



Preventing Domestic Violence

None in Three is funded by the European Union

THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW - DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND WOMEN WHO ARE TRAFFICKED

- High prevalence of physical and sexual violence experienced by trafficked women and girls – both while trafficked as well as pre-trafficking.
- Post-trafficked, women present with multiple physical and psychological problems.
- Newly identified trafficked women require immediate attention to address post-trauma symptoms and adequate recovery time before making decisions about participating in prosecutorial or immigration proceedings (returning home).
- Assessment for mental disorders (most commonly PTSD and depression) should be part of care for women survivors of human trafficking.
- Though many sex workers in the Caribbean will not have been trafficked, most trafficked women and girls in the region will have been brought in to work in the sex industry. The links between trafficking and sexual exploitation are often inextricable.
- Research shows that prostitution is multi-traumatic and often includes both physical assault and rape (not only from clients but also from pimps).
- A study of prostitution in 9 countries revealed most people want to escape prostitution, but do not have other options for survival. Many had been homeless and the majority met criteria for PTSD. Severity of PTSD symptoms strongly associated with the number of different types of lifetime sexual and physical violence.
- Some researchers argue that prostitution is not qualitatively different from trafficking while others argue that the former can reflect sexual agency while the latter reflects force and coercion. Distinctions between prostitution and trafficking in women are relatively recent and have been promoted by organizations and governments working to legitimize and/or legalize prostitution as work.
- There is little evidence that legalised prostitution reduces risk of exposure to violence.
- There seems to be a lack of awareness or understanding of trafficking issues among professionals resulting in failure to identify victims and reduced access to services.
- Legislation and policy on trafficking is often very weak and few traffickers are prosecuted. Traffickers will often seek out countries where their actions will go undetected and unpunished.
- The interplay between violence, control and coercion is highly complex and can create a web out of which it may be extremely difficult to escape.
- Professionals need specific skills in helping to address a range of complex issues, such as victims' incapacity to break away from traffickers, denial of victimization, high likelihood of flight and revictimization, and reluctance to cooperate with trafficking investigations.
- Trafficking victims are often stigmatized or treated as criminal offenders. This prevents victims from coming forward or cooperating with law enforcement agencies.

- Some laws seem to be counter-productive, even harmful as they obscure the deeper causes of exploitation and oppression and leads to the demonisation of those in undocumented, hyper-exploited labour forces.
- At the present time, trafficking in persons in the Caribbean is chiefly from the Dominican Republic to the major tourist centres of the region.

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