

Forum: United Nations Women (UNW)

Issue # 16-01: Measures to combat the sexual exploitation of women

Student Officer: Andres Uzcategui

Position: Chair of United Nations Women

Introduction

Political and economic instability has caused unexpected migrations around the world. Most of the people involved came from low income families and this created a vulnerability that gives pimps or traffickers the incentive to do illegal acts. Despite the efforts to provide laws that protect victims, there are opportunities for these to be applied more rigorously. It is among the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights that no one is to be subjected to degrading treatment. And sexual exploitation is an act that takes advantage of vulnerabilities and degrades an individual for sexual purposes.

Observations can be made in the borders of specific countries. For example, between the borders of Colombia and Venezuela, mass migrations of Venezuelans has left women vulnerable to trafficking, prostitution, and other violence. While there are laws that protect women from exploitation and abuse, the political turmoil has caused the negligence of this problem. In Somalia, the long-lasting conflict has increased gender inequality and power imbalances that have resulted in the abuse and violence against women. Weak application of laws and negligence has been a factor of its increase. Even in Brazil, poverty, migration from rural to populated areas, and lack of law application are the reason why nearly half a million children, the vast majority being girls, are possible victims of abuse and exploitation.

The common motif is the lack of importance placed on the application of laws and the vulnerability caused by the country's situation. This has enabled the apparent increase

in prostitution and trafficking, both factors of sexual exploitation. Depending on a country's laws, prostitution can be considered one of three alternatives; the exploitation of a woman, a profession, or an illegal and punishable act. There are other cases in which prostitution is the result of trafficking, where victims are forced into sexual slavery, and are the leading causes in industries like sex tourism. Regardless of how sexual exploitation is displayed, the way we report, respond, and combat exploitation has to be rethought.

Definition of Key Terms

Sexual Exploitation: The act of abusing vulnerability, power, or trust for sexual purposes. This is influenced by economic, social, or political gain of the participants. "Sexual Exploitation" is a broad term that may include terms such as "Transactional Sex".

Transactional Sex: The exchange of money, goods, or services for the purpose of sex. This includes sexual favours or any other degrading or exploitative behavior.

Prostitution: The practice of engaging in sexual relations for the purpose of gaining money or anything of value.

Sex Tourism: The act of travelling to a different country or region for the purpose of sexual relations, especially with prostitutes or sex workers.

Brothel: A dedicated place, often a house, where prostitution takes place. Generally, it may also refer to an area or group of buildings in which prostitution takes place.

Human Trafficking: The collection and transportation of people by improper force for the purpose of forced labor or sexual exploitation.

General Overview

Prostitution

Prostitution, informally defined by the United Nations Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, is the exchange of money, goods, or services for sex. Prostitution may be performed voluntarily, where a prostitute has an intent to profit from a situation, or involuntarily, where they are forced into exploitation. The lines between voluntary and involuntary prostitution are drawn by the three different global perspectives. These views are abolitionism, prohibitionism, and regulation. The three approaches may define prostitutes as victims, criminals, or workers. The legalization of prostitution varies from country to country. Primarily, these are the movements that lead discussion and shape laws of exploitation within prostitution.

Abolitionism portrays prostitutes as victims to a direct or indirect cause that has left them no other choice but prostitution. Direct causes may include third party incentives like traffickers while indirect causes range from poverty to other personal problems. Regulation (often called Legalization) is the thinking that prostitutes are workers who have a legitimate profession. This would happen under the strict supervision of the country. Then, there is Prohibitionism that views prostitutes as criminals and criminalizes anyone involved in the act or process of prostitution. The Netherlands is known for their regulation and legalization mentality. Prostitution is highly regulated, but if it's organized or done in brothels, those involved can be prosecuted. England, on the other hand, follows an abolitionism mindset. Prostitution itself isn't illegal, but it is highly restrictive, criminalizing the managing of brothels or solicitation of prostitution in public spaces.

There are numerous causes for concern that ask for addressings the prevention of women exploitation. The first obstacle is the defining of prostitution; whether or not it is considered sexual exploitation. If not, consider the acts of violence against prostitutes as another form of sexual exploitation. Reasons on why to address this topic includes a constant increase in forced migration, that increases willingness or forces women to partake in prostitution. Legalization must be questioned for the purpose of classifying prostitution as sexual exploitation.

Additionally, prostitutes heavily involved in the sex industry are vulnerable targets to physical and sexual violence. Offenders target those involved in prostitution since they are less likely to report the crime. A study on violence against sex workers found that up to 50 percent of prostitute are likely to experience sexual violence in a single year. Migrant sex workers are vulnerable to being culturally targetted. For example, a study based on Macau, China found that Vietnamese and Thai prostitutes experienced less violence than those from migrated from mainland China.

Sexual Exploitation in Trafficking

Human trafficking is among the most profitable organized crime businesses in the world, right behind the trafficking of drugs and arms. It is considered to be a violation of human rights and is synonymous with Modern Day Slavery. Trafficking prospers because of the vulnerability of others. Vulnerabilities such as poverty are targeted by traffickers who promise new opportunities for a better life. Eventually traffickers coerce or force victims into prostitution or forced labor against their will. While trafficking is closely related with the topic of migration, there is a notable difference between them. Migration, through the use of smuggling, is often considered to be voluntary. The migrant proactively seeks it. Trafficking is generally involuntary and forced by traffickers. Coercion of trafficking can be deceitful like giving promises of a better life that a victim seeks. Other times, it is abusive through torture, sexual exploitation, or personal threats.

An observation of the victims of trafficking is that previous life experiences can make a victim more vulnerable to trafficking. Sexual abuse at childhood severely increases the chances of being a victim of trafficking. A public health study found that if girls were sexually abused, their chances of being victims increased by 2.52. The abuse cripples their self-esteem and makes more vulnerable to coercion.

The victims of human trafficking are often subject to forced labor or sexual slavery. Sexual slavery, especially of women, is a large incentive for traffickers. According to the UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), 72 percent of the victims of human trafficking are women and girls. In the Americas and in Europe, the majority of trafficking victims are women or girls who are subject to sexual slavery or forced prostitution.

Sex Tourism

Sex tourism has the purpose of attracting others into engaging in sexual relations with prostitutes or sex workers from a different country or region. Depending on the country in which the act happens, participating in sex tourism may be legal.. However, the darker side of sex tourism is the illegal world involving children and forcing prostitutes. It is often closely related to the trafficking of women and girls that end up as sex slaves for the large industry.

The cultural and social aspects of sex tourism can ease the process because of differences in gender, age, and status of the origin and destination countries. Often times, these differences increase the participation and contribution of sex tourism, similar to normal tourism.

Sex trafficking victims that are moved between the borders of different countries find themselves working for an industry like that of the sex tourism. One of the largest ethical issues with trafficking and sex tourism is the participation of underage girls who are coerced into the industry. Any tourist that have sexual relationships with a minor violate a basic human right. The tourists who travel for these kinds of relationships typically come from wealthier demographics. Not to mention, the difference in class and power leaves the minor or prostitute in a powerless position. This, at its roots, is sexual exploitation, using power over others.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

United States

In most of the United States, prostitution is considered illegal as a result of state laws. 83 percent of reported trafficking cases in the U.S. are for the purpose of sex slavery and forced prostitution. On April of 2018, the Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act was a bill passed by The U.S. Senate that addressed the means through sex trafficking is facilitated, like the internet, and made it illegal to assist or support the process of trafficking through those means.

Netherlands

With a large legalization of prostitution in the Netherlands, victims of both exploitation and trafficking are sometimes invisible to the aid provided. The most vulnerable victims are children. NGOs in the Netherlands are often in charge of raising the awareness on the issue as well as preventing exploitation. However, these attempts are mostly focused in the specific case where a “boyfriend/girlfriend” lures the underaged victim into prostitution.

Brazil

Brazil's vulnerability of sexual exploitation is often described as an 'epidemic'. Up to half a million children are suspected to be involved in exploitation and most are victims of trafficking as well. Since the announcement of the FIFA World Cup in 2014, more campaigns to combat sexual exploitation and trafficking have been presented.

Russia

In Russia, engaging in prostitution can result in a fine but organized prostitution is punishable by prison. Russia is a large source and destination for women and children who are subjected to forced labor, sexual trafficking, and exploitation. Especially around the time of the 2018 World Cup in Russia, there are around 800,000 people in Russia living in slavery conditions. Out of 285 reported cases of trafficking in and out of Russia, 202 related with child exploitation.

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom abides to the abolitionism mentality. Prostitution, by itself, is legal but any organized prostitution or management of brothels is highly illegal. The National Crime Agency reports that over 1,000 women are victims of exploitation inside the U.K. The Agency also works on preventing exploitation and protecting anyone who is vulnerable inside the United Kingdom. This includes teaching internet safety, and persecution or investigation of child sex offenders.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
December 2nd, 1949	Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others.
October 28th, 2000	Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act.
November 15th, 2000	The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Mentions smuggling, trafficking, and the exploitation of the victims
July 2, 2010	United Nations Women is created
September 10th, 2010	The United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. Addresses trafficking: coercion and exploitation in the process of it.
September, 2016	2016 Coalition To End Sexual Exploitation Summit. Dedicated to addressing the harm of sexual exploitation and the means through which it happens.

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- The United Nations has focused tremendously on clarifying the issue of exploitation, especially through the medium of trafficking. In 1972, the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which promised developments in many cultural aspects for women including equal opportunities and elimination of discrimination against women. Alongside, it came with the promise that state parties would take the necessary measures against forms of traffic and exploitation of women.
- On the 31st of October, 2000, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security. This focused on including women in the participation of peace processes and how women are victims of the impacts of

war. On March 11th, 2016, the Security Council also adopted Resolution 2272, which focuses more on the sexual exploitation and abuse of women and asks for the involvement of the United Nation Peacekeepers, which have been the target of controversial allegation of United Nations workers involved in sexual exploitation.

- Current Secretary General of the United Nations, António Guterres, spoke on sexual exploitation and abuse in 2017 and mentioned a “new approach” to dealing with sexual exploitation and a zero-tolerance attitude to those involved in the act, especially those who are also working alongside the United Nations, focusing on ending impunity.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

As seen through UN involvement, the United Nations has been very aware of the scale and difficulty of the problem. One of the targets were the allegations of UN Peacekeepers involved in SEA. With the United Nations Security Council resolution 2272 and the guide to combat SEA in the United Nations Military, there has been promising results for the treatment of said allegations. However, the UN struggles with the targeting of specific countries, and how others are left out of the plan due to low numbers in Peacekeeping forces. And the reputation of countries are at stake. However, there are still positive effects like raising the awareness that may increase the “policing” of individual UN forces between each other.

The National Crime Agency and Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (CEOP) from the United Kingdom have developed a system of safeguarding children, who are considered the most vulnerable in an exploitation process. This includes preventative measures like teaching the dangers of internet relationships to young girls. Or more proactive measures like identifying potential victims or offenders. It proves to be effective as 2,000 children were reported to be safeguarded between the 2017-2018 years.

Possible Solutions

Sexual exploitation and abuse are difficult topics to address as it is difficult to discern the full scope of the problem. Sometimes, the problem is theoretically visible and simple to deal with, like the reporting of exploitation cases. Other times, the problem is nearly invisible to authorities through mediums like trafficking and organized prostitution. In these cases the exploitation goes unnoticed and unreported. In either case, the solutions are to tackle the mediums and provide opportunities for reporting. Social media, the internet, and dedicated websites are just a few of the mediums through which sexual exploitation is organized or prepared.

While some problems can be tackled individually between nation states, there are already presented solutions that can be used as a placeholder for new policies. Like the UNSC Resolution 2272, which recommends a specific procedure for handling with exploitation cases inside the UN Peacekeeping forces. The procedure could be edited, managed, or supervised by external authorities that would be in charge of combating sexual exploitation in their region.

Bibliography

Barnett, Laura. Prostitution: A Review of Legislation in Selected Countries. Parliamentary Information and Research Service, 2011.

Bernstein, Elizabeth, and Elena Shih. Erotics of Authenticity: Sex Trafficking and "Reality Tourism" in Thailand. Oxford University Press, 1 Sept. 2014, academic.oup.com/sp/article-abstract/21/3/430/2259112.

Carolin, Lindsay. "Sex Trafficking in the Tourism Industry." *Journal of Tourism & Hospitality*, vol. 04, no. 04, 2015, doi:10.4172/2167-0269.1000166.

Country Policy and Information Note Somalia: Women Fearing Genderbased Violence. vol. 4.0, Home Office, 2018, Country Policy and Information Note Somalia: Women Fearing Genderbased Violence.

Deering, Kathleen N, et al. "A Systematic Review of the Correlates of Violence against Sex Workers." U.S. National Library of Medicine, *American Journal of Public Health*, May 2014, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3987574/#bib1.

Demir, Jenna. Trafficking of Women for Sexual Exploitation: A Gender-Based Well-Founded Fear? An Examination of Refugee Status Determination for Trafficked Prostituted Women from CEE/CIS Countries to Western Europe. 2003, University of Pavia

Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. 2nd ed., 2017, Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

Joan, Reid A. Human Trafficking of Minors and Childhood Adversity in Florida. *Am J Public Health*, 2017, Human Trafficking of Minors and Childhood Adversity in Florida.

Limanowaska, Barbara. UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), Trafficking in Human Beings in Southeastern Europe, June 2002

Madeleine, Ayers. "Examining the History of Sexual Exploitation and the Fight to Eradicate It." National Center on Sexual Exploitation, 14 Aug. 2017, endsexualexploitation.org/articles/examining-history-sexual-exploitation-fight-eradicate/.

On Trafficking in Women for the Purpose of Sexual Exploitation. 1996, Commission of the European Communities

"1,320 Girls in the Netherlands Fall Victim to Sexual Exploitation Every Year." Liberties.eu, Nederlands Juristen Comité Voor De Mensenrechten, 6 Nov. 2017, www.liberties.eu/en/news/netherlands-1320-victims-sexual-exploitation/13344.

Rotteveel, Jochem, et al. *Sexual Exploitation of Children in Brazil: Putting a Spot on the Problem*. 2014, *Sexual Exploitation of Children in Brazil: Putting a Spot on the Problem*.

Schulze, Erika. "Sexual Exploitation and Prostitution and its Impact on Gender Equality". Directorate-General for Internal Policies, 2014

Swift, Jaimee. "Not An Object: On Sexualization and Exploitation of Women and Girls." UNICEF USA, 31 Jan. 2019, www.unicefusa.org/stories/not-object-sexualization-and-exploitation-women-and-girls/30366.

The Trafficking of Women for Sexual Exploitation: a Gender-Based and Well-Founded Fear of Persecution? The UN Refugee Agency, 2003,

UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2018*

Zulver, Julia. "At Venezuela's Border with Colombia, Women Suffer Extraordinary Levels of Violence." The Washington Post, WP Company, 26 Feb. 2019, www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/02/26/venezuelas-border-with-colombia-women-suffer-extraordinary-levels-violence/?noredirect=on

Appendix

- I. UN Glossary on sexual exploitation and abuse:
<https://hr.un.org/materials/un-glossary-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-english>

- II. The perspectives on prostitution:
<https://lop.parl.ca/staticfiles/PublicWebsite/Home/ResearchPublications/BackgroundPapers/PDF/2011-115-e.pdf>