

STOP Traffick! In Finland, presentation

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Ladies and Gentlemen, colleagues and friends

In Finland, MONIKA - Multicultural Women's Association implemented the research for STOP Traffick! project. We have worked in our organization with victims of trafficking since 2006 and collaborate with different authorities and NGOs in the field. Our organization's core focus is violence against migrant women, STOP Traffick! project is providing us valuable evidence-base that supports the expert role that we hold in Finland. We provide shelter and low-threshold service for victims of violence, our integration work supports women to get empowerment and agency in society, we also seek them employment.

STOP Traffick! project gave us insights on the very little researched demand side: who buy sex and where, and how capable or willing the buyers are to report their concerns related to trafficking and pimping to authorities.

Understanding the demand can lead to opportunity to train potential sex buyers on the connections between human trafficking and prostitution even more efficiently than we have been able to do by now. We need to focus on demand in order to reduce the volume of sex industry, which inherently uses and abuses sexually exploited people, and prostitution as part of it. Migrant women are an especially vulnerable group to be exploited in prostitution. There is a trend of foreignization of prostitution also in Finland as sex industry is becoming global and women migrate increasingly alone.

In Finland we weren't successful in recruiting sex buyers for face to face interviews, but online survey, similar to Irish and Cypriot ones, was a great success. We reached 544 people out of whom 208 stated to have bought sex. This amount of people answered the survey in only one week. This is very promising for future research in the field, sex buyers are willing to speak about their sex-buying experiences and patterns. Still, they don't want to risk their identity to be revealed even to a confidential face to face research. This is a challenge to overcome. I now provide you some information on the Finnish context of demand for paid sex and reflect the results of STOP Traffick! research to it.

The most important laws regulating demand in Finland are Public Order Act and Criminal Law. According to Public Order Act it is prohibited to sell and buy sexual services at a public place. Law came into function in 2003, between 2003 and 2011 106 people were fined for violation of Public Order Act, but unfortunately it hasn't been a very effective deterrent for demand as mostly sex sellers have been convicted.

In Criminal Law, marketing of sexual services was criminalized in year 2004, as it came a part of procuring crime description. Small announcements in newspapers disappeared. Still, the change in law hasn't been able to do anything to demand on special websites. According to Finnish online survey the most sex buyers stated to have bought sex previous time from the Internet, more than a fifth.

There is an article in Criminal Law that came into function in year 2006 that made sex purchase partially criminalized in Finland: it became prohibited to buy sex from a victim of human trafficking or procuring. As investigation and finding evidence for this crime is very challenging, only 42 people have been punished for

violating this crime compared to figure of 379 announcements to police, between years 2006 and 2013. Penalty norm is 20 day fines.

The numbers previously referred are from Finnish Ministry of Justice's research report Niemi & Aaltonen 2013: Abuse of a victim of sex trade: The evaluation of the Finnish Sex purchase ban. Report recommends criminalization of sex purchasing.

I now take a look at Finnish online survey results. The most important results from the Finnish online survey, in addition to above mentioned, are related to common characteristics and attitudes of sex buyers. According to our survey, a sex buyer is

well-educated (50 %, 103 out of 208 with 3rd level education),

in a relationship (56 %),

living in a city (60 %)

and with a high income-level (proportionally more sex buyers in high income levels)

These facts may indicate the reason why the sex buyers don't want to risk their anonymity even for the research. These people have studied at universities, they go to work and live in the city. They can be anyone in our social circles. The request of anonymity is in line with other researches in the field.

Another interesting result for us was the buyers' readiness to report concerns of human trafficking and pandering to authorities. As I previously mentioned the law that prohibits buying of sex from victims of human trafficking and procuring, the buyers' reporting for sexual exploitation should be anonymous. This is already possible in Finland via police net tip, but is not for urgent requests. Many sex buyers had faced a person that seemed to be forced to prostitution, there were 91 mentions of these. Alarming for us was that the majority of respondents hadn't considered reporting their concerns to authorities and 62 % of those who answered this question hadn't changed their mind in buying sex from that person. There is a lot of work should be done with sex buyers to make them report their concerns of controlled persons in prostitution.

On behalf of MONIKA, we recommend a national helpline for victims of these crimes and other people who have concerns, including buyers. This should allow anonymity for those who call. As the sex commerce is now active in the Internet, we would welcome the creation of easy and quick reporting channels for sex buyers in the Internet, for those 20 % who stated to ever have considered reporting to authorities their doubts about forced prostitution. This could be for example a chat in sex buying forums where a sex buyer could report their concerns to NGO that would run it.

Buying of sex should be made less tolerated and equal gender relations should be developed in the society in order to prevent prostitution and its demand. Women shouldn't have prostitution as their only alternative for income, and migrant women should get more support for their integration so that they would have a choice. We would recommend the adoption of the Swedish model where sex buying is criminalized as soon as it is politically possible.

Training should be provided to police and prosecutors for identification and dealing with human trafficking and prostitution related crimes. We recommend a special unit for police that investigate these crimes. NGOs should be better resourced to support this work as they have the special asset of being touch with

grassroots: victims and maybe also buyers in the future. At the moment in MONIKA we don't have earmarked budget for anti-trafficking work, and this is the situation in many other NGOs as well.

We would like to open a discussion for better prevention of human trafficking and prostitution, which requires better services, opportunities and more facilitated exit from prostitution for victims of sexual exploitation. Simultaneously, we have to focus in making a change in buyers' attitudes by training, public discussion on prostitution and motives for sex-buying as well as law enforcement.

Thank you.