

Signpost Series



3a. Prostitution and Sex Trafficking

Prostitution and sex trafficking

There is a general lack of awareness in the general public of the realities of prostitution and its links with sex trafficking. Not surprisingly, therefore, distinctions are often made between the two. However all prostitution, when its root causes and experiences of many within it are considered, is inherently unjust and incompatible with universal standards of human rights. **The National Christian Alliance on Prostitution (NCAP)** exists to unite, equip and empower groups working with people involved in the sex industry to offer freedom and change.



**National Christian Alliance
on Prostitution**

PO Box 37077
London E15 4XR

Tel: 0845 0044231
Email: ncap@ncapuk.org
Web: www.ncapuk.org



This “Signpost Series” was designed by NCAP as a response to the report “Towards the Inclusive Church; Supporting the Marginalised” to help equip the Church in the process of tackling these pastoral issues.

There are two areas to consider:

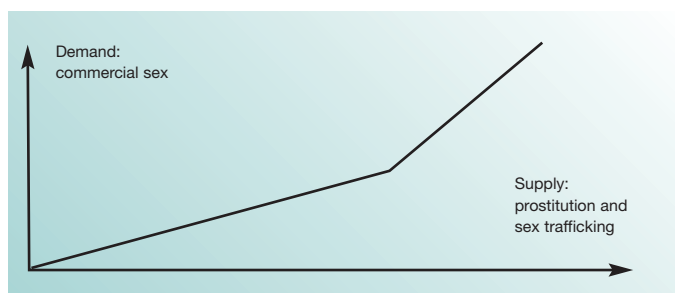
1. the dynamics of supply and demand
2. the abuse of power and vulnerability.

1. The dynamics of supply and demand

There are an estimated 85,000 individuals involved in prostitution in the UK¹ working in a range of locations across the sex industry – brothels, strip clubs, lap dancing clubs, peep shows, saunas, massage parlours and escort agencies.²

The sex industry, like any other, is governed by the laws of demand and supply – demand for sex as a commodity and the supply of human bodies to meet that demand.

Figure 1: The dynamics of supply and demand



It is mainly men that purchase sex: fathers, husbands, sons and brothers, and not the stereotypical ‘weird loner’ that one might imagine.³ The glamourisation of the sex industry, and the increased popularity of stag-night excess, lad mags and lap dancing⁴, has meant that the act of buying sex has lost its stigma. As a result, more men are paying for sex each year. In the UK the number has doubled over the last 10 years.⁵

The industry has an annual value of £770 million.⁶ In London alone men spend £200 million a year on buying sex, half in massage parlours and saunas.⁷ It is a buyer’s market, and those controlling the industry will deliver what the buyer wants with little concern over the ethics of how supply is met. Seduced by the financial gains to be made – a pimp controlling a number of girls can earn up to £6,000 per week⁸, and a compliant female can earn a trafficker up to £120,000 per annum⁹ – sophisticated criminal networks will target and exploit vulnerable individuals for the purposes of sexual exploitation.

2. Abuse of power and vulnerability

“For the most part, prostitution as actually practiced in the world usually does satisfy the elements of trafficking. It is rare that one finds a case in which the path to prostitution and/or a person’s experiences within prostitution do not involve at least, an abuse of power and/or abuse of vulnerability.” – Sigma Huda, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons¹⁰

a) The ‘route in’

Many individuals involved in prostitution come from the poorest and most vulnerable in society. For them, the ‘route in’ is ‘a choice out of no choice’ – a story of survival.¹¹

¹ *Paying the price: a consultation paper on prostitution*, London, UK Home Office, 2004
² Women’s Support Project, www.womenssupportproject.co.uk

³ www.care.org.uk
⁴ Lap dancing is the fastest growing sector of the British sex industry. Julie Bindel, *Profitable Exploits: Lap Dancing in the UK*, 2004
⁵ Ward et al., *Who Pays For Sex Sexually Transmitted Infections*, 81:467-71, 2005
⁶ The Observer, 18 April 2004
⁷ The Observer, 18 April 2004
⁸ Vice Unit, Metropolitan Police, December 2006
⁹ Churches Alert to Sex Trafficking across Europe, www.chaste.org.uk
¹⁰ Sigma Huda, *Integration of the Human Rights of Women and the Gender Perspective*, 2006
¹¹ Julie Bindel, *Prostitution, Human Rights and the Law*

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3b. Prostitution and Sex Trafficking

Some will be drawn into prostitution in order to cope with immense financial pressures and whilst battling a range of personal problems such as a history of child sexual abuse, domestic violence, homelessness and drug addiction. Others, some as young as 13, are coerced into it by organised criminal networks. Thousands will be trafficked each year from abroad.

The tactics used by pimps and traffickers will involve varying degrees of intimidation and control, but the intention is the same – to attract, dominate and coerce these individuals into the trade.

In a study conducted in 2000 in the Netherlands, 79% of women interviewed indicated that they were in it due to some degree of force.¹²

In a study in the US, 60% of individuals interviewed had been recruited by a pimp.¹³

b) Children abused through prostitution

Some criminal networks will specifically identify, groom and force children into prostitution. Often young girls will befriended by an older man and given gifts. They will gradually be isolated from their family and friends (they may go missing from home), be introduced to Class A drugs and alcohol, and then to petty crime. Eventually they will be forced to work in prostitution to pay back the money for the gifts they received. Threats may be made against them and their families should they try to escape.

Children working in prostitution in Europe¹⁴

- Latvia – up to 50%
- Estonia - up to 30%
- Poland / Germany - minors involved in roadside prostitution has flourished along the border where under 18s live like prisoners in barracks at the border crossings
- Russia - Moscow boasts a 'nympho' club where minors do striptease and are tattooed with their owner's mark. When they reach 14 their virginity is sold to the highest bidder
- Russia - of 750 girls in a reception centre, 85% had been sexually abused and compelled into prostitution

Some pimping networks, often based in extended families, will staff complex co-ordinated operations deploying victims across the country and forcing them to work in prostitution.



*'Girls will be sent to various locations in different parts of the country....to different cities over a wide area of England.... There are gangs in West Yorkshire who recruit in the North East or the Pennines and send girls around the country where they know of demand – to Edinburgh, Newcastle, Bedford, Birmingham, Manchester or London.'*¹⁵

c) Violence

The majority of individuals involved in prostitution will be exposed to extreme levels of violence on a daily basis.

110 women involved in prostitution in 18 towns and cities in the UK were interviewed over a one year period. Approximately 60% had been repeatedly raped by customers and pimps, and 17% had been abducted – taken in a car against their will.¹⁶

In a study of levels of violence experienced in prostitution in the US, of those interviewed¹⁷

- 82% had been physically assaulted
- 83% had been threatened with a weapon
- 75% had been violently raped – 70% by customers
- 50% had been kidnapped by pimps, 76% beaten by pimps, 79% beaten by customers

¹² www.care.org.uk

¹³ Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault, www.icasa.org

¹⁴ Monica O'Connor and Grainne Healy, *The Links between Prostitution and Sex Trafficking: A Briefing Handbook*, 2006

¹⁵ Coalition for the Removal of Pimping, www.crop1.org.uk

¹⁶ Dispatches: Sex on the Streets, Channel 4, 16 September 2002

¹⁷ Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault, www.icasa.org

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3c. Prostitution and Sex Trafficking

The violence occurs in order to intimidate and subdue, but also because the 'service' provided can involve violent, degrading and abusive sexual acts.

In a study in the US 80% of individuals working in prostitution that were interviewed said that their customers used pornography and photographs to demonstrate sexual acts they wanted performed.¹⁸

The violence inflicted includes physical, verbal, and sexual abuse, battering, gang rape, traumatic intercourse, emotional trauma, robbery, domestic violence and confinement, and murder¹⁹.

Violence endured results in morbidity²⁰, disability, emotional scarring, psychological stress, and low self-esteem.

Many describe disconnecting from emotional reality in order to dissociate from their experiences. This is an essential strategy used to survive and is common among victims of sexual abuse as well as hostages and survivors of torture. Drugs and alcohol may also be used as a coping mechanism to numb the pain, often leading to long term addiction and mental health issues.



Sexual exploitation: a Christian perspective

'The woman called Lolli is carefully making her neat white bed, arranging frilly silk cushions in an elegant line. 'No-one would really choose this as a way of life' she says, 'no-one...some days you feel very down...sometimes' she covers her face, 'it is as if your soul is getting hurt'.²¹

As Christians we believe that human beings are created in the image of God, and that sexual union is freely given as an expression of love and a secure context for procreation. It is a deep intimacy between two people, symbolic of God's union with humankind.

All forms of sexual exploitation is an extreme abuse and a rejection of God's ways. It de-humanises both the individual exploited as well as the perpetrator, devastating the human spirit and denying an individual's human dignity.

Reflection

'[We] dream of a life free from oppression, a life that is safe ...where we can participate as citizens and... exercise our rights as human beings...'²²

In Psalm 50:3 we read 'Our God comes and will not be silent'.²³ He rises up on behalf of the poor and vindicates them. Like the abolitionists two centuries ago, we too 'shall not keep silent', and our prayer today is that God will rescue those enslaved and cause deep repentance in the perpetrators.

John 8:2-11 tells the story of the woman who is about to be put to death by stoning for adultery. What stands out particularly is how Jesus goes straight to the heart of the matter in exposing the depth of hypocrisy and entrenched ways of thinking, illustrating how sin has in fact permeated the whole of human nature. The message is risky and bold, and the challenge for us today is clear - if we are going to engage with the matter seriously, let us start by considering the part that we play collectively and the responsibility we share.

¹⁸ Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault, www.icasa.org

¹⁹ In the UK, 10 women on average are murdered each year.

²⁰ The Canadian Commission Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution (1985) found that the death rate of women in prostitution is 40x higher than the general population.

²¹ Daily Mirror, 25 January 2006

²² Survivors of Prostitution and Trafficking Manifesto, Press Conference at the European Parliament, *Who Represents Women in Prostitution?*, 17 October 2005

²³ New International Version

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3d. Prostitution and Sex Trafficking

'I wanted someone to rescue me. I told this woman at the sex clinic, she seemed shocked by what I said so I never mentioned it again and nor did she. I didn't know where else to go after that.'²⁴



Praxis: translating an idea into action

'He brought them out of darkness and the deepest gloom and broke away their chains'²⁵

The UK government has begun to recognise that all prostitution is a victim-centred crime, and that those abused and exploited through it need help to leave it behind and start new lives. NCAP supports their efforts to bring positive changes in this area, and believes that the Church can contribute in three significant ways:

1. Challenging cultural attitudes and raising awareness on how the purchase of sex involves exploitation.
2. Lobbying for appropriate policy changes that ensure that those at risk are protected, those already involved have adequate long term support to exit safely, and criminal gangs are brought to justice.
3. Providing safe places of welcome, acceptance, friendship, healing and restoration – Christian community - where lives can be transformed.

²⁵ Psalm 107:14, New International Version

²⁴ Presentation by Ginny Wilkinson, Principal Policy & Practice Officer, Barnardos UK, 'Protecting the Children', 31 May 2006

Things you can do

- Commit to praying regularly for those involved in prostitution and for those working to help them exit
- Invite an NCAP speaker to your church/home group/pastorate
- Publish an article in your church newsletter
- Write to your local MP and/or local newspaper
- Log on to the NCAP website (www.ncapuk.org/content/resources) for downloadable resources
- Volunteer to work with/support an NCAP affiliated project – contact us for details
- Become an NCAP Partner – log on to our website and download a form or contact us for more details
- Buy a 'Stop the Traffik' freeset bag www.freesetbags.co.uk
- Log on to the www.breakthetraffic.com and join the protest
- Log on to www.gatheredvoices.com and read the views of those directly involved
- Start a local church project offering help and support to those involved in prostitution – contact us for advice, training and resources.

Further resources

For further training and/or more information, please contact the NCAP office:

t: 0845 0044231
e: ncap@ncapuk.org
w: www.ncapuk.org

Useful websites

- Churches Alert to Sex Trafficking Across Europe, www.chaste.org.uk
- Coalition for the Removal of Pimping, www.crop1.org.uk
- Josephine Butler Society, www.jbs.webeden.co.uk

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