Abstract

From Poverty to the Trafficking of Women for Sexual Exploitation: A Study of Causal Factors of Trafficked Women from Moldova

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Through current research and governmental publications we learn staggering statistics concerning the numbers of women trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation around the world. The United Nations estimates that four million people are trafficked each year around the world either because of choice, or coercion due to violence or the threat of violence, abuse of authority, debt bondage or deception (Caldwell et al. 1997; Specter 1998; Wijers and Lap-Chew 1997), and the International Organisation for Migration indicates that 500,000 women are trafficked annually, specifically from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union to Western Europe; they who constitute a new and growing supply source for the international sex industry (McDonald, Moore and Timoshkina, 2000). Furthermore, non-governmental organisations suggest that the numbers may be even higher. Since the early 1990s the wave of women trafficked from Central and Eastern European countries to Western countries has grown to a level where it now constitutes one-fourth of the world trade (O’Neill in La Strada Poland, 2002) further evidenced by such surveys as one in 1998 that found that 87.5 percent of the women trafficked into Germany were from Eastern Europe: seventeen percent were from Poland, 14 percent from Ukraine, 12 percent from Czech Republic and 8 percent from the Russian Federation (Itar-Tass as cited in Hughes, 2000).

This paper is a summary of the results of the writer’s doctorate dissertation. The information gathered is a small study in terms of quantitative analysis of the phenomenon, yet it offers valuable information from Moldovan women who survived being trafficked and most importantly, the reasons or causal factors behind their decisions to leave Moldova and consequently become victims of trafficking. The study’s emphasis was on assessing the relevance and potency of push and pull (or causal) factors of trafficking of women for sexual exploitation. Varied literature on the issue, along with the findings of this study, offer that economics plays an important, if not the most important influencing or causal factor to women who were trafficked for sexual exploitation.