the respondents reported having had an abortion. Abortion was clearly an emotional and religious issue. Most of the women thought that, had they become pregnant as a result of commercial sex acts with customers, they would have continued the pregnancy. Most of them said that it is a “sin” to have an abortion, and that the fetus should not be terminated because “it is not the fault of the child.”

Respondents who had no religious objections to abortion and were vocal in support of a woman’s right to abortion were, when interviewed, members of a local women’s group and had participated in awareness-raising sessions or informal education on women’s reproductive health and rights.

## **F. Emotional, Behavioral and Psychological Problems**

Compared to the rates of physical injuries, there are higher percentages of emotional, behavioral and mental problems reported by respondents, and represented in Figure 3. Often, the women made no distinction between physical, physiological, emotional or psychological injuries.

More descriptively, women mentioned inability to laugh or be happy, staring into space, not being able to think clearly, dreams/nightmares of past experiences, being constantly tired, having a “karma” of being hard headed when young, overeating as a response to abuse and violence, difficulty breathing, unexplained bouts of shouting, feeling of coldness at the back, eyes always sore, phobia of heights and staircases, abnormal feelings of embarrassment, feelings of a loss of sanity, self-imposed isolation to the point of not leaving the house.

In not making clear distinctions between physical and emotional/psychological effects of violence, this could mean that the women integrated emotional/psychological health with physical health, and hence their difficulty in making those clear distinctions. For example, there was much emphasis on their emotional states as a direct result of the physical violence inflicted on them. This is important, since it shows that the consequences of violence perpetrated against the women are not always easily separable into distinct physical and emotional injuries and trauma. Health services for victims of trafficking and prostitution, therefore, need to offer both emotional and physical assistance.

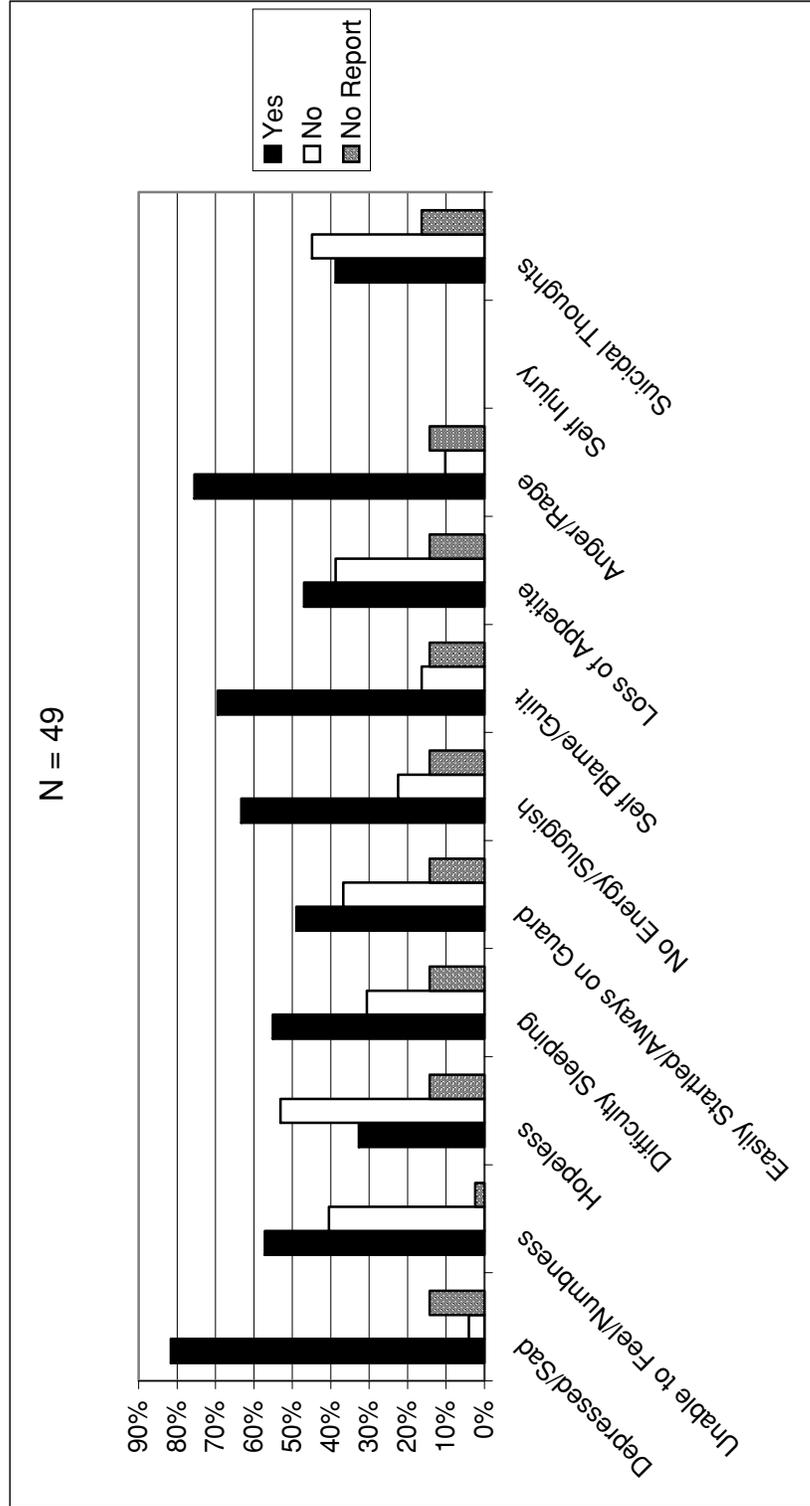
## **G. Strategies of Survival**

In general, when the women were asked how they coped with violence, the loneliness of having to live away from families and loved ones, and the uncertainty of their future, the majority seemed not to have even considered these questions, and had difficulty responding. Most respondents seemed to cope in a passive way, accepting their situation.

Of the means used by respondents to withstand the difficulties they faced, the following were cited. Women who had access to telephones would call relatives back home, not telling them of their real situation, but to be in contact and obtain knowledge about home. Others isolated themselves. “*Pag may problema umiiyak na lang ako,mas gusto kong mag-isa. (When I had problems, I simply cried, I would rather be alone).*” Some simply cried or chatted with companions. Others would console themselves with the thought that their lives would somehow be better.

Many would resort to prayer. One told of a poignant story about a religious image constantly with her, at her bed’s headboard, while in Japan. She believed that the image of the Virgin Mary had actually saved her from more harm than what she experienced. All the respondents believed in God, and said that their faith helped them survive the violence against them.

Filipino Women Figure 3 - Emotional, Behavioral and Psychological Problems of Filipino Women As a Result of Sexual Exploitation



Drugs/alcohol were constantly used as a coping mechanism, although most of the women were forced to take drugs by pimps and managers as a means of control. One woman stated: *“Para lumakasAng loob ko. Mas matapang ako pag high ako. (I am braver if I am high [on drugs]). Nandiyan lang kasi sa paligid ang shabu, ayun di gamitin mo na lang. (Shabu was readily available, so why not use it?)”* Shabu is methamphetamine hydrochloride imbibed by inhaling the fine powder and, like cocaine, it induces loss of inhibition, ability to stay awake and active, and is highly addictive. A few were able to resist taking drugs, but they did not specify how. Some women attempted suicide, but were unsuccessful

All the respondents who were in exploitative conditions wanted to leave the establishments in which they found themselves. A number of the respondents tried to escape or enlist the help of boyfriends, but escaping was nearly an impossible task. Language also effectively isolated many women from getting help.

For the majority of the internationally trafficked respondents, the fear of being harmed or killed by their managers or pimps dominated their lives abroad. For those recruited by the Yakuza, they soon realized how extensive the Yakuza network was. Two respondents who were trafficked together attempted twice to escape. The first escape attempt, from a far-flung area outside Tokyo, showed them that even the owner of the ferry that would bring them outside the brothel area was controlled by the Yakuza, as he turned them in to the brothel keepers. In the second escape, they managed to end up somewhere in the red light district in Tokyo, where they sold their jewelry to another Filipino women who took pity on them. They used the money to feed themselves. As they were eating in a sidewalk eatery, two Japanese men approached them, and they reluctantly agreed to have sex, since they had no more money. The two men brought them to a hotel where the men from the brothel were waiting and meted out severe punishment to them. Kept naked in a cold room without food or water, the two finally relented and promised to be obedient. This fears were reinforced when they saw the bodies of two murdered Filipino women that had been mutilated and kept in a closet.

Others who did not contemplate escaping coped by avoiding what they considered to be troublesome situations. This meant that they followed orders and were “obedient.” They were often told that women who tried to escape were hurt or punished. Others merely waited for their contract to finish and made the best out of their situations. This meant that they accepted the routine of daily life — of sleeping, eating, putting on makeup, going to a sex establishment or brothel where they were made to receive an endless flow of customers.

Their routinized days are captured in the following descriptions:

*“I will work from seven in the evening to two in the morning, then after two I could go out again up to around five at dawn. Then I would go to sleep, wake up to get ready to go out again.”*

*“We would leave our place around six in the evening, somebody would fetch us to go to the club. Then we’d be there up to around three in the morning—we would clean the clean first—then we’d go home, chatting up a bit before we finally go to sleep. We’d wake up to eat, then get ready so go to the club again.”*

*“Everyday we would go out at around 4 in the afternoon, and be there up to four in the morning. Then after coming back to our place, we’d exercise. Then we’d sleep, clean up and prepare to work again.”*

*“In a club in Malaysia, we’d start going to work around six in the evening up to two in the morning. Then if we had customers who’d take us out, we’d be brought back in the morning. In Hong Kong, there is no rest, for as long as there was a customer you’d have to serve him.”*

## **VI - RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **A. Framework**

Three UN instruments form the basis for the policy and practice recommendations laid out in this concluding section of the Philippines report: the new *UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime*; the 1949 *UN Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others*; and the Beijing Platform of Action from the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women.

The new UN Protocol on trafficking creates a global language and legislation to define trafficking in persons, especially women and children, assist victims of trafficking and prevent trafficking in persons. It establishes the parameters of judicial cooperation and exchanges of information among countries and is intended to jumpstart national law and harmonize regional legislation against the trafficking in women and children especially.

The 1949 UN Convention on trafficking and prostitution has been ratified by the Philippines, and addresses the exploitation of prostitution that underpins the majority of trafficking violations. It prohibits brothels, even those regulated by the state, and recognizes that it is the existence of a sex industry infrastructure especially in the west that assures a supply of women from poorer countries through international trafficking networks. At the same time, it does not criminalize the victims. Like the new UN Protocol on trafficking, it abolishes the defense of consent to being trafficked and, in fact goes further, and abolishes the defense of consent to the exploitation of prostitution.

The Beijing Platform of Action calls for “The effective suppression of trafficking in women and girls for the sex trade...” (Objective 5C) and for assistance to “...victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking” (Objective D3). It urges specific actions such as the establishment of “linguistically and culturally accessible services for migrant women and girls, including women migrant workers who are victims of gender-based violence.” The Declaration also calls for the recognition of “the vulnerability to violence and other forms of abuse of women migrants, including women migrant workers whose legal status in the host country depends on employers who may exploit their situation.”

The Philippines Government is also a signatory to various other international conventions and agreements, such as the *UN Declaration on Human Rights* and the *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW). These commitments necessitate follow-through, and the subsequent recommendations are meant as avenues by which the government can make concrete its commitments.

Women interviewed had very trenchant recommendations regarding both policy and practice. The following proposals are a result of both the interviews, where women were specifically asked about their recommendations regarding prevention, protection and prosecution, as well as the conclusions of the project team. These recommendations can be categorized into 3 areas: policy frameworks; policy itself; and practices or specific recommendations that can be implemented.

## **B. Policy Frameworks**

### **1. Legalization of Prostitution**

Ninety-six percent (N=47) of the respondents recommended that prostitution should not be legalized, and if possible completely eradicated. The reports of trafficked women and those in prostitution clearly show the violence perpetrated against them by their customers and other players in the sex industry. Regret of having been in prostitution dominated the stories of the women. As one respondent stated: *“Eradicate prostitution, it is not good for women and can cause illnesses.”* Another stated that, given her experiences, nobody should be subjected to the level of violence and abuse. *“My experience tells me that if only prostitution could be done away with, completely... First of all, your womanhood is exploited. Second, you could not avoid ill health. If you get sick, is there anyone who’d take the responsibility for it?”* Others reported that since prostitution does not require any knowledge or skills that the legalization of prostitution would send the message to young girls, and especially to their daughters, that they do not need an education to earn.

Only two of our respondents thought that prostitution should be legalized, although they also stated that women enter the sex industry not out of choice but out of necessity.

### **2. Trafficking and Migration for Labor and Prostitution**

Trafficking is not merely a migration crime or a simple labor violation, but a violation of basic human rights. Although this project makes a distinction between migration and trafficking, the cases in the study show that migration has been used and continues to be exploited by traffickers. Despite the attention given by government agencies to ensuring that migrant workers are protected under the law, this project and a growing number of other studies show that migrant workers continue to be exploited not only through illegal recruitment but also through the process of legal recruitment. In many cases, the complicity of government officials has been documented.

Laws relating to recruitment agencies must be reviewed and mechanisms put in place that recognize both domestic and international trafficking, particularly for sexual exploitation, as a human rights crime against migrants and others.

### **3. The Divide between Children and Adults**

Policy and legal reforms should address the divide between “children” and “adults.” This is an artificial dividing line when one considers that an overwhelming number of adult women in systems of prostitution were recruited into the sex industry when they were minors. Data from respondents in the Bicol region indicate that when a rescue mission was undertaken by the police involving a brothel in Pampanga, only females below 18 years of age were liberated. According to the respondents, the victims of local sex trafficking were asked their age, and when some of the women said they were above 18 years, the police did not set them free.

### **4. Review of Overseas Contract Work Policy**

The Philippines government should conduct an immediate review of policy on overseas contract work, given the massive and continuing violations of migrants’ rights in destination countries. While overseas contract work has provided continuing relief for the Philippines economy, its toll on individual migrants, their families and the general community cannot be ignored. There is already widespread push from families to send young women and men to work overseas as the only viable economic option to the lack of jobs in the country. Families have become more and more willing to sacrifice their children. The promotion of overseas contract work, moreover, has been used by unscrupulous agents and actors to violate the human rights of migrants, as seen most dramatically in trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Although governments must continue to guarantee the right to travel and work, governments must come to terms with how these rights are opportunistically exploited and enhanced by policies promoting strategic and systematic economic development based on making the Philippines dependent on the income of overseas contract workers and the vicissitudes of international market demands.

## 5. Trafficking and National Development Plans

Trafficking is a development issue in that it depletes and destroys the productive capacities of its victims. Data from the Philippines section of this report demonstrates that victims of trafficking face a range and intensity of violence and consequent health problems that are both physical and emotional, all of which affect their ability to be productive. Some of these consequences persist long after the trafficking ends. Health is a major development index, and should be factored into development plans and policies.

We recommend reducing the Philippines dependence on foreign remittances by phasing out overseas contract work as part of a Philippines national development strategy. Such a plan cannot proceed, however, without a concomitant development plan advancing economic alternatives internally that make use of local resources. Many governments in the South must establish an economic/development agenda that seeks to curtail the drain of human resources from their countries.

Governments in the North should examine their own development agendas in which the hiring and exploitation of migrant labor from poorer countries has become an avenue for trafficking, sexual exploitation, and cheap labor. Governments should forge commitments and agreements that are based on mutually enhancing development agendas where migrant labor is productive for both sending and receiving countries.

Re-deployment of returning overseas contract workers into the local labor market has hitherto failed because of the government's dependence on foreign markets for labor and remittances. The government must seriously address local initiatives for job generation for both returning migrants and to prevent trafficking from reoccurring.

### **C. Policy Recommendations**

#### 1. The Passage of an Effective and Comprehensive Anti-Trafficking Law

Recent attempts to pass an anti-trafficking law in the Philippines have met either stiff opposition or neglect from legislators. These attempts also show that there is very little understanding of trafficking as it relates to national development efforts and the government's responsibility to implement its commitment to international conventions and agreements.

A new anti-trafficking law must severely punish not only the recruiters/traffickers but also corrupt government officials who assist in trafficking. It must be based on women's human rights and provide protection and assistance to victims of trafficking. The current draft anti-trafficking bill also recognizes the responsibility of parents/relatives who traffic their own children or other relatives.

The new UN Protocol on Trafficking should serve as a legal framework for a new anti-trafficking law in the Philippines. Legislators, in particular, need to be educated about the new UN Trafficking Protocol.

#### 2. The Development of Bilateral Agreements with Destination Countries for Protection of Overseas Filipinos

This study, as well as others, strongly indicates that recruiters have developed effective illegal channels of trafficking involving local and foreign actors, and between and among countries. The Philippines government should sign bilateral agreements with host countries to ensure that complaints of OFWs are immediately addressed, file needed cases against foreign traffickers/recruiters, protect victims and provide financial and other assistance to victims. Such agreements should enable the Philippines government to extradite traffickers/recruiters for cases to be filed against them in Philippines courts.

These agreements must also ensure that destination countries provide victim protection, especially victim witness protection, for those trafficked into these countries. Victims of trafficking are reluctant to come forward because of fear of retaliation from traffickers and recruiters, in the Philippines and abroad. Victim witness protection programs assist victims to file cases against their traffickers with State protection.

#### **D. Practice Recommendations**

##### **1. Training for Embassy and Consular Officials and Staff**

Embassy and consulate officials must be trained to handle cases of illegal recruitment effectively and efficiently. Specific funds must be allocated for emergency assistance, e.g., for trafficked migrants to be returned home as soon as possible, and for medical assistance. Many reports have documented the insensitivity of some embassy and consulate officials and, worse, their complicity with the traffickers. Testimony from women trafficked to Nigeria indicates that Filipino embassy officials there, when told by women that they had been trafficked to Nigeria, said the embassy had no funds to repatriate them and that the women must continue prostituting in the clubs so that they could save the money to return to the Philippines.

##### **2. Documentation and Database on Trafficking**

All the interviews conducted with regional and local government agencies show the lack of information about trafficking of women and children, especially international trafficking. Although there is knowledge about the existence of sex trafficking, government officials had scant or no concrete information on the problem. When studies are conducted on both domestic and international trafficking, it is disheartening to note that some government agencies had never read or studied the findings.

Local government officials interviewed for the study bemoaned the fact that they have no capacity to monitor illegal migration or recruitment networks. Yet, during the field interviews, illegal recruitment agencies, assisted by DOLE and local government officials, were operating under their very noses. Governments must implement an official system of documentation, including a systematic database on migration, with categories of work such as “entertainers,” for which individuals migrate abroad. This database should also list legal recruitment agencies.

Local governments also complained that documentation of Japan-bound “entertainers” is not within their authority since the documentation and pre-departure training and orientation happen in Manila. While this is true, there certainly can be mechanisms of coordination between local and national agencies. As recruitment for overseas work through informal channels becomes highly popular, the urgency of funding and adopting a national and community-based documentation system needs to be especially addressed.

##### **3. Public Education and Awareness-Raising Campaigns**

On the whole, women’s groups, migrant organizations and other NGOs are doing public education about sex trafficking and illegal migration. Despite the unquestionable commitment of

these NGOs, their reach is constrained by limited resources and lack of national mechanisms. Moreover, it is the responsibility of the State to conduct effective public education on these issues given the fact that migration has become a national income-generating economic strategy, for which government must bear the main responsibility. Replication of best practices that are gender-sensitive and women-oriented should be used and disseminated in these campaigns.

Government in coordination with NGOs must support good national public education campaigns. Appropriate multi-media educational campaigns should be launched nationwide, to reach the communities where the informal channels of recruitment are active and gaining ground in the deception of would-be migrants.

#### 4. Clarify and Coordinate Responsibilities of Government Agencies

Given the multi-layered, overlapping and often blurred areas of responsibility on migration-related concerns, response to sex trafficking has been ineffective if not totally absent. There is also the tendency for some government agencies to take a hands-off policy if they construe that trafficking does not fall within their mandate. Although there are existing task forces on illegal recruitment, due to a lack of understanding of the nexus between migration and sex trafficking, problems of sex trafficking often gets sidelined.

Clarifying, organizing and streamlining the mandates of agencies concerned with migration-related concerns are necessary to ensure distinct delineation of responsibility and effective and comprehensive coordination. One government official in Cebu City has attempted for the past few years to address sex trafficking, even if it does not clearly fall under her agency mandate, because she has been approached by survivors of trafficking and their families — an advocacy for which she had been “penalized.”

Men who have sponsored more than one mail-order bride should be included in a database. In Australia, serial sponsorship is being addressed, albeit with some substantial gaps in the law. Countries where men are sponsoring or recruiting serial brides can also adopt such measures. The mail-order brides interviewed recommended that marriages to foreigners should be undertaken with knowledge about the prospective groom or husband, including whether they have pursued foreign marriages and sponsored brides before. One woman recommended: “*Like in my case, I only knew that I was the third on the list [third marriage of her husband].*” It is high time that men are addressed as part of the equation.

The work of the Commission on Overseas Filipinos (CFO) is commendable and has helped some Filipino women who married foreign men. However, a lot of the problems occur in the country of destination of the women, and therefore some kind of on-site services need to be addressed.

Local government agencies must be strengthened and given adequate capability to monitor the departure and return of OFWs. Monitoring may be more effective and realistic at the local level. Often, communities know who have returned from overseas work. Support for trafficked women who want to report violations can be initiated with the aid of local government agencies.

#### 5. Expand Protection and Other Social Services to Illegally Recruited Migrants and Those Trafficked

Illegal migrants should be given particular attention and assurance that they will not be victimized a second time. When respondents were asked why they did not report their cases to the authorities, they said that they were afraid that criminal charges would be lodged against them.

Currently, social service coverage is offered only to migrants who were legally recruited. There is a need to expand the coverage of protection and social services to illegally recruited migrants duped by their recruiters. A portion of the fees collected from overseas Filipino workers should be set aside to assist those who were illegally recruited, also because illegally recruited OFWs have contributed to the national economy through their remittances.

6. Provide appropriate community-based direct services and gender-sensitive training/capability building to service providers.

There are few services that are available for OFWs and especially for survivors of local trafficking, and none to date for victims of international sex trafficking. Unfortunately, many of the services in place display lack of a gender-sensitive and women-oriented perspective in the delivery of services. Even among some caregivers, there is a tendency to stigmatize the victims of sex trafficking/prostitution. Returning migrants should be able to access services that address post-migration or post-trafficking issues and concerns, particularly legal counsel and voluntary psychological assistance.

7. Strengthen GO-NGO-Private Sector Collaboration.

There are a number of non-government organizations and private institutions that deal with migrant issues, trafficking, human rights and sexual exploitation. Government should build and enhance links with these groups to ensure that their expertise is heard and brought into the policy arena. Efforts to address sex trafficking in particular are at an initial stage. Viable and mutually enhancing alliances should be strengthened to best address these problems.

8. *Implement Viable and Sustainable Income-Generation Plans and Programs that Specifically Target Vulnerable Groups.*

Programs must target especially women and youth who are vulnerable to trafficking and other sexually exploitative situations, including those who are susceptible to the mail-order bride system. These programs should also be available to post-trafficking victims and migrants returned from abroad. All the respondents acknowledged the fact that whether it is for work or marriage, migration has become an avenue to improve one's economic status and personal life.

Although there are some existing post-migration programs, these are small and oftentimes in the category of micro enterprises that do not provide long term economic uplift to migrants, especially trafficked women. Local jobs and employment opportunities, so that women will not be enticed to go abroad, is a basic need. Respondents were specific in their recommendations that loans, business training and ultimately self-managed enterprises such as food stalls be made available through these programs.

Appropriate training in design, implementation and monitoring of income generating activities, particularly targeting women, must be incorporated into such income generating plans and programs. Emergency funds for educational and health needs of program participants are also needed, so as not to deplete participants' enterprise capital.

Existing assistance programs must also consider job placement as a vital component for those seeking employment.

9. Education

A number of respondents underscored the need to have access to education, with some of them wanting to finish schooling/go to college. Education and thus ability to access skilled jobs would decrease the attraction to work overseas, and give them more general knowledge and information about areas in which they feel untutored.

Education is a basic right guaranteed in the Constitution, and yet hundreds of thousands of youth are deprived of it. It is also important to train parents not to discriminate against girls, as this practice makes girls vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation.

#### 10. Develop Peer Support Programs and Services

Many respondents recommended programs that would be staffed by survivors of sex trafficking. Especially mentioned were support groups for survivors of sex trafficking at the community level, to share their stories, find strength to organize themselves and educate vulnerable sectors of women and children about sex trafficking and prostitution.

Voluntary counseling services for victims of trafficking should be made available so that women can rebuild their self-esteem, develop confidence and empower themselves to manage their lives in productive and self-sustaining ways. Current counseling services within the DSWD, for example, tend to be focused on children who are victims of sexual exploitation; also, they lack sensitivity to specific needs of trafficking survivors.

### NOTES

- \* We define “mail-order bride” to mean that various commercial institutions (pen-pal clubs or agencies), and sometimes other family members or friends of the women, facilitated introductions to foreign men with the purpose of arranging a marriage for a fee.

**THAILAND**  
**TRAFFICKING AND PROSTITUTION FROM A GENDER**  
**AND HUMAN RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE**  
**THE THAI EXPERIENCE**

by  
Jean D’Cunha \*  
with Field Assistance of Nanlada Punyaratna

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**Introduction**

*Background and Rationale*

A wealth of documented experience, research and analysis exists on prostitution and sex trafficking of women and children from, into and in transit through Thailand. Studies cover a spectrum of trafficking issues: its scale and magnitude, trends, causes, immediate circumstances, violations, impacts and policy and programme interventions by state and non-state actors at the international, regional, national and local levels. It appears that the phenomenon of trafficking has been exhaustively treated, but a deeper exploration of the definition and nature of violence intrinsic to the institution of prostitution and sex trafficking begs attention.

Existing studies foreground violations of economic, civil, political, legal, emotional and physical rights. What remains inadequately addressed, however, is a deconstruction of the sex and sexuality of prostitution as manifested in (a) the sexual act/s of prostitution; (b) the experience of the sex/sexuality in prostitution for women and clients; (c) the construction of prostitution and women in prostitution; (d) and the actual and potential impact of prostitution on human communities. Moreover, existing studies largely view violations as:

- Separate and discrete acts, impacting particular dimensions of the personality.
- Fundamentally contingent on the structure of the institution (illegal prostitution and conditions of debt bondage/slavery vs. legal prostitution and allegedly freer conditions); client profile (normal vs. violent); or strength of stigma.
- Consequences arising from conditions that are seen to be external to prostitution and that thereby can be controlled or eliminated. For example, the illegality of prostitution is seen as a fundamental, not an exacerbating, cause of violation. Therefore, legalization or decriminalisation of prostitution is advocated to regulate, minimize or eliminate violations.

The Government of Thailand rightly views prostitution and sex trafficking as human rights concerns. It has introduced a host of policy, programme and legal initiatives to address these issues, although there is scope to strengthen and enhance their effectiveness (Human Rights Watch, 1993; UNICEF EAPRO, 1995). Like any other country, it is important for Thailand to scrutinize emerging perceptions of prostitution as “sex work” and “migration for sex work.”

The “sex work” perspective views prostitution as work like any other, an expression of autonomy, self-determination, and a conscious, rational exercise of individual rights and choice. It argues for prostitution to be decriminalized and subject to labour laws like any other business. The use of terms like “sex work” and “sex workers” flows from this understanding and is built on the distinctions between free and forced prostitution, as well as between adult and child prostitution. Although sex trafficking in this view is a human rights violation, it tends to be located within the movement phase of the migration process and is essentially viewed as an outcome of restric-

tive immigration policies. Other interacting socio-economic and political determinants are underplayed, if not ignored. Further, trafficking is defined as a human rights violation only in so far as palpable force and coercion are used in the course of movement, and within the institution into which women are trafficked. In this view, the context of consent—including inducement, vulnerability, and other more subtle pressures—has been excluded from the definition of trafficking. In the effort to decriminalize prostitution and endorse “migration for sex work,” the links between trafficking and prostitution are blurred by emphasizing the range of purposes for which trafficking occurs, while down playing sex trafficking; and delinking trafficking from prostitution. Proponents of this view seek to achieve these goals by advocating for the introduction of criminal laws against trafficking that are separate and distinct from labour laws governing prostitution.

It is necessary to find concrete ways to promote and protect the human rights of women in prostitution while simultaneously critiquing the institution and criminalizing third party managements and traffickers. The impetus governing the Thailand section of this research is grounded in the need for a deeper exploration of this grey or insufficiently plumbed terrain.

### *Objectives*

This study aims to:

1. Develop more clarity about the terms “consent” or “choice” by deconstructing structural factors that compel and keep women and girls in prostitution.
2. Enrich our understanding of the links between migration and trafficking by dissecting each, and exploring convergences and divergences.
3. Identify, define and document cumulative and related violations and their impact on women and girls in prostitution, at all stages of the trafficking and prostitution cycle.
4. Deconstruct sex and sexuality in prostitution and, especially, its impacts on women in prostitution.
5. Identify needs and concerns that women in prostitution want addressed, as critical to gender-responsive policy and programme interventions.

### *The Investigative Process*

This investigation is informed by the lived experience of 10 women and girls in prostitution operating at the lower end of the hierarchically-structured sex sector in the “hospitality industry” in Bangkok and Pattaya, Thailand (5); in debt bondage and slavery in snack bars and brothels in Japan (2), Singapore (1) and Australia (1)<sup>1</sup>; and in street prostitution in Pattaya (1). The data used in this study includes interviews undertaken between June 2000-01, as well as previous interview data of this author from 1991 and 1998 included for its depth of insight. The 10 respondents located in Bangkok and Pattaya, Thailand and Melbourne in Australia were women in prostitution. Additionally, we conducted 19 other interviews with 4 senior managers of NGOs working with women in prostitution, 11 staff and social workers of these organizations, 2 health personnel and 2 clients. These sites were selected for the following reasons:

- Bangkok and Pattaya are important centers for prostitution in Thailand drawing in masses of women from poorer areas of North and Northeast Thailand. All the interviewees working in Bangkok and Pattaya came from the Northeast – Chaiyaphum, Srisaketh, Pichit, Udon Thani and Udon Ratchathani.
- Women in prostitution in Bangkok and Pattaya often gravitate abroad to the entertainment

industries of Japan, Singapore, and Australia.

- Links with the staff of *Project Respect*, an Australian NGO working with women in prostitution, closely tracking the case of 40 Thai women trafficked into brothels in Melbourne, in the state of Victoria, Australia in 1998.

Non-governmental organizations working with women in prostitution in these areas facilitated the interviews with the women and their staff. These were the Rahab Ministries, Patpong, Bangkok; the Catholic Commission on Migration, Bangkok; The Fountain of Life Center, Pattaya (1991, 1998, 2001); and Project Respect, Melbourne, Australia (2001).

Because one purpose of this study was to identify and make visible the harm to women trafficked into prostitution, most especially their experiences of sex and sexuality, we used qualitative methods that were considered appropriate to this end. These included open-ended interviews and narrative accounts. The women selected were those willing to share their experiences, and included Thai women internally trafficked from provinces in Northeast Thailand into Bangkok and Pattaya, and from Thailand to Japan, Singapore and Australia. All the women interviewed knew they would be getting into prostitution, or were at least aware that they would be in an environment conducive to prostitution.

The study also drew on secondary data sources such as government documents, legislation, policies and programmes on trafficking and prostitution, reports of UN agencies, books, and articles in journals, research reports, and media accounts.

### ***Concerns***

As interviews concerned intimate experiences that included the sex and sexuality of prostitution, it was difficult to find women who were willing to speak. Moreover, even those women who agreed to be interviewed found response difficult at times, and either broke down or halted the interview temporarily. A single interview was on average conducted for 3-4 hours, over a period of 2-3 days, at times and venues determined by the women. Although the number of women interviewed is small, the depth of experience and insight that mark these interviews must be read together with data from other countries and regions that are part of this project, as well as existing research on the subject. The issues raised through these interviews, regardless of the sample size, are strong indicators of the experience of women in prostitution, intricately tied to the essence of the institution.

### ***Style***

The Thailand section of the study combines a narrative and analytical style. This was determined by the sample size, difficulties in quantifying experiences and perceptions, and the potential of this style to convey the richness and depth of experience and analysis.

### ***Structure***

The study commences with the experience of a Thai woman in prostitution in a snack bar in Japan. This is a springboard to:

- Analyze the constituents of a definition of trafficking.
- Examine the basis for trafficking and prostitution, going beyond their location purely within the context of migration, and developing more clarity about the terms “consent” and “choice” by deconstructing structural factors compelling and maintaining a woman or girl in prostitution.

- Provide a brief overview of the new markers of trafficking in Thailand.

This chapter uses interviews and secondary data to:

- Identify, define and document cumulative and related violations and their impact on women and girls in prostitution, at all stages of the trafficking and prostitution cycle.
- Deconstruct sex and sexuality in prostitution and its impacts on women in prostitution.
- Identify needs and concerns that women in prostitution want addressed, and that are critical to gender-responsive policy and programme interventions.

### **Portrait of Nu**

*“I am waiting to give birth to my baby. I hope it is not a girl. She must not suffer like me,” says 28 year-old Nu, seven months pregnant and living temporarily at an NGO shelter in Bangkok. In a cathartic outpouring of all that lay buried in the deep recesses of her being, she recounts her story thus....*

*I was abandoned by my parents and left to be brought up by distant relatives. I studied up to the primary level and did all the housework. When I reached puberty the son of the family I lived with began making advances towards me. He raped me several times, and began sending me out occasionally with clients for short periods, warning me never to tell his parents. I was already ‘spoilt’ and decided to run away and entertain clients on my own, instead of living under his control. I came to Bangkok at the age of 15, rented a room and began seeing clients independently. But getting enough and good clients was difficult, and operating independently without any protection was risky.*

*A hairdresser friend suggested that I find a well-paying job outside the country that also took care of my food and accommodation. She said that there were plenty of Thai women who worked in Japan and returned rich. She assured me that if I had no contacts or didn’t know how to go about things, she would introduce me to an agent who would help me secure work in Japan. I was willing and an appointment was fixed.*

*The agent interviewed me on my background. I told him that I had no relatives, that operating independently in Bangkok hardly got me good clients and money, and that I was worried that I wasn’t smart and good looking enough to go to Japan. He assured me that this was no problem at all, but that he would have to physically examine me before a final decision was made. He asked me to undress behind a makeshift screen, examined my body for ‘damage,’ and internally probed me with his bare hands to detect ‘disease.’ When he was satisfied that I was okay, he said I would be sent to Japan.*

*I was told that I would be working as a waitress in a bar earning approximately US\$200 per month, and that I was not bound to go out with clients, but could if I chose to earn more. Payment for the agents’ fees, my travel and other expenses were to be made only after I received my first wage*

*From the time the agent began working on my travel documents to the time of my departure – which was a little over two weeks - I was kept in a small hotel room and provided with food. The agent said this was necessary in preparation for my departure. I learnt later that I travelled to Japan on a tourist visa and someone else’s passport affixed with my photograph.*

*The day before my departure, I was told that I would be escorted from Bangkok airport by a Thai family – a man, his wife, their son and daughter. I was to pretend that they were my*

parents and siblings, and I was instructed by the agent to address them as mom and dad, and not to talk too much to them. I was specifically instructed not to talk to the Thai and Japanese immigration officials or to any authorities. My 'father' would take care of everything. I had to demonstrate to the agent how I would behave with my family, to assure him I had understood his instructions.

I was introduced to my 'family' at the airport. The man seemed to be a technician with Thai airways. I don't know if those were really his wife and children, but they were all fair and well dressed, and seemed to know what to do. My father kept my passport with him. The agent gave me 30,000 yen for my expenses before we left.

At Narita airport in Japan, my 'father' took care of the immigration procedures. After we collected our baggage, the woman went her own way with the boy and girl, and my 'father' led me away in the opposite direction, where we were met by a Japanese man with three young Thai women in his charge. My 'father' took the 30,000 yen from me, left me with the Japanese and disappeared.

We were brought by taxi to a karaoke bar in Shinjuku. The owner was a Japanese, married to a Thai mama-san. The bar owner said that he did not accept girls with big tattoos and body marks and asked us to go one at a time into a cubicle at the back of the bar. I was asked to undress and the owner began pressing and massaging various parts of my body. He examined me vaginally. This was a repeat of the same procedure as in Thailand, but here the owner even slept with me before hiring me. I really felt horrible – 'like a piece of flesh,' being inspected, bought and sold. I had to take a blood test for HIV/AIDS. I was the only one of the four women bought by the bar. The other girls were taken elsewhere. I later learnt that if women tested HIV positive or were found physically unpleasing, they were bought only by lower grade bars where earnings are less and conditions much worse.

As soon as the others left, the mama-san told me that I had to pay off a debt of over one million yen. My food, rent and other expenses would be added to this amount. We did not receive commissions on drinks, although we had to persuade clients to buy drinks. Clients paid the mama-san directly for taking the women out during the debt repayment period. The mama-san warned me not to try to run away as she would be very tough, and that all girls who tried escaping were brought back by the Yakuza and severely beaten or sold to other bars, accumulating double the debt. I was shocked and realized that the only way for me to pay off my debt was to go out with as many clients as possible. Tips from clients were the only liquid cash we earned. Sometimes a generous client helped women pay off their debts.

Our living quarters housed thirty girls between the ages 14-30. Most were already in prostitution in Thailand before they came to Japan, but like me did not know they would have to go out with clients, pay off a huge debt, and live in total confinement. A few however had no idea at all they were being sold into prostitution and had a much harder time. We were packed into a small room with a bath-cum toilet above the mama-san's house, far off from the bar. There was no radio or television and we were instructed to always talk softly or sleep when not at work. We were warned not to peep out of the window, as we would be arrested by the police who came on their daily rounds. It was very cold, but there was no heater or warm water. I was provided with a sheet, a blanket, a pillow, a pair of socks and had to sleep on the ground. We used to hold each other tight and sleep to keep warm. We generally worked through the night, slept in the morning and woke up in the early evening. We showered in batches to save time and water. We cooked and ate a routine meal of rice with raw, boiled, fried eggs or omelettes mixed with fish sauce and chillies and sometimes fried vegetables. I

*hated this food, but this was what we were given. It was also cheaper and that meant we could work our debts off faster. Other meals at the bar were ordered through the mama-san from an adjoining Thai restaurant, and added to our debts. We were never allowed direct communication with the restaurant workers or anyone else. Even our letters were censored.*

*By 6:30 p.m. we were ready to be escorted to the bar. Most of us consumed drugs or gulped down alcohol before leaving for work. Our regular supply came from the mama-san and was added to our debts. I used a drug called domikum which made me feel happy, funny and carefree. It helped me lose all inhibitions and I never felt intense pain when on it. Most of us didn't know Japanese and were forced to engage in body communication with clients. We had to sit very close to clients, touch and be touched by them, wear short dresses with spaghetti straps without any underwear, or walk around the bar stark naked to attract customers. I could only do this when high.*

*We could never refuse a client who wanted to go out with us, even if he was dirty, smelly or absolutely drunk. If a girl resisted being prostituted or accepting a specific client, she was badly beaten. Girls have been raped publicly in front of all of us by the Yakuza, especially called in to season them. This terrorizes other girls. Some girls were burnt with cigarette butts, and their nails hammered with bottles. If a girl was really unmanageable, she was sold by the owner to the Yakuza and we never saw or heard of her again, or she was sold to another bar with double the debt to repay. Also our mama-san would send us out with known sadistic clients when we disobeyed her, and girls came back very traumatized. Some behaved as if they were raving mad. In the one year that I stayed in the bar I never saw a girl being murdered but heard of incidents from friends. I decided it was better to obey the mama-san, and pay off my debt as fast as I could, than suffer this fate.*

*On an average, I entertained about three or four clients a night depending on the number of clients in the bar. Our clients were all Japanese between the ages 20-70, but the majority were over forty. They liked young girls. Often the younger men swore love to us, but we knew it was only lust. They would soon drop us. Most of my young clients were very insensitive and rough. The older men tended to be gentler. Most of our clients thought that we had come to Japan because Thai women love sex. There were two girls out of the thirty in our bar who said they didn't mind sex, provided it was not violent, but the rest of us drugged ourselves or drank to go through with it. We often got sadistic and kinky clients who were unknown to the bar owner – much more than I got in Bangkok. They would beat us before intercourse with sticks, belts or chains, till we bled. One of my clients wanted me to scream loud while beating me before sex, but he didn't draw blood. Some impotent men used fake penises. There were some clients who inserted coke bottles into the girls' vaginas; lit candles and dropped hot wax over our bodies and into the women's vaginas; stared into a woman's vagina and poured boiling water into it; gave the nipples electric shocks for a few seconds; or demanded oral or anal sex. If girls came back traumatized after going out with a sadistic client, and reacted hysterically or had nightmares, they would be beaten by the mama-san and told that they must have provoked the client to be violent. The mama-san never brought sadistic clients to book. If we cried on the job or resisted a client, we were beaten even more. That is why we routinely used drugs before sex, because then we didn't feel the pain that much.*

*We had to work even when we were ill or menstruating. We used to insert sponges during menstruation, to prevent clients from knowing that we were menstruating. The mama-san instructed us to tell our clients to use condoms. Some men would, but most not. As I could not speak Japanese I could not ask them to use condoms, so I would excite them and slip it on without them knowing. If clients refused to use condoms, we had to give in. The mama-san*

*never asked them to use one.*

*We used to have a pill a day supplied by the mama-san to avoid pregnancy. Of the thirty girls in the bar, while I was there, two got pregnant. They consumed some medicine and one of them aborted. The other got the girls to stamp her stomach till she aborted. Generally abortions were self-induced and facilitated by the girls in the bar. Letting the mama-san know that we were pregnant would get her angry, and seeking her help or going to a doctor would add to our debts. The abortifacient –Satreepenpark [liquid medicine used to regularize menstruation or to abort, and commonly available in Thailand] - was secretly supplied by Thai restaurant workers, and the women were reported to consume 5-6 bottles before they aborted. The women complained of fatigue, abdominal pain and bleeding after that.*

*We didn't know much about STDS/AIDS, except the names of these ailments. Those of us who visited STD clinics had seen pictures of STD affected body parts. We were only taken to the doctor when we were unable to stand. The owner was afraid that his illegal operations and our illegal status would come to light if we were exposed to outsiders. Those who were taken to doctors had stiff fees added to their debts.*

*Many of the girls complained either of a burning sensation or pain while urinating. We were told by the Thai restaurant owners that this was syphilis and were supplied with orange tablets at a price. We did not know what the drug was, but it made us feel better. Other health problems were stomachaches, fevers, injuries, nervousness, hysteria, emotional disturbances, mental breakdowns, including suicides. Some girls got drunk and urinated and vomited all over, and the mama-san increased their debts as a penalty. Others who took drugs got aggressive. We were under constant pressure and we often fought, screamed and fisted one another. There was also a lot of peer bonding as we had only one another to depend on.*

*One of the girls who was depressed and drunk once slashed her wrists with a broken bottle, but fortunately did not cut herself deeply. She was going crazy in controlled conditions, got few clients, and felt she would have to work in the bar forever to pay off her debts. She would often get hysterical. We would try and calm her with medication, get her food and use the little Japanese we knew to get her clients. A girl in the next building jumped out of the window and died instantly. The mama-san and the girls left the premises and we don't know what happened after that.*

*Sometimes the police would come in to check if there were overstayers [of visas]. The owner was mostly warned in advance by informants. Overstayers would be concealed, or heaped into a bus and hidden in a hotel close by in the mountains till the police left. At other times the bar would be closed for a day or two. There was also a time when only those with valid visas were produced before the police, and the police bribed.*

*Of the thirty women in the bar, four tried to escape, two successfully with the help of clients. The other two were caught and returned to the bar by the police only to be mercilessly beaten up by the owner. The mama-san told us that the girls who escaped would be tracked down and killed. Every single one of us dreamed about escaping. Several of us made plans but were too afraid to act on them.*

*When debts were paid off, the mama-san returned our passports, and we were free to either leave or stay for a month or two and earn something. Most women in our bar wanted to return to Thailand immediately, but had to stay back and earn some money to buy their return tickets and save a little before returning. Thai dealers in restaurants fixed our papers and return tickets for a fee. We were too afraid to go to the Thai embassy because we were told*

*that the embassy officials would cut our hair and throw us into jail, as we were illegal residents. Many girls who dared to leave the bar to work independently after repaying their debts, were arrested by the police, fined, imprisoned, forced to provide sexual favours to the police and deported. It's funny because we are punished for no fault of our own, but the bar owners, the corrupt police and even clients who abuse us badly are never punished.*

*I finished repaying my debt in ten months. I had some money from tips, but not at all enough to buy my return ticket. I worked for two months more in the bar. With the Japanese I picked up in a year, I then began to solicit clients in front of one of the motels close by. I had a boy friend whom I lived with. I realized he was not serious about me and was not going to marry me. I had no education, no job, no accommodation, was an illegal resident, and could not return to Thailand immediately without earning something reasonable. So I stayed on with my boy friend and went out with clients to save some money.*

*One day I happened to walk into a Thai restaurant and found a pamphlet that said, 'If you need a Thai friend to talk to, contact this number...I rang the number and found myself talking to a Japanese nun. I told her my story and requested her to help me get back to Thailand. She made the necessary arrangements and sent me to an NGO in Thailand. I returned with a saving of 30, 000 baht [US\$685] after five years of struggle.'*

*I asked Nu how she assessed her experience in prostitution, what she got out of it, and what she hated most.*

*Considering I had no formal education, I was able to earn some money and survive, and even buy myself some clothes. No one in the world can get over sleeping with one man after another who does not love you. These men want to come to us but don't love us or don't want to marry us. They only use us. The bar owners, recruiters or clients are never blamed for what they do to us. I don't trust the police or the embassy. In Japan I hated to be so controlled. I feel ashamed about being in prostitution, but I can't change my past. I haven't told my present boyfriend about Japan. I feel embarrassed when people look at me. I think they do so because they know I was a prostitute. I talk loud and rudely. I must take drugs even now, after being so long in prostitution. It makes me feel strong.*

Nu went briefly back into prostitution sometime after her return from Japan, even though she had begun vending noodles at a street corner. I asked her why.

*I had to earn more when sales were poor. It is very difficult to get off nightlife, when you have been in it for long. We get used to a non-domestic routine. Society does not accept us. Only women in prostitution won't look down on me, and can understand me.*

I asked Nu what she wants society to provide for women.

*Education and decently paying jobs for women so they won't get into prostitution, and the same for women in prostitution so that they can get out; drop in centres like the one I'm in now; penalizing the recruiters and mama-sans, not us. In Japan they tell us that if we go to the Thai embassy we will be put in jail. So we go neither to the embassy nor to the police for help. Women should know where to go and find help.*

### **Dissecting Trafficking, Understanding Consent**

Nu's is the prototypical experience of millions of women for whom prostitution and trafficking is a violation of their very being and personhood. Nu does not fit the stereotype of the "naïve and innocent, virgin girl" kidnapped for prostitution. Rather, a cumulative experience of structural deprivation, and a culture of violence and battle for survival beginning in babyhood and persisting

throughout her life, rendered her vulnerable to prostitution. These factors induced her to migrate, predisposing her to be manipulated, deceived and abused prior to prostitution, in the course of movement to Japan, and finally in prostitution. Her *decisions* at all points were products and manifestations of a structurally-mediated force of circumstances, common to although differing in degree for the other respondents in this study, and masses of women in prostitution.

These interacting socio-economic, political structures, processes and relationships underscored by class, caste, race, ethnicity, and which structure Nu's and other trafficked women's experiences are as follows. On the **supply side** these are:

- Gendered development processes that interact with patriarchal settings, thus marginalizing women from education and the job market, exacerbating gender inequities, and feminising poverty. Continued globalization and its unregulated market model of development increase this situation for women. A huge pool of socio-economically and emotionally vulnerable women and children are thrown into the circuit of facilitated job placement, migration and prostitution for their own and family survival.
- Acute economic, political and/or social disruption including the Asian economic crisis; the collapse of the Soviet Union and East European societies; and conditions of political instability, conflict, and human rights violations in which masses of women flee communities and countries such as in Burma/Myanmar.
- Social exclusion and hence heightened vulnerability of certain groups, such as ethnic minorities, tribal communities, undocumented migrant workers, stateless people and those in refugee camps. Ethnic minorities in Northern Thailand do not have citizenship or own land and thus lack a viable village economy. Most live in poverty and are unable to send their children to school, rendering them vulnerable to trafficking (ILO-IPEC, 1998).
- Dysfunctional families: death of parents and guardians, child abuse, marital discord and disintegration, families that trade their children as sexuality acquires a market value.
- Sexual abuse, often predisposing women and children to prostitution. In gendered social contexts where bodily purity and sexual integrity are key markers of ideal womanhood, rape and other forms of sexual abuse result in stigmatisation and often a complete loss of self-worth. Women who internalise these values often believe that prostitution is the only way to survive. Nine of the 10 women interviewed had been raped prior to prostitution, and five explicitly said that rape was a major determinant.
- A culture of consumerism and perversion of family values that manipulates family needs and desires. Often women and girls are also manipulated to fulfil family obligations, family needs, and family consumption, by showing gratitude to families, even if it means being sold or entering prostitution.
- Labour export policies of Thailand and other countries in the region.
- Opening of borders due to globalization, resulting in remote areas being exposed to rapid social change, trafficking and prostitution.

The following structural factors raise the **demand** for prostitution:

- The development of prostitution into a global sex industry with a more female-specific demand, circumscribed by gendered constructions of femininity.

- Impoverished and impoverishing political processes such as poor leadership and governance, economic and political tradeoffs between traffickers and public officials, the lack of political will to impose sanctions against traffickers, and unscrupulous public officials.
- Male-centered ideological assumptions of prostitution that assert that sex is a male right, and that sex and women's bodies are commodities functional to male biology, male sexual fantasy and hegemony.
- An impoverishment of culture and spirit manifested in an increasing alienation and commodification of life, human beings, and human relations. Alienated human beings, with fractured emotionalities and psyches, produce alienated sexualities. This raises the demand for alienated forms of sex, with the need for stimulation from newer and different sexual partners — black, brown, women from particular ethnic groups, children — all imaged as exotic with the promise of boundless sexual excitement.

Nu's *decisions*, and those of other women circumscribed by these structural factors are final straw *survival strategies* - not *real* choices – taken in the face of severe constraints and a lack or absence of alternatives. This reality must be characterized as such, and *not as choice*, which suggests selection from a range of possible options.

Nu's experience and those of the other respondents in the study fit the definition of trafficking in the Optional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, that supplements the UN Convention on Transnational Crime. Trafficking in this Protocol is defined as:

*...the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power, or of a position of vulnerability, or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation;*

*Exploitation shall include, a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;*

*The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation...shall be irrelevant where any of the...[fore-mentioned] means...have been used;*

*The recruitment, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered 'trafficking in persons,' even if it does not involve ...[any of the above listed means]*

*"Child" shall mean any person under eighteen years of age (Art. 3).*

This definition, the first internationally agreed upon definition of trafficking comprehensively captures the fundamental constituents of trafficking, within a human rights framework (Raymond, 2001).

- It defines trafficking as a crime against humanity, and more specifically against women and children, underscored by the intent to exploit and violate (Raymond, 2001).
- It deals with every stage of the trafficking cycle - oppressive realities that induce or make persons vulnerable to trafficking, the actual movement of persons by traffickers, and the institutions into which they trafficked. It targets all persons involved in trafficking and a spectrum of violations at every segment of the chain. It thus distinguishes itself from a narrow

view that focuses on trafficking primarily within the context of migration or violent movement.

While considering linkages between migration and trafficking, it is important to view trafficking facilitated by intermediaries as a sub-stream of the migration process that manipulates and abuses migration channels and mechanisms. Further as mentioned earlier, trafficking is characterized by the intent to exploit, and by criminal linkages, resulting in dependence, vulnerability and abuse.

- The definition addresses a wide range of means utilized for trafficking that include both overt and blatant forms of force and violence, as well as the more insidious and subtle inducements, that capitalize on an individual's vulnerability to achieve consent – often this being no choice or consent at all. It thus makes consent of the trafficked individual to any of the outlined means irrelevant (Raymond, 2001; D'Cunha, 2001).

In a majority of cases where deception and coercion is the motivating force, voluntary movement cannot be an overriding factor in the definition. Even if the trafficked person's choice to migrate or work illegally is real, the circumstances in which they are held without their consent, and their dignity and rights violated at different points in the chain, does not mean they consent to this exploitation (Budapest Report, 1999). Further even when women and girls enter prostitution knowingly, they may lack a complete understanding of what this actually involves and may be unaware of the consequences to their health and well being. They may lack full knowledge of work conditions or ground realities in destination countries, or hope that they may not suffer intense violation. Such lack of knowledge and false hope may be attributable to the romanticization of destination countries by the media and deception by intermediaries. At the other end of the spectrum, women may be completely deceived about the purpose and nature of work and end up in slavery, or may be recruited and moved without their consent.

Moreover the irrelevance of consent ensures that trafficked persons will not bear the onus of proof during criminal proceedings and will be provided assistance and protection, rather than viewed as criminals or partners in crime. It finally plugs a loophole that traffickers use to escape prosecution (Raymond, 2001).

- It addresses the gender dimensions of trafficking in persons by focusing on trafficked women and children and violations against them, including the sexual. By including the diverse means and purposes for trafficking, including for sexual exploitation, the definition addresses the more recent developments in trafficking.
- In recognizing that much trafficking is for prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation, the definition affirms that prostitution and trafficking cannot be separated (Raymond, 2001).

This definition and the other provisions of the Protocol<sup>2</sup> serve as guidelines for national legislation. With pressure from civil society for governments to include mandatory protection and assistance to trafficked victims and effective enforcement measures in new anti-trafficking legislation, such legislation could be a step towards preventing and combating trafficking from a human rights perspective. It is relevant to Thailand (as well as to other parts of the region and globe), where prostitution and trafficking have acquired alarming dimensions.<sup>3</sup>

### **New Markers of Trafficking and Prostitution in Thailand**

Prostitution and trafficking of persons in Thailand is far from new. What is new is that sexual exploitation has been developed into an industry with transnational and global linkages assuming the following manifestations:

***Appalling Scale of Prostitution and Cross-Border Sex Trafficking within, from, into and through Thailand, also Involving Newer Source and Destination Sites***

Prostitution and trafficking of Thai women and children internally, from the North and Northeast to Central and South Thailand, and across national boundaries, have assumed mass dimensions. Typically the source areas for traffic continue to be those with low capital concentration and less development, to more prosperous destinations. Formerly, West Asia, Germany and the Netherlands were traditional destinations for Thai women. However, during the mid-1980s and 1990s, newer sex sites to which Thai women have been trafficked are Japan and new industrial countries in Asia such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, Macau, and Malaysia. Additionally, Thai women are taken to the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Belgium and Switzerland (Asia Migrant Bulletin, 1995). During the last 15 years, Thailand itself has developed into a major destination for women trafficked into the Thai sex industry from poorer countries in the Mekong region such as Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia, as well as for women from Burma/Myanmar, Yunnan Province in Southwest China and, more recently, for women from countries of Eastern and Central Europe – Uzbekistan, Russia, and other States of the former Soviet Union (Bangkok Post, 11/2/2001). Thailand has become a regional hub through which persons from the Mekong countries are trafficked to Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan (ILO-IPEC, 1998: 3; UNICEF, EAPRO, 1995: 31).

Conservative estimates of the National Commission on Women's Affairs in 1994 suggest 150,000 to 200,000 women in prostitution in Thailand of which more than 20 per cent are children. This does not include women trafficked from and through Thailand. Since 1990, figures also suggest that 80,000 women and children have been trafficked into Thailand for prostitution, the highest numbers being from Burma/Myanmar, followed by Yunnan Province in China and Laos (ILO-IPEC, 1998: 3). Between 20,000 and 30,000 women and girls from Burma/Myanmar are trafficked primarily into Thai brothels. Ten thousand new recruits are added each year (Human Rights Watch, 1993). However, the total numbers are assumed to be considerably higher, since the majority of the 917,689 illegal immigrants into Thailand are from Myanmar (UNIFEM et al, 1998). In 1992, the Public Security Bureau in Yunnan, China, reported that more than 5000 girls leave the Province for Thailand each year. (UNICEF EAPRO, 1995: 36).

There are over 150,000 non-Japanese women in prostitution in Japan, over 30,000 who are Thai (Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, Asia Pacific, 1996: 33; Human Rights Watch, 2000). Of the estimated 4000 prostitutes in Auckland, New Zealand, 800 are Thai, and 400 are other Asian women (Coalition Against Trafficking In Women, Asia Pacific, 1996:35). There is a yearly traffic of around 300 Thai women into Australia by 10 smaller criminal syndicates (Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, 1996: 30).

***Growth and Diversity in the Purposes and Institutions into which Persons are Trafficked and the Forms and Mechanisms of Trafficking***

The industrial production of sex services requires an adequate and assured supply of women and children. The principal mechanism of supply is trafficking. Consequently a dominant purpose for which women and girls are trafficked is prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation, such as production of pornography. In 1998, the United Nations identified the sex trade as the fastest growing international trafficking business, moving an estimated four million illegal migrants a year (The Age, 1999). However, trafficking also occurs for other purposes: domestic service, labour in sweatshops and small factories, begging, sale of items (flowers, garlands), marriage, and adoption.

Traffickers employ a spectrum of methods to enslave women and children in prostitution. These are kidnapping, abduction, rape and sale, material inducements to parents, relatives and guardians to sell women family members, deceit in the form of promises of well-paying, legitimate jobs, better quality of life, residency status (Australia), or befriending, declarations of love, and fake marriages. Newer and more sophisticated methods of force and violence are being used to facilitate brokering, networks, and market linkages for the sexual exploitation and enslavement of women and children. These range from international marriage alliances and the mail-order bride system (D’Cunha, 1998a), to the use of Internet services — news groups and Web sites for the global exchange of sex-related services, advertisements of commercial sex tours and mail-order bride catalogues (Hughes, 1999).

Trafficking takes place over land, and by sea or air. Agents operating in the Mekong region typically use vehicles such as pick-up trucks or small buses as they usually transport several women and girls at a time. Boats are also used to bring women from Cambodia, Laos and Southern Burma into Thailand. Many Chinese hill-tribe girls from the Sipsong Panna autonomous region in Yunnan report travelling by foot or motorcycle over rugged terrain. Traffickers accommodate these women in rural areas until further transport is arranged to central “transit” houses in cities closer to Thailand’s border areas such as Mae Sai, Klong Yai, Mae Hong Song, Mae Sot, and Ranong. Other means of transportation used to bring women through Thailand into third countries, or to transport Thai women across Thai borders, are planes and ships (UNICEF, EAPRO, 1995).

Trafficking manipulates legal migration channels or blatantly defies these by utilizing a range of specific mechanisms. Recruitment agencies and intermediaries providing transfer services may be unregistered and hence illegal, or they may be constituted as legal entities taking cover as language schools and vocational institutions which are used as fronts for illegal activities. These manipulations are as follows:

***Regular process-irregular stay/work*** - This involves use of legal entry mechanisms with the intent of facilitating women’s stay in the host country unlawfully after visa expiry, or introducing them to criminal activity (pick pocketing, theft, drug sales/smuggling), illegal work or activity (unregistered sweat shops, prostitution) and/or illegal conditions of work, forced and bonded labour.

Legal entry mechanisms used are: a valid tourist, entertainer’s, student, business or transit visa, visa exemption privilege, visa obtained in transit countries, protection visa, and the open border policy. Tourist and student visas are well-documented mechanisms to traffic Thai women into prostitution in Japan and Australia (Human Rights Watch, 2000; The Age, 1999). Flights are also booked to the USA or other destinations with a layover in Japan. Transit visas thus provide the entry of Thai women into Japan (and into the sex industry), as they are easier to obtain than tourist visas (Human Rights Watch, 2000).

Bangkok police and anti-drug agents report that Uzbek and Russian women, trafficked into Thailand for prostitution, are also being used by international drug syndicates as drug carriers. Being Caucasian, they are less suspect than Asian or African women (Bangkok Post, 2001). Illegal syndicates in Thailand and New Zealand exploit the visa exemption privilege to traffic Thai women into prostitution in New Zealand. This privilege permits Thais to enter and stay in New Zealand for 90 days without a visa (The Nation, 1999). Traffickers use New Zealand to obtain visas, and as a departure point, for Thai women trafficked to Japan, Australia and Cyprus (Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, Asia Pacific, 1996: 35). Trafficking networks also utilize protection visas, granted by Australia to refugees enabling them to work. In the well-

publicized case of 40 Thai women trafficked for prostitution into illegal brothels in Australia in 1998, the trafficker is reported to have brought them in on tourist visas, and then applied for protection visas through a migration agent, for the women to secure working visas. 1997-2001 Australian protection visa data, listing applicants from Southeast Asia, demonstrates that Thailand and Laos are the only two countries from which the number of women applicants outstrips men. For Thailand the figures are: 179 women and 71 men (1997-1998); 138 women and 55 men (1998-1999); 116 women and 23 men (1999-2000); and 54 women and 7 men (2000-2001). This gives credence to the concern that traffickers are exploiting protection visas. (Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Australia, 1998-2001).

Open transit points between Thailand and its neighbours, where no border crossing permits are demanded, are being advantageously used by traffickers. From Poipet and the Island of Koh Kong in Cambodia, women and children are trafficked into the Thai areas of Aranyaprathet town and Klong Yai, Trat Province. Bokeo Province in Laos, with four out of its five districts situated on the banks of the Mekong, is another open gateway for trafficked women and children from Laos into the Thai province of Chiengrai and the Shan state of Burma (UNICEF, EAPRO, 1995).

***Irregular process-irregular stay/work*** - This may include presenting false, stolen or counterfeited travel documents, using fictitious marriages to mask irregular transfer operations, training and advice to women to make fraudulent claims before authorities, arranging official or unofficial transportation and harbouring facilities, facilitating illegal border crossings by avoiding border controls, illegal work, and violating work conditions.

Thai women are trafficked with the passports of other nationalities. Prior to June 1993, Malaysian passport holders did not need visas to enter Japan, and many agents sent Thai women to Japan via Malaysia, changing their Thai passports en route (Meking Study Center and IOM, 1997). Similarly Thai women also enter Japan on Singapore passports, as Singapore passport holders do not require visas to enter Japan (Human Rights Watch, 2000). Thai women are trafficked into Japan and Australia with stolen passports in which their photographs are substituted under other names. The use of forged passports and visas is very common (Interviews with Thai women trafficked to Japan 1991, 2001; Human Rights Watch, 2000; Payne, 1997). This obviously occurs as a result of collusion between traffickers and airline staff, border and immigration officers, and police authorities. On February 18 and 19, 1991, the Crime Suppression Division Police arrested 15 employees of Thai Airways International (THAI) on charges of falsifying documents and procuring women for prostitution abroad. The arrested workers had used their status to easily obtain visas from embassies for women whom they claimed in the false documents to be their wives or daughters. Thai employees have taken advantage of the system that issues confirmation papers to assist its employees to obtain visas. The THAI employees arrested had allegedly replaced the pictures in the passports of their wives and daughters with those of the trafficked women (Bangkok Post, 2/20/1991; Bangkok Post 8/17/1991).

Women and children are also moved across borders by bypassing official channels. Asians, including many Thais, have been taken into Japan by boat, bypassing border controls and immigration check points (Mekong Study Center, 1998). Similarly, women and children from Laos, Cambodia and Burma have been trafficked into Thailand through mountain and forest passes, and across the Mekong River by boat, without the knowledge of border patrols (UNICEF, EAPRO, 1995).

***Growth and Diversification in Kinds of Sex “Services” and Sex Establishments; Changes in Profiles of Trafficked and Prostituted Persons; Development of Ingenious and Hi-tech Marketing Strategies***

The industrialization of sex “services” in Thailand with global linkages is marked by increasing diversification, sophistication and specialization of its “product,” markets and marketing strategies. Buyers are offered a vast array of “services” through a range of hierarchically structured establishments that employ *different* women and children of *varying* ages and from *diverse* social contexts. The industry caters to a wide spectrum of client demand in specialized locales and has enticingly designed marketing strategies to attract prospective buyers. An estimated 4.6 million Thai men regularly, and 500,000 foreign tourists annually, use Thai women and children in prostitution (Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, Asia Pacific, 1996: 36).

Institutional arrangements for prostitution include street operations, brothel prostitution, massage parlours, ago-go bars, beer bars, karaoke bars, pornography shops, strip theatres, sex telephone clubs, escort services, live sex show bars, and internet services. Services include routine heterosexual sex, same-sex prostitution, ago-go, or lap dancing where the women dance half or fully naked on a dais, or where the dancer sits on a man’s lap gyrating, twisting and explicitly stimulating him, high-priced kinky acts and live sex shows. These latter events include specialized and hazardous acts for public entertainment such as the genital insertion and ejection of razor blades, glass bottles, darts, cigarettes, snakes, and birds through the control of vaginal and abdominal muscles; public displays of sex with animals; and double act heterosexual and homosexual intercourse. With the growth of the industry, the diversification of sex services and, consequently, the bizarreness is likely to increase, thus intensifying the violation of women.

A much more advanced technology that is being used to sell live sex shows over the internet is live video conferencing, in which live audios and videos are transmitted from video recorder to computer. Real time communication is possible, so the individual can personally watch or direct live sex shows, while viewing it on the computer. There have been several documented cases in which children have been sexually abused through live videoconferencing (Hughes, 1999).<sup>4</sup>

As part of the global sex industry, sexual entertainment is at one level arranged in different venues in any part of the globe, with Thai women and children trafficked across borders and foreign and Thai clients able to travel to sexual destinations in Thailand with ease (D’Cunha, 1998a). At another level, with Internet technology, the Thai or foreign client may be in one continent while directing and watching a live strip show, or the sexual abuse of a Thai child or woman in another continent. The demand for clean and safe sex, the belief that sexual intercourse with a virgin girl enhances potency and slows down the aging process, the stimulation and gratification caused by innocence, small bodies, and small tight vaginas, have resulted in younger children being drawn into the industry (UNICEF, EAPRO, 1995).

With an emphasis on “*differentness, exotica and mystery,*” women of diverse ethnic groups and nationalities, as well as young children, are being incorporated into the sex industry (D’Cunha, 1998a). Thai and Japanese men demand fair hill-tribe girls from Thailand, or fairer girls from the Northeast of Thailand or Burma/Myanmar; *farangs* prefer browner women from North Thailand; and Chinese buyers demand Chinese women from the region (UNICEF, EAPRO, 1995).

Apart from glossy brochures, leaflets, explicit and implicit advertisements in tourist guide-books, the Internet has become the latest and the most highly used site for the promotion of such exploitation. Agents offer catalogues of mail order brides with girls as young as 13, and advertise commercial sex tours. Men exchange information on where and how to find women and children in prostitution, hotel prices, telephone numbers, taxi fares, cost of alcohol, the sex acts that can be bought and the price of each act, descriptions of the women’s appearances, performance, ratings of their compliance to men’s wishes and pornographic details of the sexual encounter. The women

are completely objectified and evaluated on everything from skin colour to presence of scars and firmness of their flesh. Such a rapid electronic medium enables men, in a short time and inexpensively, to have enough information to locate and abuse the woman who is described (Hughes, 1999).

The oldest forum on the Internet for promoting the sexual exploitation of women is the newsgroup, alt.sex.services, renamed alt.sex.prostitution. Postings from this newsgroup are archived into a World Wide Web site called the World Sex Guide, providing sex-related information about every country worldwide. The most voluminous coverage is on Bangkok, Thailand. The men provide information on everything from currency exchange rates to how to run a bar tab, to names, addresses and phone numbers of hotels where men will feel comfortable. All the city sections and their specialities are listed and described – massage parlours, discos, escort services, lady houses, Japanese clubs, and blowjob bars.

Web pages with colour photographs promote special shows in Bangkok where men can pay to see women smoking with their vaginas, or razor blade shows in which a woman dances and pulls out two dozen razor blades connected by a string from her vagina. At another Web site, a man describes a show in Bangkok in which a woman dances with two pythons and inserts the head of one into her vagina (Anonymous, 15 Jan.1995). Some men posting information on the alt.sex.prostitution newsgroup are quite blatant about their misogyny and sadism. Others describe “*bad experiences*” in which they didn’t get their money’s worth, or the woman didn’t keep up the act of enjoying the session. Her pain, disgust, disorientation and disassociation showed.

The men exchange information on child prostitution. One man says, “*In Bangkok there is child prostitution. I have been offered 9-year olds, and 14 year-olds are not uncommon.*” His solution: “*If child prostitution turns you off, be careful when you select your girl*” (Anonymous Bangkok, date unknown). On this newsgroup, the men tell each other that they can exploit women and girls for sadistic practices.

*“The hotel girls are usually younger than most other ‘available’ girls in Bangkok, 14-15 year-olds being rather common. They are in fact ‘owned’ by the hotel, which means that you can treat them more or less any way you want – and many men do. Hotels like this should be like paradise for those of us who are into S& M (Sadomasochism)”* (Anonymous, Bangkok, Date Unknown).

### **High Levels of Organization and Profitability**

As in the case of every multinational enterprise, the sex industry in Thailand with its global connections is well organized and connected. It has backward and forward, vertical and horizontal linkages among segments of the trafficking-prostitution chain, which include local and international crime syndicates. It has contacts with other local or international crime groups, centres of political power, and law enforcement personnel who openly or tacitly collude with trafficking networks. It is also linked with the legitimate corporate sector.

For example, trafficking of Thai women to Japan involves a range of actors: the initial recruiter who contacts the woman; the agent in Thailand who pays the recruiter, arranges travel documents and holds the women till they are ready to leave; escorts who accompany women to Japan, often through other countries like Singapore, Malaysia or South Korea; the brokers who meet the women on arrival and pay the agent for delivering them; and the owners and managers of sex establishments (either the Yakuza or others in league with them) who pay large sums of money to the brokers for the acquisition of the women. In some cases the networks also rely on the cooperation of public officials/employees who prepare false documents and/or turn a blind eye

to violations apparently in return for bribes or other favors (Human Rights Watch, 2000; Interviews with women trafficked to Japan, 2001).

Sex trafficking is closely linked to crime networks involving drug and gun running, car thefts, burglaries, illegal hiring of illegal migrants, corruption, immigration criminality, visa and passport counterfeiting and money laundering (Budapest Report, 1999). According to Pol Col Chatree, Chief of the Narcotics Suppression Division, it is believed that Nigerian and Chinese drug syndicates are not only pushing East European women into prostitution in Thailand, but also into the drug business as well. Asian and African drug cartels have long used Thailand as a transit and storage point before sending drugs out into the world market. Thailand is also used to launder money from illegal businesses, especially the drug trade (Bangkok Post, 11/2/2001).

The expansion and consolidation of the sex industry in Thailand with its transnational linkages has been aided by its incorporation and contacts with legitimate branches of the corporate sector — the tourist, entertainment and leisure industry, the travel and transport industry, underground narcotics and organized crime. For example, organized sexual entertainment has been an integral part of tourism that has developed as an industry in Thailand since the 1970s and was the largest source of foreign exchange in the 1980s. Promotion strategies sold the promise of escape not just to breathtaking landscapes, but also emphasized the Thai feminine mystique — the exotic and sexual lure of Thai women as a significant comparative advantage of the Thai tourist industry (UNICEF, EAPRO, 1995). Corporate rest and recreation trips to Bangkok – a.k.a sex tours — were offered as performance incentives and rewards to rejuvenate corporate warriors. In 1990 and in 1991, the number of tourist arrivals reached 5.3 and 5.1 million respectively, of whom more than 65 per cent were unaccompanied males (Boonchalaksi and Guest, 1994: 15). A German survey published by the German Health Ministry in 1995 revealed that in 1990 about 30 per cent or 50,000 of the German tourists who came to Thailand came only for sexual entertainment (German Health Ministry, 1995).

As in other countries, the sex industry in Thailand shows a tendency to grow rather than contract. The internal, regional and trans-regional movement of labour and capital that is relatively unhindered by both overt and covert institutional structures sustains the industry. It results in the generation of massive profit margins reportedly equalling those in the arms and narcotics trade. A recent study on public policy in Thailand conducted by the Chulalongkorn University Political Economy Center, established that for the period 1993-95, prostitution was the largest of the underground businesses, the others being drug trafficking, arms trading, contraband in diesel oil, trafficking in human labor and gambling. It estimated that these underground businesses generated an estimated minimum income of at least US \$33 to 44 billion a year, representing some 15 to 18 per cent of the country's GDP, and that prostitution accounted for about two-thirds of the country's illegal income. Annual income from prostitution was between 450 and 540 billion baht (US\$ 22.5 and 27 billion), or about 10-14 per cent of the country's GDP. (Lim, 1998: 10).

This large-scale accumulation of capital takes place through a progressive appropriation and decimation of women's and children's bodies, sexualities and entire beings.

### **The Trafficking-Prostitution Experience: Cumulative Harm and Violence**

From the instant women and children are procured for prostitution, especially in more controlled institutions, they are *seasoned*. Seasoning includes practices like changing the individual's name, denial of money for travel, taking away travel documents, threats by brothel/bar owners to report the illegal status of recalcitrant women to the police, turning women over to gangsters, or selling them again at double the debt. These practices are coupled with harsher methods — verbal abuse, isolation, starvation, drugging, beatings, burns with cigarette butts, knife wounds, putting

the woman out in the snow, and gang rape. These methods of seasoning break a woman's will, distance her from her previous life and impose a new ethos on her (Interviews with Thai Women in Prostitution, 1991, 1998, 2001). Seasoning is a well- institutionalized mechanism of control, ensuring perfect obedience and enslavement. It subjects women to forced identification with and subordination to the brothel management or to pimps, and it is one of the worst forms of dehumanization, as it means a complete loss of freedom. The woman begins to live only for the present realizing that she has no control over her economic, emotional, physical and sexual life (D'Cunha, 1991).

Trafficked women and children are first confronted by the immediate terror of kidnapping, deceit and abuse. They try to make sense of what is happening and figure out a means of escape, but all the external points of reference for maintaining identities are cut off. They find they cannot escape. They are physically confined and concealed, and a strict vigil is maintained over their interactions and movements. One brothel in Ranong in the south of Thailand, from which women and girls were rescued on June 10, 1992, was surrounded by barbed wire and an electrified fence (UNICEF, EAPRO, 1995). In the 1998 trafficking case of Thai women to Melbourne, Australia, some of them had attempted climbing out of a window and scaling down an overhanging tree. The window was sealed and the tree chopped down (The Age, 9/5/1999). In 1984, four young girls were trafficked into a brothel in Phuket, in South Thailand, and chained to their beds to prevent them from escaping. In a fire that gutted the building, all four were charred to death in chains.<sup>5</sup> In the case of transnational trafficking, the appropriation of travel documents by traffickers, as well as the women's illegal status, make escape difficult as they fear arrest, imprisonment and torture. The management threatens women with physical and mental torture or even death if they try to escape (Interviews with Thai women trafficked to Japan, 1991, 2001). In a raid on the aforementioned Ranong brothel, the police found 33 Burmese women and girls enslaved for an average of 3 years. Three of them had fainted from a brutal beating with coat hangers after a failed attempt to escape (UNICEF, EAPRO, 1995).

Confinement is a regular practice especially for minors and new recruits. Owners of sex establishments allow women out unescorted only when they are seasoned, are much older, and when their earning potential has decreased, or when the purchase amount together with substantive profits has been recovered. Women in Japan and Singapore report being freed after repayment of debts and when clients buy them out (Interviews with Thai Women Trafficked to Japan and Singapore, 1991, 2001).

Once in prostitution a woman realizes that she has no control over the choice of client, the pace or price of work, or the nature of the sexual activity. She is the shared property of any male who can pay a price for sex and for her body. Interviews with all the Thai women (1991, 2001) reveal that the client either states his preference for a particular woman in the bar or is directed by the owner/manager to women who are unengaged. Thiem, trafficked from a Pattaya bar into prostitution in Singapore, reported: *"Our owner in Singapore would receive orders over the phone. He would take two or three girls that fitted the client's demand, by car to the hotel. We would be scrutinized by the client who would make his choice"* (Interview with Thiem, 2001). The women have to entertain clients who are physically unattractive, dirty, drunk, diseased or violent. Failure to do so incurs verbal or physical abuse from the brothel keeper. A 17 year-old rescued along with 23 others from a brothel in Nakhon Pathom in June 1994 said if she refused to sleep with a client, the brothel owner would burn her with cigarettes on her genitals, mouth and other parts of her body (The Nation, 10/8/95).

All the women said they had no control over the number of clients they were made to service. In Australia, the brothel was a sex factory with a woman forced to take a minimum of 500 clients

without payment, to repay a debt of A\$ 40,000 that could be unilaterally increased. After repayment, women would be paid A\$ 40-50 per client (The Age 11/5/1999; Maltzahn, 2001). Living in conditions of complete bondage, these women were made to work 12 hours a day, 7 days a week to meet the target so that they could start earning money (The Age 21/8/1999). Police admitted at least three Melbourne brothels used *contract girls* who had to sleep with 700 clients each, without payment, to meet their contract terms. Industry figures name more than a dozen Sydney brothels participating in this trade (The Age; 6/6/2001). Also, in Japan and Singapore, the women were driven to service as many clients as possible to repay debts faster. The average was 3-4 clients a night. Uzbek and Russian women in Thailand often are made to entertain 5 customers a night to clear debts (Bangkok Post, 11/2/2001). In Thai brothels the average is 7 clients a day on weekdays, and nearly twice as many on weekends (UNICEF, EAPRO, 1995). Some women are taken out for a night by a client and sometimes, without prior agreement, he is joined by several of his friends.

Even in Thai bars in the entertainment sector that are supposedly less restrictive than Thai brothels, several subtle and overt pressures operate to compel women to take clients out. Choy, who works in an ago-go bar in Pattaya, reported: *“I must take a minimum of 6 clients out per month, failing which my wages are cut. Also tour guides and agencies bring clients to the bars, and the rule is to go out with the client to ensure better business and keep the tour agencies happy. We risk being fired if we don’t”* (Interviews with Thai women in 1991, 1998, 2001). The condition of contract women in Australia, and the high debts paid by the women trafficked to Japan and Singapore under long term arrangements, bind them into dependency and enhance their vulnerability to prostitution racketeers.

Further, the physical or mental state of the women is of no consequence to the owners. They are forced to take clients even when ill, depressed, menstruating or pregnant. Choy states:

*“I was once badly injured by a client and was bleeding from the vagina. The doctor asked me to take a week’s rest. I could not afford to lose so much money, as our wages are cut if we stay at home when ill. I had to work despite the pain, soreness and bleeding, knowing too that this increased chances of infection.”*

Another woman, Tik, who was employed in a sex show establishment in Pattaya, reported: *“I once cut myself while drawing razors out from my vagina. I was bleeding and in pain. Apart from making me pay the medical bill, my owner said he would cut my wages if I didn’t report to work the next day. I reported ill”* (Interview with Tik, 2001). Patricia Green, Director of the Rahab Ministries in Bangkok, states: *“I’ve interviewed girls who were knocked unconscious for refusing to work while menstruating.”* In a raid and rescue of 148 Burmese women and girls from three brothels in Ranong on the 14<sup>th</sup> July 1993, the police found two pregnant women who were being forced to entertain clients. One of the women was near death after being severely beaten by the owner for refusing sex with clients, as she was three months pregnant (UNICEF, EAPRO, 1992).

Failure to conform to the imperatives of the establishment meets with violence. *“We were repeatedly instructed not to converse with clients,”* reports Nu. *“One of the girls told the client that she did not like being in prostitution, and that she wanted to go home. The client spoke to the mama-san. The girl was badly beaten and left out in the cold”* (Interview with Nu trafficked to Japan, 2001). On rescuing 23 girls from a brothel in Nakhon Pathom in June 1994, the police learned that the owner had battered to death one of the women – a new recruit - on discovering that she was pregnant. She was beaten and her belly battered against a big earthen jar. She was then flung against the wall. She died soon after. One of the girls was caught eating cucumber provided by the cook outside meal times. Her hands were put on the chopping block and one of her fingers cut off (The Nation, 10/8/95).

The sexual “service” provided in prostitution is not just routine sex, but perverted, violent sex that men are unable, or choose not, to engage in with a wife or girlfriend. These “services” include sex between a single client and several women, slashing the woman with razor blades, strapping women to bedposts and lashing them till they have welts on their bodies, biting breasts violently, making the woman whip the client till he bleeds, or making her urinate or defecate on him (Interviews with Mem and Nu trafficked to Japan, 1991, 2001 respectively). Choy had a client who inserted an iron rod into her vagina. She bled profusely, and suffered vaginal inflammation, bleeding and pain for over ten days. The client insisted it was menstrual blood and complained against her to the owner. The owner believed Choy but did nothing to the man (2001). Nong states: “*A client once kept ducking my head into a bucket of water and was gratified when I choked and sputtered. Once in the room with the client, there was little chance to escape*” (Interview with Nong, 1991).

Women in prostitution are often raped “on the job,” so to speak, or are forced to go beyond the terms of the agreement with the client. Nine of the women said they had been raped in prostitution multiple times. Others reported that an agreement to service a single client resulted in being gang-raped by several of his friends, non-payment or being paid less than the agreed-upon amount, demands for oral or other forms of sex when the negotiations had been for straight sex (Interviews with Thai women trafficked to Japan and Singapore, 1991, 2001). Dah who operates on the street in Pattaya, and Nu and who prostituted on the streets of Bangkok before going to Japan, reported being dragged into vehicles and gang-raped, at least four or five times, while soliciting (Interviews, 2001). None of the women sought any kind of help or reported the rapes to the police, knowing that they would be told *they asked for it*.

Common responses of the women to clients are disgust, fear, resentment, indifference, feigning cheerfulness and enjoyment of sex, play-acting and pandering to clients, jeering at clients who fall prey to their pretences, and perceptions of the client as a source of income. Some women are also attracted to and fall in love with clients. “*The girls in prostitution I’ve talked with, have distorted notions of sex,*” states Patricia Green. “*They see intercourse as disgusting, and associated with deception, pain and violence. Few equate sexual activity with loving and caring and view it simply as a means of economic exchange.*” Women experience humiliation in being treated like *pieces of flesh* (Nu) and domination and powerlessness. “*Even when you knowingly enter prostitution, or don’t have violent clients regularly, it is very difficult to get used to your body being touched and prodded by a series of strange men each day. Also constantly having penetrative sex can be uncomfortable and painful. So we have to devise our own ways to cope with it,*” states Thiem (2001).

Dissociation from the client and the sexual act is a very common survival technique used by women in prostitution. “*Before each sexual encounter, I am seized with the fear of client violence or of contracting disease. I block these thoughts out and think of the hardship of my family, especially my mother who is a nervous wreck, and the income needed to sustain them,*” says Choy, “*or the day I meet my savings target and return home,*” says Mon (2001, 1998). Other methods of survival are use of alcohol and drugs, avoidance of deep kissing, and trying to avoid penetrative and oral sex. Sr. Supaporn of the Fountain of Life Center, Pattaya, adds that “*Some of the girls insist on condom use, or develop ways of slipping on the condom without the client’s knowledge, not just as a disease or pregnancy prevention mechanism, but to avoid skin contact. They thus ensure physical and emotional detachment and a preservation of their integrity*” (Interview, 2001). Dah confirms that “*When a condom breaks, I rush to clean myself, not only to protect myself against disease and pregnancy, but because I feel I have become dirty physically and morally.*”

Sr. Supaporn states:

*“Other coping mechanisms are dressing well to feel good and more presentable than more simply dressed women, bragging about the number of clients and the compliments received, dreaming about what they will do with the money earned, trying to forget about the pain. The hardened woman who tries to prove that she enjoys prostitution, and is the toughest in the street is no less a victim. Her reactions are a defence and survival mechanism, a crutch to her ego and self worth” (2001).*

*“Girls often become desensitised,” reports Patricia Green. “They say things like ‘I no longer care what happens to me, or nothing worse can happen to me now.’ They talk only about what happens to others. Many girls who are out of prostitution are often unable to recall their life in prostitution, or particular events at that time” (2001).*

### **Consequences to Women’s Health and Well-Being**

The long hours, lack of rest, inadequate food, poor sanitation, and the sadism and violence in the life of women and children in prostitution predispose them to numerous health and well-being problems. They suffer from pulmonary tuberculosis, anaemia, hepatitis-B, and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) such as chronic syphilis, gonorrhoea, and general herpes; gynaecological ailments like pelvic inflammatory disease, inflammation of the uterus, leucorrhoea, vaginal inflammation and irritation, vaginal bleeding caused by soreness and multiple sex partners, and cervical cancer; physical injuries such as cuts, bruises, orthopaedic injuries and, in more extreme cases, severance of body parts and murder (Interviews with Thai women in prostitution, 1991, 2001; and with Sr. Supaporn, Fountain of Life Center and Khun Anong, Pattaya Rak Medical Center; 2001).

In the case of prostituted children, rectal fissures, lesions, poor sphincter control, lacerated and ruptured vaginas and uteruses, perforated anal and vaginal walls, peritonitis, venereal disease, lacerated and mutilated bodies, chronic choking from gonorrhoeal tonsillitis, asphyxiation and death are problems largely related to adult sexual contacts with children. Little girls who become pregnant are often unable to sustain a pregnancy or childbirth. They struggle in labour for several days and die (D’Cunha 1991). Young girls may also be particularly at risk for HIV infection. Preliminary medical research also suggests that the younger the girl, the thinner the mucous membrane of the genital tract compared to adult women. The membrane is thus a less efficient barrier to viruses, and in producing mucous which has an immune function (UNDP, undated).

Women’s access to health services is poor because of their undocumented status and the status of the prostitution establishment, the pressures of engaging in constant sexual activity, the disparaging attitudes of medical personnel, and the women’s lack of health consciousness. They treat themselves or go to “quacks.” Those who enjoy greater freedom go to cheaper medical centres, private practitioners, or government hospitals. Women routinely take pills provided by the establishment, or bought over the counter, to suppress menstruation and avoid pregnancy, so that they can toil continuously, repay debts faster, save, and avoid the owners’ wrath. They often undergo unsafe and self-induced abortions, by using abortifacients or by stamping on and punching their stomachs (Interviews with Thai Women Trafficked to Japan, 1991, 1998, 2001). Thiem reports: *“I consumed some medicine which took 14 hours to cause an incomplete abortion. I finally went to a clinic, where the doctor used the suction. I began working three days after the abortion and was hospitalised within a fortnight with severe abdominal pain. The doctor said my uterus was inflamed” (2001).* Sr. Supaporn reports: *“Several of the women suffer acute haemorrhaging after abortions, and I know of one woman who died after trying to abort in the fifth month of pregnancy” (2001).*

The level of awareness of STDs and AIDS is superficial. Women know they can die of AIDS and that one way to protect themselves is to insist on condom use by clients, or to use female condoms. Most men, barring some *farangs*, do not use condoms, as they insist it diminishes sexual pleasure. The women, even those in the hospitality sector, say they have little bargaining power to ensure condom use, and the establishment owners do not make it mandatory for clients. There is a high level of breakage due to poor quality and improper use. Female condoms are seldom used because they are uncomfortable, inconvenient and expensive (Interviews with Thai Women in Prostitution 1991, 1998, 2001).

Despite violations rendering women vulnerable to HIV infection, they also suffer other abuses related to their actual or perceived HIV status. Some of these are:

- Stigmatization of women and children with HIV infection or full blown AIDS (Interviews with Sr. Supaporn, Fountain of Life Center; Patricia Green, Rahab Ministries; Sr. Meg Gallagher, The Catholic Commission on Migration, 2001)
- Mandatory HIV testing and lack of informed consent, which is both intrusive and an ineffective means of reducing the spread of infection (Interviews with Thai Women in Prostitution, 1991, 2001; Human Rights Watch, Global Report on Women's Human Rights, 1995)
- Mandatory health testing that is *de facto* discrimination against women and children in prostitution. The official policy for mandatory testing is to sanitize women for clients, and to ensure public health. Yet the customers, owners, and controllers of the sex establishments are not subjected to mandatory screening, although male-to-female transmission is much higher than female-to-male transmission (Human Rights Watch, Global Report on Women's Human Rights, 1995)
- Reluctance to provide test results to patients even when the latter have requested this information (Interviews with Thai women Trafficked to Japan, 1991, 2001; Human Rights Watch, 1993)
- Inadequate, or absence of, pre/post test counselling (Interviews with Thai Women in Prostitution, 1991, 1998, 2001; Patricia Greene, Rahab Ministries; Sr. Meg Gallagher, The Catholic Commission on Migration, 2001)
- Different medical confidentiality standards for men and women. In Thailand, for instance, standards are different for women/children in prostitution than for men selected for National Sentinel Surveillance of HIV/AIDS, tested at clinics for STDs. Under the AIDS Plan, men are tested on a confidential basis, providing the highest assurance of confidentiality, but the women's results are revealed to brothel owners and pimps. (Human Rights Watch, Global Report on Women's Human Rights, 1995)
- The absence of confidentiality, and easy access of public officials to the women's records, has resulted in brothel keepers' knowledge of test results. They then exploit this knowledge, expelling those found infected, and maximize profit by bringing in "clean girls" and charging higher prices for them. The ordeal of Burmese women and girls expelled from Thai brothels when they tested HIV positive, continues upon their arrival on the Burmese side of the border. They are punished by the Burmese government for unauthorized emigration and involvement in prostitution, and for contracting HIV/AIDS (Human Rights Watch, 1993).

Women and children in prostitution also suffer severe psychological trauma manifested in stress, depression, excessive emotional attachment, attention-seeking behaviours and disorientation. Impaired learning ability, short attention and memory spans, forgetfulness and lack of

concentration while performing even simple tasks, the tendency to escape into sleep or fantasy, lack of motivation to consider alternatives, make decisions, or initiate efforts to plan a future even though they wanted to study and work, are some manifestations of this disorientation. There appears to be a strong present-time orientation and little sense of past or future, which could be a form of escapism and a result of severe trauma (Interview with Patricia Green, 2001).

Psychological disturbance also assumes the forms of dreams, hysteria and nightmares about being resold, attacked and chased, insomnia, lack of sanity, fear and revulsion of men and the sex act, fear of violence, fear of returning home without money and of being beaten and resold, fear of new caregivers and authority figures, distrust and suspicion of people, difficulties in confiding, aggression, feelings of anger towards those who tricked, abused and sold them and a strong desire to punish them, destructiveness and even suicide (Interviews with Thai women in Prostitution, 1991, 1998, 2001; Sr. Supaporn, Fountain of Life Center; Sr. Meg Gallagher, Catholic Commission for Migration; Patricia Greene and staff, Rahab Ministries, 2001). An obsession with physical appearance, beauty aids, clothes and other accessories; constant pandering to men and the yearning for male reassurance, love and stable marriages; routine shifting of identities from being “straight respectable mothers” by day, to clandestine prostituted women in sex establishments by night, are constant pressures that negatively impact the health and well-being of many women in prostitution (Interviews with Thai women in Prostitution; 1991, 1998, 2001; Sr. Supaporn, Fountain of Life Center; Sr. Meg Gallagher, Catholic Commission for Migration; Patricia Greene and staff, Rahab Ministries, 2001).

Patricia Green reports that for children, “Values and family relationships are confused, and most children have strong feelings of denial and inner conflict about their families. They cannot reconcile parental love with being sold by parents into hell.” A frequent refrain is: “If my parents loved me how could they have sold me into this life. These girls have lost their childhood, have been forced into an adult life, have lost their innocence, their body, their sense of self — lost everything and have no future.” As Ah Sor whom Greene interviewed says, “I feel jai haay - that my heart has gone from me.”

### **The Sex and Sexuality of Prostitution**

To fully grasp the health consequences of prostitution and sex trafficking and how integral violence is to the sex industry, it is necessary to understand the sex and sexuality of prostitution and its determinants. Traditional social constructions of sexuality have by and large distinguished male and female sexuality, projecting the distinctions as biologically determined and hence natural and inevitable. In these constructions, the male body and sexuality is invested with potency, purity and creativity, and the female body and sexuality is deemed inert, receptive, polluting and functional.

Prostitution is ideologically predicated on the patriarchal assumption of the universality, inevitability and social necessity of male sexuality. Traditional rationalizations of the existence of prostitution, argue that irrepressible male sexuality that is inhibited from being expressed can result in the rape of *innocent women* and erode the family structure. *Male sexual potency* consequently demands the existence of a separate category of paid publicly sexualised women to contain what cannot be fulfilled within socially legitimate contexts of sexual expression such as marriage. Women in prostitution thus exist as sexualised, commodified bodies to be appropriated, dissected, fragmented, used and abused in the interests of male biology and its need for variety, sexual fantasy and hegemony. The construction of prostitution and of the women in it endorses endemic institutional violence against women - the means necessary to satisfy this inevitable notion of male sexuality (D’Cunha, 1998b).

Women in prostitution report that even the standard act of prostitution — coitus, with a range of strangers — is violating. They therefore have to dissociate emotionally and to engage in complex diversionary tactics to cope and survive. This kind of sexual experience, which involves the separating of the most intimate parts of one's physical and psychic being from one's emotions and total person, is indicative of the objectification and de-personalization of women in prostitution. A woman in prostitution becomes alienated from sexual intimacy, sexual pleasure and control over her body and sexuality. At the same time, from the perspective of the woman, dissociation may be an assertion against male arrogance and domination, as well as a defence against fusing their emotional lives with prostitution.

In the final analysis, sexuality in prostitution is ultimately the male sexual experience. It is he who enjoys the power of money, conquest, ego and sexual gratification and who acts out his misogyny with impunity. It is he who deludes himself into believing that he is the subjective choice of the woman or several women. Men justify this abuse in many ways including that the sex of prostitution is part of their biological drive, an expression of masculinity, takes place between two consenting individuals, is part of the indigenous culture, and a sexual experience for which the women ask and enjoy. Payment for sex is another conscience salver (Interviews with Male Buyers in a Patpong and Pattaya Bar, 1991). Any guilt that he may have had is wiped away by the price paid, indicating the emotional and sexual poverty in men. The social construction of male socialization and sexuality often interacts with their alienating living and working conditions to produce atomized, fragmented individuals with fractured psyches and emotionalities. This gives rise to alienated sexualities and newer kinds of sexual demands: newer sexual partners, newer forms of sex, including twisted and violent sex inflicted on women.

Sometimes, that the client may order the violence to be inflicted on himself (D'Cunha, 1997). Certain types of sexual activity demanded by men, such as the demand to be dominated, may indicate the desire to withdraw from the pressures of conforming to socially-prescribed aggressive male stereotypes. Even in sadomasochistic acts, in which women in prostitution are made to enact sadistic acts against men, a client may experience himself as all-powerful because in the pain and suffering that he commands, he demonstrates a martyrdom that he has chosen (Barry, 1979). Women sometimes report their own shift in response from initial resistance and revulsion to brutalizing the client, to enjoying the act. A Filipino woman in prostitution reports: "*They deserve a good whipping and my bodily integrity is maintained*" (D'Cunha, 1998b). In addition to the alienation and impoverishment of the sexuality of prostitution that women already experience, this enjoyment of inflicting violence on the client can mark a further and different kind of erosion of the woman's spirit and psyche.

Another dimension to the violence of prostitution can be seen in the vilification of women in prostitution. Supposedly, women's sexuality is functional to providing male sexual pleasure and, outside of prostitution, to procreation. At the same time, however, the significance of women's sexuality is denied through its disparagement. Women in prostitution are constructed as social and sexual necessities for men, yet they are demonised as undesirable necessities, social evils and blights on the social body. Thus it is women in prostitution who are made to bear the brunt of social disapproval and who are framed as repositories of vice and promiscuity, a threat to established conjugal and familial norms, deviants from prescribed social and sexual codes for women, corrupters of public moral sensibilities, and conduits for filth, pollution, contagion and disease.

*The woman in prostitution is the 'dangerous, polluting and menacing evil' whose body and sexuality must be controlled and regulated in the interests of the wider community and society. While her functionality is emphasized and her existence in a sense both encouraged and tolerated, her inconvenience is handled by situating her at the margins of social exist-*

*ence, driving her into back alleys and behind close doors away from public gaze, controlling, regulating and invisibilizing her (D’Cunha, 1998b).*

Women are thus cast into two distinct categories in binary opposition to each other — the homebound wife responsible for social and biological reproduction and the publicly sexualised woman who is both sexual temptress and provider of sexual pleasure. These rigid constructions permeate the individual and collective consciousness of both men and women, creating a restricted and distorted human understanding of what is pure and impure, moral and immoral, natural and offensive about sex and the body.

State structures, laws and public policy underscore the expression of these social constructions of women and the female body, as exemplified in prostitution legislation where only women in prostitution are criminalized as sexual reprobates, offending social prescriptions of ideal womanhood (D’Cunha, 1987, 1991, 1992). The specific construction of women in prostitution, their invisibility, their social, moral and legal castigation and isolation, combine to conceal and intensify their oppression, including sexual oppression. This increases their vulnerability to and dependence on the organizers and controllers of the sex industry.

For women, the consequences of this personal, social and sexual denigration are many:

- A negative identity and consciousness of women in prostitution who are socialized into a culture of submission, thus finding it difficult to perceive themselves as worthwhile human beings and as surviving subjects (D’Cunha, 1998b)
- Lack of economic, civil, political, social and sexual rights for women in prostitution, based on prevailing sexist values that women who engage in commercial sexual activity have no right to refuse male sexual demands, or set the terms of sexual encounters, thus rendering women in prostitution vulnerable to rape with male impunity. Women who supposedly have said “yes” to prostitution are denied the right to say “no” to rape and, in fact, are blamed for being raped (D’Cunha, 1998b).
- Women in prostitution historically targeted as sources and transmitters of STDs and now AIDS, with the attendant fear that women’s diseased bodies will render males dysfunctional, thus eroding productivity and the social fabric. Governments have consequently over the years justified the social and legal control of women in prostitution as a public health measure, while showing blithe unconcern for the other health problems of women in prostitution (D’Cunha, 1998b)
- Subversion of women’s efforts to organize for their rights.

### **Adverse Impacts of Normalized Prostitution on Human Communities: Learning from the Experience of Other Countries**

There is an assumption that international human rights standards are neutral and apply equally to all people, without distinctions of any kind. Recognizing women as fully human like men, and establishing formal equality between women and men, is not in itself enough to guarantee substantive equality and full enjoyment of rights for women. Women’s experience of personhood is circumscribed by normative, discriminatory, male-centered constructions of masculinity and femininity, with interacting ethnic and racial constructs. These constructions mediate women’s roles, functions and activities; ownership of, access to and control over resources; values, attitudes and conduct; and a sense of self and being. Women’s disadvantage is thus maintained, and women’s individual and collective human rights are diminished and disregarded.

The emergence, maintenance and perpetuation of the sex industry, and its hierarchical institutional structure, are grounded in gendered social and economic contexts. These include marginalization of women's ownership of, access to and control over material/non-material resources (preyed upon by traffickers, pimps, owners/controllers of prostitution establishments), and a culture of violence embedded in the ideological assumptions about prostitution and the women in it. The gendered circumstances underlying recruitment and entry into prostitution, and the gender-specific violations and consequences of prostitution, render it incompatible with women's human rights, and with principles of gender justice and equality. Trafficking and prostitution are incompatible with the dignity and worth of a person and are in and of themselves human rights violations. They violate the human rights principles of universality, inalienability, indivisibility, interrelatedness and interdependence.

Governments the world over have historically invoked multi-pronged strategies to address trafficking and prostitution, the most common being legal strategies. The normalization of prostitution by law, either through *legalized prostitution* or more recently the demand by a segment of NGOs to *decriminalise prostitution*, are contentious issues. Legalised prostitution institutionalizes prostitution as a legitimate sector of society, although it is subject to state regulation and control. Under this legalized system, women in prostitution must register with designated authorities as *prostitutes* to obtain a licence to practice prostitution. They must often undergo regular and mandatory medical examinations for sexually transmitted diseases, and adhere to a host of other local rules and controls, such as operating in designated areas. Violations of state rules and controls allegedly are enforced by certain penalties. Brothels are also issued licences, contingent on certain conditions.

Historically, legalized prostitution has been justified as a public health measure to curb the spread of STDs, with women being scapegoated as responsible for the spread, and hence controlled as a method of containment. However, legalized prostitution is premised on the patriarchal assumptions that prostitution is a necessary, universal, inevitable social evil, functional to male biology and hence imperative for the preservation of the sexual integrity of innocent women, for the preservation of the family structure, and the control of STDs and AIDS. Legalisation has also been justified as a convenient way of segregating prostitution – an *eyesore on the street* — by *ghettoising women* into legal brothels. Other proclaimed objectives of legalisation are that it controls the expansion of the industry, erodes the stigma against prostitution and women in prostitution, and eliminates organized crime from the industry (D'Cunha, 1991; 1992).

Decriminalised prostitution is a more recent position that has partially emerged in response to the limitations of legalized prostitution, and which argues for elimination of state controls that legalization imposes. It is rooted in a liberalism and liberal feminism that views prostitution as a conscious, rational, choice of women in a patriarchal and discriminatorily-structured job market, equating prostitution with other woman-specific "jobs" to which women in particular are relegated. Decriminalization of prostitution argues that prostitution be recognised as a valid form of work, an expression of women's autonomy, self determination and human rights; that prostitution businesses and third party managements be removed from the purview of criminal law and state regulation, and instead be subject to labour law like any other business; and that state controls on the women be likewise eliminated. In distinguishing between free and forced prostitution, adult and child prostitution, and prostitution and trafficking, decriminalisation argues for the introduction of trafficking laws to penalize traffickers, asserting that these laws should be separate from labour laws governing prostitution in general.

It is not within the province of this country report to undertake an in-depth critique of these positions, but the following issues warrant careful consideration in any study on trafficking and prostitution.

- The normalization of prostitution in both the legalisation and decriminalisation approaches sanctions an exploitative and oppressive institution that has emerged from the historical vulnerability and subordination of women, and the historical right of men to trade them as objects for sexual use (D’Cunha, 1991, 1992; Sullivan and Jeffreys, 2000).
- The normalization of prostitution as an industry will result in greater *product, service and market expansion and diversification* and newer, more bizarre and brutal forms of exploitation. The legalized sex industry in Australia, for example, was quick to recognize that along with a woman’s vagina and anus, all of her reproductive capacities are sellable products. The magazine of the Prostitute’s Collective Australia, in a 1999 piece entitled “The Working Mother to Be,” highlighted the benefits to women in prostitution while pregnant. “Pregnant women may find themselves with a whole new group of clients who find pregnancy a turn on. In addition, if offered the service, a surprising number of men find drinking breast milk either arousing or soothing” (Sullivan and Jeffreys, 2000).
- Once normalized, the industry cannot easily be controlled. Nor can women in prostitution be rendered “respectable professionals,” or the harm to them minimized. Normalization simply endorses an institution that is premised on the availability of *non-domestic* women for sexual use and abuse by men, and on the increase of capital accumulation. Further, the more bizarre and brutal the acts, the higher will be the price and the profit to the industry, and the greater resistance there will be to measures like harm minimization and penalties that erode profits.
- Normalization will make it difficult to set the clock back. Rather than contract, the sex industry will be allowed to flourish, aided by structures of normalization such as legalization, decriminalisation and labour law, the redefining of abusers as *respectable, powerful entrepreneurs*, as sex businessmen network with the political and administrative elite and float their brothels on the stock exchange, and as profits from sexual abuse become an indispensable part of the state’s revenues. As these structures of normalization take hold, it will be virtually impossible to do away with legalized or decriminalized prostitution (Sullivan and Jeffreys, 2000).
- Decriminalization does not adequately address the structural forces conditioning a woman’s entry into prostitution and keeping her there, and ends up enforcing deceptive categories of free/forced prostitution. Distinctions between free and forced prostitution, child and adult prostitution, and trafficking and prostitution are artificial. What becomes blurred are the links between the decision to prostitute and the circumstances mediating such a “choice” (D’Cunha, 1997).

At whatever age, prostitution violates human rights, gender equality, and causes harm to the individual, although the degree and intensity of harm may vary between individuals, and between children and women. The adult-child distinction reinforces the erroneous view that child prostitution is forced and harmful, but that adult prostitution is consensual and not harmful. It is entirely possible to protect the rights of adult women who “decide” to remain in prostitution, without making the adult-child distinction (D’Cunha, 1997).

- Trafficking and prostitution are intimately linked, trafficking being the main means of supplying women and children into prostitution. The experience of legalised prostitution in 19<sup>th</sup>

century Europe shows that trafficking increases with the normalization of prostitution. This renders the separation of trafficking laws and prostitution laws under decriminalized prostitution ludicrous (D’Cunha, 1997).

- Legitimising prostitution will thwart efforts towards reciprocal, equal, just and empowering relationships between men and women and will retard the development of humane communities. More boys and men will be socialized to maltreat women as normal practice, thus progressively also dehumanising men. More girls and women will be drawn into prostitution, violated, and the individual and collective rights of women will be eroded.

What will be the meaning, value and outcome of struggles against sexual harassment and violence in the home, the workplace or the street, if men can buy the right to perpetrate these very acts against women in prostitution? What is defined as violence in one context, without monetary exchange, would ironically be normalized as work, pleasure, an expression of autonomy and self-determination in another context just because a monetary transaction takes place.

- The experience of countries or states that have legalized prostitution reveals their failure to achieve the stated objectives of normalisation. Instead, women have been placed under greater control and brothel managements have gained. The Mustang Ranch of Nevada, located in a county of this state where prostitution is legal, and which is the largest brothel in the United States, is prison-like in appearance. Women are still pimped into this brothel, “work” 12-14 hours a day, have no right to choose clients, and are subject to violence and abuse. Likewise, legalization in Germany has increased the vulnerability of registered women in legal prostitution, causing them to be harassed by the police. Women are arrested outside designated activity spaces even if they are not soliciting. Trafficking, pimping and prostitution of women and children continues (D’Cunha, 1991, 1992).
- Legalized prostitution in Australia has resulted in the expansion of the industry and more so, the illegal sector. An investigative report by Victoria’s *Age* newspaper in 1999 found an increase in the number of legal brothels from 40 a decade ago to 94 today along with 84 escort agencies. Ironically, the real growth area is in the illegal sector. The over 100 unlicensed brothels outnumbered the legitimate sex businesses in 1999 and had trebled in 12 months. Child prostitution, abuse of prostituted women by big business, trafficking of women, especially from poorer countries into Australia by organized crime are on the rise. Convicted criminals fronted by supposedly more reputable people remain in the business (Sullivan and Jeffreys, 2000).

### **Addressing Dilemmas in Practice**

While critiquing trafficking and the institution of prostitution, distinguishing between the individual and the institution, and recognizing the need to address the concerns of women in prostitution, we find ourselves on the horns of a dilemma. At the core of this dilemma are tensions and intricacies that arise from criminalizing the industry – one practical manifestation of the critique – and ways and means to concretely assist and protect the rights of women who remain within it. More specifically at the ground level, the problems are as follows:

- Problems in reaching women in illegal institutions held in conditions of confinement and bondage, and catalysing their collective organization for their rights.
- The dilemma of penalizing exploitative third party managements, and shutting down establishments on one hand, and the lack of resources to provide immediate and meaningful socio-

economic alternatives to large numbers of women opting out of prostitution, on the other hand.

- The dilemma of penalizing exploitative third party managements, and shutting down establishments on one hand, and addressing the concerns of women who for a host of reasons wish to continue in prostitution, though not under the control of a third party.
- Difficulties in addressing proliferating institutional manifestations of prostitution and sexual exploitation, most especially those related to new information and communication technologies.

There are no easy solutions and overarching blueprints. But in our search for answers, we draw on the insights and creative practice of organizations of women in prostitution and NGOs working with women in prostitution in different countries, as described and analysed below (Discussions with Prerna, Saanlap and the Joint Women's Programme, India, 2001).

### ***Critiquing the Institution of Prostitution, While Organizing Women in Controlled Brothels for Their Rights***

Prerna, Saanlap and the Joint Women's Programme (JWP) are three NGOs working with women in prostitution in the brothel areas of Kamathipura (Mumbai), Sonagachi and Kalighat (Calcutta), and G.B. Road (Delhi) in India, respectively. Prerna has successfully catalysed an organization of women in prostitution, with about 20-30 core members, that expands to about 200 when larger scale direct action is undertaken. All three organizations oppose legalisation and decriminalisation of prostitution, and work with women (and the children of women in prostitution) in conditions of bondage in hoodlum-controlled brothel areas. All three NGOs have a history of about 15 years of work in their respective areas. Their entry point into this work was addressing the concerns of the children of women in prostitution, for the following reasons:

- The children are very vulnerable.
- In tightly controlled brothel prostitution, it was only possible to work with the children – not with the women. Fifteen years ago, organizing women in brothel prostitution was unthinkable.
- Working with children is non-threatening to brothel managements.
- Working with children is a way of preventing second-generation prostitution.
- Reaching the women, if at all, was only possible through the children.

Work with the children included enrolling them in the local school, running day care centres for them, and placing children in hostels if necessary. Brothel owners were persuaded to encourage the women to send their children to school. Women were reached on an individual basis, through the children, resulting in a gradual building of rapport with the women. The women gradually began talking about their needs, problems, and aspirations. Their greatest concern is the welfare of their children.<sup>6</sup> In addition JWP also works on health issues with the women, more specifically STD/AIDS prevention through promotion of safe sex practices, in which the cooperation of the brothel managements was sought. An unintended but positive outcome of all these interventions is that the brothel managements now recognize and respect the work of these NGOs, and also realize that these NGOs are publicly well known and well connected.

Although work with the children continues, an organization of women in prostitution has now coalesced that has taken up several rights issues both against the brothel management, and the bureaucracy.

- Acquiring ration cards that enable access to low priced government rice, sugar, fuel. The women further demanded that the cards be issued solely in their names, compelling the authorities to delete the names of the male pimps and landlords (Prerna and JWP).
- Protests against police violence against women that take the form of bribes, fines, beatings, sexual favours, and verbal abuse. Protests took the form of direct confrontation with abusers, group demonstrations at the police station, and filing First Information Reports (the first written complaint made to the police), against the abuser. Outcomes of the protests include a new caution among the police, public apology to the victims and reimbursement of medical bills for treatment of injuries as well as getting new policemen on the beat (Saanlap and Prerna).
- Retrieval of women's belongings and money from brothel keepers. Actions initially took the form of persuading the owner in the interests of fair play and justice to return the belongings and Rs 8000 of a woman leaving the brothel. When this went unheeded, group demonstrations were organized. This resulted in a group of brothel owners coming to meet NGO office bearers to protest the women's actions. The NGO advocates reasoned that no one should hold what was earned by and belonged to another, and that the NGO fully supported the women. All the belongings and Rs 6000 were returned. The remaining money was returned a little later (Prerna).
- Protests and complaints filed with the police against individual brothel keepers for specific acts of violence against women in brothels, and against child prostitution.
- The women in prostitution in Kamathipura receive information or direct complaints about specific acts of violence perpetrated by the brothel management or about induction of children into brothels. They filed police complaints against individual brothel keepers on these counts. Saanlap works with youth groups from (non-prostitute) families in the area raising awareness among them about trafficking and prostitution. These groups function also as alert committees, informing the police of cases of violence against the women, induction of children into the brothels, and about women and girls who want to leave (Saanlap and Prerna).
- Joining the women's movement demonstrations against price hikes for essential commodities. About 200 women in prostitution from Kamathipura joined a demonstration against rising prices – a landmark show of solidarity between women conventionally polarized. Women's groups in Mumbai have likewise been supporting women in prostitution in their protests against police brutality.
- Legal training for some of the women in prostitution (Prerna). There are women who have left prostitution and are working as staff in other Prerna projects in Mumbai.

There has been a mixed response from brothel keepers. Some allow the women to attend meetings. Others have abused the women or protested women's new assertiveness to NGO officials. The response of brothel owners still seems contained at this point. A possible reason for their restraint is that once brothel keepers have recovered the initial sum paid for a woman or girl, plus a substantial amount above that, the control relaxes. Moreover, in the Indian context, which places a high premium on virginity and strongly stigmatises women in prostitution, women who have been in prostitution for a few years cannot easily opt out. Brothel keepers know that the women will not easily leave. There have so far been no demands to shut down brothels or any

single brothel, which would be a real challenge to the brothel establishment. Other brothel keepers are more pragmatic at the present time and accede to women's demands, such as going to meetings and picnics. The situation is however dynamic, and there is no knowing when there will be a violent backlash.

Factors that facilitate the success of NGOs who advocate for the rights of women in the brothel areas are as follows:

- Long years of work in the area with palpable results.
- Credibility with the women and other stakeholders, including non-prostitute households in the area.
- Strategic entry point through the children.
- Organizational leadership and membership is vested in ordinary women in prostitution, and not with the brothel management.

The work of these NGOs is based on strategic thinking and political expediency that is grounded in a substantive understanding of the complex realities of prostitution. The organizations distinguish between short and long-term strategies and have a process view of structures, relationships and change. Some of these strategies — such as seeking cooperation from brothel managements in sending the children to school or taking care of the health concerns of the women, and seeking active participation of the management on certain issues such as price rise protests — began by attacking the softer interests of the management and individual brothel keepers. These short-term strategies, as well as not calling for brothel closures at any particular site (except at a general macro level in law), may appear to be compromises. But these are necessary at the initial stages of organizing and are necessary for more long-term strategies that must be built on stronger Government-NGO capability and better government-NGO prevention, protection and reintegration plans for women vulnerable to and in prostitution.

#### *Addressing the Concerns of Women who Continue in Prostitution after Brothel Closures*

There are some examples in India of women in prostitution living and operating in small communities without third party control and management, after their brothels were shut down. How this arrangement works in practice begs further exploration. Formation of associations of these women to ensure better control and determination over their lives and well being is one mechanism to address their concerns. This ought not to deter the continuing struggle against the institution of prostitution and the myriad and complex forces that create and reproduce it.

#### *Difficulties in Confronting an Ever-Growing and Entrenched Sex Industry, Including Sexual Exploitation on the Internet*

Citizens' committees need to put pressure on national and local governments to take tough action against the industry and design and implement effective prevention, protection, assistance and reintegration measures for women and children vulnerable to and in prostitution. It is also important to address the demand factor in prostitution. Creative practice in this area includes awareness raising and education for buyers, such as the "First Offender Program" run by SAGE, an organization by and for women in prostitution in San Francisco, California. The Hotline Foundation in Bangkok, Thailand, runs a hotline that can be phoned by males who have been perpetrators of violence, including sexual violence. The Foundation provides in-house counselling and referral services, and runs a television programme every week viewed by 1.5 million people. Violence against women — its causes, the myths perpetuating violence, impacts, grievance

redress mechanisms, and the need for more humane gender relations — is a dominant theme of these programmes.

Technological solutions to the control and regulation of Internet sexual exploitation exists in the form of software that can be used to block pornographic sites. A more sustainable solution, however, is non-gendered education for children and the youth — values education, gender sensitivity consciousness, sex and sexuality education that emphasizes concern, sensitivity, mutual respect and human dignity - provided in the home, through educational institutions and various media forms.

These are experimental initiatives that address complexities of prostitution without normalizing it. There are also other interventions that have long been undertaken in Thailand and other countries around the world, but need to be extended, re-oriented, strengthened, and rendered more effective.

### **Present Actions and Future Directions**

Several international instruments that directly and indirectly address prostitution and sex trafficking have been introduced into the United Nations system.<sup>7</sup> Some of these were the outcome of 19<sup>th</sup> century struggles in Europe against trafficking and prostitution. Although some countries have taken measures in line with these Conventions to contain prostitution and sex trafficking nationally, much more requires to be done to prevent and control it, to address official complicity, and to protect women and girls against victimization.

More recently, efforts have been introduced to build and consolidate sub-national, national, sub-regional, regional and international partnerships between governments, and between governments and non-government organizations. Community-based organizations in source areas, transit zones and destination points for prostitution and sex-trafficking — such as associations of women in prostitution, researchers, academics, lawyers, and media personnel – are also collaborating. Policies, programmes, and interventions designed and implemented by these players are multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary. They address prosecution measures against traffickers and recruiters, and prevention, protection and assistance to those in prostitution. Other areas addressed are repatriation and return, recovery and reintegration, and research and advocacy (D’Cunha, 1999).

### ***Prosecution***

#### ***Policy and Legal Measures***

- Put pressure on national governments to formulate and implement legislation and programmes consistent with, and going beyond, the UN Trafficking Protocol, 2000. Some of the key provisions of the Protocol are: criminalization of traffickers and their accomplices (Art. 5); assistance and protection to trafficked victims (Art. 6); measures by the host country to secure the status of trafficked individuals, e.g., permission to remain in its territory temporarily or permanently (Art. 7); regional and international exchange of information on laws, criminal networks, patterns, mechanisms and forms of trafficking, so as to distinguish traffickers from victims of trafficking, to track and prosecute violators, and to protect victims of trafficking (Art.10); sensitive border control measures (Art. 11); measures to guarantee the quality and security of travel documents to prevent their misuse by traffickers (Art.12); and provisions to enhance the cooperation between states to achieve these objectives (*UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*, 2000).

- Decriminalize individual women in prostitution.
- Introduce extra-territorial laws that penalize violators in countries other than where the crime was committed.
- Introduce penal sanctions against persons holding political office, those in custodial positions and law enforcers who are directly involved in or collude with traffickers and other perpetrators of commercial sexual exploitation.
- Ensure the formation of statutory and mandatory citizens' committees that work with governments and implementing authorities to ensure efficacy in implementation of laws against prostitution and trafficking.

### ***Prevention***

#### ***Economic***

- Put pressure on governments to invest women with ownership and control of productive material resources like land and housing.
- Advocate for gender equal laws, including inheritance laws.
- Protest against economic policies that marginalize women or discriminate against them in public employment, and suggest alternatives.
- Organize against any government policy that directly promotes prostitution (e.g., there is a joint organization of Japanese, Filipino and Thai NGOs organized against sex tourism).
- Introduce economic projects for women that address their strategic economic and business needs and interests, and which are gender-responsive, market-oriented, viable and sustainable.
- Build women's capacity to respond to market changes by providing them with training in business enterprise development.
- Generate gender consciousness in the community that facilitates women's economic empowerment at the individual, household and community level.

#### ***Political***

- Work for women to be represented in formal/informal decision-making bodies and in fora at various levels; and build the capacity of women for political decision-making roles.
- Mainstream gender into all national plans, policies, laws, and programmes in consultation with women's NGOs and specialists.
- Through community-based organizations, ensure that local political bodies and law enforcement agencies investigate cases of missing women and children, especially in source areas of recruitment.

#### ***Education***

- Guarantee literacy, and formal and informal education to women.
- Train persons holding public office and law enforcers in gender sensitivity and human rights principles and policies (Art. 10, *UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*, 2000), including discussions about gender roles and

stereotypes, the inequity in gender relations, myths about prostitution, and the socio-economic and political basis of prostitution.

- Incorporate gender sensitivity and human rights concerns into school/university curricula and publicly disseminate this through all media.
- Raise awareness on gender and human rights concerns within local communities that are highly vulnerable to prostitution.
- Facilitate the formation of community-based committees that undertake surveys on the situation of women and youth in their communities, sensitize others in the community, particularly those most at risk to the dangers of sex trafficking, and catalyse community thinking on sustainable solutions to the problem.
- Support re-socialization, awareness raising, gender sensitisation, and counselling programs for arrested clients, perpetrators or potential perpetrators of violence.

#### ***Protection and Assistance for Those in Prostitution***<sup>8</sup>

- Initiate bilateral agreements between governments to protect the rights of victims of trafficking. Thailand and Cambodia are in the throes of discussing a draft Memorandum of Understanding that requires both governments to protect/promote the rights of and safely repatriate women migrant workers. If signed, the agreement would establish a legal framework between the two countries for prosecution of traffickers and a joint task force on bilateral co-operation (ECPAT Newsletter, 2001).
- Treat trafficked women as victims and survivors of human rights violations, rather than as “illegal” migrants. In Thailand in June 1999, a Memorandum of Understanding on Common Guidelines of Practice for Agencies Concerned with Trafficked Women and Children was signed between the Office of the Prime Minister of Thailand, the Department of Social Welfare, the National Police Forces and NGOs. The guidelines for practice define the trafficked person as a victim. They protect, promote the rights of such persons, and treat them accordingly. The MOU also accords foreign women and children the same rights as Thai nationals. Training courses on the provisions of the MOU and how to use them, are being conducted in border provinces for police and hospital staff, social workers from public welfare offices and attorney generals (ECPAT Newsletter, 2001).
- Establish a focal point within embassies abroad to address trafficking and prostitution cases.
- Initiate alternate livelihood programs so that women have real options to leave prostitution.
- Provide education and skills consistent with market demand.
- Provide creche, educational, health, legal and counselling services for children of women in prostitution, and children in prostitution. The Centre for the Protection of Children’s Rights Foundation (CPCR) in Bangkok has established three multi-disciplinary professional teams – doctors, lawyers, psychiatrists, counsellors and lawyers – to deal with cases of child abuse. They meet regularly to discuss cases, share information and expertise. Following CPCR training in South Thailand, local childcare workers are also becoming more cooperative in their casework. Based on these initiatives, it is hoped that multi-disciplinary collaboration will be institutionalised in state-run programmes nation-wide.
- Provide health education and general health services for women in prostitution.
- Encourage safe sex practices for women in prostitution.

- Ban mandatory testing for HIV/AIDS.
- Maintain confidentiality of an individual's health status. Provide results of health status testing only to the woman who is tested.
- Provide voluntary pre and post-test counselling.
- Provide AIDS care centres for women.
- Establish drop-in centres to which women can come to share their information, problems and aspirations, and receive concrete assistance.
- Organize reflections/group discussions with women at these centres concerning the sex industry and brothel structures, and their experiences in them, their activities, attitudes to life, bodies/sexuality, savings, budgeting, investment of savings.
- Develop sensitivity to gender issues.
- Provide voluntary counselling to women that helps them redefine their experience as one of exploitation and survival, rather than being morally condemnatory.
- Provide legal assistance and information to women in prostitution in a language comprehensible to the individual; protect the privacy and identity of victims of trafficking; provide victims with information on relevant court and administrative proceedings; and enable women in prostitution to present their testimony during the criminal proceedings.
- Permit NGOs to testify on behalf of women in prostitution.
- Ensure the physical safety of the individual in countries to which women have been trafficked.
- Provide compensation for damage suffered from the seized assets of traffickers and other perpetrators.

### ***Repatriation and Return<sup>9</sup>***

- Repatriation should be voluntary.
- Responsibility for repatriation should be borne by the country in which the individual is a national, or has the right of permanent residence, at the time of being trafficked. Countries should provide funds for repatriation in a safe and speedy manner.
- Countries responsible for repatriation should enable timely provision of travel documents to those without proper documentation.
- At the time of repatriation, countries should give due consideration to the status of any legal proceedings arising from the person's trafficked status.
- Countries to which women have been trafficked should provide emergency shelters and means of subsistence for victims of trafficking while they await repatriation/return.
- Countries responsible for repatriation should ensure that repatriated women are not illegally detained or forcibly tested for STDs or HIV/AIDS, or penalized in any other way.

### ***Recovery and Reintegration***

- Governments and NGOs should provide livelihood programmes, credit schemes, health services, counselling, and legal services to aid in the recovery and reintegration of women and children rescued/seeking help out of and after leaving prostitution.
- Governments and NGOs should work with the families/local communities from which

trafficked women originate to facilitate the process of reintegration. Social workers from the Centre for the Protection of Children's Rights Foundation, Bangkok, visit families of children rescued from prostitution or other oppressive circumstances to prepare families to understand and accept their children and facilitate their reintegration. Families are also provided with welfare assistance. In cases where it is impossible for children to return home, arrangements are made through NGOs and government for foster care, institutional placement and for their formal/informal education and training in vocational skills.

### ***Research and Advocacy***

- Governments should provide financial support for research and advocacy that are the underpinning of anti-trafficking policy and programme design.
- Governments and NGOs should conduct periodic project implementation evaluations to help enhance the efficacy of policies and programmes.

### **NOTES**

1. Translated notes of testimony by Thai woman trafficked into Melbourne in 1998 and recorded by staff of Project Respect.
  2. The Protocol is aimed at preventing, suppressing and combating trafficking. It judiciously combines preventive strategies in the form of socio-economic, legal, administrative, advocacy, research, and educational measures to contain and prevent trafficking, as well as provisions to protect and assist victims of trafficking. Protection measures include the defence of victims' international human rights, together with penal sanctions against traffickers and their accomplices, thus strengthening the promotion and protection of women's human rights. Although some of the protective provisions are discretionary for States — as are other parts of the Protocol — the Protocol is an important step in the direction of rights promotion and protection for women. It provides a basis for civil society and the international community to advocate for effective enforcement, and strengthen protection and assistance for victims of trafficking.
  3. Accurate figures are impossible, and conservative estimates and examples give an indicative picture
  4. The reference to live video conferencing of sexual abuse of children does not explicitly name Thailand in the reference cited.
  5. Personal Discussions with Thai women activists during the ISIS International Cross Cultural Exchange Programme on Poverty and Prostitution, 1991.
  6. A very important aspiration and demand of Indian women in prostitution is to ensure that their children are provided opportunities for a different life than they have had. In view of the high premium on virginity and the acute stigmatisation of women in prostitution in India, common in most of South Asia, women see no hope for themselves and resign themselves to their own fate.
  7. Among these are: the *Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others*, 1949; the *Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery*, 1956; the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, 1966; and the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, 1979.
  8. Some of these provisions are embodied in the UN Trafficking Protocol. See Article 6, *UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*, 2000.
  9. The UN Trafficking Protocol contains many of these provisions. See Article 8, *UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*,
- \* I wish to specially thank Ms Patricia Green, Rahab Ministries, Bangkok; Sr. Meg Gallagher, the Catholic Commission on Migration, Bangkok; Sr. Supaporn, The Fountain of Life Center, Pattaya; Ms Kathleen

Maltazahn, Project Respect, Australia; and the staffs of these organizations for their gracious sharing of information and insights and for facilitating interviews with women in prostitution. I am deeply grateful to the women for opening their hearts to us. I wish to thank Khun Benjaporn Sutthiprapa, Khun Song, and Khun Namlada Punyaratna for their assistance in translation and interpretation. Finally I wish to thank Loy Rego, my husband, for his insightful comments on this section.

**VENEZUELA**  
**INTERVIEW FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS**  
**A SURVEY OF TRAFFICKED WOMEN AND WOMEN IN PROSTITUTION**

by  
Zoraida Ramirez Rodriguez  
with assistance from Xiomara Linares Gonzalez

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Forty-one women were interviewed for this study: 18 from Colombia, 11 from the Dominican Republic, 2 from Ecuador, and one from Cuba. Throughout this section, these women are referred to as Latin American/Caribbean women. The remaining 9 respondents were from Venezuela.

### **I COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN**

**Colombia:** Since 1950, Colombia has experienced a spiral of violence in the cities as well as in rural areas. The health services are poor, and malaria and yellow fever are endemic in some parts of the country. The population faces serious socioeconomic problems because of low wages. Colombia has one of the highest incidences of unemployment not only in Latin America, but also in the world. Colombians who have emigrated indicate that they have done so looking for jobs and peace.

**Dominican Republic:** The economy of the Dominican Republic relies mainly on tourism and free trade zones where many multinational companies have been established. For 31 years, the country existed under a dictatorship and since 1961, under a democracy in which there have been many conflicts that have slowed the progress of its economy. Health and educational services have also been cut, and this situation has generated an exodus of people looking for a better life.

**Ecuador:** Since 1960 Ecuador has experienced not only political instability, but also military confrontation over border disputes with Peru. There is also marked social and economic inequality. Due to the serious economic crisis in this country, the rates of unemployment as well as underemployment are exceptionally high. Since the 1980s, there has been massive out-migration from the rural areas to the cities as well as emigration to a small number of Latin American countries. The flow of migration to the United States, which dates from the 1950s, has continued steadily. In the last two years, Spain and other European countries have been the preferred destinations of Ecuadorians where they have faced considerable discrimination.

**Cuba:** The only Cuban woman interviewed for this study was a 38-year-old in quite unusual circumstances. She was the only woman in a group of Cubans who seized the Peruvian Embassy in Havana in 1980. All in this group were subsequently granted refugee status by the United Nations and left Cuba. The President of Costa Rica, Rodrigo Carazo, sponsored their trip and the group traveled in his plane. As a UN refugee this woman went to different countries including Costa Rica, Panamá, and Colombia. When she was in Colombia, a man trafficked her for sexual exploitation, bringing her to Venezuela in 1981, where she has been in prostitution since being trafficked.

**Venezuela:** Venezuela's economy is based on oil production and its derivatives. Due to substantial oil revenues prior to the 1980s, Venezuelans enjoyed satisfactory standards of living and improved health and education services. During this period, the state increased public spending without increasing taxes. Since the early 1980s, however, Venezuela has

experienced a decrease in oil revenues and an increase in foreign debt payments. There has also been an increase in corruption, a bank system crisis and a marked lowering in the population's standard of living. Also since 1958, the country has witnessed periods of political instability. Other factors such as high interest rates, an increase in unemployment, low wages, high cost of living (housing, services and food), and a crisis in health and education services have contributed to an increase in underemployment and migration. Women, in particular, have struggled to survive these conditions. Furthermore, the geographical location of Venezuela within South America and the Caribbean, coupled with Venezuela's fluctuating economy brought about by a corresponding oscillation in the price of oil, has resulted in Venezuela becoming both a generator and a receiver of migrants.

Venezuela is a signatory to the 1949 *Convención para la Represión de la Trata de Personas y de la Explotación de la Prostitución Ajena* (*Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others*). Article 6 enjoins State signatories to repeal or abolish any law, regulation or administrative provision that subjects those in prostitution to registration, supervision or possession of special documents. However, Venezuela violates the 1949 Convention by regulating women in prostitution and requiring them to carry identity cards issued by the Health Ministry. This document guarantees the prostitution client that women holding this card are free from STDs and HIV/AIDS. This practice is common to many Latin American countries and to some Caribbean countries. Both Venezuelan and foreign women in prostitution are under pressure to obtain this document. When policemen or employees from the Ministry of Labor carry out raids in night clubs, women found without this card are either jailed or expected to hand over money or sexual favors. However, women are required to present national identity cards to obtain this certificate from the Health Ministry. Thus women who are in the country illegally have to use "gestores" or private agents who "specialize" in obtaining documents, and who often take advantage of the women's illegal status.

After the disastrous floods of December 1999, a high percentage of the Venezuelan population – especially women — was left unemployed in the areas affected by the floods. Some women were prostituted, trafficked locally and then trafficked internationally, a fact confirmed by different women interviewed

The Economic Commission for Latin America (CEPAL) has prepared a Social and Economic Balance report covering ten years documenting the persistence of poverty and inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is estimated that 20 million people have lived in poverty from 1990 to 1999. All trafficked women come from countries facing serious social, economic and political problems, and in which women continue to experience discrimination and severe inequality. Women in Latin America and the Caribbean represent about 51 percent of the total population. Unfortunately, unemployment, underemployment, and low wages affect mainly women. Women also suffer more from social ills such as hunger and poverty, with the result that poverty has become increasingly feminized in the entire region. Additionally, the background of many women in prostitution includes every kind of family violence. Thus and criminals take full advantage of these circumstances to exploit women by sexually violating their human rights.

### **Interview Site**

All interviews were carried out while women were at the Health Department. The interviewers had no previous contact with the interviewees, and all interviews were voluntary. Many of the women had small children with them, and it was necessary to entertain the children while their

mothers were being interviewed. Children were given sweets, and provided with paper and crayons, so that they could busy themselves drawing. Some of their drawings have been saved as they provide insights into the children's emotional states. Most of the women became emotional during the interviews, and the interviewers provided solace as well as food and water for the women.

## **II - PROFILE OF THE WOMEN INTERVIEWED**

Natural disasters, such as the floods in Venezuela, as well as political turmoil, such as armed internal conflict in Columbia, were influential in creating conditions for women to be trafficked and sexually exploited. Economic circumstances such as economic crises in countries of the region, lack of resources for daily survival, lack of employment for women in their countries of origin, lack of employable skills and being solely responsible for supporting their children and other relatives made women vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Other factors instrumental in making women vulnerable to trafficking and sexual exploitation were family break-ups, verbal, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, and pregnancies. Fifteen percent (N=6) of respondents reported being abused as children.

Being distant from relatives also subjected women to a loneliness that was preyed upon by recruiters, traffickers and pimps. Frequently, the police harassed migrant women due to their illegal status. Language also made women vulnerable to recruitment into the sex industry. It might be assumed that Spanish-speaking women trafficked from one Spanish-speaking country to another are less vulnerable, but there are considerable language variations from one country to another, and women reported a lack of understanding at times about where they were being taken and what they would be made to do.

The same circumstances that made women vulnerable to sexual exploitation also kept them in the sex industry. When women entered the sex industry, the abuse and violence intensified and their health became more vulnerable. Suffering from constant verbal, emotional, physical and sexual abuse, they had little self-esteem and often abused alcohol and sometimes drugs. Fear pervaded their lives, they were afraid that they would be discovered to be in prostitution, and they were forced to lie constantly. Police harassment and societal stigma increased their emotional distress, loneliness and marginalization. Loss of identity as a consequence of foreign women's illegal status was also a problem. Government officials who discriminated against them because they were women, because they were immigrants, and because they had no legal papers constantly abused Latin American/Caribbean women. They also suffered from poverty and the inability to provide properly for their children, parents and siblings.

Forty-seven percent (N=19) of women entered prostitution between the ages of 19-30; 41 percent (N=17) entered prostitution between the ages of 31-43; and 12 percent (N=5) were younger than 18. Only one woman reported having been in prostitution before migrating. The average length of time that women spent in prostitution was from 1-8 years, with 31 percent (N=13) reporting longer periods of 12-32 years. Most had been in the sex industry in urban locations, although some women reported that they had engaged in prostitution in rural areas and near military bases. The types of prostitution establishments were listed as popular types of bars, nightclubs, popular and middle class brothels, high-class nightclubs and brothels, and brothels in the Caribbean islands.

At the time of interviewing, most of the women interviewed (N=23) were between the ages of 24-40. Four women were younger than 25, with the youngest being 19, and 14 women were between the ages of 40-59. In addition to speaking Spanish, 3 women spoke English and one Italian. Twenty-two of the women interviewed had never finished high school and 6 had only

primary school educations. Most of the women interviewed had more than one child, and 29 respondents reported 2-6 children.

Forty-six percent (N=19) of the interviewees took first jobs as domestic workers. In fact of the total 41 women interviewed, only 2 had never engaged in domestic work at some point. Ninety-five percent (N=39) of the women indicated that employment agencies, which specialize in looking for women to work as domestics, are conduits for women to be sexually exploited. This can happen directly through trafficking networks associated with the agencies, or indirectly when men sexually exploit women where they are employed. Women in prostitution who had formerly worked as domestics said that very often they suffered from sexual harassment and violence perpetrated by the men living in the houses where they worked. Two Venezuelan women interviewed said that when they started prostitution they were minors and were under “the protection of the owner of the place” where they worked as domestics. In addition to domestic work, some women reported having been street vendors, factory workers, cooks, hairdressers, nursing assistants and, one, a secretary.

Eleven respondents had been married, 14 were single, 6 divorced, and 9 were cohabiting (NR=1). Women from Colombia and Ecuador tended to bring their families to Venezuela, whereas women from the Dominican Republic sent back money to their families hoping that this would improve their financial circumstances.

Twenty-four of the Latin American and Caribbean women reported that they had been trafficked into Venezuela, and 6 of the Venezuelan women reported that they had been trafficked within the country. Women stated that their traffickers, pimps and bosses came from Columbia, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Goajiro (the region between Venezuela and Colombia), Spain, Portugal, Italy, and other countries in Europe. Fifty-one percent (N=21) of respondents reported that a member of their family had been involved in the recruitment process; 10 reported the involvement of a friend or male neighbor; 6 had responded to an advertisement or an agency solicitation; and 4 simply stated that “others” had recruited them. All respondents indicated that they had originally been drawn into prostitution for economic reasons.

### **III – RECRUITMENT, MOVEMENT AND INITIATION: RECRUITERS, TRAFFICKERS AND BUYERS**

Most of the respondents (N=35) reported that they realized almost immediately that they would be involved in the sex industry. Most of the women said that they had been recruited individually, with 8 responding that other women were recruited with them. Four respondents reported that a relative had been paid money by recruiters but they did not know the amount.

Thirty-nine women reported that they did not pay any money to the recruiter. Four reported that a relative had received some money ahead of time, but none of these women knew the amount of money the relative received. These 4 women were told that they would have to pay back the money advanced to relatives on a daily basis by engaging in sex with men, and that a portion of their earnings would be used to discount their debts.

When women were asked what they wished they had known about the sex industry before recruitment, the responses were revealing.

*“Everything about the way I live now, because it is nothing like what I imagined”*

*“Everything that has to do with this life and its implications.”*

*“Everything, because I studied, I made an effort over three years to get into a profession. At this point to have a decent life, I am forced to do this.”*

*“That I would have to surrender my body to a man for money.”*

*“That in living this life, I would find so many other women in such deplorable conditions.”*

*“To see myself subjected to circumstances against my will.”*

*“About the double life one ends up living and the illnesses to which we are exposed.”*

*“How to deal with aggressive clients, to avoid them hitting and abusing us”*

*“About people’s hypocrisy and nastiness, and for everything I have experienced with the clients, with the owners, with the other women — to have to forget one’s values and to suffer humiliation in this world.”*

*“That there would be nights and days not being able to sleep”*

*“About how sad and harsh this world is.”*

All 41 women interviewed stated that they regretted being in the sex industry. Nothing about the sex industry is what they would have wanted in their lives.

Women reported being transported by plane, bus, and car. Twenty-three traveled as a group, 16 traveled alone, and 2 did not respond. Not all women who were trafficked or migrated arrived in Venezuela directly. Some women added some details about the way they were transported:

*“I crossed the border with Colombia.”*

*“I went through Colombia and entered (Venezuela) via San Antonio, then to San Cristobal, and I arrived in Caracas.”*

*“I came with my mother and my children. It was a horrible journey. I thought they were taking us to some place in the country, but after so many days on the road and such unfamiliar roads, we got to a place called Petare which is near Caracas.”*

*“We were made to get out of the car near the police checkpoints, and we were forced to cross them on foot. Then we got back in the car.”*

*“We arrived and went directly to the hotel to talk with the owner, and we were initiated in this business the next day.”*

*“...it was horrible, I was not able to clean myself at any time during the journey. I was not even able to change my clothes.”*

*“I left without any money on me. I only ate two bananas and drank water; I had nothing else to eat throughout the journey which lasted many days. In a small bag I was carrying a change of clothing, my identity card and notes with contacts of personal women friends, who might be useful at some point.”*

*“We were told that they were taking us to buy clothing merchandise to be resold in our country, but they left us here.”*

When asked about freedom of movement, twenty-six percent (N=11) indicated that they were not free to move around because they did not hold identification papers and were confined on a farm. Sixty percent (N=25) reported that they had relative freedom of movement, but were not allowed out of the sex establishments after 6:00 p.m. (NR=5).

Half of the respondents reported that other women in the sex establishments taught them how

to behave with male buyers and about the kinds of sex that men would demand. Others reported that the establishment owners and managers “tutored” them, and still others that they learned what to do from a relative or woman friend, or simply picked up the behavior themselves. Thirty-three women stated that they were asked to do things that made them feel uncomfortable such as simply having sex with clients, anal sex, oral sex, same-sex acts, and sex with drugs.

### **A. Profile of Pimps\* , Recruiters, and Traffickers**

Thirty-six women said that recruiters, traffickers, and pimps or “bosses” were different persons. Women also used the terms “supervisors,” “administrators,” and “owners and managers.” Most respondents reported that these “bosses” were men, although some stated that there were a few women in these categories. The women spoke about the traffickers, pimps and “bosses” according to nationalities, and as either Venezuelans or foreigners. Traffickers were Colombian, “Goajiros,” Latin, Spanish, and Venezuelan. “Bosses” were described as Colombian, Dominican, European, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and Venezuelan. Only Venezuelans were reported to be pimps.

Four respondents reported that they had a sexual relationship with the manager or owner. Twenty-four women were supervised on a daily basis by the manager, 8 by the owner, and 2 by “administrators” (NR=7). Some women were paid directly by clients, some in turn had to give the money to the owner, some collected from the “cashier,” some from the manager, administrator and “waiter.”

Women reported that almost half of the “bosses” were involved in other businesses such as gambling (*banca de caballos* - “horse banks” or illegal betting places), hotels, restaurants, bars and pool halls. Women stated that 20 percent of the “bosses” were involved in other criminal activities in addition to prostitution, such as trafficking and selling drugs, and that some of the “bosses” attempted to engage the women in these criminal activities. Several of the women reported that they were forced to distribute drugs outside the brothels, and to participate in muggings. Some of the “bosses” had international networks or connections, for example in Spain or the United States, and set up “special [sexual] services” for international clients from Canada and Japan who had been referred by their international associates and friends.

### **B. Profile of Buyers**

Buyers came from all age groups, and were between the ages of 17-80. The majority of clients were married. Women reported that buyers came from different races and nationalities: African, African American, Arab, Asian, British, Brazilian, Canadian, Chilean, Colombian, Cuban, Dominican, Dutch, Ecuadorian, French, Italian, German, Mexican, Peruvian, Puerto Rican, Portuguese, Spanish, Trinidadian, Uruguayan, U.S. white American, and Venezuelan. Women reported that the level of education of buyers ranged from illiterate to PhDs.

The majority of men had completed high school or university, and a significant number had attained doctoral degrees. Occupations of buyers included accountants, artists, doctors, engineers, executives and business owners, factory owners, lawyers, managers, manual workers, mechanics, military, peasant farmers or *campesinos*, sportsmen, street vendors or *buhoneros*, taxi drivers, technicians, university professors, and waiters.

Women reported that they engaged in 1-10 paid sexual contacts daily. According to respondents, the number of clients varied according to the woman’s age and the time she had been at the brothel. Three women reported that the number of paid sexual contacts of *other women* ranged from 18-20, and 2 said that it ranged from 20-40. Women who had to engage in as many as 20-40 paid sexual contacts daily were to be found in brothels of a marginal category.

Women reported that buyers demanded all kinds of sexual activities including oral, anal, sadistic sex and orgies. When asked if the clients expected women to do whatever they wanted, 60 percent (N=25) of respondents said yes.

Women voiced the following opinions about the men who paid for sex:

- That they are dirty
- That these are men incapable of getting a woman to have sex without paying
- That these men are sexual perverts
- That men could be more human if they knew themselves and if they knew women
- That these men have problems
- That these men do not acknowledge women as persons
- That these men are crazy, sick, swinish, and unsatisfied
- That such men are not worthwhile
- That these are men have empty lives, look for novelty, new experiences, and that many of them use drugs
- That they are cruel and mean
- That they are insatiable, full of fantasies and repressed
- That men who like anal sex are homosexual and hide their sexual preference because they are 'machista'
- That these men do not have partners, or they want a change from their wives
- That these men have no shame and are hopeless
- That each person has his reason for his behavior, and she does not judge the men

Women voiced the following opinions about what men thought of them and other women in prostitution:

- Men think the women are trash, but the women think of themselves as persons
- That they are whores
- That they are sexual objects
- That they are worth nothing
- That they are in prostitution because they like it
- That prostitutes are simply in a job like any other
- That they are bad
- That they are social garbage
- That they are women without feelings and materialistic
- That they do not deserve respect
- One woman does not care about what the clients think of her

Women were asked several questions about sexually transmitted diseases and clients' use of condoms. Only 8 women stated that the establishment screened the clients for disease, but it was not clear how the establishments carried this out.

Although 28 of the women stated that men used condoms, only 7 reported that men used them voluntarily. Half (N=20) of the women interviewed reported that when men were asked to use condoms, they did not comply. Various tactics that women used to get men to wear condoms were: persuasion and insistence; that condoms were compulsory and one of the house rules; that money given to the women before sexual activity would not be returned if a man refused to wear a condom; and that condoms were a way of keeping healthy.

The reasons that male buyers gave for not wanting to use condoms varied. They said that they were not sick; that condoms irritate and harm their skin; and that sex is more pleasurable without a condom. Twenty-six women reported that if men wanted sex without a condom, women were expected to comply with their wishes. One woman stated that men forced her to comply because she was very young.

When women reported that they were unable to insist that men wear condoms, it was because men refused, were physically stronger, assured women that they were healthy and some women trusted what men told them, threatened not to pay, promised some women alcohol, and paid more to have sex without a condom. Seventy-three percent (N=30) of the respondents reported that men paid more for sex without a condom.

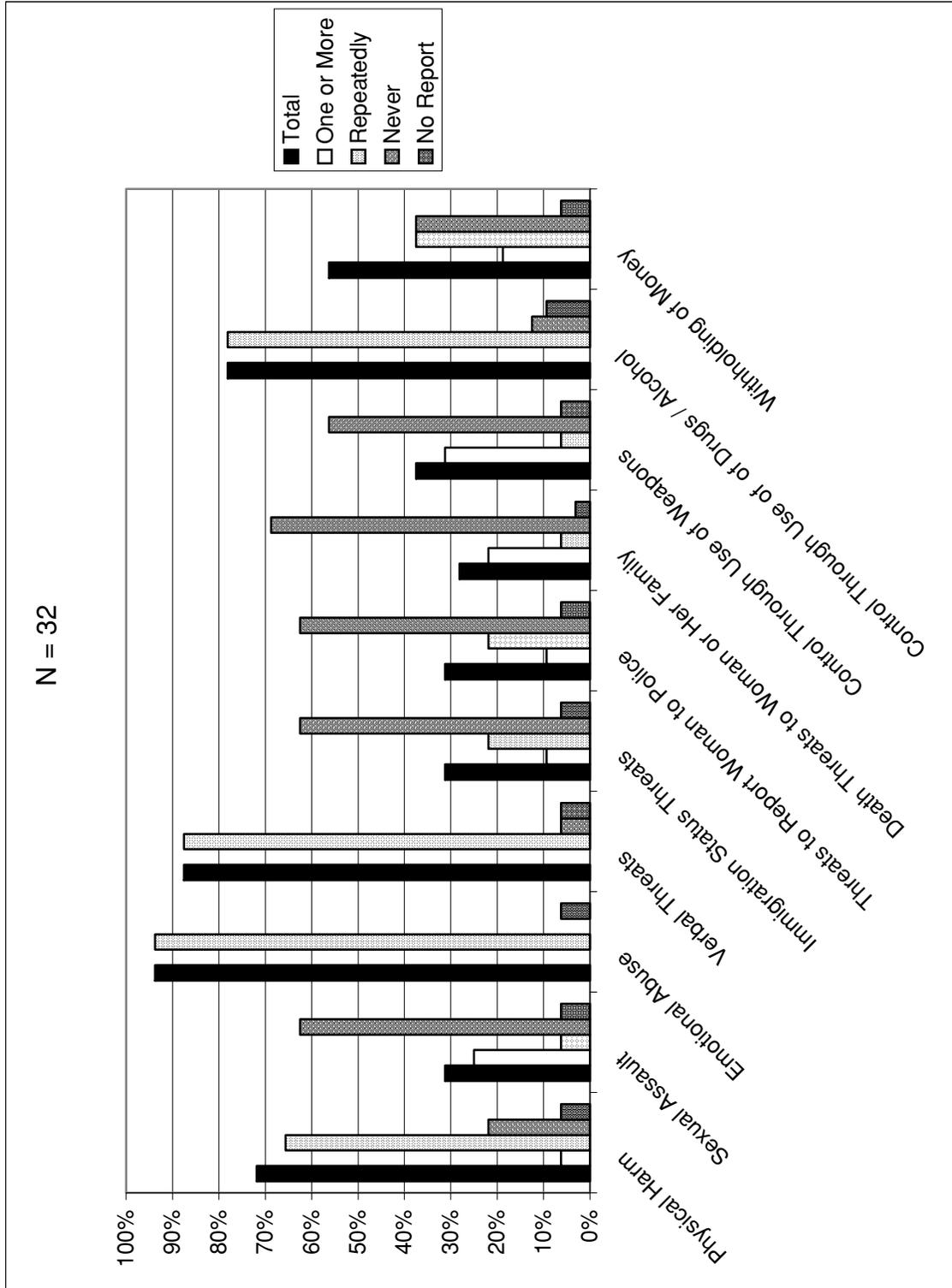
Condoms were obtained in various ways: women bought condoms at the drugstore and then sold them to the clients; some establishments sold condoms to clients; sometimes, vendors came to the sex establishment to sell condoms; and a number of women bought condoms from Ambar, a pro-sex work organization in Venezuela promoting prostitution as legitimate labor.

Ninety percent (N=37) of women reported violence inflicted by clients. Guns hurt four, and four others reported that clients used fists, baseball bats and room furniture to inflict violence on them. One woman had been strangled and 15 were threatened with firearms. When they were asked whether there was anything they were able to do about the violent treatment of the clients, 17 women said that the doorman and the *compañeras* (other women in prostitution) helped them; 6 stated that the owners and managers intervened; 4 stated that the establishment employed security guards for that type of situation; 8 women said that they had to defend themselves; 2 stated that they were unable to do anything and no one helped them; and 4 did not respond. When asked if they ever felt they would be killed by one of their clients, 46 percent (N=19) reported yes.

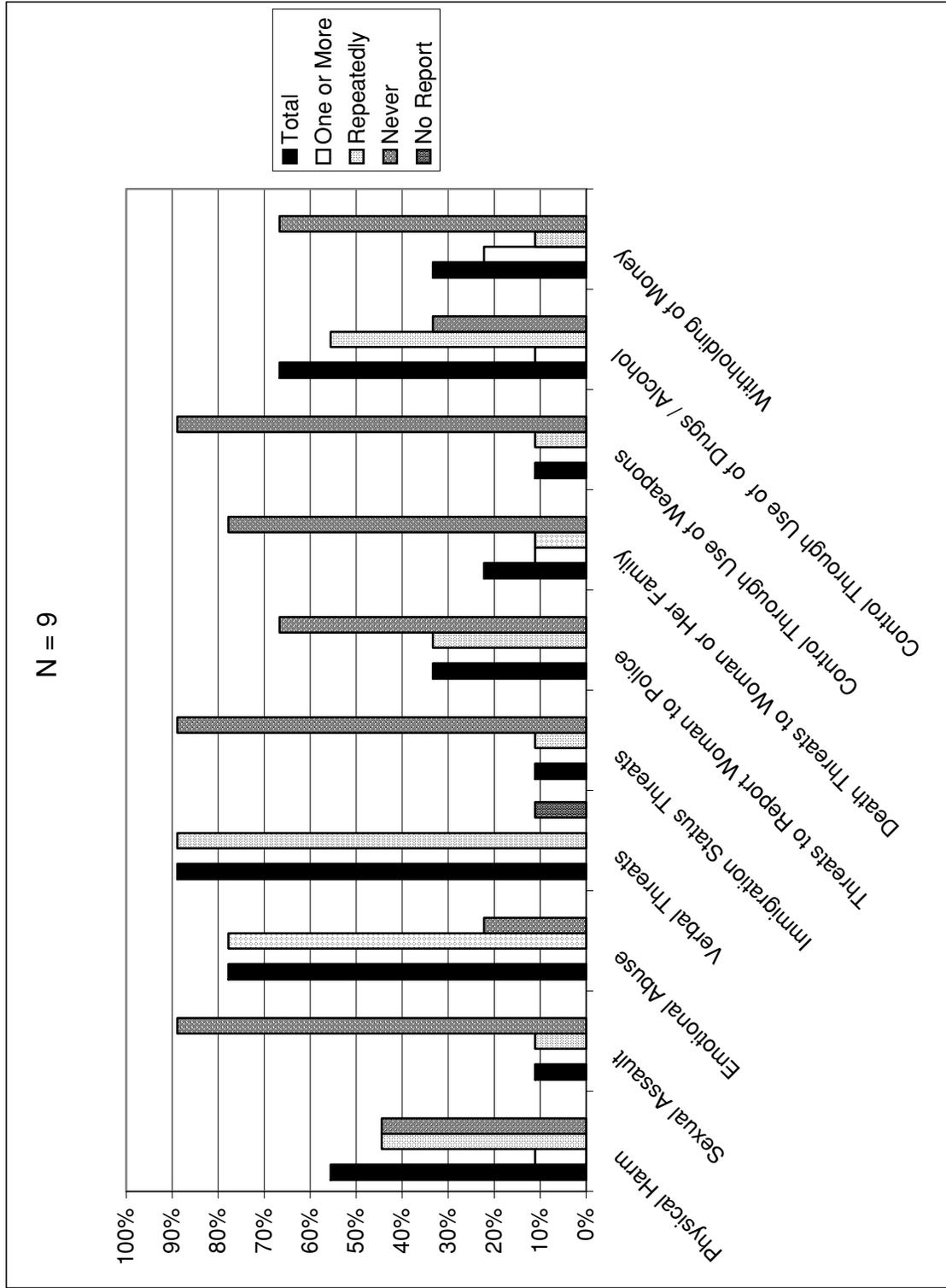
#### **IV – VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

The larger picture of violence against women comes from not only the buyers, but also from recruiters, traffickers, pimps and “bosses” who abuse women. Figure 1 below provides a picture of the types and frequency of violence experienced by both Latin American/Caribbean and Venezuelan women in the sex industry, and the means of control and threats that were used against them.

Latin American and Caribbean Women Figure 1 - Violence, Means of Control and Threats by Recruiters, Traffickers, Pimps and "Clients"



Venezuelan Women Figure 1 - Violence, Means of Control and Threats by Recruiters, Traffickers, Pimps and "Clients"



Seventeen percent (N=7) of respondents added that pornography was used against them and that they were shown pornographic videos in the process of engaging in sexual activities with the buyers. One male worker in the brothel filmed a woman having sex with a client and showed it to the other women in the brothel. One woman thwarted a client's attempt to produce pornography of her, because she knew he would blackmail her with it.

In general, the rates of violence, threats and control reported by Latin American/Caribbean women are higher than those reported by Venezuelan women. In almost all categories in which both groups of women can be compared (physical harm, sexual assault, bodily mutilation, emotional abuse, death threats, control through use of weapons, and control through use of drugs and alcohol), women from other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean experience the highest rates of violence.

Women were also asked if they had witnessed violence done to *other women* in the sex industry that they knew, or with whom they were acquainted. In general, women from Venezuela reported higher rates of violence done to *other Venezuelan women* than to themselves. For example, Venezuelan women reported that 78 percent of *other Venezuelan women* suffered physical violence, as opposed to 56 percent when they reported about themselves. Likewise, Venezuelan women reported that 41 percent of *other Venezuelan women* experienced sadistic sex, as opposed to 26 percent when reporting about themselves. This discrepancy in rates may be due to several factors, the most obvious being that women who were interviewed had great difficulty when they self-reported the violence that was done to them.

Women's daily life was controlled. The women interviewed described a typical day in the brothel, massage parlor, or sex establishment. All the women reported that they followed a timetable, and then gave an accounting to the person in charge, or supervisor. In some establishments, women had to sign in on arrival and sign out when leaving. At the brothel, they changed clothes, took a bath and fixed themselves up. Most were required to appear partially or totally naked. Women in these establishments talked among themselves while they waited for clients who would select them for sexual activities. Some women took buyers to rooms in the brothel, whereas others would go with the client to a hotel. In some establishments, the owner made women sign forms, registering everything that happened and the money they received. If women refused to do this, they would be summarily dismissed from the establishment. Women in bars and nightclubs were given drink tokens in order to encourage the buyers to drink with them. When the women had been in the establishment for many years, the owner might appoint them as supervisors of other women in the establishment.

Some women were promised extra money for recruiting women into the sex establishments. "*They promised to pay me for each woman I brought to the establishment.* "

### **A. Strategies of Survival**

Women coped with their violent and sexually exploitative situations in various ways. Of the 41 women interviewed, 37 reported that they tried to avoid difficult situations. Several used street smarts and forceful tactics stating that "*I become aggressive with the clients,*" and "*I try to be craftier than my clients and the other women in streetwise behavior and mental sharpness.*" Women also went to church to pray. Others cried, took painkillers, went for walks, watched television, talked with people, and did not go to the sex establishment outside of "working" hours. Other women stated that "*I avoid all personal contact,*" and "*I isolate myself in my home.*" One reported, "*I try to find comfort in other women.*"

Seventy-one percent (N=29) of the respondents reported that they used drinks or drugs to escape the reality of sexual exploitation. Of those who took drugs, several mentioned marijuana,

cocaine and “perico,” (a mixture of different left-over drugs). Sixty percent (N=25) of the women began abusive drug and alcohol use after entering the sex industry. Only 5 women reported substance abuse before prostitution.

When asked what they hated most about prostitution, respondents stated:

*“Everything related to the world of prostitution”*

*“I feel that my body rejects everything that has to do with that world.”*

*“The drunk clients”*

*“The sleepless nights and the wasting effect on my health”*

*“The sexual harassment by the men who believe they can put a price on us”*

*“Having sex with the clients. Anal sex is the worst.”*

Some of the strategies women used to avoid engaging in specific sex acts they hated most were: lying to the buyers, setting limits with clients, going to the bathroom and talking about different things, claiming to suffer from a heart condition, and *“caressing and seducing the buyer with sweet talk.”* One woman stated: *“The woman must always be crafty, and that is how she behaves with them [buyers].”* Another woman remained vigilant by *“...watering down the drinks I have with the client.”* Another woman reported: *“Sometimes they [strategies of avoidance] work, but other times they did not work and the clients denounced us to the person in charge of the establishment.”*

Women also engaged in actions to make their conditions better on a day-to-day basis. Many women concentrated on ways of saving money. Some organized themselves to approach the owner for a raise in pay. Others saved their drink tokens and, when they had collected 100-200, exchanged the tokens for money. Some women gave loans, or *bolsos*, to each other. One woman saved money by cleaning up the room *“...so that the room charges do not go up.”*

One of the few ways for women who have been in prostitution to escape the daily sexual exploitation is to move “up” to madam or supervisor status. Six women were promised that they would become a madam provided that they cooperated and fully carried out their duties in the sex industry. Other women who became madams were promised better venues. *“They promised to take me to Spain to be in charge of an establishment. I have been in charge of establishments in Caracas.”*

Seventy-three percent (N=30) of respondents, at some point, did attempt to escape the brothel/bar/massage parlor/nightclub. One woman stated: *“I always think of leaving.”* Some of the women tried *“...to acquire a skill in something else.”* Another *“... began to sell clothing.”*

Respondents also reported that *other* women in the sex establishments attempted to escape from the establishment through various means:

*“They got a man who is taking them to cohabit.”*

*“They look for another job.”*

*“They spend time saving.”*

*“Some women have been trafficked to Curacao.”*

*“Some become “buhoneras” (street or market vendors)”*

*“They manage to find people who help them out of prostitution.”*

There were consequences if women were caught trying to leave the sex establishments.

*“They used to beat me if I attempted to escape from the place where they had me locked up.”*

*“The owner stopped me from working for 8 days”*

*“They would not pay me.”*

*“The deceit grows, my self-esteem decreases each time.”*

Twenty-six women reported that clients *offered* to help them leave prostitution, saying that they would help them with housing and children, and proposing that women live with them. Sixteen women reported that clients offered them money. One woman was offered a job in a client’s business. Another was invited to go to Spain. Some buyers proposed marriage. But there were also consequences to this “help.” Eight women had to make promises to clients.

*“I promised to move in with him.”*

*“I told him I would comply with his whims.”*

*“I assured him that I would go to bed with him.”*

*“I offered to have sex exclusively with him.”*

However, since all the women interviewed were still in prostitution, apparently these “promises of help” did not materialize, or did not last long.

Women reported what they told, or did not tell, their family and friends about their life in prostitution. Seventy-three percent (N=30) of the women stated that neither their family nor their friends knew that they were in prostitution. *“They think that I do something else.”* One woman told her family that she waited on tables at a bar. *“They know that I work as a waitress, but they do not know that I go to bed with the clients.”* A few women reported that their families and friends knew everything.

*“I told them, but they advised me to leave it.”*

*“Everyone in my family knows about it, they want me to leave it and find something else.”*

However, 73 percent (N=30) of the women maintained contact in some way with their families and friends during the time they were in the sex industry. There were restrictions, however, on this contact. *“They do not allow me to travel to see my family. If I do it, they do not pay me for that day.”* Fourteen women reported that their friends were also linked to the sex industry, and some were introduced to the sex trade through these friends. Five women reported they had no friends, and one stated that she *“... distrusted everybody.”*

## **B. Professionals and Police**

Two women reported being forced to have sex with doctors to whom they went for treatment. One doctor blackmailed the woman into sex by threatening to tell her husband about her laboratory results. Six women were forced to have sex with policemen.

*“A policeman blackmailed me over my documents.”*

*“...when they raid the establishment, because I do not have papers.”*

*“They come to the brothel looking for free sex.”*

Eleven women also reported that the police had financial and other kinds of deals with the brothels, clubs, massage parlors, and bars. *“The owners paid the police so that they would not raid their business.”* At times, *“The owner asked us for money to pay the policemen.”*

Two Latin American women from other countries also had sex with immigration officers who promised them immigration “papers.” One respondent reported that one of the NGOs expected her to have sex with staff members, social workers and health employees at the Health Ministry in exchange for their assistance in obtaining health certificates from the Ministry.

All 41 women had been arrested at some point by the police and interrogated about trafficking and drug use. Reasons for their arrests included not having identity papers, not having a health certificate, and simply being taken within the process of general raids that police sometimes conduct on the establishments. Thirty-seven women were detained at police stations and held in places where the conditions were deplorable. These places were *“...dirty without toilet facilities, smelling bad.”* They were *“...always overcrowded [with] more than 40 women herded together regardless of the offense.”* The conditions were *“...unhygienic...all the women used to urinate there.”*

Only 2 women had been given any information about their legal rights, and only one had bail posted for her. *“Bail was paid by the woman in charge of the business, and this money was later deducted.”* One woman without identity papers was deported from Venezuela to Colombia, the country from which she had been trafficked.

## **V – CONSEQUENCES TO WOMEN’S HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**

Sexually exploited migrant women are more vulnerable to clients, owners of establishments, traffickers, bosses, and those in authority because they are foreigners. This vulnerability is exacerbated by the conditions of daily violence in which women live that have harmful consequences both physically and psychologically. Prostituted women often lose their identities and their self-esteem, and become desensitized to any kind of violent situation. Women are prematurely worn down, both physically and mentally, making it more difficult for them to leave the world of prostitution.

Because of their illegal status in Venezuela, there is a stigma attached to women from countries such as Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador and Bolivia. The difficult economic circumstances that affect the countries from which women are trafficked are well known in Venezuela. Venezuelan authorities, including policemen, Health, Labor, and Foreign Relations Department employees are well aware that many trafficked women enter and reside in the country illegally. Consequently the women are vulnerable to extortion at the hands of some government functionaries. There are high levels of corruption in Venezuela, and the Venezuelan media frequently expose and denounce cases of corruption. Added to trafficked women’s illegal status and stigma are the conditions of sexual exploitation perpetrated by traffickers, pimps, owners of establishments, bosses and others in the sex industry. Foreign women are exposed to more intense physical violence than Venezuelan women. Sexual exploitation affects both their physical and psychological health and, additionally, the stress of legal problems they often encounter may damage their health even further

Although the health sector in Venezuela is in severe crisis, foreign women attending state-run hospitals, maternity clinics, and emergency services have access to these services and are not subject to discrimination. Nevertheless, the deficiencies in the services do affect trafficked women in need of medical help. Venezuela does not have a comprehensive health service for women. Migrant women in need of medical treatment are referred to a variety of services,

### *Women's Health in the Migration Process*

During the actual process of migrating from countries of origin to Venezuela, twenty women reported illnesses and injuries. Women reported that the conditions of the journey made them ill and exacerbated previously existing health problems. Women listed headaches, colds, diarrhea, chicken pox, asthma, stress, high blood pressure, stomach ulcers, appendicitis, irregular heartbeat, gall and kidney stones, fibroids, syphilis, cervical lesions, ectopic pregnancies and road accident injuries. Fourteen women reported that their health was worse after migrating. Ten women found traveling conditions uncomfortable and difficult. Women traveled without money, a change of clothing, and with no access to washing or shower facilities. They were forced to walk continuously without a break and were threatened constantly by the traffickers to the extent that they were in fear of their lives. In addition to these stresses and fears, the women were anxious about the relatives left behind.

Since arriving in Venezuela, 76 percent (N=31) of migrant women reported that their socio-economic situations had not improved since they became trapped in the world of prostitution. Many women lived in one room, or in "ranchos" that are shanty dwellings of the poor, improvised from whatever materials become available to them. Five women lived in the sex establishments where they "worked."

### *Women's Health In the Sex Industry*

Half of the women interviewed reported that their health had deteriorated since being in the sex industry. Nineteen took medications such as analgesics, nebulizers, antibiotics, muscle relaxants and barbiturates to alleviate conditions such as headaches, asthma, ulcers, syphilis, kidney pain, bleeding, trauma caused by violence and nervous disorders.

When asked questions about reproductive health, pregnancy and abortion, women found it very difficult to respond to these questions. Half the women (N=20) reported that they used birth control methods such as the pill or condoms while in prostitution, although it was not clear whether these methods were used consistently. Two reported that they became pregnant as a result of being in prostitution, and 9 stated that they had undergone abortions while they were in prostitution. Six of the 9 reported that they had been forced to undergo abortions against their will. When asked if *other women* in prostitution underwent abortions and how many times, 13 of the respondents reported "always."

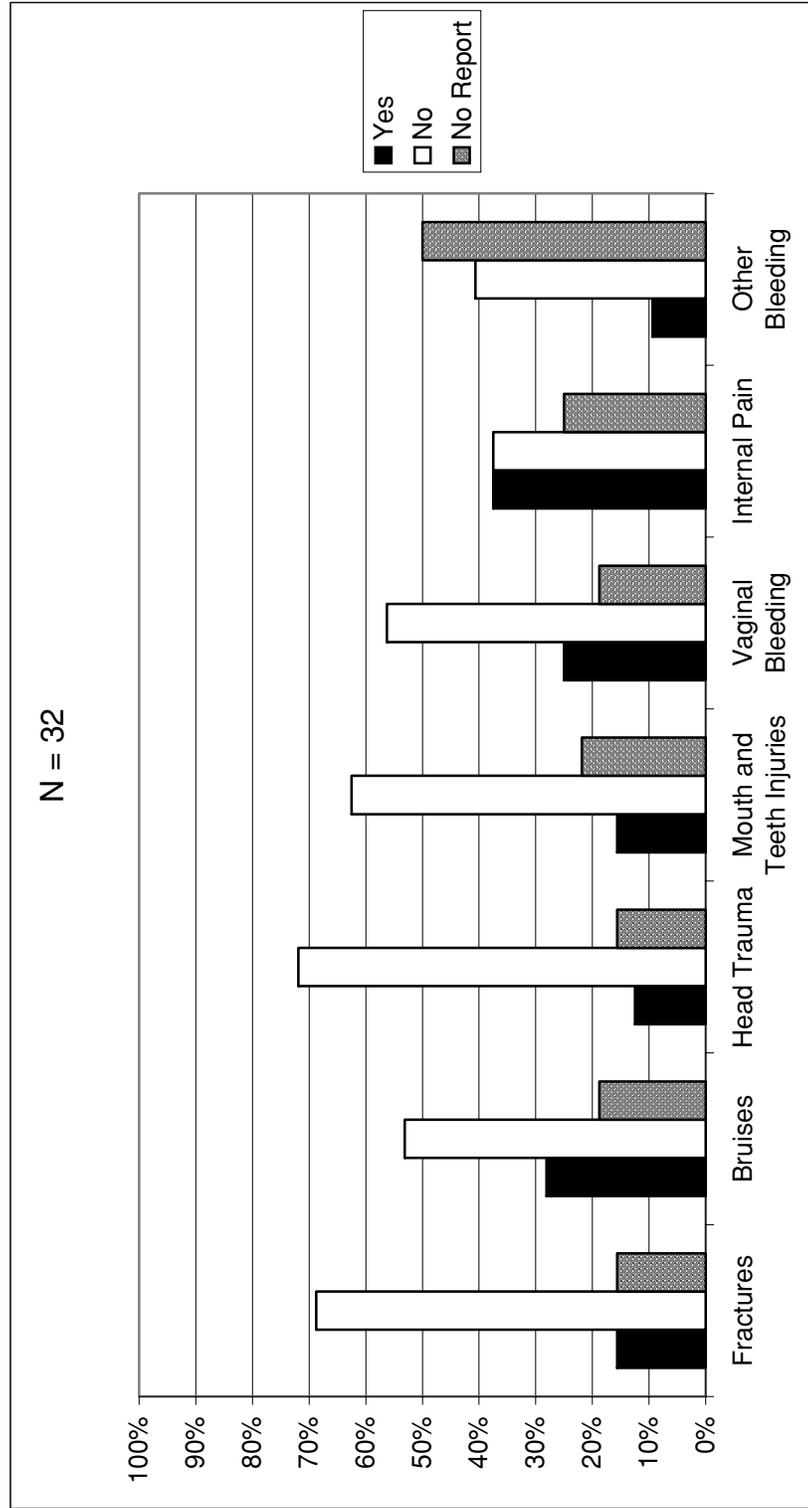
Women were also asked about sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Five stated that they had been diagnosed with and suffered from multiple bouts of syphilis or gonorrhoea. Fourteen others stated that at some point they experienced symptoms of STIs, such as vaginal discharge, itching, bleeding and infections in the genital area. Thirteen of these 14 had received creams, sprays and pessaries, either from the Health Ministry Service or from private gynaecologists. Four reported having been diagnosed with HIV. Twenty-eight women reported that they had knowledge of STIs and HIV/AIDS prevention from the media, relatives, other women in prostitution, a sex establishment owner, NGOs, Health Ministry officials, and doctors. As with other questions about reproductive health, women found it difficult to respond to questions about sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS and, from the context of the interviews, the interviewers hypothesized that more women actually had contracted STIs and HIV but were reluctant to acknowledge this stigma and burden.

All women interviewed in Venezuela for this study had eventually received certificates from the Health Ministry. Thirty-four women reported that they had been tested for HIV/AIDS at the Health Ministry, since it is compulsory for women in prostitution to have a test every 6 months to renew their health certificates. However, this did not mean that they received professional health

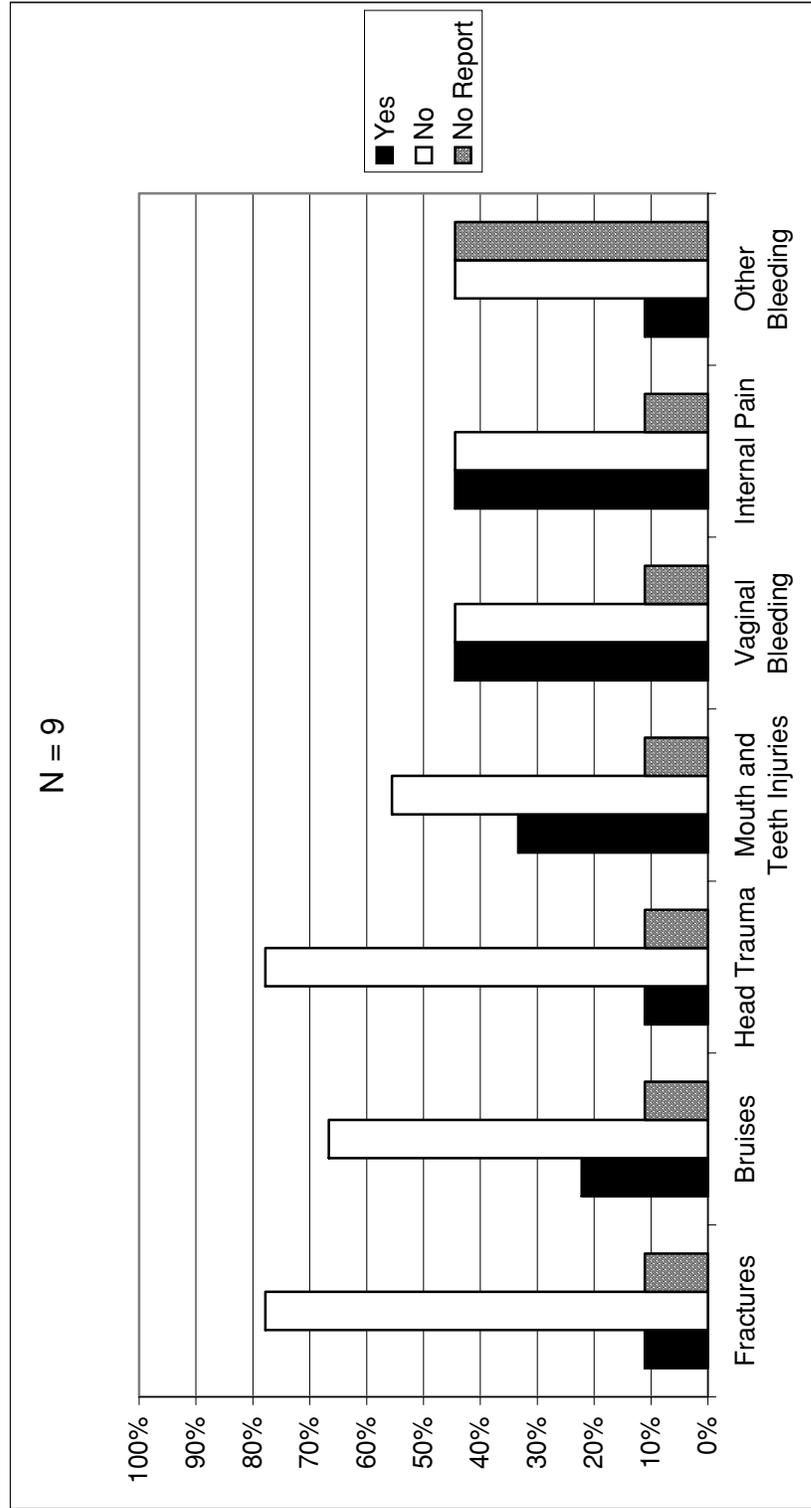
attention there beyond the testing and certification.

It is important to look beyond the issues of sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS to arrive at a more accurate picture of the health effects of prostitution on women in the sex industry. Most studies on the health consequences of prostitution are restricted to investigating the rates and causes of sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS for women in prostitution. Yet the greater health consequences of prostitution result from the injuries that women sustain in the process of abusive and violent sexual acts. Violence against women has been cited as the number one health issue facing women today, and it is important to bring prostitution within this ambit of violence against women. Thus it is necessary to examine the injuries sustained by women in the sex industry from the violence that is done to them as an “occupational hazard.”

Latin American and Caribbean Women Exploited in the Sex Industry Figure 2 - Injuries Suffered by Latin American and Caribbean Women



Venezuelan Women Figure 2 - Injuries Suffered by Venezuelan Women Exploited in the Sex Industry



### A. Injuries Sustained by Latin American/Caribbean and Venezuelan Women in the Sex Industry

During a brothel raid, a policeman fractured a woman's ribs and legs. Women with leg fractures were forced to "work" while wearing a cast. Bruises were caused by blows from clients, from falls, from fights with other women in the brothel, as a result of being beaten with objects and furniture in the establishments, from attempted strangulation by clients, and from beatings inflicted by pimps. Vaginal bleeding was caused by frequent sexual intercourse, and anal bleeding from anal penetration. Clients cut respondents' hands and arms with sharp knives, scissors, and razor blades during fights with the women in the brothels.

Interviewers thought the rates of injuries reported by women were lower than expected, especially when compared with the violence that respondents reported in Figure 1. From the context of the interviews, interviewers assumed that women minimized the nature and extent of the injuries they experienced as a consequence of the actual violence, possibly felt shame in reporting the actual physical burden of the violence as it required them to reveal the intimate bodily nature of their injuries, and possibly blamed themselves for some of their injuries.

It was, however, easier to reveal health information when women saw themselves as witnesses rather than victims. For example, women reported higher incidence of injuries in mostly every category listed (fractures, bruises, head trauma, mouth and teeth injuries, vaginal bleeding, internal pain and other bleeding), when they were asked if they had witnessed injuries to other women in the sex industry.

<b>Table 1 (N = 41)</b>							
<b>Injuries Suffered by <i>Other</i> Women Exploited in the Sex Industry as Reported by Lac or Latin/American/Caribbean (N = 32) and Ven or Venezuelan Women (N = 9)</b>							
		Yes	%	No	%	NR	%
Fractures	Lac	6	19	21	66	5	15
	Ven	2	22	6	67	1	11
Bruises	Lac	13	41	13	41	6	18
	Ven.	4	45	4	44	1	11
Head Trauma	Lac	8	25	19	59	5	16
	Ven.	3	33	5	56	1	11
Mouth and Teeth Injuries	Lac	2	6	25	78	5	16
	Ven.	1	11	7	78	1	11
Vaginal Bleeding	Lac	10	31	17	53	5	16
	Ven.	5	56	3	33	1	11
Internal Pain	Lac	10	31	16	50	6	19
	Ven.	6	67	2	22	1	11
Other Bleeding	Lac	2	6	16	50	14	44
	Ven.	2	22	3	33	4	45

Most women in the sex industry rarely sought help from medical professionals, using traditional medicines or alternative means such as herbs and medicinal plants. Sixteen reported that they took care of themselves when they were ill or injured; eleven received care from relatives and friends, and 2 from other women in prostitution. Women stated that they did not have the money to pay for medical consultations or prescriptions. Nor did they have the time, since many had children and were on call in the sex establishments. When women did have medical appointments, they were frequently unable to keep these appointments for various reasons, including their own lack of self-esteem and reservations about contacting medical professionals because of their fears of being treated badly. Four reported visiting a hospital for emergencies such as fractures, appendicitis, and a heart attack. Interestingly, women's major health concern was not about contracting HIV/AIDS but whether they would "get better" from ailments and injuries that they had reported.

Thirty-one women in this study proposed a future and free comprehensive health service that provides medications, clean consulting rooms, and respect for them as individuals — a service they stated that should be available at all hospitals nationwide. One woman requested residential centers for drug rehabilitation. The same 31 women insisted that health services should treat them humanely, and provide information and guidance about prevention of various illnesses and family planning. They wanted access to all kinds of medical specialists so that they will not die through lack of medical or hospital care.

## **B. Condoms**

Seventy-eight percent (N=32) of respondents had received information about condoms. Most had obtained this information at the Health Ministry, but others mentioned the media, the owner of a sex establishment, an NGO, relatives and co-workers as sources of information. Twenty-five women reported that condoms were "...the way to keep healthy, and to prevent sexually transmitted infections, AIDS and/or HIV." During the interviews, women stated that if they used a condom, they would not get AIDS, HIV and sexually transmitted infections. They believed that by using a condom, they "...are not putting [their] lives at risk." However, they did not acknowledge other risks they run while they are exposed to sexual exploitation, such as contracting tuberculosis and hepatitis, as well as injuries that are part of the "occupational hazards" of being in the sex industry. Use of condoms enabled them to get the health certificate issued by the Health Ministry so that they could continue in the brothels. Without the certificate, they could be arrested in the course of police raids on the brothels."

As reported earlier in this study, 28 women reported that men used condoms. Not only were women asked questions about whether men used condoms, but they were also asked about doubling up on condoms, whether condoms broke, if they experienced any vaginal irritation, abrasion or bleeding from condom use, whether they used the female condom, and if condoms were used by men who were considered to be boyfriends/partners, or their husbands.

In Venezuela publicity about the female condom is just starting but is not widespread. Due to their cost and difficulty in use, female condom rates of usage are low. Their availability on the market does not attract the few women who know about them. Most women believe that female condoms are uncomfortable, and also they are not widely for sale in many pharmacies.

<b>Table 2 Condom Use, Breakage and Irritation (N = 41)</b>												
	<b>Latin American/Caribbean Women (N=32)</b>					<b>Venezuelan Women (N=9)</b>						
	Yes	%	No	%	NR	%	Yes	%	No	%	NR	%
Use of More than 1 Condom at a Time	10	32	11	34	11	34	4	44	5	56	-	-
Breakage <sup>a</sup>	8	25	13	41	11	34	3	33	5	56	1	11
Causes Irritation to Vaginal Area <sup>b</sup>	9	28	13	41	10	31	5	56	3	33	1	11
Causes Vaginal Bleeding	1	3	6	19	25	78	2	22	2	22	5	56
Use of Female Condom	4	12	21	66	7	22	-	-	8	89	1	11
Used by Intimate Partner	5	16	17	53	10	31	2	22	6	67	1	11

### **C. Emotional, Behavioural and Psychological Problems Resulting from Sexual Exploitation**

The women interviewed said that they had experienced feelings of sadness and depression since they became trapped in prostitution. They reported that these feelings were caused by the emotional circumstances that they lived through resulting from intra-family violence, the perils of migration, and sexual exploitation. Women reported living in and through wretched and harmful conditions and never imagined that they would end up in prostitution. The following statements are indicative of their emotional state.

*“I have not been lucky in my life.”*

*“I have nothing left, but this.”*

*“What else can I do in my life?”*

*“Fate pushed me to this kind of life.”*

*“What is left for me but to remain here, and give my children a different life?”*

*“They think that I am useless, but I do not think so, but what can I do?”*

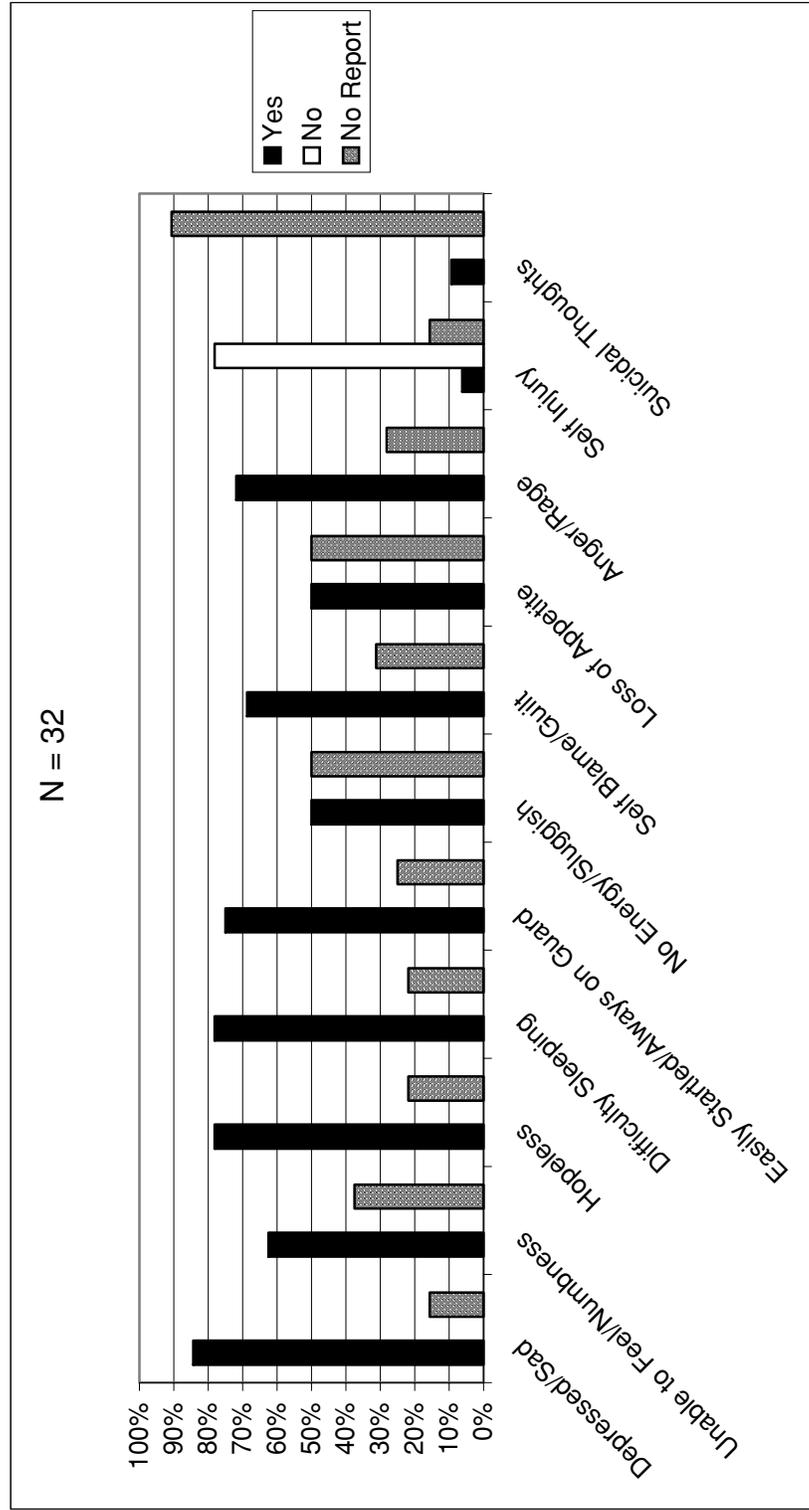
*“I have to stay here regardless of what they may think of me.”*

*“They say that I was born to this, but I have dreamed of doing other things in my life.”*

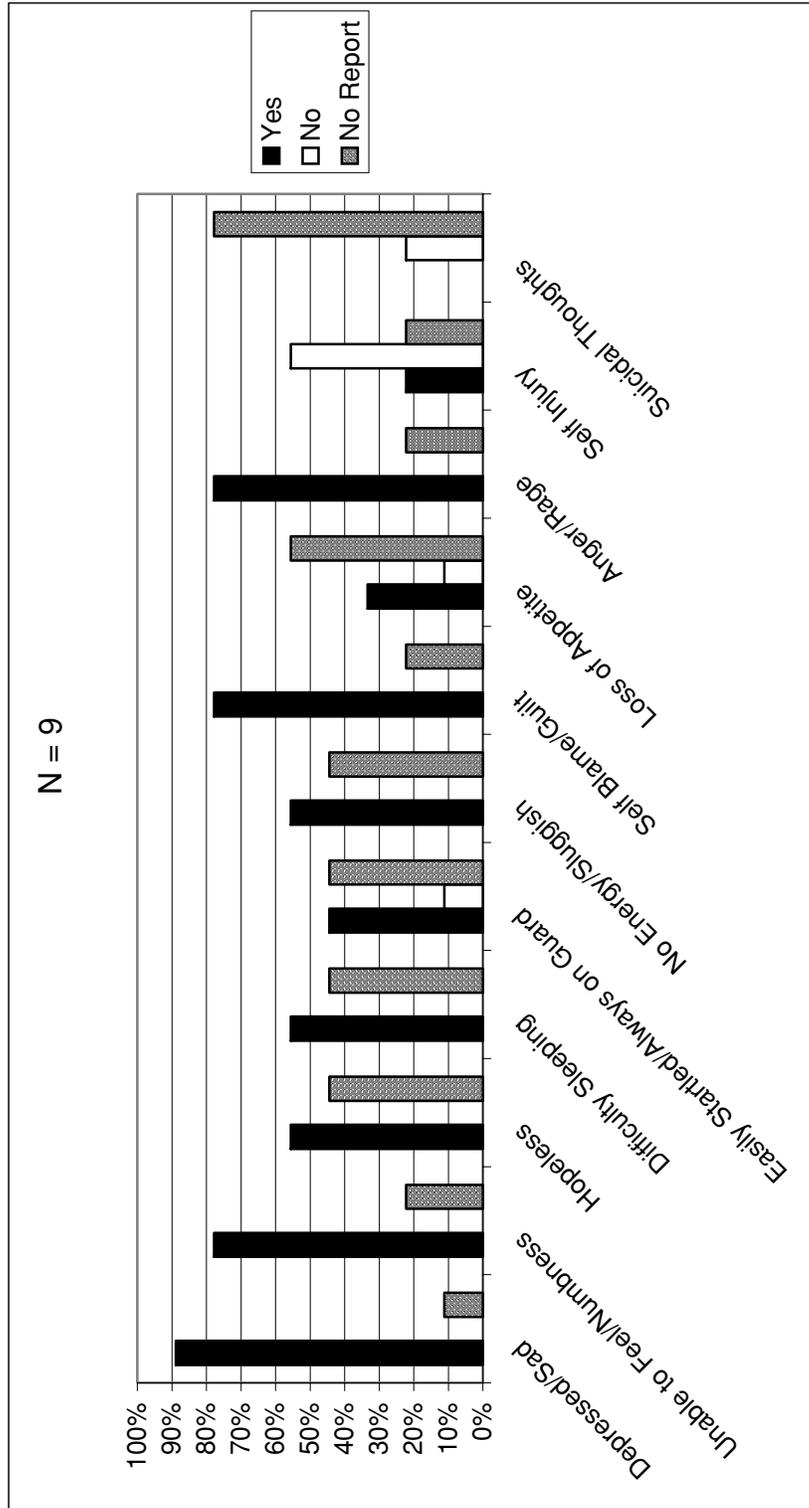
*“I would like to have a hairdressing salon, a small business, to make wigs. I like that, I have lots of ideas but...who is going to help a woman like me?”*

*“I feel that I am worth nothing in this life.”*

Latin American and Caribbean Women Figure 3 - Emotional, Behavioral and Psychological Problems of Latin American and Caribbean Women As a Result of Sexual Exploitation



Venezuelan Women Figure 3 - Emotional, Behavioral and Psychological Problems of Venezuelan Women As a Result of Sexual Exploitation



## VI - OPINIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

When the women were asked what they would tell women migrating out of their countries for work, 15 replied that women should migrate but not to “work” in prostitution, *“otherwise they will end up...as prostitutes.”* Ten other women advised women to remain in their own countries and *“look for a solution among your own people and family.”* Four women cautioned that women should think twice before migrating. *“Think about it. It can be a fraud and lead you to prostitution.”* And 4 others added that in evaluating the possibilities that exist, women *“should set targets and get benefits.”* (NR=8).

Thirteen women became involved in the sex industry because of financial need.

*“Other jobs do not pay well.”*

*“The government does not take care of women, there are no opportunities for work.”*

Fourteen women reported that it was lack of guidance, as well as emotional and family reasons that led them into prostitution. *“No woman likes this life style, they do it out of need, they are not aware of the harm that surrounds them.”* Two reported that they liked being in the sex industry because *“...this life style is like a jumping board to get money and to improve our lives.”* (NR=12).

Women were asked about whether prostitution should be legalized and redefined as legitimate work for women. Half (N=20) of the respondents said that prostitution should not be recognized as a legitimate job. *“It is not a job, it is a life style with horrible experiences. It would be the ruin of all women.”* Twenty-nine percent (N=12) of respondents stated that legalization would protect women, *“...because in this way the policemen would not be able to blackmail or abuse the women, and women would avoid being abused by the clients.”* (NR-9).

Women responded to a question about whether women in prostitution should be charged and arrested for practicing prostitution. Seventy-six percent (N=31) of women stated that women should not be arrested. *“If the government does not give them opportunities...it is impossible that they should be guilty of something like that.”* Two respondents stated that only those women in prostitution should be arrested who are on drugs. (NR=8)

Thirty-four percent (N=14) of the women stated that male buyers should be charged and arrested *“So that women can be respected.”* Forty-six percent (N=19) responded negatively about arresting buyers, stating that *“Men should be guided.”* Several of these 19 reported that if male clients were arrested *“...how could those women survive?”*(NR=8).

There was the most support for charging and arresting traffickers, pimps, and owners of brothels to be arrested. Sixty-eight percent (N=28) reported that all in these categories should be penalized.

*“They harm women, they deceive them.”*

*“They exploit women, they earn a great deal of money and leave nothing for the women.”*

Four reported that if traffickers, pimps and owners of brothels were arrested, *“The women would be left without a place to work.”*(NR=9).

Women were also asked if they wanted to leave prostitution. Seventy-one (N=29) of the women reported that they wished to leave.

*“I am going crazy trying to leave this. I do not want to drink liquor, or stay up all night, or be with men.”*

*“This is tiring, and each day we are more discriminated against socially. There are no free days, it is a form of slavery.”*

Three respondents reported that they did not wish to leave prostitution because they had not yet earned enough money to begin a new life. *“I still have not done what I should with the money I hope to get from prostitution, to set up my own business, and to finish building my house.”* (NR=9).

In order to leave prostitution, women reported that they needed good-paying jobs, education, training, help for their children, independence, guidance, drug and alcohol treatment, and self-esteem. The majority of women stated that they needed:

*“A well paid job to get money, to have my house and to help my family”*

*“Respect and work, in other words, different options”*

*“Viable businesses managed by women so that they benefit from their productivity and not others”*

*“Possibilities to become independent”*

*“To open residences where women can get help, cooperatives in all areas”*

*“Psychological help, detoxification for those on drugs and alcohol”*

*“To teach them to value themselves, to rescue their dignity”*

*“Housing policies so that they can live in dignity”*

*“It would be good if they would offer opportunities to study and train which were freely accessible.”*

*“Help to be offered to their children”*

When asked if, from their experience, women thought that most women in prostitution wanted to be there or wished to do something different, 61 percent (N=25) of the respondents reported that women in the sex industry wish to leave prostitution and do something different (NR=9).

*“Women would like to say never again, but they have no job, nor facilities to change their lives. They cannot stand it any longer.”*

*“Women wish to leave prostitution, but they are imprisoned by their own problems.”*

*“All women want to leave it.”*

Seventy-eight percent (N=32) of the women stated that they would not want their children, family or friends to enter the sex industry and be put in the position of having to earn money from prostitution.

*“I would not want them to live that horror.”*

*“God forbid! It is very painful and I love them too much, I would not want them to suffer.”*

Several respondents stated that they were in prostitution so that their *“...daughters get an education and have a better life.”* Only one woman stated that *“It depends on what they decide; who am I to say what is good or bad?”* (NR=8).

Regarding their own futures, 26 percent (N=11) were not optimistic or were outrightly despondent.

*“If I do not get out of there, it will be awful”*

*“The future is dark because all my illusions have ended.”*

In spite of all they had endured, 31 percent (N=13) of the respondents were hopeful.

*“Positive, since I hope that my daughters study and have a different fate.”*

*“That my children graduate”*

*“I see myself out of here!”*

*“Great, if I reach my goals out of this lifestyle.”*

*“If I come out of prostitution, it will be more stable.”*

To achieve their future goals, women reported that they needed financial help, education, training for employment, housing and a move to a safe place, and a new identity. Half the respondents reported that they needed to study, have a trade, or have their own business.

*“To learn a trade, to work in an office, to do something else so that I do not have to sleep with a man, without love, because it is then when one loses one’s feelings.*

*“To get an occupation that allows me to get my own house and to see to my family.”*

To the question: “Would you ever recommend your experience in the sex industry for other women?” 73 percent (N=30) respondents replied that they would not; 3 stated that if a woman has no alternative, “this would be a solution;” and 8 did not respond.

*“Because of the traumas, when you become first involved you are healthy and then it is going to harm you in many ways.”*

*“This is the worst, it sucks you in.”*

*“It destroys your life.”*

*“This is a terrible world and many women do not manage to get out.”*

Women reported the need for “respect for women’s human rights” and government policies that truly help women. Governments must eliminate ways in which women are exploited. Some respondents specified that education, information and publicity campaigns would help stop trafficking. Others stated that laws against trafficking must be consistently enforced, different governmental agencies should coordinate efforts and collaborate, and that there should be stricter penalties for traffickers. Several added that there should be “*Life sentences to those who prostitute girls.*”

In conclusion, women stated the following:

*“Please, help them!”*

*“Let’s hope these interviews will be useful so that new lives will arise.”*

*“Let’s hope that this will help us to leave this life.”*

*“I think it is important that governments are informed of the conditions women are in.”*

*“It is terrible...to accept...the scorn, the ill treatment, the sadness one feels, because of money, out of need. No one should “work” in that way.*

*“I thought nobody worried about us, that no one cared for us except our mothers, but I see that there are those who are fighting for us.”*

*“I was able to feel relief crying, answering questions about what I live through, and what I have lived through.”*

*“I think that the questions made me feel that a woman should value herself, for herself.”*

## NOTES

- \* In Spanish (Venezuelan) there are two translations for the word “pimp” — “chulo” and “proxeneta.” “Proxeneta” is the traditional word for a pimp. “Chulo” is a pimp who exploits women not only through his power and domination, but also by creating an emotional dependency in which women are treated as girlfriends, lovers and “special.”

**THE UNITED STATES  
INTERVIEW FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS  
A SURVEY OF TRAFFICKED WOMEN AND WOMEN IN PROSTITUTION**

by  
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## **I METHODS**

For this project, we interviewed a total of 34 women using a structured questionnaire: 18 women from Russia/Newly Independent States (NIS), 3 Filipinas, and 13 U.S. women. The Russian/NIS women were located and interviewed in Russia, after having returned from being trafficked for prostitution in the United States. The Filipino women were interviewed in Saipan, where they had been trafficked from the Philippines for sexual exploitation. The U.S. women were trafficked for prostitution within the U.S.\*

The respondents in Russia were interviewed by a team directed by a sociologist at the Institute of Sociology in Moscow. Interviews took place in St. Petersburg, Moscow, and various Russian suburban towns. The women identified themselves as Russian (13), Estonian/Russian (1), Russian/Baku/Azerbaijan (1), Jewish/ Ustyuzhniy (1), Ukrainian (1), and from Uzbek/ Murmansk (1). Twelve women originated from urban backgrounds; five came from rural backgrounds and one grew up on a military base.

The U.S. women were formerly or currently receiving social services and advocacy at a Minnesota-based social service agency called Breaking Free that serves women in prostitution. A member of the CATW team interviewed eleven of the women in St. Paul, Minnesota and 2 in Rochester, Minnesota. All the U.S. women originated from urban backgrounds. The U.S. women racially identified themselves as African American (6), Caucasian (4), biracial African American/ Caucasian (2) and Caucasian/Mexican (1).

The Filipino women were interviewed in Garapan, Saipan by a member of CATW Asia Pacific. The interviews were semi-structured and more open-ended; and the interviewer used thematic questions derived from the structured survey developed for this project. The results from these interviews are not reported as data in most instances; rather they are more qualitative in nature. Although we do not include data from the interviews in the tables (N=31) of this report, we have integrated the content of the women's responses into the text of this report.

## **II PROFILE OF WOMEN INTERVIEWED**

### **Education and Work Experience**

The educational levels of the Russian/NIS women ranged from middle school (at least 8<sup>th</sup> grade) to community college level education. Jobs and work experience of Russian/NIS women ranged from having no work experience or being currently unemployed to work as an administrator and manager, administrator at beauty shop, babysitter, cleaner, cook, courier, dance instructor, elementary school teacher, factory worker, governess, janitor, librarian, manager, model, passenger train conductor, pastry chef, salesperson, secretary, shop assistant, trolley conductor, waitress. Women also reported unemployment and unavailability of jobs. Thirty nine percent (N=7) of the Russian women had worked in the past but were currently unemployed or had never had a job in

Russia.

The educational levels of the Filipinas were 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 1<sup>st</sup> year high school, and secretarial school. In the Philippines they worked as a vendor of plastic bags, a waitress, and a ticket auditor.

The educational levels of the U.S. women ranged from those who had some elementary school (at least 8<sup>th</sup> grade) training to four women who had some college level education, including one woman with an associate degree in business. The range of jobs and work experience that U.S. women had before being drawn into prostitution varied, from no experience to work as a cashier, cook, deputy marshal, factory worker, fast food worker, forklift driver, greenhouse worker, hostess, janitor, mail clerk, manager, newspaper deliverer, nursing assistant, outreach worker, painter, retail salesperson, security guard, stock driver, runner for Chicago Board of Trade, waitress, women's advocate and telemarketer.

### **Background Information on the Situation of Women in Russia**

The Human Rights Watch Women's Rights Project reports that in the 1990s women in Russia suffered unemployment much more egregiously than male counterparts (Human Rights Watch, 1995). By the mid-1990s, women constituted 2/3 of the unemployed in Russia, a figure that reached 85 percent in some regions. Moreover, the government actively supported employment of men over women and refused to act on women's claims of sex discrimination. Coupled with unemployment was the elimination of social service programs for children, the elderly, and the unemployed. Data from 1992 reveal that 55 percent of Russian women who were single parents with children under 6 lived below the poverty line (Human Rights Watch, 1995).

The decline of Russia through the 1990s has been much more severe than that of the Great Depression in the United States, with real per capita incomes having plummeted by as much as 80 percent and Gross National Product (GNP) having fallen over 55 percent (Zuckerman, 1999). The combination of acute economic decline, the elimination of women from the workforce, the government failure to enforce sex discrimination laws, and the rapidly growing sex tourism and sex trafficking industry has resulted in immense sexual exploitation of young, economically vulnerable women from Russia as well as the Newly Industrializing States of Eastern Europe and a rapid increase in sexually transmitted diseases. (Feshbach, 1999).

### **Background Information on the Situation of Women in the Philippines**

In 1995, 15.3 percent of the Philippine labor force (or an estimated 4,200,000 women and men) migrated for labor, making the Philippines the largest Asian exporter of labor and making workers the Philippines' largest export (Jose and Erpelo, 1998). Remittances sent home by overseas workers have been growing annually by 35% since 1992, reaching US\$ 7.1 billion in 1996; and they are relied upon by the government to reduce the country's deficit (Jose and Erpelo, 1998). Sixty percent of all overseas contract workers leaving the Philippines are now women, with 2000 women leaving the Philippines per day (Philippines National Statistical Office 1994), a trend referred to as the feminization of labor.

Macro-economic policies promoted by international lending organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund which mandate "structural adjustments" in many developing regions of the world, have helped push certain countries to export women for labor, such as the Philippines, making them vulnerable to trafficking. Male demand, female inequality and economies in crisis – among other factors – lie at the nexus of sex trafficking (Daguno, 1998).

In the words of one of the respondents: *"Nowadays in the Philippines, if no one sends money home and no one is abroad, there'd be no hope. We'll starve."*

### **Age of Respondents and Entry into Prostitution**

At the time of the interviews, the Russian/NIS women ranged in age from 19 to 32, with a median age of 25.4 years. The U.S. women ranged in age from 18 to 49, with a median age of 34.4 years. The Filipinas were 21, 26, and 30. The age range at which U.S. women entered prostitution spanned 13 to 28 years of age. The question about age of entry was not asked in the Russian/NIS questionnaire.

More than half of the U.S. women were drawn into prostitution in their teen years between ages 13 and 18. Nine had been displaced from their home environment at very young ages between 1 1/2 and 14 years. They had run away from home, been put out by their parents, and been placed in foster care or removed by others from the environment they considered to be their home. Two others left their homes at ages 17 and 18 respectively after earlier teen pregnancies.

Forty-four percent (N=8) Russian/NIS women had been in prostitution in their home country, including various cities in Russia and in other countries, such as Finland, prior to migrating or being trafficked into the U.S. However, questions regarding the age of entrance into prostitution and number of years in prostitution were either not asked or not consistently answered.

The Filipinas interviewed were recruited in the Philippines for dancing in strip joints in Saipan where they were made to dance naked and pressured by the bar owner to allow customers to touch them. One of them, who had been prostituted after coming as a dancer, recently attempted suicide. The Filipinas told of Chinese women who came to Saipan to work in garment factories and were now also in street prostitution. The Chinese women had to pay exorbitant fees to leave China and for their work permits. Additionally, many were encouraged to gamble and use drugs in Chinese-controlled gambling halls and preyed upon by loan sharks, leaving them desperate to get out of debt.

### **Locations Where Women Engaged in Prostitution**

The Russian/NIS women interviewed had been prostituted in a variety of settings and at multiple locations including bars (11), brothels (9), massage parlors (8), strip clubs (5), with escort service or as call girls (4), clubs (2), peep shows (2), rooms (2), discos (1), as entertainers (1), public bathhouse (1), restaurants (1), street (3), boss's house (1), and trailers (1).

The U.S. women interviewed had been prostituted in a variety of settings with 8 women reporting having been prostituted in two or more different settings such as street (11), bars (4), through escort services (3), crack houses (3), saunas (2), strip clubs (1), and at truck stops (1). Length of involvement of U.S. women in prostitution spanned from 1 to 25 years, with a mean of 11.3 years. Two women reported ongoing involvement in prostitution.

### **Childhood Violence and Violence Against Women Prior to Prostitution**

Twenty-eight percent (N=5) of Russian/NIS women reported sexual abuse and assault in their teenage years, including rape by stepfather, father-in-law, acquaintance, boss and gang rape. One other woman reported that her father was in prison and her older sister was in prostitution. Forty-six percent (N=6) of U.S. women reported childhood incestuous sexual abuse by family members, with 3 of the women also reporting physical and mental abuse ongoing in their home setting, and 2 reporting additional stranger or acquaintance rapes in their adolescence. Many of the U.S. women witnessed violence and substance abuse in their homes; many were put out of, taken out of, or ran away from their home.

Low rates of past sexual abuse reported by the Russian/NIS women (28 percent) could be due to respondents' failure to recognize or characterize certain events in their childhood as

abusive, or a discomfort about talking about violence in the home, which is traditionally viewed as a private family matter. Respondents may also have minimized the violence in their lives or had become so accustomed to low levels or certain forms of repeated violence in their lives that are daily occurrences, that it is regarded as normal.

### **III RECRUITMENT, MOVEMENT, AND INITIATION: RECRUITERS, TRAFFICKERS AND BUYERS**

The methods of recruiting Russian/NIS women to leave their home country and enter the United States included newspaper advertisements for jobs (babysitting, chorus line dancers and waitresses) and employment agencies offering jobs as office administrator of a timber equipment trading company in the U.S., babysitters and entertainers/ strippers. None of the women knew at the time of job application that the jobs they applied for entailed prostitution. However, many realized quickly upon arrival that they had been deceived. One woman, offered a job as an office manager in a timber equipment trading company, described her plight:

*“As soon as I arrived to the USA, I was taken straight to the place where I had to work [in prostitution] for 2 months. Everything started in 4 hours upon my arrival.”*

Another who had been recruited to work as a model in a boutique said of the deception,

*“When I arrived, it turned out that such a boutique doesn’t exist.”*

Three women arrived as spouses of U.S. residents/citizens. One of these women was pimped by her husband after 3 months in the United States; another was pimped by her ex-husband to enter prostitution. Two other women reported being lured into the United States by men who prostituted them immediately upon arrival. One of these men had kept up a “romantic” correspondence relationship with our respondent for over a year and the other man had posed as a modeling agent offering our respondent a job at a boutique. Eight Russian/NIS women reported that they were recruited in groups of up to 12 other women to enter the United States, strongly suggesting that “job” recruiters also deceived these other women. A few Russian/NIS women came with or at the invitation of family members. When the living arrangements with relatives did not work out, these women had no financial alternative except to enter prostitution. The dominant picture of recruitment for the women we interviewed is that of male individuals—some strangers, some known and intimate, some in recruiting networks and industries—taking advantage of and deceiving economically desperate women.

The Russian/NIS women interviewed provided some feedback in hindsight of their ordeal in the United States. Many expressed that their naiveté led them to believe and blindly trust in the promises of their spouses/suitors and of those who recruited them. They thought that achieving employment and success in the United States was a guaranteed option. Desperation from poverty and hopelessness in their home country led many to throw caution to the wind. Many were ignorant about the immigration and employment authorization documents and requirements that were needed in order to secure legitimate employment in the United States. One of our respondents described the web they were tangled in:

*“It is a well-organized system, designed to get you confused and put you in debts. Prostitution is the only way to pay debts back.”*

Another woman pointed out how traffickers prey on those who are most vulnerable and disenfranchised:

*“... They are all professionals in this business. They select people who don’t have relatives or friends, people who cannot resist”.*

## Recruitment

Seventy-seven percent (N=10) of U.S. women interviewed were recruited into prostitution by individuals, including boyfriends, spouses, pimps, and bar owners. In a few cases young women followed girlfriends into prostitution when their living arrangements with relatives failed. The dominant difference between men and women who induced these women into prostitution is that men actively recruited and deceived women in order to exploit them, whereas economically desperate young women who entered prostitution in the United States paired up with girlfriends or followed the example of someone like themselves.

The following table is a summary and profile of the individuals and agents who recruited the women interviewed into the sex industry.

<b>Table 1</b>		
<b>Relationship to Person/Agent Who Recruited Russian/NIS Women from Abroad and U.S Women into the Sex Industry</b>		
	<u>Russian/NIS</u>	<u>US</u>
Friend/Neighbor/Acquaintance	1	5
Spouse/Partner	4	7
Family member	1	
Print/Media Ad.	4	
Business agency/Recruiter	2	
No one		3
Bar owner		2
Older men/sugar daddy		4
Pimp		3
Stranger	2	2
Total	14	26

*N.B. U.S. women reported multiple agents of recruitment*

The Filipinas were recruited in the Philippines by an unregistered recruiter called a “colorum.” The plan used by the recruiter was that the women would leave the Philippines as tourists to Saipan and would be given work permits when they arrived in Saipan. The work permit designated their employment as “dancers.” When they returned to the Philippines, they registered as contract workers and paid taxes. The women paid a fee to the recruiter and a fee for the work permit (\$US500-1000). The women were aware that they would be dancers in a Saipan bar; but they did not know that they would be expected to dance naked, spread their legs, lap dance and be touched by customers. The women interviewed said that bars are adding “VIP rooms” for male clients, and that women dancers are getting pressured into sex with customers. They told of some women who were held in confinement by bar owners and kept in restraints if they tried to escape. From dancing to prostitution was a slippery slope, that was worsened by men who abused the women’s vulnerability through loan-sharking, encouraging drug and gambling dependencies, and threatening to report them if they overstayed their visas. One Filipina reported:

*“Now they all want the girls to go to the VIP rooms. They push the girls...We are leaving the club because of pushing us to do VIP.”*

## **Movement**

Sixteen of 18 Russian/NIS women arrived in the United States by air; one arrived by ship; and one was smuggled into the United States from Canada in a truck with a hidden panel. Women entered the United States with a range of visa types including tourist (7), business (4), student (1), spouse (3). Three were unsure of their visa status. Once here, 10 of the 18 women (56 percent) reported that they were monitored and kept under varying degrees of surveillance in their location of prostitution and/or residence. Half of the women (9) did not have access to their travel documents. One woman described the state of helplessness and fear resulting from the tactics of the traffickers:

*“I don’t know English, had no documents, took drugs. They told me that they would kill my parents because they have complete information about them. I was always locked up. Besides,*

*“I was afraid to go out. It seemed to me that no one could help me and everything I was doing is disgusting.”*

Sixty-seven percent (N=12) of the Russian/NIS women and nearly half of the US women (38 percent, N=5) were moved from place to place in cities with intermittent stops in rural and suburban areas. They reported being in every kind of prostitution setting from massage parlors, the street, and the pimp’s or john’s house to bars, striptease joints, peep shows, escort services, and brothels. Half of the international women (9) reported that they were prostituted in immigrant areas in various cities.

## **Initiation**

The initiation of Russian/NIS women and U.S. women into prostitution differed in some fundamental ways that reflected their differing life situations. In answer to the question, “How did you get into prostitution,” Russian/NIS women gave two dominant responses: force and exploitation of their economic desperation. This corresponds to their descriptions of deception on the part of traffickers posing as employers and job brokers and also to their acute financial plight in Russia and in the United States.

The U.S. women, similarly, gave two dominant responses to the question of how they got into prostitution: opportunistic males who pimped them and the exploitation of their drug habits. In cases of women who reported that they got into prostitution to support a drug habit, all of the women had been victims of child sexual abuse or abusive and troubled home life as children, and/or hooked on drugs by boyfriends. A chain of abusive and victimizing events that diminished their choices resulted in their entering prostitution.

Most women learned what to do in prostitution from men and/or other women. However, the roles and culpability of men and women in initiating women differed vastly. Men initiated women into prostitution through force, rape, and intimidation. Whereas, women either accompanied girlfriends already in prostitution and imitated them, or pimps and brokers forced them to watch other prostituted women, in a sort of live pornography, as a way to learn what to do.

Mainly in the case of Russian/NIS women, “bosses” tried to get women to recruit other women. Five women reported that they were offered opportunities to recruit other women, such as friends or other “good looking girls” from their home country, into prostitution in the United States. Even with their own plight, most could not subject other women to prostitution for their own gain. Three refused, one oversaw other Russian women for a short time and quit, and one reported recruiting women during the time of the interview.

*“Once I got a supervising position over 5 Russian girls who didn’t speak English. They also had no idea where they were. I could not do this work, I felt sad about them.”*

### **Traffickers/Recruiters/Pimps of Russian/NIS Women**

Those characterized in our study as traffickers, recruiters, “bosses” and pimps of Russian/NIS women vary in their roles and national origins. A large number of those who recruited and initiated the trafficking of Russian/NIS women were Russian. In five cases, the trafficker or boss was a boyfriend or fake husband. Russian/NIS respondents provided descriptions of various levels of operators in the trafficking business, including those who acted as recruiters in Russia, convoys or “travel companions” during the migrating process, bosses, those who managed or collected their money, those who bought and sold women, those who acted as drivers or security guards.

Sixty-seven percent of women (N=12) reported that they knew or believed that their traffickers were involved in a larger organized network. These organized networks comprise anywhere between an estimated four to fifty members. Eight of these networks are reported to be multinational, including collaborators identified by the women as Russian, Jewish, Ukrainian and Arab; multinational networks from Russia, Poland, the Ukraine, the U.S., Canada, Syria, Turkey, Portugal, Cuba, Morocco; and “from everywhere—Europe, America, Africa, Russia,” according to one woman. Two of the twelve women reported that the trafficking or pimping network was comprised of extended family members, including a Turkish family operation and an extended Azerbaijan family that had been in this “business” a long time. One of the twelve women reported being married to one of her traffickers. Another one of the twelve reported being duped into a romantic “acquaintance” and eventually impregnated by a Russian trafficker who was connected with other men who ran a similar dating scam/scheme with other girls, in order to gain their trust and eventually traffic and prostitute them in the United States.

Three (17 percent) Russian/NIS women reported being trafficked by at least two individuals; including one who, together with her girlfriend, was pimped by her girlfriend’s lover and then eventually by the girlfriend herself. One woman chose not to disclose any details about their traffickers due to fear of reprisal from them.

Five Russian/NIS women reported that the trafficking networks or sex businesses in which they were involved had connections to various other countries. These connections involved the purchase, sale, and transport of women among those countries including Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic countries, Poland, Romania, and Albania, with new women arriving once a month. One reported that some women she knew were sent to Mexico. Two women reported that their Azerbaijan trafficker transported women from Moldova, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Russia to the United States.

The Russian/NIS women reported being supervised by those identified as bosses, pimps, boss’s girlfriend, security guards, managers and driver. Eighty-nine percent (N=16) reported that bosses, pimps, husband/pimp, driver and boss’s girlfriend collected the money they earned.

It has been increasingly documented that traffickers, pimps, and bosses are involved in other criminal activity, such as drugs and weapons trafficking, racketeering, gambling, and pornography as well as prostitution and trafficking (Richard, 1999; Raymond, Hughes, and Gomez, 2001). The Russian/NIS women interviewed were keenly aware of the deception, exploitation, and ruthlessness of the traffickers and bosses. However, most either did not know about or were afraid to report on the criminal activity of the agents and their networks.

### **Traffickers, Recruiters, Pimps of U.S. Women**

Twelve of the 13 U.S women answered questions about those who acted as recruiters, traffickers and pimps. Seven women reported that they were recruited and pimped by U.S. men. Five women said that they did not have any pimp.

Women respondents provided descriptions of various levels of operators in the sex industry, using descriptors such as pimp, escorts, “*guy I met in a bar*,” boyfriend, sugar daddy, a much older man, “*older men with whom I was in short term relationships*,” my mother’s friend, and a married man with children. Others described their pimps/traffickers as businessmen, a burglar, and drug dealers. Pimps were racially identified as Caucasian and African American.

Two patterns of traffickers and pimps emerged from these interviews. They were boyfriends and acquaintances of the women, and they were significantly older than the young women they exploited into prostitution. Six of these women considered one or more of their pimps as boyfriends at the time they recruited them. Five of the seven described their pimps as being much older than themselves, with age differences ranging from 11 years to 35 years. With the exception of one pimp who had a connection involving drugs to a well-known, recently indicted family of sex traffickers (Evans family), the women reported that the pimps operated independently of organized crime activity.

**Profile of Buyers: International and U.S. Women**

Men of all ages and from all classes and occupations purchased the women we interviewed. The women knew less about the marital status of the buyers (although they thought many were married) than they did about their nationality and occupation.

Russian/NIS women reported that male buyers ranged in age from 20 to 70 years old. The buyers included Americans (“white” and “black”), Jews, Chechens, Arabs, Turks, Azerbaijani, Yugoslavs, and Russian and Ukrainian immigrants. Some women reported that they had a hard time identifying race or nationality and one said that she wasn’t able to discern because she didn’t speak English. The majority of women did not know the buyer’s marital status; the remaining reported that anywhere from 40-70 percent of the men were married, and some had children. Several women were able to identify the occupations of the buyers, including commercial and criminal businessmen, blue-collar workers, and truck drivers.

The U.S. women reported that men who purchased them ranged in age from 15 to 97 years. National or racial backgrounds of the men that the U.S. women identified included “white”, “black,” Mexican, Native American, Nigerian and Vietnamese. About half the U.S. respondents guessed that most of their buyers were married. The buyers of U.S. women in this sample included airplane pilots, bankers, blue collar workers, business owners, car salesmen, carpenter, CEOs, chef, construction workers, electricians, firefighters, janitorial, lawyers, maintenance workers, painters, people in bars, police officers, president of an all girls school, roofer, sports players, truck drivers, friends and acquaintances of girlfriend and drug dealers.

<b>Table 2 - Profile of Buyers</b>		
	<i>Russian/NIS Women</i>	<i>U.S. Women</i>
<i>Age range</i>	20-70	15-97
<i>Race/Nationality</i>	Americans, immigrants from Russia and Ukraine, Jewish, Arab, NIS, Turkish American, Nigerian,	Americans, Mexican American, Native Vietnamese
<i>Occupations</i>	Business, blue collar, criminal	White collar, blue collar
<i>Marital status</i>	Mixed. Some unknown	Mixed. Some unknown

When asked about the numbers of male clients they had to service daily, and the kinds of sex acts they had to perform, both Russian/NIS and U.S. women were subjected to similar levels and kinds of sexual exploitation. The Russian/NIS women serviced between 3 and thirty men daily. One woman said that she *“sometimes served 10, but my record was 23 tricks per day. I could hardly walk after it.”* U.S. women reported having to service between 3-7 buyers daily. Those who used drugs stated that their number of buyers could rise to as many as 20-30 a day. One woman reported having encountered thousands of buyers in seventeen years of prostitution.

One third of the Russian/NIS women reported that buyers requested *“peculiarities that turned them [buyers] on, sometimes very humiliating”* including anal sex and other acts that women chose not to describe. The U.S. women reported that most of the requests were for oral sex or a combination of oral and vaginal intercourse. Some women reported requests for “kinky” sexual acts or to perform sado-masochistic acts on the men. Asked what the male buyers thought of her and other women they used in prostitution, one international woman replied, *“They didn’t regard us as women or people.”*

Women were offered virtually no protection against contracting disease from male customers. Ninety-four percent (17 of 18) of the international women reported that the sex establishments did not screen buyers or patrons for disease. Only 2 of the 18 were in places that maintained a policy of condom use. None of the U.S. women was in contexts—street, bars, massage parlors, and brothels—that screened men for disease.

The Filipinas described the men who frequent the strip bars as Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Bangladeshi, Caucasian, and American. Some are tourists, and others work in Saipan. They range in age from mid-twenties to middle-aged.

#### **IV VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

The minimal documentation of the harm and trauma of prostitution and trafficking may in large part be due to the fact that prostitution has not been recognized as a form of violence against women and the ambivalence, on the part of many researchers, NGOs and governments, to view prostitution as a violation of women’s human rights. This professional disregard parallels the earlier and common medical neglect of physical injury and trauma to battered women, a neglect increasingly documented and characterized by health researchers over the last 20 years (Taylor and Campbell, 1991).

Women in the sex industry who have been trafficked and prostituted suffer the same kinds of injuries as women who are battered, raped and sexually assaulted. However, when women are subjected to these same injuries in the context of prostitution, the violence is ignored or redefined as “sex.” “Rough sex,” sadism and rape – for women in prostitution, whether trafficked there or not — are often accepted or tolerated as “occupational hazards.” Moreover, just as people have commonly blamed victims of domestic violence for staying in abusive situations, they have also blamed women for not leaving prostitution. Our findings in these interviews reveal that violence against women in prostitution - in all of its physical, sexual, verbal, and mental forms - is endemic and serves to trap and control women in the system of prostitution by fear, poverty, use of drugs, preying upon their vulnerabilities, and the loss of life options. In the words of three international women:

*“They just broke me down, shattered my will and hopes. I was humiliated.”*

*“They didn’t push me to take drugs, they just made me an injection about 2 weeks after arriving.”*

*“The bosses...they used to say: “Remember, there was a girl working for us. You should know, she is not here anymore because she did something she was not supposed to.”*

Figure 1 below summarizes the multiple forms of violence, abuse, threats, and induced drug habits that johns, pimps, and “bosses” perpetrated against the women we interviewed in order to break their spirit and control and subjugate them within the sex industry. Both Russian/NIS and U.S. women suffered extraordinarily high rates of physical violence (84 percent and 100 percent respectively) and sexual assault (67 percent and 85 percent respectively), revealing that these internationally trafficked women and domestic women in prostitution were similarly at risk of great physical and sexual harm. This reported violence, moreover, corresponds with the extreme rates of violence reported in two surveys of U.S. women in prostitution and in a study of prostitution in five countries reported below.

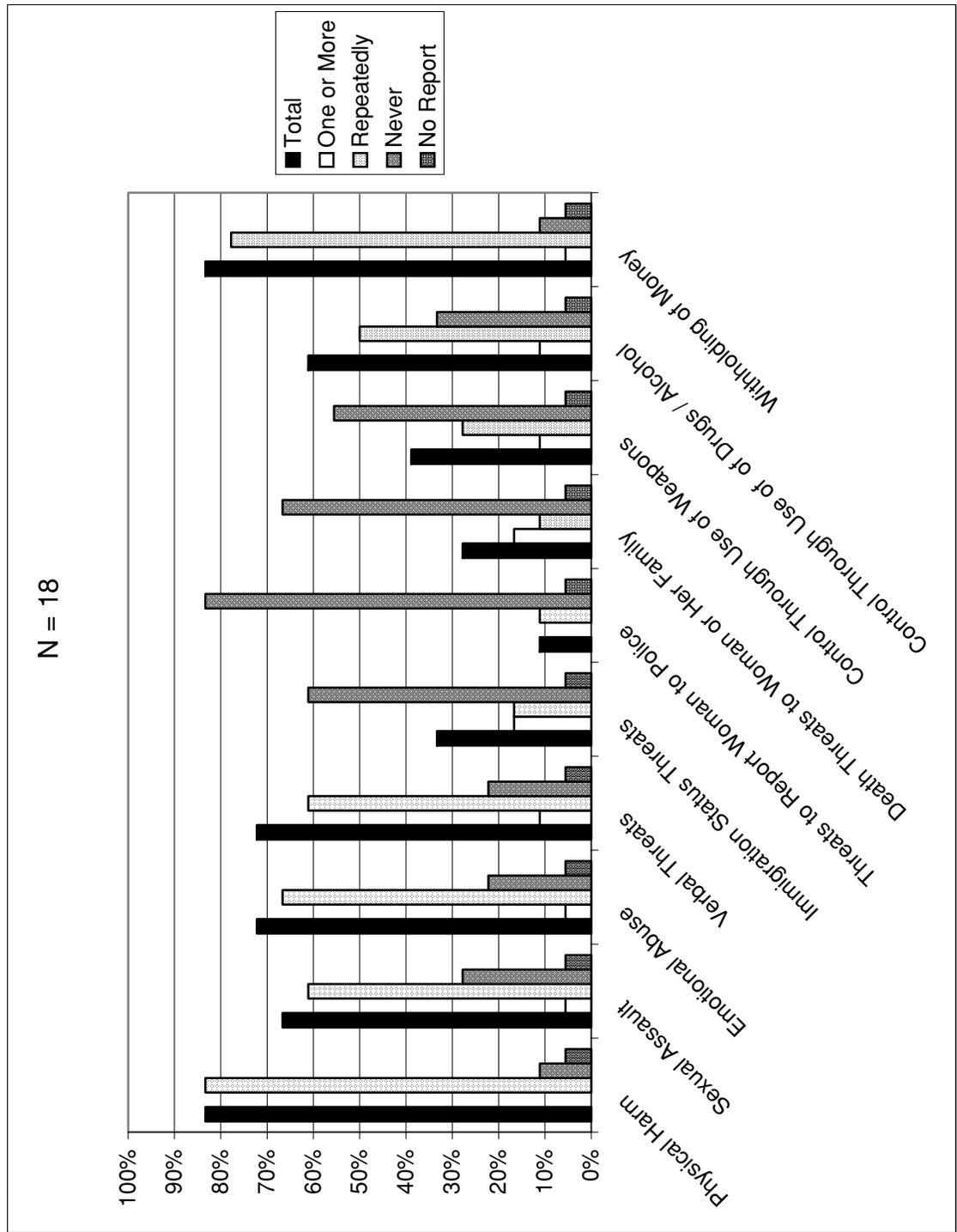
A 1994 survey conducted with 68 women in Minneapolis/St. Paul, who had been prostituted for at least six months in varied contexts from the “street” to massage parlors and escort services, found that 62 percent had been raped by a john; half the women had been physically assaulted by their purchasers; and a third of these experienced purchaser assaults at least several times a year. Twenty-three percent were beaten severely enough to have suffered broken bones; two were beaten into a coma (Parriott, 1994). In another survey of 55 victims/survivors of prostitution who used the services of the Council for Prostitution Alternatives in Portland, Oregon, 78 percent reported being raped by pimps and male buyers on average 49 times a year. Eighty-four percent were the victims of aggravated assault, often requiring emergency room treatment; 53 percent were sexually abused and tortured; and 27 percent were mutilated (Hunter, 1993).

In order to examine the violence and trauma suffered by those who are prostituted, Farley *et al.* (1998) interviewed 475 people in five countries (South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, USA, and Zambia) who were currently in or had just left prostitution. They used a structured questionnaire that asked about physical and sexual assault in prostitution; and they documented mental and psychic trauma by employing a scale that assesses symptoms of post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD). The results were reported as averages of the five countries. Seventy-three percent of those prostituted had been physically assaulted, and 62 percent were raped since entering prostitution (46 percent more than 5 times). The severity of trauma, averaged across the 5 countries, was slightly higher than that of Vietnam Veterans seeking treatment. Moreover, the severity of trauma did not vary significantly across race, country, or kind of prostitution (street or brothel).

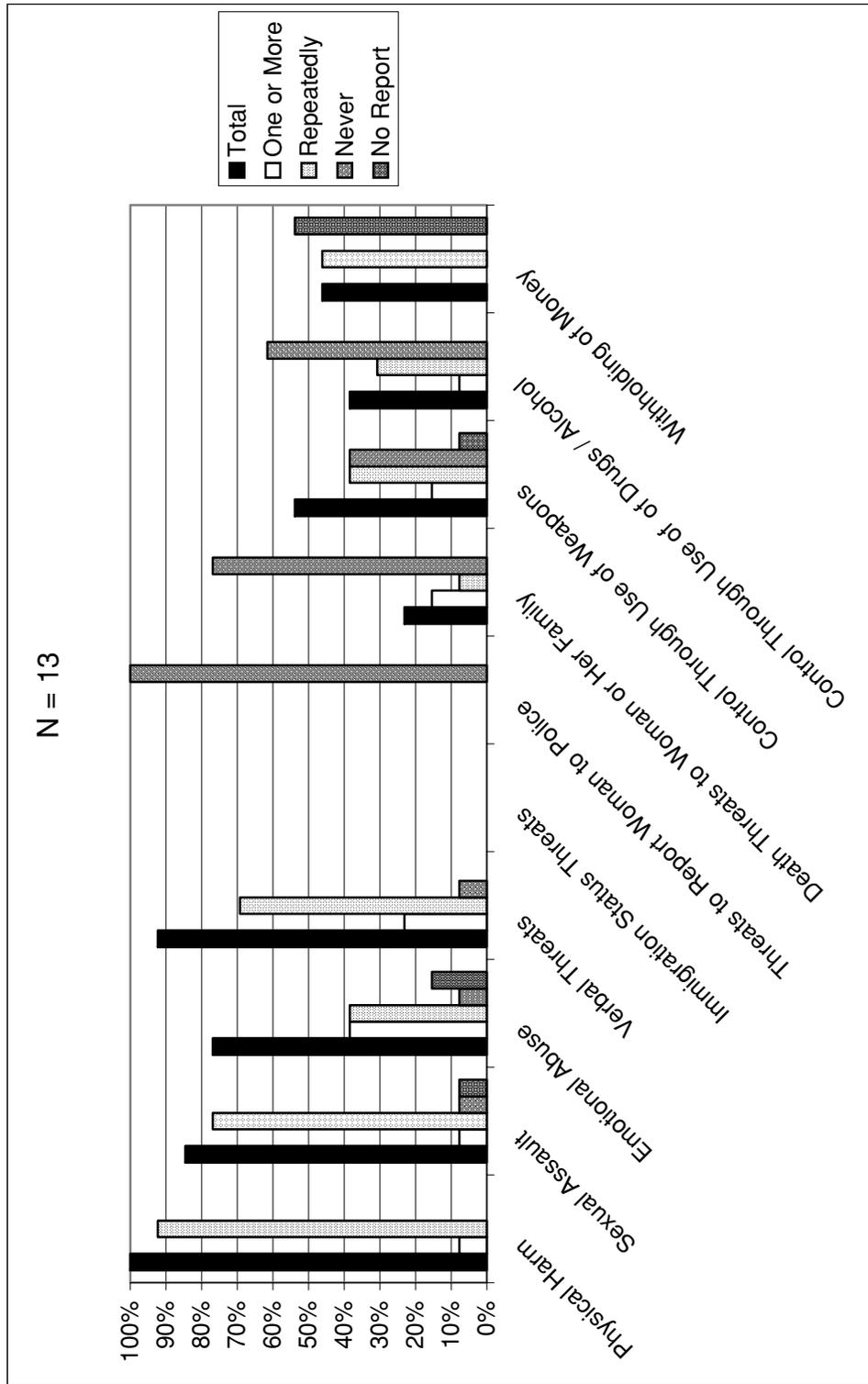
Russian/NIS women were further controlled by a layer of economic and immigration-related threats whereby recruiters, traffickers, pimps, and buyers preyed upon their vulnerability as migrants trapped in a criminal underground. “When my visa was finished,” said one, “they told me that if I’m taken by the police I will [be] put into prison for 20 years.” Eighty-eight percent reported that money was withheld from them. One woman’s plight describes the indentured state of many: “*I always owed for drugs, food, lodging, tickets etc. I had no wages. It always was like I didn’t earn anything.*” One third of the Russian/NIS women were threatened with being reported to U.S. immigration officials, and many (55 percent) were kept in jail-like confinement with security guards and locked doors.

Women reported acts of physical violence that included being beaten, bit, burned, chased, choked, crushed, dragged, hit with objects, pinched, punched, scratched, shoved, smacked, strangled, stripped, thrown out of a car, twisted, and hair pulled. Sadistic sex acts included being beaten and urinated on, pinched in the breasts, sodomized, objects inserted in anus and vagina, bestiality and filmed in pornography. Instruments and weapons used against women in these acts of violence included being strangled with a bandana, burned with cigarette butts, bound with extension cords, assaulted with sticks, knives and guns, hit with shoes and a liquor bottle. Re-

Russian/NIS Women Figure 1 - Violence, Means of Control and Threats by Recruiters, Traffickers, Pimps and "Clients"



US Women Figure 1 - Violence, Means of Control and Threats by Recruiters, Traffickers, Pimps and "Clients"



spondents were also given forcible injections of drugs in order to better control them, exact compliance, make them lose inhibitions, and encourage dependency.

Virtually all of the Russian/NIS women (89 percent) reported seeing other women injured in prostitution by male buyers and brothel owners. When asked about specific injuries that other women in the brothel suffered, 12 of the 16 (75 percent) who responded to the question reported even higher incidence of injury than they reported about themselves. Some women found it harder to talk about the injuries they had seen other women endure than what had happened to themselves, while others who could not speak about their own did answer questions about other women's injuries. For this reason, the composite of what they experienced and of what they witnessed other women experience is important to report in order to capture the full scope of male violence and female injury and harm in prostitution.

In answer to the question of whether pornography was used "on the job," 10 (56 percent) Russian/NIS women and 7 (54 percent) U.S. women reported that pornography was used in some form on or against them while they were in the sex industry. When asked if they had to have sex with professionals including police, doctors, immigration officials, and NGO/social workers, international women reported more abuse and sexual exploitation by doctors (N=4), police (N=3), and security (N=2) than U.S. women (N=1 police, 1 lawyer). While it is known that police and doctors sexually exploit women in prostitution, it's clear that the added vulnerability of trafficked women to deportation makes them all the more defenseless against exploitation by professionals who have access to them.

### **Strategies of Survival**

In order to learn how women resisted and coped with the conditions of sexual exploitation and what sustained them, we asked women what they hated most to do in prostitution and what tactics they used to avoid such acts. The Russian/NIS women consistently described hating that they were broken spiritually and physically by the degrading sexual acts and abusive conditions. Many expressed that they will never recover from the trauma or experience life in the same way, some still carrying fear of retaliation long after they left their captive condition. Many carry an excruciating private burden of humiliation and shame.

*"I was broken down and will never be normal. I am still scared they will find me."*

*"What I did and what they made me do simply killed me."*

*"The humiliation I felt...After those terrible drunk gang bangs, I went nuts."*

*"Most of all I hate the fact that I cannot leave this business, even now. It is like being trapped in quicksand."*

The tactics that these women used to avoid the sex of prostitution and to make their conditions safer and less abusive included being compliant and avoiding conflict in order to avoid being abused, raped, or punished by the pimps or buyers. As one woman responded, "If the boss was happy, our life was easier." Other women reported feigning and maintaining a congenial disposition to keep their daily conditions tolerable and free from abuse from their bosses. *"I pretended to enjoy everything and be happy. Laughed almost all the time."* Two respondents reported that some women slept with the security guards or bosses, or pretended to be in love with their pimps, in order to preserve their well-being. Others reported that some women "ratted" on others to get in favor with the bosses. Half of the Russian/NIS women (50 percent) said that they used drugs and alcohol habitually to cope with their misery in prostitution. *"I could not forget my problems every time. The dose grew constantly,"* said one.

The U.S. women, in answering the question of what they hated most to do in prostitution, replied that spending time with clients, being touched by them, having sex with them, and being held in disrespect and used by them were most repulsive. The U.S. women used many tactics to avoid vaginal sex, including body massage, using their breasts, oral sex, and manual stimulation. Some used sexually explicit language and seductive ploys in order to arouse and cause buyers to ejaculate more quickly. Some encouraged buyers to use crack so buyers “would forget about sex altogether.” Most of the women were habitual drug users (10 of 13 or 77 percent), and like the Russian/NIS women, used alcohol and drugs to deaden their feelings. *“It would end up that I would just drink to get drunk to cover up what I was feeling—which was dirty and ashamed.”*

Although many U.S. women said that they used drugs and alcohol prior to entering prostitution (9 of 12 who responded), it is simplistic to assume that they entered prostitution to support a drug habit. The cycle of substance abuse in which they are caught has its roots in the life history of abuse, neglect, and severe stress which all of the respondents (13 of 13) described when asked about prior sexual abuse before entering the sex industry. Their collective experiences of rape, incest, being witnesses to domestic violence, losing their primary home, being runaways, having a difficult home life, and economic destitution have been reported earlier in this report. Much of their current substance abuse results from the accretion of abuse: sexual, physical, mental and economic prior to and within prostitution. Further, some report that prostitution worsens their drug habits, forcing them to escape longer and deeper from the consciousness of their entrapment. The worsening of drug problems ultimately traps them within prostitution, sapping them of the stamina and will to get out. In probing the implications for battered women of the federal One Strike policy on drug use in public housing, Renzetti (2001) takes on the same question of “which came first” – the violence or the drugs — for women victims of domestic violence. She cites numerous studies that have found that “a history of partner violence is strongly predictive of new drug use [among women victims], not a continuation of ‘old bad habits’ (Renzetti, 2001: 691).”

Russian/NIS women tried physically to escape prostitution, in some cases, and witnessed many other women trying to do so. When women were caught, they were made into object lessons for the others. Escapees were *“beaten very strong,”* blackmailed, and sexually humiliated; some who were caught *“never showed up any more.”* One woman tried to escape multiple times:

*“First they would beat us up, but did it carefully to avoid mutilation. Then they videotaped and photographed us in order to blackmail.”*

### **Law Enforcement and Immigration**

Most of the U.S. women (N=9 or 69 percent) have been arrested by police for prostitution and for numerous other drug, juvenile runaway, and property-based charges. Two told of police demanding sex in exchange for not arresting them. One woman reported that, while police did not arrest them, they took their drugs and robbed them. The women’s responses to questions about the criminal justice system and police were minimal and matter-of-fact, as if the reality of being stopped and arrested by police was part and parcel of business as usual. While police corruption was reported by only three of the women (23 percent), this, too, had an air of normalcy about it in their responses.

The Russian/NIS women had a more complex experience with the justice system. Police questioned twelve women (67 percent); eleven (61 percent) were arrested and held in jail for up to a few months; and eleven (61 percent) were deported back to Russia. Four of the eleven (36 percent) women arrested and held in jail for deportation were offered some kind of organizational referral by law enforcement personnel; however, none reported that the assistance or counsel was

useful or helpful. What is not clear from their responses is whether any traffickers were arrested and prosecuted by police. Interestingly, a comparable percent of international women as U.S. women reported that they were aware of police corruption. Three of the deported women and one other interviewed (4 of 18 or 22 percent) said that police did appear to have some financial or other arrangement with the brothel, club, or massage parlor in which they were located. One woman reported that police got access to sex with her through a deal with the boss: “*Police officers visited our bar and the boss offered me to them as a kind of ‘service’.*”

## **V – CONSEQUENCES TO WOMEN’S HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**

Women trafficked in prostitution are extremely vulnerable to being physically harmed and traumatized by gender-based violence, as is documented earlier in Figure 1. If anything, the injury and harm could be more egregious because trafficked women are sexual chattel, ultimately expendable, often “illegal aliens” who do not speak English, and without recourse to law enforcement, health, and social services. The men who sexually traffic them are often linked directly and indirectly with criminal networks and explicitly set out to exploit the trafficked women. Moreover, who would intervene to help, defend, or rescue trafficked women once they are trapped in the system of prostitution? In a cross-cultural analysis of violence against women, Heise (1998) found that the greater the likelihood that community members of family would intervene, the lower the levels of male violence. The isolated conditions of women trafficked in prostitution — with few social controls on the men and no social protections for the women — render them extremely vulnerable to male violence, abuse, injury and infection, and medical neglect.

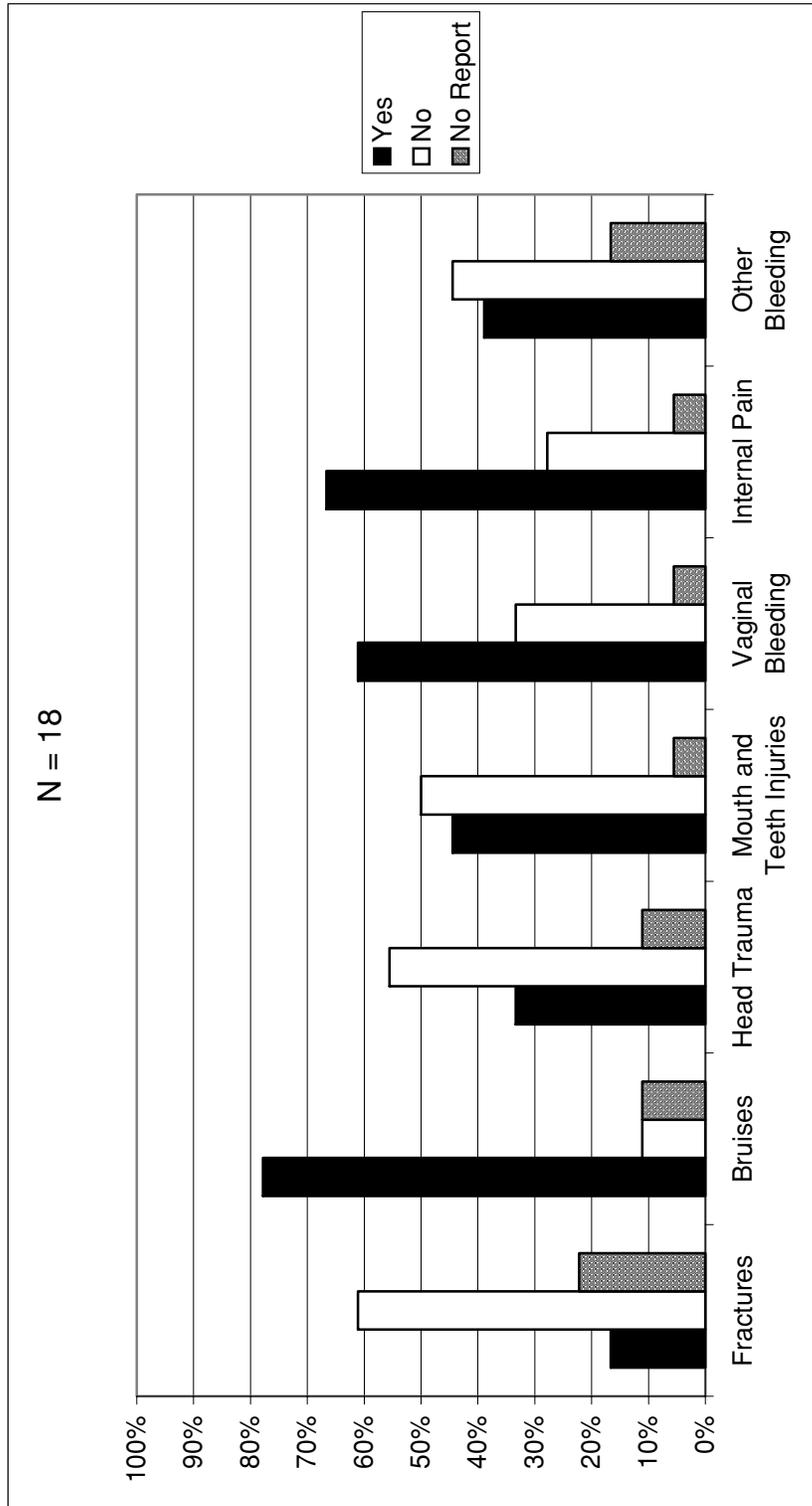
### **The Health Burden of Violence Against Women**

Women victimized by male violence suffer bodily injury, disability, homicide and suicide; severe stress and psychological trauma; substance abuse; a plague of sexually transmitted diseases, infections, and non-infectious diseases; unwanted pregnancy, miscarriages, abortions, and infertility (Heise, 1994). A World Bank study has estimated that women worldwide between the ages of 15 and 44 lose as many years of healthy life to the above-cited consequences of rape and domestic violence as they do to each of the following disease conditions high on the agenda of the World Health Organization: HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, maternal sepsis, cardiovascular diseases, and all cancers (Heise, 1994: 17). Rape survivors are nine times as likely to attempt suicide and suffer severe depression as non-victims (Heise, 1994: 19-20). These estimates are likely underestimates since they have been calculated from data gathered and recorded within cultural and medical contexts that have historically condoned, denied, ignored, and trivialized violence against women.

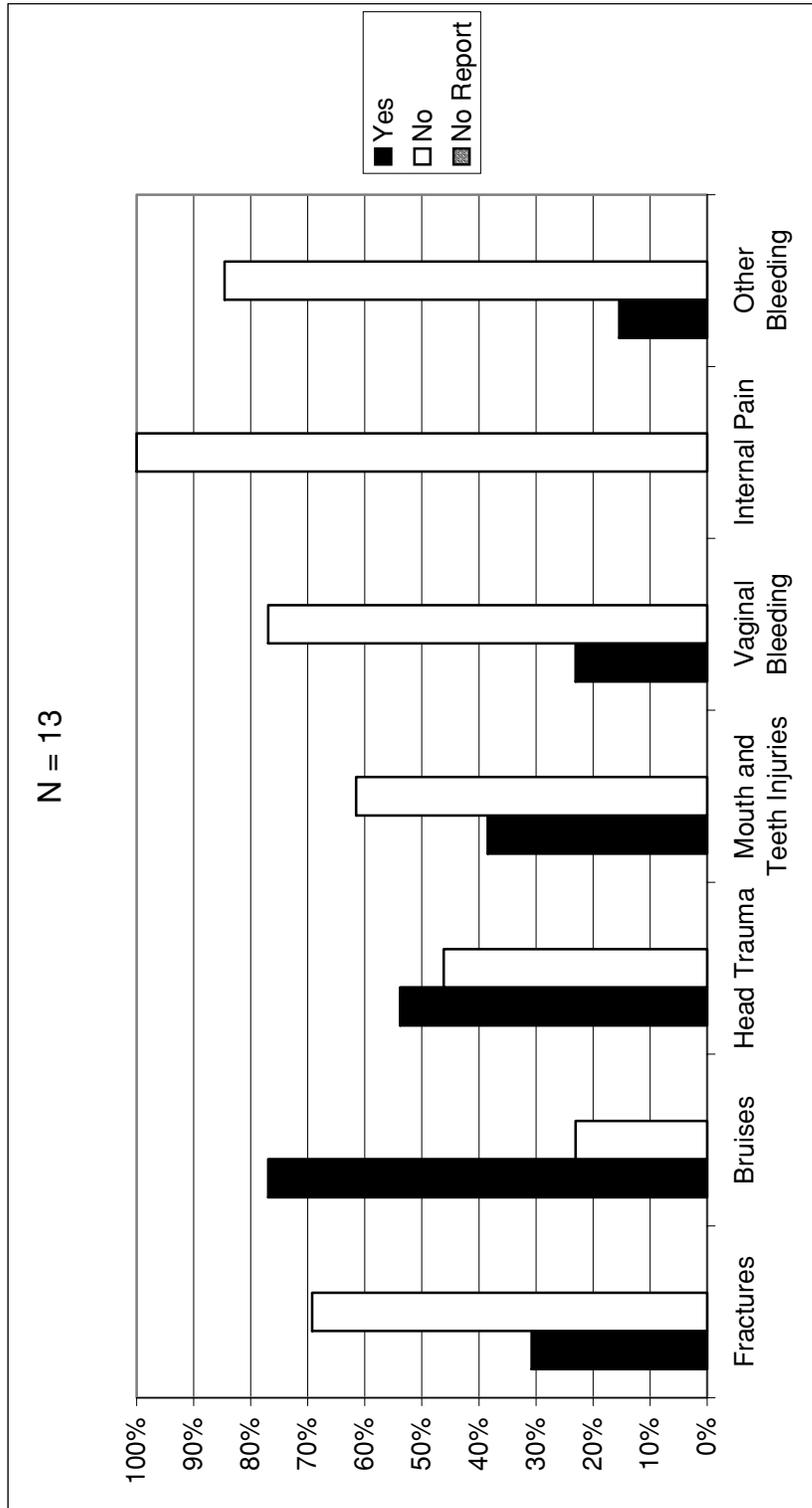
### **The Health Burden of Prostitution as Violence Against Women**

Women in prostitution are particularly at risk of gender-based violence—including physical, psychological, and economic harm—from pimps, buyers, police, and boyfriends. In some cases—as this study and others have documented, police are buyers, and boyfriends/husbands are women’s pimps and traffickers (Raymond, Hughes, and Gomez, 2001). Yet, historically the overriding preoccupation of medical and public health practitioners regarding prostitution has been prostitutes as vectors of disease. Their research has fixated on the prevalence of sexually transmitted (STD) and infectious disease in prostituted women and the women’s role in the web of disease causation, to the exclusion of documenting the injuries and other-than-STD illness suffered by women in prostitution. Medical and public health remedies—including regular and mandatory surveillance for sexually transmitted disease, routine antibiotic treatment, and promotion of condoms—have functioned to monitor and control women in prostitution, but rarely, if ever, to medically monitor, control, or stop the more numerous male purchasers of sex. These

Russian/NIS Women Figure 2 - Injuries Suffered by Russian/NIS Women Exploited in the Sex Industry



US Women Figure 2 - Injuries Suffered by US Women Exploited in the Sex Industry



remedies also do not address the more powerful sex industry in generating the conditions in which disease thrives. Studies conducted to characterize and document the full health impacts of prostitution on the women involved (impacts such as injury and trauma, in addition to sexually transmitted and communicable diseases) for the sake of intervention and advocacy that benefits the women, are a rarity.

One unique and telling source, *Prostitutes in Medical Literature* (Kantha, 1991), provides a comprehensive annotated bibliography of studies on women in prostitution published in international medical literature from 1900 through 1990. By far the preponderance of studies conducted in the late 19th and 20th centuries was preoccupied with the epidemiology of sexually transmitted diseases. Numerous case control studies found that women in prostitution have significantly higher rates of sexually transmitted diseases or infections, hepatitis B, and HIV/AIDS; higher risk of cervical cancer; decreased fertility and a higher abortion rate (Kantha, 1991: 173-176). However, the absence of studies on the physical violence and psychological trauma that prostituted women suffer at the hands of pimps, purchasers, police, and boyfriends confirms that health professions have largely ignored and, thus, not documented nor studied, the full scale of gender-based harm in prostitution.

### **Injuries Sustained by Women in Prostitution**

Our interviews with Russian/NIS and U.S. women in the sex industry reveal that these women suffered extremely high rates of injury, including bruises from being hit and beaten (78 percent of Russian/NIS and 77 percent of U.S. women) and mouth and teeth injury from being hit and bitten and from drug use (44 percent and 38 percent respectively). Russian/NIS women, in particular, reported high rates of vaginal bleeding, internal pain, and other bleeding from multiple and rough sex—oral, anal, and vaginal. The results are represented in Figure 2. Russian/NIS women did not have access to clinics and counseling and service organizations such as Breaking Free and the Red Door as mentioned by the U.S. women; thus, their higher rates of pain and bleeding were most likely a result of no access to health services. As two Russian women said in response to the question of what kind of health services women who have migrated and who are in the sex industry need:

*“Most of them have no idea at all where to turn to, especially when they are afraid of police, have no insurance or ID.”*

*“Any service. But I think it’s impossible. We didn’t know who can help us.”*

So-called “safety policies” in brothels did not protect women from injury and harm. Even where brothels supposedly monitored the “customers” and utilized “bouncers,” women stated that they were injured by buyers and, at times, by brothel owners and their friends. Even when someone intervened to control buyers’ abuse, women lived in a climate of fear. Although 60 percent of Russian/NIS women reported that buyers had sometimes been prevented from abusing them, half of those women answered that, nonetheless, they thought that they might be killed by one of their “customers.”

Women were asked questions about whether they got sick during the migrating process and whether their health was better or worse since migrating. The Russian/NIS women distinguished clearly between the overall health impacts of the migration process and the overall health impacts of prostitution. Many reported no change in health during migration. The few who did report worse health during migration cited colds and respiratory problems because of being outside in the cold or in insufficiently heated conditions. However, sixty-seven percent (N=12) reported that, as a result of prostitution, their health has worsened severely, citing drug and alcohol dependencies, depression, and HIV/AIDS. Thus, the acute and chronic health effects of being prosti-

tuted had much more serious long-lasting health consequences for international women—consequences similar to those reported by U.S. women—than the migration process itself.

Virtually all the Russian/NIS women were flown from Russia; one came by boat and another was brought over the border in a truck from Canada. On the other hand, women who are smuggled in boats and across borders, for example, where the migration process itself is elongated and involves systematic abuse and dangerous living conditions, would likely suffer more harm and illness from the migration process itself.

### Condom Use

In response to a series of questions about condom use, the Russian/NIS women revealed that buyers willing to use condoms ranged from 30 percent to 80 percent of men. With those buyers not willing to use condoms, women employed whatever strategies they knew to try to convince them, often unsuccessfully. Some did not know how to insist: “I couldn’t do it. In most cases it provoked aggression as if I intended to spoil their mood.” Where buyers were allegedly required to use condoms, this requirement did not deter them from offering to pay more for sex without a condom. Sixty-seven percent (N=12) of the Russian/NIS interviewees said that male buyers offered to pay more for sex without a condom. The prostituted and trafficked women’s physical and economic vulnerability could easily render any “policy” on condom use ineffective.

In answer to the question, “Did the condoms ever break,” an astoundingly high number, 11 Russian/NIS women out of 18 (61 percent) replied “yes,” with the frequency ranging from one time (3 of 11) to at least 10 times. Three of 13 U.S. (23 percent) women reported condoms breaking, while 5 of 13 did not know. This extraordinarily high rate of condom breakage, together with the reported vaginal irritation (94 percent international and 38 percent U.S.) and bleeding (28 percent Russian/NIS) from multiple condom use, as summarized in Table 3, raises serious questions about the validity of relying on recent public health policy that mainly emphasizes condom use in the name of protecting women in prostitution from sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS.

	Russian/NIS Women						U.S. Women					
	Yes	%	No	%	NR	%	Yes	%	No	%	NR	%
Use of More Than One Condom at a Time	-	-	17	94	1	6	3	23	7	54	3	23
Breakage	11 <sup>a</sup>	61	7	39	-	-	3 <sup>b</sup>	23	5	38	5DK	38
Causes Irritation to Vaginal Area <sup>c</sup>	17	94	1	6	-	-	5	38	7 <sup>d</sup>	54	1	8
Causes Vaginal Bleeding	5	28	11	61	2	11	0	0	13	100	-	-
Use of Female Condom	4	22	14	78	-	-	2	15	9	70	2	15
Used by Intimate Partner	4	22	6	33	8	44	0	0	10	77	3	23

<sup>a</sup> Eight reported multiple incidents, (one reported No, but answered 2 times to follow up question)  
<sup>b</sup> Two reported multiple incidents  
<sup>c</sup> Irritation includes reports of yeast infection, itching, allergic reaction, discharge caused either by latex and/or lubricant  
<sup>d</sup> One reported irritation/peeling of skin around the mouth area

Public health programs which promote “safer sex” and condom use in the sex industry are more likely to protect male prostitute users than to protect women from men who engage in “risky” sex. Ultimately, they insure a healthier supply of prostituted women for male buyers. Safer sex intervention programs do not protect women against condom breakage during intercourse (Edwards, 1994), nor against latex allergies and vaginal abrasions from frequent sex with multiple customers. Most importantly, they do not protect women against the high incidence of physical and psychological harm women in prostitution have reported. Condom promotion programs in prostitution are the counterpoint of gunlock promotion in gun safety programs: They do save some lives; they don’t eliminate the source of the harm.

Moreover, the majority of Russian/NIS and U.S. women who answered the question of whether their intimate partners used a condom during sexual intercourse replied “no.” Their reasons ranged from ignorance about how to protect themselves in a few cases, to wanting to please and feel trusted by boyfriends in other cases.

*“I did not think it was necessary. And it was also like a gesture from his side, like “I trust you.”*

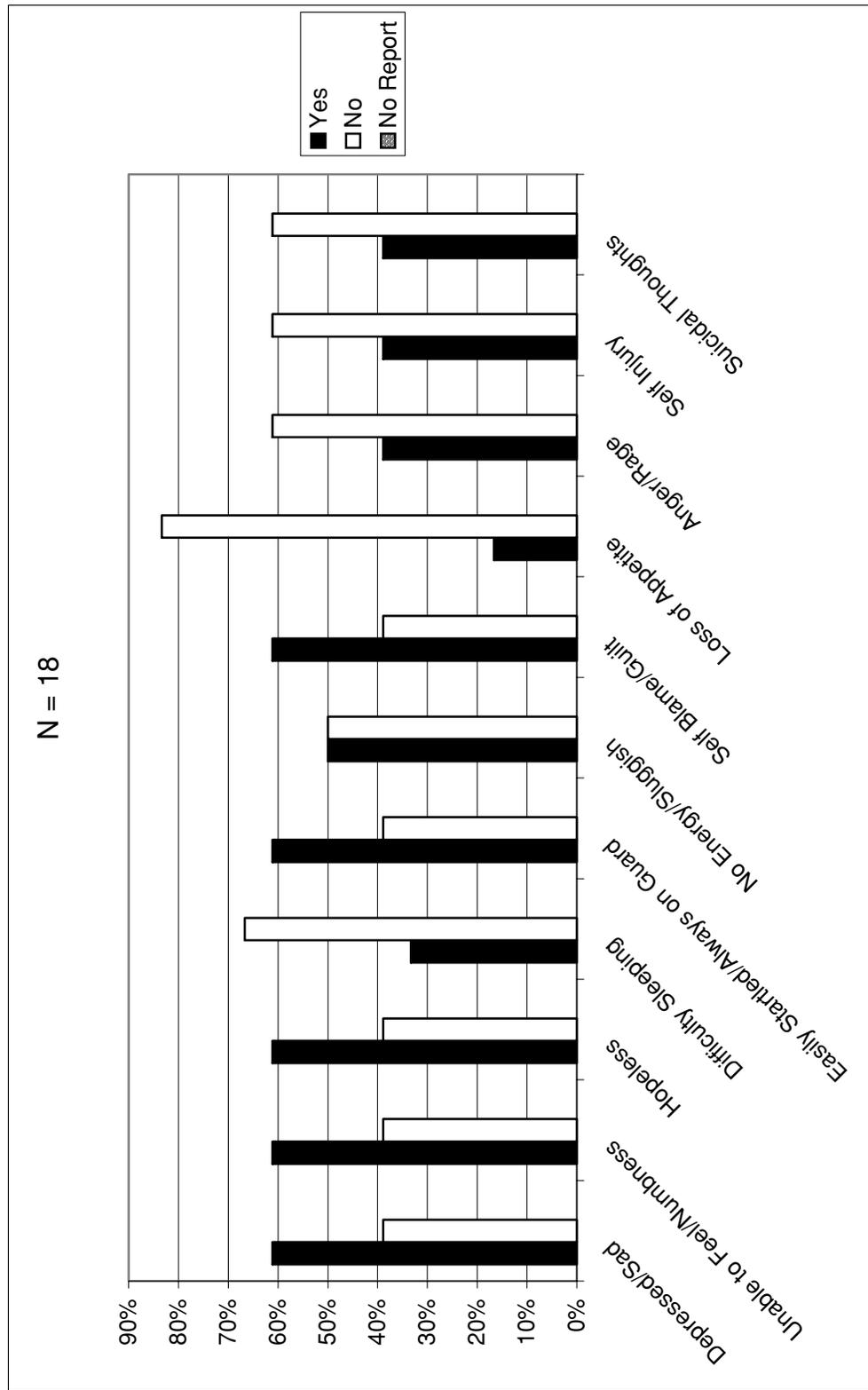
### **Emotional, Behavioral and Psychological Problems Resulting from Sexual Exploitation**

The mental and emotional consequences of sexual exploitation in prostitution were acute and extreme for both international and U.S. women. Most reported depression and numbness leaving them unable to feel. As we noted earlier more of the Russian/NIS women reported feeling “hopeless” (61 percent) than U.S. women (30 percent), which may be due to the services and the resources which the U.S. women have been offered through social service organization for women in and exiting prostitution, such as Breaking Free. Numerous women cannot sleep normally (33 percent Russian/NIS and 69 percent U.S.) and are easily startled and on guard (61 percent and 46 percent respectively), conditions that would result in fatigue, sluggishness, and nervous anxiety. Their anger and rage is most often turned against themselves in thoughts and attempts at suicide (39 percent Russian/NIS and 54 percent U.S.) and self-mutilation and injury (39 percent and 54 percent). Although most women recognize that the harm of prostitution is done to them by “customers,” pimps, bosses and traffickers—as is evident in the next section on recommendations — they bear not only the crucible of rage and anger but also the burden of self-blame and guilt (61 percent of Russian/NIS and 46 percent of U.S.).

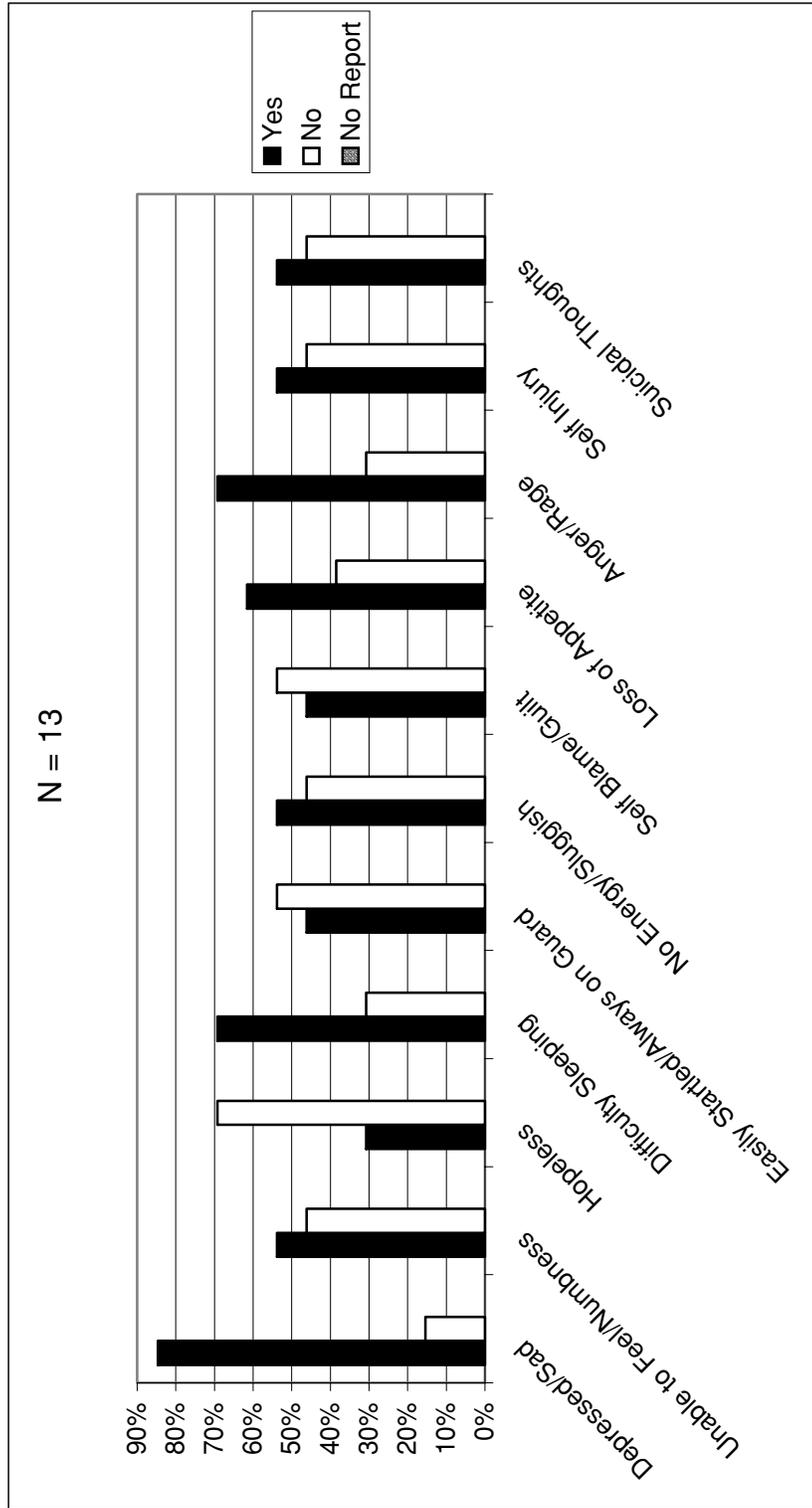
*“I feel pretty stable now, but then I was paranoid—knowing that people would know I was a prostitute, that people were out to hurt me, that the girls were out to get me. Insecure. All drug induced...Self identity shot. Self esteem down. Depressed. (U.S. woman).”*

Women described the range of emotional consequences of sexual exploitation in various ways. Some stated that they felt angry at the world, “like the world owed me something, and they weren’t giving it to me.” African-American women in the U.S. sex industry expressed hatred of white men. Many women had engaged in multiple attempts at self injury through drug overdoses, abuse of pills, high risk behavior, not using condoms, attempting to get run over by walking in the middle of the street, self-cutting and wrist slitting, “smoking myself to death,” “tried to bust my heart,” not taking care of themselves, and attempts to poison and hang themselves. Many expressed feelings of worthlessness, being trapped, paranoid, dissociated, disgust, and shame. Others stated that they felt superior, with high motivation only for doing drugs. One said: *“I have big gaps in memory of my life.”*

Russian/NIS Women Figure 3 - Emotional, Behavioral and Psychological Problems of Russian/NIS Women As a Result of Sexual Exploitation



US Women Figure 3 - Emotional, Behavioral and Psychological Problems by US Women As a Result of Sexual Exploitation



## VI OPINIONS AND RECOMENDATIONS

### Opinions of Russian/NIS Women

Overwhelmingly Russian/NIS women warned about the dangers of migrating for work, especially because many of them ended up in prostitution. No one can be trusted; risks of all kinds abound; there is no guarantee that money will be easier to make abroad than at home. One woman concluded, *“It takes from you your health, happiness, meaning of life, dreams...”* When asked why women enter prostitution, most gave the reason of poverty, while the remaining did not know. None saw prostitution as a choice freely made within a context of other options.

The majority of women (10 of 18, or 56 percent) felt strongly that prostitution should not be legalized and considered as legitimate work. *“No way. It’s not a profession. It is humiliating and violence from the men’s side,”* said one. None of the remaining eight women supported legalization. Rather they were unsure or had no opinion on the issue of legalizing prostitution. Although the women did not support legalization and defining prostitution as legitimate work, not one woman reported that women should be charged and arrested for engaging in prostitution. Eighty-three percent (N=15) felt strongly about this while the remaining three were unsure.

As for whether they think that men who buy sex (the “customers”) should be charged and arrested — a policy that the country of Sweden has established — 12 of 18 (67 percent) answered “yes.” Many explained their conviction with bitter, experience-based reasons grounded in a sense of justice.

*“They [buyers] use women and never contemplate it could harm us.”*

*“It is important to give them punishment. I would also castrate them.”*

*“Any kind of exploitation should be punished. They are the main cause of the problem... the clients and... the pimps. You can hardly find any women among them.”*

Women felt even more strongly that traffickers, pimps, and brothel owners should be charged, arrested and severely punished, with 89 percent answering affirmatively when asked. Many expressed anger and acute bitterness toward these profiteers who made their money on the ruined lives of trafficked and prostituted women.

*“They make millions of dollars...It is we who ruin our lives.”*

*“They should not only be charged, they should be executed, especially the organizers.”*

Only two women had no opinion when asked about a policy to prosecute the trafficking and prostitution perpetrators.

Of the Russian/NIS women we interviewed who are still in prostitution in Russia (11), 64 percent (7 of 11) responded that they do want to leave prostitution and 36 percent (4 of 11) indicated that they want to stay in prostitution for the income. Women offered a similar and complementary set of survival needs that must be available for women to leave prostitution: money, housing, help to overcome addiction, jobs, education, support and stability. Not one woman wanted her children, family, or friends to earn money by entering the prostitution industry, with some explaining that their reasons were self-evident and others wishing their children to have better life alternatives. *“I would like a good life and independence for my children,”* said one. *“Now I have my own apartment and even my own car, but I paid far too high a price for it. I wouldn’t like people whom I love to go through this same stuff,”* said another. Even the four women who indicated that they want to stay in prostitution for the income do not wish their

children, friends and family to do so, although some expressed a fatalism about better opportunities being available for them.

Asked about their future — both how they see it and what they want for it — women gave idealistic, realistic, and fatalistic responses respectively. Some wanted peace and happiness, someone to marry them, to own their own business, to have or raise their children in a normal life. Others feel they have no future, that time is limited by their ill health (HIV/AIDS), and they would need a new identity to have a future. All of the women responded affirmatively to the list of prevention, protection, and prosecution actions needed to stop sex trafficking. In particular, education/information campaigns and service coordination were identified by all of them; and a majority also indicated that legal action, with consistent enforcement and stricter penalties for traffickers was necessary to stop sex trafficking.

### **Opinions of U.S. Women**

Eighty-five percent (N=11) of U.S. women strongly stated that prostitution should not be legalized and considered legitimate work, warning that legalization would create more risks and harm for women from already violent johns and pimps. Only one woman held the opposite view, stating that legalization would result in fewer rapes, and a second woman had no opinion. Even the lone woman who thought that prostitution should be legalized supported her opinion by citing the violence of johns and pimps toward women in prostitution. Some of the reasons given by the majority who opposed the legalization of prostitution are:

*“...That would just open up so much sexual assault. Sexual disrespect...”*

*“No, because what they do to those ladies out there in the street, you shouldn’t do to a dog.”*

*“It should not be legalized, because there’d be more deaths, more suicides...”*

*“It shouldn’t be legal...It should be illegal to be a trick and to live off a hooker.”*

The U.S. women had a starkly different response to the questions of whether women should be charged and arrested for practicing prostitution than the international women. Seventy-seven percent (N=10) replied “yes.” However, many of the reasons given offered further evidence of their view of prostitution as dangerous (and thus jail is safe), and are intertwined with their drug dependencies and homelessness (and, thus, arrest may lead to being sent to rehabilitation programs and shelter). In other words, arrest may bring protection, safety, and desperately needed social services.

*“Yes, to keep them safe off the streets. Maybe my sister-in-law would be here now if she had been arrested.”*

*“Yes, they should be made to go to classes or go to a safe house or something to get them off drugs...They need affordable housing or a place they can go where they’ll be safe.”*

The majority of women (9 of 10 who answered, or 90 percent) replied that “customers” should be arrested; and all who answered the question whether pimps, brothel owners, and traffickers should be arrested (N=8) responded “yes.”

*“Yes, if it wasn’t for the men, there wouldn’t be any prostitution”.*

*“Yes, they should be in our shoes and see how they are treated the way they treat us. They should see how they treat us through our eyes and they wouldn’t do it anymore.”*

Only a few U.S. women (3 of 13) indicated that they were in prostitution at the time that they were interviewed, and all three said that they would like to leave prostitution. Asked what they

and other women need to leave prostitution, the seven who responded provided a list of basic life services and skills needed: a safe place to live, education and job skills, support groups, and help to deal with drug dependency. Two pointed out that the criminal justice system has programs and schools for johns, so “*why not have programs for prostitutes.*”

Not one woman wanted to see her children, family, or friends end up in prostitution; and some spoke of society’s need to de-glamorize the experience as it is portrayed in the media and see it bluntly for what it is. “*Prostitution stripped me of my life, my health, everything,*” said one. Despite the traumas, violence, and hardships these women had suffered, many expressed hope for their future to get on their feet financially, to help other women in the same situation, to stay “clean and sober,” to get their children back and to be a better role model for them. The capacity for hope and the sense of still having a chance at life—something less evident in the Russian/NIS women’s responses—is very likely due to the support and direct services offered by a survivors’ support organization, Breaking Free, through whom they were contacted and interviewed.

### **Public Policy Recommendations**

There has been a recent trend to separate international sex trafficking from domestic sex trafficking and prostitution. This directly contradicts the United Nations 1949 *Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others* that recognized the inconsistency of isolating the international problem of sex trafficking from the various forms of commercialized sex within nation-States.

Our final policy recommendations are based on the necessity to rejoin trafficking with prostitution. There is an urgent need for the political will to act against this global exploitation of women and children. The challenge of governments today is to recognize that prostitution is a massive and growing industry, while not ratifying prostitution as a job. The challenge of governments today is to provide rights and protections for women in conditions of sex trafficking and prostitution, while acknowledging that sex trafficking and prostitution violate women’s rights and bodily integrity. The challenge for governments today is to punish the growing numbers of sexual exploiters – traffickers, pimps, procurers, and buyers — while not penalizing the women who find themselves in conditions of sex trafficking and prostitution.

It is our contention that state recognition of prostitution as work, or state regulation of the sex industry as an economic sector, institutionalizes the buying and selling of women as commodities in the marketplace. Legalization and state regulation of prostitution further removes women from the economic mainstream by segregating prostituted women as a class set apart for sexual service and servitude. Legalization and decriminalization of the entire industry reinforces the definition of woman as sexual object, and as a provider of sexual services, thereby eroticizing and perpetuating gender inequality. Furthermore, legalization and decriminalization of the buyers and pimps legitimizes and strengthens men’s ability to put the bodies of women at their disposal.

Rather than accept the unexamined premise that some women need prostitution to survive economically, we question why prostitution is the only place where mostly women can turn when all else fails. It is a gendered reality that prostitution may be the best of the worst economic options that many women face. However, the fact that there are often no better income opportunities for women shouldn’t function as a new economic law turning many women’s desperate economic plight against them by institutionalizing their exploiters as entrepreneurs. In our framework, this is to surrender the political battle for women’s right to sustainable work, and to tolerate that women’s bodies are increasingly bought for sex and used as merchandise in the marketplace.

We, therefore, encourage governments to use the following elements in implementing policy, and in drafting national, regional and international legislation addressing sex trafficking and prostitution. Governments should:

- Protect and promote women’s rights, while they are still in conditions of sex trafficking and prostitution, and at the same time aggressively eliminate the causes;
- Reject any policy or law that legitimizes sex trafficking or prostitution or that legalizes or regulates prostitution in any way, including as a profession, occupation, entertainment, or an economic sector;
- Decriminalize the women in conditions of sex trafficking and prostitution, at the same time that they penalize the traffickers, pimps, procurers and promoters of prostitution, as well as those who buy women for sexual acts (a.k.a. johns or customers);
- Adopt legislative and other measures to prohibit sex tourism and to penalize those who organize and advertise tourism for the purpose of sexual exploitation as practices of the procuring and promoting of prostitution;
- Use appropriate publicity to warn of prosecution for sex tourists;
- Prohibit persons or enterprises from promoting, profiting from, or engaging in any business involving the matching of women in marriage to foreign nationals, as in mail-order bride selling and pseudo-marriages.

Women in conditions of sex trafficking and prostitution have the right to sexual integrity and sexual autonomy, and should be able to charge sexual harassment, assault and rape. Consent of the woman procured for sex trafficking and prostitution should not be recognized as a defense for pimps, procurers and buyers, nor as a rationale for state-sanctioned institutionalization of prostitution as work. Socio-cultural practices of temporary marriage, honor, or written contracts should not be used to justify or defend against any act of sexual exploitation.

Women should receive fair, sustainable, and/or legally mandated compensation as waitresses, receptionists, dancers, singers, bar workers, entertainers, artists, “GROs” ( guest relations officers) — but not as “sex workers” — so that the economic pressure to engage in the prostitution often cloaked by these terms is reduced. Women should be able to keep and control any money they receive, and no third party should profit from the earnings of women in conditions of sex trafficking and prostitution.

Most importantly, governments and non-governmental organizations must put resources at women’s disposal such as credit, micro-lending programs, enterprise training, and other needed services; and provide medical care, shelter, voluntary counseling, and educational programs for women who have been harmed by sex trafficking and prostitution. A woman’s prior sexual history, status as an illegal immigrant, or stateless person should not be used against her. Trafficked women should be provided with refuge, visa and/or refugee status, protection from traffickers, and/or voluntary repatriation whether, as victims of sex trafficking, they have entered a country legally or illegally. Under no circumstances, should governments construe these above recommendations in a manner to prevent women from migrating or traveling abroad (Hynes and Raymond, 2002).

Governments and non-governmental organizations can acknowledge that there are women and girls attempting to survive in conditions of sex trafficking and prostitution without normaliz-

ing prostitution as work. Governments and non-governmental organizations can acknowledge that women have the right to do what they can to mitigate these conditions until they can live in a society which no longer tolerates and supports or tolerates the mass male consumption of women and children who have been trafficked and prostituted.

Governments and non-governmental organizations have tended to emphasize short-term solutions for women in sex industries that encourage women to stay in the industry, such as negotiating for safe sex, condoms, and HIV/AIDS testing. However, it is important to advocate for such measures within a context of other proposals, which provide women with alternatives to sex trafficking and prostitution. We believe that women have the right to humanitarian assistance to help them out of prostitution rather than humanitarian assistance to keep them in it.

### NOTES

- \* We use the definition of trafficking from the new UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime that became open for States signatures in Palermo in December 2000.
- (a) “Trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.  
  
Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;
- (b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used.

***CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS***

## **POLICY AND PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS: THE LINKS BETWEEN SEX TRAFFICKING AND PROSTITUTION**

by  
Janice G. Raymond

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The global sex industry promotes trafficking. It also promotes prostitution. In advocating for anti-trafficking legislation, it is important not to legitimate the commercial sex industry. Initiatives that are designed to give women and girls real alternatives to prostitution – financial help, education, shelter, health care, employment -- are better anti-trafficking measures than proposals that keep women in the sex industry, such as decriminalizing the pimps and buyers, and requiring women in prostitution to be registered and undergo health checks. Such measures ultimately protect the sex industry, not the women in it. Attempts to make prostitution a form of legitimate and legal “sex work” do not help to end trafficking. Legalization gives the sex industry larger market share, increased market stability, and the incentive to expand – all factors that enlarge the flow of sex trafficking worldwide.

In the international policy arena, legalization and decriminalization of the sex industry have been contentious issues. Some proponents state that prostitution should be de-linked from trafficking, and that they should be treated as two distinct issues. In distinguishing between forced and free prostitution, these proponents argue for the introduction of criminal anti-trafficking laws to penalize traffickers but assert that labor laws should regulate prostitution as a legitimate form of work. It is a major point of this study, supported by all the country reports and the majority of those interviewed, that one cannot separate prostitution from sex trafficking and treat them as discrete in public policy and legislation.

The necessity to link prostitution with trafficking legislation is demonstrated in countries that have legalized or regulated prostitution, where the highest numbers of women from the South, and countries in financial crisis, are trafficked for prostitution. There is good evidence that countries such as the Netherlands and Germany, both of which have recognized prostitution as work and as an economic sector, are precisely the countries that experience higher rates of women trafficked into the country for prostitution. For example, a report done for the Budapest Group found that 80 percent of the women in the brothels in the Netherlands are trafficked into the country (Budapest Group, 1999: 11). As early as 1994, the IOM stated that in the Netherlands alone, “nearly 70 per cent of trafficked women were from CEEC [Central and Eastern European Countries] countries” (IOM, 1995: 4).

### **Legalization/Decriminalization of Prostitution**

Legalization of prostitution has been justified as a public health measure, to protect women in the sex industry through work regulations, and as a method of containing trafficking and child prostitution, harm to women and the expansion of the sex industry. In the state of Victoria in Australia, rather than controlling the sex industry and its harm to women and children, the system of legalized prostitution there has promoted unregulated expansion of brothels and sex clubs, increased criminal involvement in the industry, and an increase in child prostitution. Women who must be licensed are driven into the violence of street prostitution to preserve their anonymity. Advertisements line the highways in states such as Victoria, Australia, offering women as objects for men’s sexual use and teaching new generations of men and boys to treat women as subordinates (Sullivan and Jeffreys, 2000). Men who would formerly not risk buying women now find it acceptable to purchase women in prostitution. Additionally, as Jean D’Cunha states: “The normalization of prostitution as an industry will result in greater *product, service and market expansion and diversification* and newer, more bizarre and brutal forms of exploitation (p.150).”

The legalized sex industry in Australia has been quick to market women's pregnant status as a sellable product in prostitution (Sullivan and Jeffreys, 2000).

Recently, some advocates speak about decriminalizing rather than legalizing prostitution, thus eliminating all state controls over the industry. Decriminalization is based on the proposition that prostitution is a legitimate occupation and a woman's choice in a gender-defined job market that offers many women few good job opportunities. As such, a woman should have the right to contract with third parties, i.e., pimps now redefined as sex industry entrepreneurs, to further her goals. In this view, trafficking as an offense disappears by redefining it as "migration for sex work." Advocates argue that just as prostitution is a rational and free choice of women in local prostitution industries, it can be the same rational and free choice of migrant women.

There is a crucial difference in advocating for decriminalization of women in prostitution and decriminalization/legalization of the industry. This project supports the decriminalization of women who are the victims of the sex industry because no woman should be penalized for her own exploitation. However, to advocate decriminalization of the sex industry is to legitimize pimps, recruiters and traffickers as a class of respectable businessmen, and to tolerate men buying women for "sexual services." In fact decriminalization of the sex industry is legal acceptance and sanction of the industry.

In our study, women in the sex industry in the Philippines, Venezuela and the United States were asked if prostitution should be legalized. Ninety-six percent of Filipino respondents recommended that prostitution not be legalized. Only two Filipinas recommended legalization, although they also stated that women enter the sex industry not out of choice but out of necessity. In Venezuela, half of the women interviewed did not favor legalization; 29 percent said that legalization would protect women, and 21 percent of women did not respond. In the U.S. country report, 56 percent of the Russian/NIS women and 85 percent of U.S. women in the sex industry stated that prostitution should not be legalized and considered legitimate work. The remaining Russian/NIS women did not support legalization but rather stated that they were unsure or had no opinion on the issue. U.S. women in prostitution warned that legalization would create more risks and harm for women from already violent buyers and pimps.

Seventy-eight percent of women in the Venezuelan country report also stated that they did not want their children, family or friends to enter the sex industry; and 73 percent would never recommend their experience in the sex industry for other women (almost all other women interviewed did not respond to these questions). Not one woman in the U.S. country report wanted her children, family or friends to earn money by entering the sex industry. Some commented on the need to de-glamorize prostitution as it is presented in the U.S. media. One woman stated: "Prostitution stripped me of my life, my health, everything."

### **Helping Women in the Sex Industry**

It is important to work for measures that decrease the harm to women in the sex industry and provide basic needs, at the same time that we work to abolish the institution of prostitution. Jean D'Cunha, the Thai project director, interviewed three NGOs in India who work in the brothel areas of Kamathipura (Mumbai), Sonagachi and Kalighat (Calcutta) and G.B. Road (Delhi). All three groups – Prerna, Saanlap and the Joint Women's Programme – oppose legalization and decriminalization of prostitution, but have worked for 15 years to obtain basic needs for women in conditions of bondage in criminally-controlled brothel areas. Women in prostitution were reached through children, who were initially the focus of two of the groups.

These 3 Indian organization have worked to obtain basic needs for women in the sex industry in the following strategic areas:

- 1) Acquisition of ration cards enabling women to buy low priced government-issued rice, sugar and fuel.
- 2) Staging protests in reaction to police violence against women in prostitution that entailed direct confrontation of abusers, demonstrations at police stations and filing written complaints against specific police offenders. Outcomes of these protests resulted in a new caution among the police, new policemen on the beat, public apologies to the victims and reimbursement of victims' medical bills.
- 3) Return of women's belongings and money that had been impounded by brothel keepers.
- 4) Filing of complaints with the police against individual brothel keepers for specific acts of violence against women in brothels, and against child prostitution
- 5) Joining women's movement demonstrations against price hikes for essential commodities.
- 6) Seeking the cooperation of brothel managements in sending children to school, or providing women with health care.
- 7) Legal training for some women in prostitution.

These initiatives were designed to be pragmatic, with no demands that women leave prostitution or that any brothel be shut down. The three NGOs distinguish between short and long-term strategies, recognizing that certain long term goals such as closing down the brothels are not possible at this moment in time. Although strategies such as seeking the cooperation of brothel keepers in children's education, or women's health care, may appear to be questionable compromises, the work of these NGOs is built on strategic thinking and political expediency that is grounded in a substantive understanding of the local sex industry situations. The fulfillment of more long-term goals, such as closing the brothels, "must be built on stronger government-NGO capability and better government-NGO prevention, protection and reintegration plans for women vulnerable to and in prostitution (p.154)."

What these 3 NGOs have demonstrated is that it is possible to work for women's basic needs and rights in systems of prostitution while not capitulating to the movement for legalizing/ decriminalizing prostitution in the mistaken belief that this will help women in the sex industry.

### **International and Regional Initiatives and Legislation**

Country reports affirm the importance of the 1949 *Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others* and the recent *UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Person, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime*.

The 1949 Convention addresses both prostitution and trafficking and does not separate the two. The provisions of the 1949 Convention remain unknown to the public at large, to governmental representatives and even to States that have ratified this convention. Many NGOs who work at the grassroots level to assist victims of trafficking and prostitution are also unaware of its provisions. To this day, however, the 1949 Convention remains a powerful tool uncompromisingly condemning the exploitation of prostitution. Its moral and political force is indicated by the fact that it is the most denounced legal instrument worldwide by the sex industry, regulationist states, and pro-legalization of prostitution NGOs. It remains the most significant human rights instrument capable of advancing the struggles against the sexual exploitation of women and children. However, it needs to be strengthened with a supplementary Protocol that would aid its enforcement and monitoring capability; and more countries need to ratify the 1949 Convention.

More recently, the new UN anti-trafficking Protocol has created a global language and legislative model to define trafficking in persons, assist victims of trafficking, and prevent trafficking. The Protocol states emphatically that the consent of a victims of trafficking is irrelevant (Art.3) and protects all victims of trafficking, not just those who can prove force. It also establishes the parameters of judicial cooperation and exchanges of information among countries. It is intended to jumpstart national laws and to harmonize regional legislation against the trafficking of women and children. The Protocol contains specific prevention, protection, and prosecution measures that are instrumental in the campaign against trafficking. Although some of the specific recommendations that follow are contained in this Protocol, many also go beyond the Protocol.

In drafting anti-trafficking legislation, governments should follow the example of the Protocol and treat trafficked persons as victims and survivors of human rights abuses, and not as migration criminals. It is also important for governments to initiate multilateral and bilateral agreements that assist in the prevention of trafficking, the protection of victims and the prosecution of traffickers. For example, the governments of Thailand and Cambodia are in the process of drafting a Memorandum of Understanding that requires both countries to protect and promote the rights of victims of trafficking and safely repatriate women. The Indonesian country report recommends a multi-lateral anti-trafficking agreement to be forged between Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. The Philippines country report recommends the development of bilateral agreements with destination countries for protection of overseas Filipinos so that complaints are immediately addressed, cases can be filed against recruiters and traffickers, and victims can be protected and assisted. Such agreements should enable the Philippines government, for example, to extradite traffickers for cases to be filed against them in Philippines courts.

Governments should also recognize that trafficking is not merely a migration crime or a simple labor violation, but a violation of basic human rights, no matter at what age the violation. Considering that an overwhelming number of adult women in systems of prostitution were recruited as children, there should be no artificial dividing line in policies and legal reforms that treat only the sexual exploitation of children as a crime but not that of adult women.

### **Measures to Prevent Trafficking**

No government policy should promote prostitution, whether through legalization or decriminalization of the sex industry, or through the acceptance of mail-order bride businesses or sex tourism enterprises.

Governments should resist current moves to establish legitimate economic “sex sectors” that encourage towns, cities and countries to benefit from taxing the enormous revenues of sex industries.

Governments must eliminate structural factors that push women into trafficking networks such as poverty and gender discrimination.

Economic policies that marginalize women or discriminate against them in public employment, for example, should be abolished.

Communities must become aware of recruiters who operate in their locales and often with their tacit permission.

Communities must organize at the community level to combat trafficking.

Governments must support effective public education and awareness-raising campaigns on trafficking. Replication of best practices that are gender-sensitive and woman-oriented

should be used and disseminated. Multi-media education must especially reach communities where recruiters are active and gaining ground.

Government-NGO-private sector collaboration against trafficking should be strengthened.

Governments should build and enhance links with a variety of NGOs and use their expertise.

Governments should also fund capability of NGOs to address trafficking issues.

Governments should provide funds for research and advocacy that underpin anti-trafficking policy and program design.

Governments such as the Philippines should implement an official system of documentation, including a systematic database on trafficking, listing categories of work such as “entertainment” for which many nationals migrate abroad, and also listing recruitment agencies.

Governments such as the United States should establish a database on trafficking that includes names of men who have sponsored multiple fiancées or wives from abroad and through marriage marketing agencies.

Laws relating to recruitment agencies in countries of origin should be reviewed, and mechanisms put in place, to recognize both domestic and international trafficking, particularly for sexual exploitation.

Governments that promote overseas contract work, such as the Philippines, should conduct an immediate review of policy, given the massive and continuing violations of migrants’ rights in destination countries.

Although governments must guarantee the right to travel and work abroad, governments in the South, such as the Philippines, must draft national development plans that reduce dependence on the remittances of those who have been trafficked and those working overseas.

Governments in the North should examine their own development agendas in which the hiring and exploitation of migrant labor from poorer countries has become an avenue for trafficking, sexual exploitation and cheap labor.

Governments should invest in income-generating programs that target youth and women vulnerable to trafficking, decreasing the need and attraction to seek income abroad. These programs should address strategic economic needs and interests, and be gender-responsive, market-oriented, viable and sustainable. Loans, business training, and self-managed enterprise programs should support women’s economic empowerment at the individual, household and community level. Education, training and access to skilled jobs should be part of these programs.

A portion of the application fees from overseas Filipino workers, for example, should be set aside to assist those who have been trafficked and illegally recruited abroad, especially since these migrants are contributing to the economy through their remittances.

### **Measures to Protect Victims of Trafficking**

Governments should initiate economic alternatives and credit schemes for women in prostitution that provide them with real options to leave the sex industry.

Those countries whose nationals are trafficked to other countries should establish focal points in embassies abroad to address trafficking and prostitution cases.

Embassy and consular officials and staff should be trained to handle trafficking cases, and cases of illegal recruitment, effectively and efficiently. Specific funds must be allocated for emergency assistance to trafficked migrants.

Governments should provide compensation to trafficked women from the seized assets of traffickers, pimps and other perpetrators.

Governments should fund networks of organizations that can provide educational, health, drug and alcohol programs, and legal, linguistic and voluntary counseling services for women who have been trafficked and sexually exploited, as well as for the children of women in prostitution.

Survivors of trafficking and sexual exploitation should be engaged and funded to help staff support services for survivors of trafficking and prostitution.

Governments should provide health education and general health services for women in prostitution that do not stigmatize them. These services must maintain confidentiality of an individual's health status providing information only to individuals who receive the services.

NGOs should encourage safe sex practices for women in the sex industry.

Governments should ban mandatory testing of prostituted women for HIV/AIDS.

Trafficked women should be offered voluntary repatriation and the means to obtain timely travel documents and funds for repatriation.

Governments and NGOs in countries of destination should insure that women return voluntarily and safely to their countries by establishing contact with NGOs in the country of origin who will follow-up to insure that women are not re-trafficked or ultimately end up in the local sex industry.

Governments and NGOs should work with families and local communities from which trafficked women originate to facilitate women's process of reintegration and to prevent future trafficking from these areas.

Governments should provide resources to NGOs who protect and assist trafficked and prostituted women.

Governments in destination countries should provide internationally trafficked women with refuge, visa and/refugee status, and protection from traffickers whether they have entered the country legally or illegally. Permanent visa status should be provided to women who give material evidence in a crime of trafficking.

### **Measures to Prosecute Traffickers and Buyers**

Governments should pass effective and comprehensive anti-trafficking laws.

Victims of trafficking and women in prostitution should be decriminalized.

Local law enforcement authorities should investigate cases of missing women and children, especially in source areas of recruitment

Governments should introduce penal sanctions against persons in political office, those in custodial positions, and corrupt governmental officials and law enforcers who are directly involved or collude with those who perpetrate trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Citizens' committees should work with governments and implementing authorities to ensure efficacy in implementation of laws against prostitution and trafficking.

NGOs should be permitted to testify on behalf of trafficked women.

Governments should provide legal assistance and information to trafficked women in a language comprehensible to them; protect their privacy and identity; and provide them with physical safety and victim witness protection.

Penalties for recruiters, traffickers and pimps must reflect the seriousness of the crime.

Legal sanctions should be instituted against buyers of women in the sex industry. It should be a crime to buy women for commercial sexual exploitation.

Sweden's 1999 *Violence Against Women* bill provides a model for future policy and legislation on prostitution. Sweden has enacted groundbreaking legislation to prohibit the purchase of so-called "sexual services" (Swedish Government Offices, 1998). It is one of the first pieces of legislation to address the demand for prostitution that leads to trafficking for sexual exploitation, by targeting the men who purchase so-called sexual services. This new prohibition declares that prostitution is not a desirable social phenomenon and lifts all penalties against the women in prostitution.

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Although there are many other recommendations contained in these country reports and in the literature on trafficking, the list above represents the major ones that emerged from the interviews and the project teams. In closing, we reiterate the words of the U.S. country report:

*Governments and non-governmental organizations have tended to emphasize short-term solutions for women in sex industries that encourage women to stay in the industry, such as negotiating for safe sex, condoms, and HIV/AIDS testing. However, it is important to advocate for such measures within a context of other proposals, which provide women with alternatives to sex trafficking and prostitution. We believe that women have the right to humanitarian assistance to help them out of prostitution rather than humanitarian assistance to keep them in it.*

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**Janice G. Raymond, Ph.D.** is Professor of Women’s Studies and Medical Ethics at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. She has been Visiting Professor at the University of

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**Zoraida Ramirez Rodriguez, Ph.D.** is an economist, born in Caracas Venezuela. She has worked for ANPMICALS (National Association of Small and Medium Industry), FEDEINDUSTRIA (Federation of Small and Medium Industry), and CORPOINDUSTRIA (National Corporation for the Development of Small and Medium Artisan Industry and has been an advisor to a number of businesses and NGOs in Venezuela. From 1990-91, she worked as an advisor to the Ministry of Employment, researching the design and application of World Bank programs impacting Venezuelan women. She is the author of *Prostitucion y Subdesarrollo: Una Aproximacion Teorico-Feminista (Prostitution and Underdevelopment: a Feminist Approach)*, (Caracas: Centro Feminista Latinoamericano de Estudios Interdisciplinarios, 1994). Since 1993, Dra. Ramirez has been the Latin American and Caribbean representative for the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women and is a member of the International Board of Directors. She has lectured at many international conferences on prostitution and trafficking in women sponsored by the UN, governmental and non-governmental organizations. In Venezuela, she has organized national events, journals and workshops to publicize the situation of women and offer solutions. A feminist since 1968, Dra. Ramirez has founded many groups such as "Conjura" and "La Mala Vida." She speaks on radio and television programs, and has been interviewed in the Latin American print media on prostitution and trafficking. She has pioneered research on prostitution, women's human rights, abortion, and nuclear energy.

**Aida Santos** has been involved in the campaigns against prostitution, trafficking and sexual exploitation for more than a decade and was especially involved with the Bases Conversion Program when the U.S. military left the Philippines in 1991. She was also a former political prisoner during the Marcos regime in the Philippines. Currently, she works with different local and international women's groups to promote women's human rights, in the struggle against violence against women, and in women's health programs. She has worked as a gender and development trainer for local and international NGOs. Aida Santos is also a poet/writer who has written 3 anthologies of poetry, numerous articles, and has been published locally and internationally. She was the Philippines country representative to the International Network on Feminist Approaches to Bioethics and the East Asia-U.S. Network Against Militarism, and is a member of the Board of the Coalition Against Trafficking Against Women (CATW) Asia Pacific.

