Södertörn University

This is a published version of a paper published in Baltic Worlds.

Citation for the published paper:
Mörner, N. (2009)
"Anti-trafficking efforts: hard to get results"
Baltic Worlds, 2(3-4): 10-13

Access to the published version may require subscription.

Permanent link to this version:
http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:sh:diva-15122
Anti-trafficking efforts hard to get results

WITH THE FALL OF THE WALL and the introduction of a market economy in Eastern Europe, trafficking has become increasingly common. The countries of the region have cooperated with the EU in attempts to stop this activity. But trafficking has not diminished. There are those who claim that anti-trafficking efforts have actually led to increased trafficking. Others are of the opinion that the efforts are misdirected, that the welfare of the victims is being ignored.

“There are root causes of trafficking in the countries of origin, such as poverty, unequal gender relations and traditional social structures to name a few, there are root causes involving the migration process, such as the lack of safe and legal migration opportunities — especially for certain categories of migrants, such as low-skilled and women — as well as root causes in the countries of destination, such as demand for cheap and exploitative labor and the increasingly repressive policies towards undocumented persons.”

This is how Irena Konečná, director of La Strada in the Czech Republic, summarizes the reasons why it is so difficult to stop trafficking. In her view, there are problems in the countries of origin as well as in the destination countries — but also in immigration policy itself.

La Strada is an NGO that supports the victims of trafficking and provides information on the danger that trafficking poses. La Strada International is a network of NGOs based in Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, Bulgaria, Moldavia, the Czech Republic, România, Hungary, Moldova, Macedonia and the Netherlands. La Strada focuses on groups that are particularly at risk: youths, the unemployed, minorities, and migrants. It runs telephone support and offers victims safe housing and other types of help. One of the first La Strada organizations was founded in the Czech Republic in 1995. At its inception, the organization focused primarily on sexual exploitation. But according to Konečná, the trend in the Czech Republic has been towards an increasing number of people being subjected to labor exploitation. Konečná does, however, emphasize that there are no clear boundaries between different kinds of exploitation. They coincide and intermix.

“I would like to stress that human trafficking is not something ‘static’. Rather, it is a process that can begin with labor exploitation and violation of labor laws but end as forced labor or human trafficking, or even sexual exploitation”, says Konečná.

With time, the Czech Republic, like Poland and other countries, has become an important destination country. In the Czech Republic, there are businesses and individuals who engage in sexual as well as labor exploitation. The pattern recurs in other Central European countries that have put themselves through IMF’s reform program in order to make the transition to a market economy. They go from being countries of origin to being transit countries as well; finally, they gradually turn into destination countries.

The phenomenon is complex: trafficking develops and is transformed. The streams of people who are being bought and sold go in different directions.

The new Europe was to be the continent of mobility. And it became the continent of migrants.
You can never stop people from having a better life – fortunately, I would say.

Kristina Abia

We cannot stop the exploitation of people, however we try. The best we can do is fight the problem on all fronts, and try to keep improving the situation.

The anti-trafficking efforts that have been undertaken in the past have shown that it is possible to reduce the number of victims in order to strengthen the problem and to justify demands for funding: “Does the cooperation and counter-operation of NGOs and state always function satisfactorily? NGOs often fail to recognize the efforts on the victims and do not always encourage the victims to notify the police and engage the judicial apparatus. The police, in turn, do not always refer the victims to the NGOs for support.”

The trafficking problem may be handled differently depending on the country and the region. It can be considered as a legal problem, as a question of human rights, or as a migration problem. In some countries, the trafficking of women is considered as a human rights issue, while in others, it is treated as a legal matter. In still others, it is treated as a migration issue.

The anti-trafficking efforts that have been undertaken in the past have shown that it is possible to reduce the number of victims. These efforts have focused on several levels. The government of the destination country, for instance, has implemented policies and provided resources to combat trafficking. Additionally, international organizations and NGOs have played a critical role in providing support and assistance to victims. The government of the destination country, for instance, has implemented policies and provided resources to combat trafficking. Additionally, international organizations and NGOs have played a critical role in providing support and assistance to victims.

The anti-trafficking efforts that have been undertaken in the past have shown that it is possible to reduce the number of victims. These efforts have focused on several levels. The government of the destination country, for instance, has implemented policies and provided resources to combat trafficking. Additionally, international organizations and NGOs have played a critical role in providing support and assistance to victims. The government of the destination country, for instance, has implemented policies and provided resources to combat trafficking. Additionally, international organizations and NGOs have played a critical role in providing support and assistance to victims.

The anti-trafficking efforts that have been undertaken in the past have shown that it is possible to reduce the number of victims. These efforts have focused on several levels. The government of the destination country, for instance, has implemented policies and provided resources to combat trafficking. Additionally, international organizations and NGOs have played a critical role in providing support and assistance to victims. The government of the destination country, for instance, has implemented policies and provided resources to combat trafficking. Additionally, international organizations and NGOs have played a critical role in providing support and assistance to victims.