

PROSTITUTION IS NOT A CHOICE

SOROPTIMIST WHITE PAPER

LEARN ABOUT THE TRAFFICKING OF
WOMEN AND GIRLS WORLDWIDE, AND
FIND OUT WHAT CAN BE DONE TO END
THIS WIDESPREAD PROBLEM...



SOROPTIMIST
Best for Women



I think so much about what has happened to me. Why these men did what they did to me. Old, disgusting men. It was horrible. They knew I did not want to be there, but they paid their money. They used me. I was their property for the night. They destroyed me.

(14-year-old girl at Casa Hogar, a shelter in Costa Rica for children rescued from the country's sex trade.)

OVERVIEW

Prostitution has been called the world's oldest "profession." In reality, it is the world's oldest "oppression" and continues to be one of the most overlooked human rights abuses of women on the planet today.² Prostitution of women is a particularly lethal form of violence against women and a violation of a woman's most basic human rights.

While many societal institutions attempt to normalize prostitution, prostituted women are subjected to violence and abuse at the hands of paying "clients." For the vast majority of prostituted women, "prostitution is the experience of being hunted, dominated, harassed, assaulted and battered."³ It is "sexual terrorism against women at the hands of men and little is being done to stop the carnage."⁴ Indeed, in "no other so-called profession are so many women murdered each year."⁵

Above all, prostitution is not a choice, as some claim. Survivors of prostitution have described it as "the choice made by those who have no choice."⁶ Women are forced into prostitution by gender discrimination, race discrimination, poverty, abandonment, debilitating sexual and verbal abuse, lack of formal education, or a job that does not pay a living wage.⁷

Regardless of the reasons for prostitution, or physical location of the act - strip club, massage parlor, brothel, street, or hotel - prostitution is extremely dangerous to women, and this physical and psychological danger is perpetuated by the demands of the buyers. Prostitution must be exposed for what it really is—a "male social system in place to ensure the satisfaction of male demand for sexual servicing and for objectified sex."⁸

¹ Victor Malarek, *The Johns: Sex for Sale and the Men Who Buy It*, (Arcade Publishing, April 16, 2009), 149.

² *Ibid.*, Prologue xii.

³ Dalla, Rochelle L. *Global Perspectives on Prostitution and Sex Trafficking*. Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2011, 78.

⁴ Malarek, Prologue xii.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁶ Melissa Farley. "Prostitution, trafficking and cultural amnesia: What we must not know in order to keep the business of sexual exploitation running smoothly," *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism*, (2006), 102. <http://www.prostitutionresearch.com/laws/000151.html>

⁷ *Ibid.*, 102-103.

⁸ Solidarity Philippines Australia Network, "Prostitution as a Choice?" *KASAMA*, Vol. 11 No. 4 (October–November–December 1997).

<http://cpcabrisbane.org/Kasama/1997/V11n4/Choice.htm>

This white paper examines women forced into prostitution and the demand that keeps them there. Men represent the “demand” side of the economic equation and women represent the commodity or “supply” side of prostitution. Without buyers, there would be no demand and, subsequently, no supply.

In addition, this paper will examine different approaches to addressing prostitution, favoring the “abolitionist” model that advocates for offering supportive services to victims of prostitution and prosecuting johns, pimps, brothel owners and traffickers.

In essence, the “abolitionist model” contends that the tacit global approval for the buying and selling of the bodies of women and girls perpetuates violence against women and undermines gender equality. According to celebrated author and journalist Victor Malarek, “Gender equality will remain unattainable as long as men buy, sell and exploit women ... by prostituting them.”⁹

*Many of us began as children ... our parents are poor and they sell us.
We obey our parents. We have no choice.*

(Mei, a 20-year-old veteran of the Thai sex market¹⁰)

THE SUPPLY: WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH NO CHOICE

Sadly, the majority of girls enter prostitution before they have reached the age of consent.¹¹ Research shows that most women in prostitution were sexually and physically abused as children, deprived and pushed into selling sex at age 14, on average.¹² In the United States, the average age of entry into prostitution is about 15 years old.¹³ First responders from across the country also report that the average age of victims with whom they come into contact is 15 years. However, “most of these youth report having been prostituted for some time before coming into contact with services or juvenile justice.”¹⁴ Many enter prostitution after enduring incest, abuse and rape by family members or acquaintances. Thus accustomed to frequent violence and exploitation, they eventually come to believe this is their role in life.¹⁵

Sexual abuse by multiple perpetrators is common, as is physical abuse in childhood.¹⁶ In one study of prostituted women, 90 percent of the women had been physically battered in childhood; 74 percent were sexually abused in their families, with 50 percent also having been sexually abused by someone outside the family.¹⁷ Of 123

⁹ Malarek, 239.

¹⁰ Ibid., 133.

¹¹ Hughes, Donna M. “Men Create the Demand; Women Are the Supply: Lecture on Sexual Exploitation.” Men Create the Demand; Women Are the Supply. Spain, Valencia. Nov. 2000. *University of Rhode Island*. Web. 20 Oct. 2014. <<http://www.uri.edu/artsci/wms/hughes/demand.htm>>.

¹² Malarek, 214.

¹³ *The Demanding Justice Project Factsheet*. Rep. Shared Hope International, 2014. Web. 20 Oct. 2014. <<http://sharedhope.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Demanding-Justice-Fact-Sheet1.pdf>>.

¹⁴ *The National Report on Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking: America’s Prostituted Children*. Rep. Shared Hope International, May 2009. Web. 21 Oct. 2014. <http://www.sharedhope.org/dmst/documents/SHI%20National%20Report_without%20cover.pdf>.30.

¹⁵ Farley and Kelly, 15.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

survivors at the Council for Prostitution Alternatives in Portland, Oregon (an agency offering support, education, shelter and access to health services to clients of all sex industries), 85 percent reported a history of incest, 90 percent reported a history of physical abuse, and 98 percent cited a history of emotional abuse.¹⁸

One woman in prostitution stated:

“We’ve all been molested. Over and over, and raped. We were all molested and sexually abused as children, don’t you know that? We ran to get away. They didn’t want us in the house anymore. We were thrown out, thrown away. We’ve been on the street since we were 12, 13, 14.”¹⁹

Childhood sexual and physical abuse are often compounded by other reasons that drive women into prostitution, including poverty, desperation to support family members and drug addictions.²⁰ Other forces include lack of education or a job that does not pay a living wage. Women also turn to prostitution as a last resort when the social infrastructure of a country collapses as a result of terrorism and war, famine, natural disasters and economic crisis.²¹

At its core, prostitution is rooted in global structural gender inequality, which makes women more likely to experience poverty, abuse and racism and more vulnerable to sexual exploitation by men. As a widely marginalized population, women’s interests, needs, and demands are widely ignored in political arenas.²² Therefore, male authorities in power continue to normalize prostitution as “sex work,” a view that helps to keep women in prostitution. In contrast, viewing prostitution as a violation of women’s human rights has been shown to help women out of prostitution.²³

RACISM IN PROSTITUTION

Research also shows there has been a “deafening silence” regarding racism in prostitution.²⁴ Throughout history, women have been enslaved based on race and ethnicity, as well as gender.²⁵

According to Dr. Melissa Farley, a psychologist and researcher with the non-profit organization Prostitution Research & Education based in San Francisco, “You cannot understand prostitution unless you understand how sex, class and race all come together and hurt a person at the same time. People are chosen in prostitution because of

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Hughes, “Men Create the Demand,” 2.

²¹ Louise Gerdes, book editor, “War and Terrorism Increase Prostitution,” *Prostitution and Sex Trafficking: Opposing Viewpoints* (Thomson Gale 2006), 142.

²² Ibid.

²³ Raymond, Janice G. “Gender Equality, Prostitution And Trafficking.” Coalition Against Trafficking in Women. Mexico, Puebla. 2004. *Coalition Against Trafficking in Women and Girls in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Web. 28 Oct. 2014.

²⁴ Farley and Kelly, 13.

²⁵ Ibid.

the extreme imbalance of power. The poorest, the most vulnerable women, are basically made available for constant sexual access."²⁶

Sexual exploitation is a vehicle for racism and "first world" domination, disproportionately victimizing minority and "third world" women.²⁷ Indigenous women are "brutally exploited" in prostitution, such as Mayan women in Mexico, Hmong women in Minneapolis or First Nations women in Vancouver.²⁸

African-American women are forced to deal with the oppression that arises from being black in a white-dominated culture and the oppression that arises from being female in a patriarchal society.²⁹ Structural racism limits educational and career opportunities for African-Americans, making black women and girls especially vulnerable to sexual exploitation and lifelong servitude in the sex industry.

In addition, racist stereotypes in the mainstream media and in pornography portray black women as wild animals who constantly crave sex at any point in time, with anybody.³⁰ Strip joints and massage parlors are typically zoned in black neighborhoods, sending the message to white men that it is acceptable to solicit black women and girls for sex.³¹

Once involved in prostitution, women of color face barriers to escape. There is a lack of culturally sensitive social services, so many black women must access resources from agencies that mostly cater to white people.³² However, seeking help from outsiders, particularly whites, is strongly stigmatized in the black community. Additionally, white-dominated agencies are ill-equipped to understand and deal with problems of poor black women.³³ Unable to overcome these barriers, many women remain in prostitution indefinitely.

Given the relationship between prostitution, race, and poverty, one can infer that women enter prostitution only as a last resort. Survivors have even described prostitution as "volunteer slavery."³⁴ According to Vanessa Kelly, coordinator of the Traumatic Stress Treatment Program at the University of California in San Francisco, "If you look at what is perceived as a free choice," she states, "it is significantly impacted by one's financial situation or by poverty, racism or prior sexual abuse. When you consider all those factors, it is not a decision at all. It's the limited choices that people have."³⁵

Similarly, a comprehensive study on prostitutes in India concludes, "No one chooses the racial group or caste one is born into. No country freely chooses to be colonized... These circumstances, from the uncontested evidence of who

²⁶ Katia Dunn. "Prostitution: Pro or Con?" *The Portland Mercury*. (May 9, 2002.)

<http://www.portlandmercury.com/news/prostitution-pro-or-con/Content?oid=26820&show=comments>

²⁷ MacKinnon, Catharine A. "Trafficking, Prostitution, and Inequality." *Harvard Civil Rights - Civil Liberties Law Review*. Harvard University, Aug. 2011. Web. 20 Oct. 2014. <<http://harvardcrcl.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/MacKinnon.pdf>>. 278.

²⁸ Farley, "Prostitution, Trafficking and Cultural Amnesia," 12.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Nelson.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Melissa Farley, "Unequal," *Prostitution Education and Research*, (September 13, 2005), 2. <http://www.prostitutionresearch.com/Unequal.pdf>

³⁵ Constance Johnson, "Prostitution: Not a victimless career choice," *Women's E-news*, (September 22, 2000).

<http://www.womensenews.org/story/prostitution-and-trafficking/000922/prostitution-not-victimless-career-choice>

the prostituted disproportionately are, most powerfully determine who is used in this industry. These circumstances are not chosen by any of them.”³⁶

A CONTINUUM OF ABUSE

Often, the abuse women and girls experienced in childhood becomes a constant, pervasive reality in prostitution. Women who experienced early sexual abuse are at risk for a later recurrence of sexual and physical trauma.³⁷ Incest, rape and prostitution, therefore, may be seen as points on a continuum of sexual exploitation and abuse.³⁸ Although sex industry apologists contend that prostitution is merely a form of unpleasant labor much like factory work, the following statistics belie that claim.

In an international study of prostitution in nine countries, 71 percent reported being physically abused and 63 percent reported being raped by a customer.³⁹ In a rigorous study of pimps in seven cities in the United States, 58 percent of prostitutes reported violence, while 36 reported having abusive clients.⁴⁰ Studies show that women in prostitution are not only beaten, they’re beaten repeatedly.⁴¹ And in no other so-called profession are so many women murdered each year. Women in prostitution are 18 times more likely to be murdered than women of similar age and race.⁴²

One 14-year-old stated: “You feel like a piece of hamburger meat—all chopped up and barely holding together.”⁴³ From this data, one must conclude that prostitution cannot be called “sex work.” It is not a profession but is torture. Women in prostitution are battered women.⁴⁴ The techniques of physical violence used by pimps are often the same as those used by torturers.⁴⁵ In one instance, a teenager was beaten with a six-foot bullwhip. In another, an adolescent girl was tied to a car and forced to run behind it.⁴⁶

One of the myths surrounding prostitution contends that “high-class” call-girl prostitution is much safer than street prostitution. In escort prostitution, an ad is placed online or in a newspaper and the meeting takes place in a home or hotel room.⁴⁷ “High-class call girl” also means that more money passes through the hands of several

³⁶ Mackinnon, 278.

³⁷ Farley and Kelly, 15.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Melissa Farley, et al. 2003. “Prostitution and Trafficking in Nine Countries: An Update on Violence and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder.” *Journal of Trauma Practice*, Vol. 2, No. 3/4: 33-74.

⁴⁰ Dank, Meredith. *Estimating the Size and Structure of the Underground Commercial Sex Economy in Eight Major US Cities*. Rep. The Urban Institute, 12 Mar. 2014. Web. 22 Oct. 2014. <<http://www.urban.org/publications/413047.html>>.

⁴¹ Malarek, 89.

⁴² Brenda Zurita, “Prostitution is not a profession,” *Concerned Women for America*, (December 14, 2005).

<http://www.beverlylahayeinstitute.org/articledisplay.asp?id=9691&department=BLI&categoryid=family&subcategoryid=blitraf>

⁴³ Farley and Kelly, 17.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 16.

⁴⁵ Dalla, 299.

⁴⁶ Farley and Kelly, 17.

⁴⁷ Melissa Farley. “Prostitution Harms Women Even if Indoors: Reply to Weitzer.” *Violence Against Women*, {2005}.

<<http://www.prostitutionresearch.com/Farley%20Indoor%20Prostitution.pdf>>

middlemen.⁴⁸ The booker organizes the appointments and usually keeps 10 percent of the fee paid. He then divides the remainder of the money equally between the woman and the agency.⁴⁹

Contrary to popular belief, research has not verified that call-girl prostitution is safer than street prostitution.⁵⁰ While it is not uncommon to find high-class call girls charging \$10,000 per night, these women still report being abused twice a year.⁵¹ One report found that women in all forms of prostitution (escort, strip club, street, massage parlor and brothel) were subject to sexual violence.⁵²

While many people maintain a distinction between high-class call girls and prostituted women in a brothel, high-priced call girls actually have much in common with the women in the brothels. Many have experienced broken homes, homelessness, childhood abuse, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder.⁵³ For example, the call girl involved in the scandal of former New York Governor Eliot Spitzer appeared to be living a glamorous life, making more than \$4,000 in one night. But the 22-year-old identified as “Kristen” in court documents left a broken home, abused drugs, and had been homeless.⁵⁴

In an interview with *Today.msnbc*, Natalie McLennan, a native of Montreal, was a 24-year-old aspiring actress when she started working for a top-end escort service in New York City. Struggling and starving, she decided to try the “escort” business to survive financially, but finally got out. “I had so much anxiety and panic attacks because I felt something might happen,” she said. “I couldn’t sleep at night.”⁵⁵

Despite the alarming stories and statistics, much of the literature continues to focus on prostitution as a vocational choice. The notion that prostitution is work, however, tends to make its harm invisible.⁵⁶ Prostitution is institutionalized and mainstreamed when it is considered to be unpleasant but legitimate “sex work.” Even organizations such as the World Health Organization and Amnesty International USA mistakenly define prostitution as a profession rather than as human rights abuse.⁵⁷

Ultimately, viewing prostitution as a viable “choice” for women diminishes the possibility of improving women’s lives. In fact, more than 90 percent of prostituted women in various surveys want to leave prostitution, but lack viable options.⁵⁸ They are unable to leave because of their pimps, their addiction, and/or the need to feed their children. In order to leave, they need housing, job training, jobs and medical care—including substance abuse treatment—issues to be discussed later in this paper.⁵⁹

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Mike Celeizic. “Q&A with a call girl.” *Today MSNBC.com*, March 12, 2008.

<http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/23589422/>

⁵⁰ MacKinnon, 248.

⁵¹ Megan K. Scott. “Prostitution realities are unlike glamour myth in wake of Spitzer scandal.” *Associated Press*, (March 28, 2008).

http://www.caase.org/pdf/articles/2008/2_Prostitution_Realities-are-Unlike-Glamour-Myth-in-Wake-of-Spitzer-Scandal_AP.pdf

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Scott.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Celeizic.

⁵⁶ Gerdes, 107.

⁵⁷ *Prostitution – Which Stance to Take?* Resolution. Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, 4 Oct. 2007. Web. 22 Oct. 2014.

<<http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta07/ERES1579.htm>>.

⁵⁸ Gerdes, 107.

⁵⁹ Farley, “Unequal,” 2.

HARM TO WOMEN

Inevitably, the rape-like acts of prostitution cause harm to the mental and emotional states of women and girls. In one study, sixty-eight percent of women in prostitution suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and many have symptoms of anxiety, depression, insomnia, irritability, flashbacks, emotional numbing and hyper-alertness.⁶⁰ One woman described how her symptoms of PTSD were ignored by her therapist:

“I wonder why I keep going to therapists and telling them I can’t sleep and I have nightmares. They pass right over the fact that I was a prostitute and I was beaten with two-by-four boards. I had my fingers and toes broken by a pimp and I was raped more than 30 times. Why do they ignore that?”⁶¹

In a 30-year study of almost 2000 prostitutes in the US, the most common causes of death were homicide, suicide, drug- and alcohol-related problems, HIV infection and accidents.⁶² In particular, suicide rates among prostitutes are much higher than those of the general population. The Council for Prostitution Alternatives found that 65 percent of prostituted women had seriously attempted suicide, and 38 percent had attempted it more than once.⁶³ While figures vary, public records show that 15 percent of all suicide victims in the U.S. are prostituted women and girls.⁶⁴

Chronic violence and abuse within prostitution also makes women vulnerable to physical health problems. In one survey of prostituted women in San Francisco, half of respondents reported joint pain, cardiovascular and respiratory symptoms, neurological problems and HIV.⁶⁵

For increasing numbers of women and girls, prostitution is a death sentence when they contract HIV.⁶⁶ Violence is a primary risk factor for HIV, because the virus can spread more easily through broken or abraded tissue.⁶⁷ The number of prostitutes with HIV is staggering. For example, in the West African state of Burkina Faso, 58 percent of the prostitutes and 74 percent of prostitutes in Kenya are HIV-positive.⁶⁸ Yet most research treats HIV as if it were only a threat to the male customers who must protect themselves from “irresponsible females.”⁶⁹

⁶⁰ Farley and Kelly, 18.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Potterat JJ, Brewer DD, Muth SQ, Rothenberg RB, Woodhouse DE, Muth JB, et al. Mortality in a long-term open cohort of prostitute women. *American Journal of Epidemiology* 2004;159:778-85.

⁶³ Donna M. Hughes, “Best practices to address the demand side of trafficking,”

Women’s Studies Program, University of Rhode Island, (August 2004), 5. http://www.uri.edu/artsci/wms/hughes/demand_sex_trafficking.pdf

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Farley, “Prostitution: A critical review,” 20.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Johnson, “Prostitution: Not a victimless career choice.”

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Many professionals who have contact with women in prostitution recognize their inability to leave. In one study, 76 percent of law enforcement officials and 71 percent of social service providers reported that some women in prostitution are held captive and are not free to leave.⁷⁰ Even if they are not held captive physically, members of society must support prostituted women “to get out of it” and must “try not to pretend that one of the worst forms of sexual violence in the world is something that is benign and something a woman chooses.”⁷¹ Statistics and studies have made it clear that prostitution is not a victimless crime.

“Guys get off on controlling women, use physical power to control women, really. If you look at it, it’s paid rape. You’re making them subservient during that time, so you’re the dominant person. She has to do what you want.” – Unnamed “john”⁷²

PLAYERS IN THE DEMAND SIDE OF PROSTITUTION

There are four key factors that create demand within prostitution:

1. Male consumers, or johns, who drive the demand for prostitution
2. Pimps, brothels, escort services, clubs, etc. who earn profit from the sex industry
3. Countries derive revenue from the sex industry and do not create policies against the purchase of sex
4. Cultures normalize prostitution, indirectly creating a demand for victims

1) The **“johns”** are a vital component of the demand for prostitution. Women involved in the industry continue to be branded prostitutes, whores, sluts, hookers and harlots, while the users of prostituted women are benignly labeled as clients, patrons, customers and johns.⁷³ It’s impossible to tackle the myriad issues surrounding prostitution “without taking a hard look at these men [johns], at their characters, actions and motivations.”⁷⁴

Up to this point, investigative journalism and clinical research have produced much information on prostitution and the women involved, but little attention has been paid to their male customers. According to clinical psychologist Melissa Farley, “Ninety-nine percent of the research in this field has been done on prostitutes, and 1 percent has been done on johns.”⁷⁵ However, “little will be done to stop this insanity until men start taking responsibility for their actions, until men realize that they are the problem.”⁷⁶ There is an expanding field for research on “johns,” though, as evidenced by two studies undertaken by the US Department of Justice.⁷⁷

⁷⁰ Janice G. Raymond, Donna M. Hughes and Carol J. Gomez, “Sex Trafficking of Women in the United States,” *The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women*, (March 2001), 5. http://www.uri.edu/artsci/wms/hughes/demand_sex_trafficking.pdf

⁷¹ Malarek, 241.

⁷² Melissa Farley, “Prostitution and trafficking in Nevada: Making the Connections,” *Prostitution Research & Education Publishers*, (September 26, 2007), 88.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, Prologue, xiv

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁷⁵ Bennetts, Leslie. “The Growing Demand for Prostitution.” *Newsweek*. 18 July 2011. Web. 21 Oct. 2014. <<http://www.newsweek.com/growing-demand-prostitution-68493>>.

⁷⁶ Farley, Prologue, xv.

⁷⁷ Moses, Marilyn C. “Understanding and Applying Research on Prostitution.” *NIJ Journal* 255 (2006): n. pag. *National Institute of Justice*. U.S. Department of Justice, 2006. Web. 22 Oct. 2014. <http://www.nij.gov/journals/255/Pages/prostitution_research.aspx>.

As journalist Victor Malarek contested, “It would not be profitable for pimps and criminals to stay in this business if platoons of men weren’t prowling side streets in search of purchased sex—male buyers who are willing to close their eyes and shell out \$50 or \$100 for a few minutes of physical bliss while deepening the misery of countless women and children.”⁷⁸ Yet, in most discussions and research, the ultimate consumers of prostituted women are largely ignored. “They are the missing link.”⁷⁹

Several explanations have been given for this lack of study of males who prostitute women. Some argue that lack of research of males who buy and sell women reflects a sexual double standard in which women are seen as responsible for men’s deviance. As with most double standards in society, women are blamed for male sexual behaviors. As such, men’s buying and selling of women is not reflected in the research.⁸⁰ Others contend that lack of focus on men who create demand for prostitution is consistent with the assumption that male demand is natural and inevitable.⁸¹

Due to a lack of research on johns, it’s difficult to calculate the exact number of existing johns. However, one thing is certain: They vastly outnumber the estimated 10 to 40 million prostituted women and children worldwide, who, on average, service four to six men a day.

The number of johns fluctuates by country, with the highest rate of men who purchase sex in Southeast Asia. In Cambodia, more than 80 percent of the male population has purchased sex at least once in their lives.⁸² In Europe, Italy has the highest numbers of men who have paid for sex at an estimated 45 percent.⁸³ In Spain, 39 percent of men pay for sex regularly.⁸⁴ In Japan, 37 percent purchase sex regularly⁸⁵; in the Netherlands, 21.6 percent⁸⁶; and in China, it’s roughly 20 percent of the male population⁸⁷. In the United States, an estimated 15-20 percent of men have paid for sex on at least one occasion.⁸⁸

⁷⁸ Malarek.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Martin A. Monto and Deana Julka. “Conceiving of Sex as a Commodity: A study of arrested customers of female street prostitutes.” *University of Portland. Western Criminology Review* (2009), 1. <http://wcr.sonoma.edu/v10n1/Monto.pdf>

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² USAID, “Cambodia HIV/AIDS Technical Support: Technical Assistance and Support Contract 3 (TASC3) Indefinite Quantity Contract Section A – Request for Task Order Proposal (RFTOP),” Apr. 2, 2007. <www.usaid.gov>

⁸³ Tamsin Smith, “New Danger for Italy’s Foreign Prostitutes,” *bbc.co.uk*, Sep. 12, 2003

⁸⁴ Sven-Axel Månsson, “Men’s Practices in Prostitution and Their Implications for Social Work,” *Social Work in Cuba and Sweden: Achievements and Prospects*. Eds. Sven-Axel Månsson and Clotilde Proveyer Cervantes, 2004.

⁸⁵ Robert T. Francoeur, PhD, Editor’s Comment in Yoshiro Hatano, PhD, and Tsuguo Shimazaki, “Japan,” *Continuum Complete International Encyclopedia of Sexuality*, Eds. Robert T. Francoeur, PhD, and Raymond J. Noonan, PhD, Kinsey Institute, 2004.

⁸⁶ Jelto J. Drenth, PhD, and A. Koos Slob, PhD, “Netherlands and the Autonomous Dutch Antilles,” *Continuum Complete International Encyclopedia of Sexuality*, Eds. Robert T. Francoeur, PhD, and Raymond J. Noonan, PhD, Kinsey Institute, 2004.

⁸⁷ Yingying Huang, Suiming Pan, “Job mobility of Brothel-based Female Sex Workers in Current Northeast China: the Process from Xiangang Worker (lay-offs) to Sex Worker,” *Institute of Sexuality and Gender, Renmin University of China*.

⁸⁸ Abt Associates Inc., “Final Report on the Evaluation of the First Offender Prostitution Program,” Prepared for Karen Bachar, Office of Research and Evaluation, National Institute of Justice, March 7, 2008.

WHY DO MEN PAY FOR SEX?

The data indicates that men who pay for sex are not a small minority, but rather make up a substantial subsection of the male population on most demographic variables.⁸⁹

These men include Sgt. Dan Jacober, a 16-year veteran of the Sherwood City Police Department, who arrived at the Hilton Hotel in Portland to meet a girl named Haley.⁹⁰ Haley had posted an ad on Craigslist, the Web's largest classified advertising site, describing herself as a 20-something, blonde sorority girl in town for a night and "not afraid to try anything." He asked her to wear black panties. They agreed on \$150.⁹¹ Jacober was hoping to get lucky, but along with five others, was arrested for solicitation as part of an undercover sting operation. Their friends and families were shocked.⁹²

Why do men like Jacober seek out women for prostitution? Research finds that many assumptions made about johns are myths. Seldom are the men lonely or have sexually unsatisfying relationships.⁹³ In fact, men who purchase sex acts are more likely to have more sexual partners than those who do not purchase sex acts. They often report they are satisfied with their wives or partners. They say they are searching for "something more"—sex acts that their wives will not do or excitement that comes with the hunt for a woman they can buy for a short time.⁹⁴

Research also shows that the attitude of johns throughout the world is remarkably consistent—it is about entitlement, power and control.⁹⁵ Johns seek brief encounters where they express selfish desires without the burden of responsibility or reciprocity.⁹⁶

Women employed by massage brothels conducted a series of interviews with johns and noted that some johns believe that commercial sex is a mutually pleasurable exchange. Others believe the payment of money removes all social and ethical obligations.⁹⁷ As one john admitted, "There are plenty of whores in the sewer willing to do what I tell them for cash."⁹⁸

The johns' most commonly held belief, however, is that what they are doing is perfectly natural. "The drive for sex is in the man's genes. It's totally natural. It's biological. He must have sex," says a john called Derek. There is nothing more "natural than the biological need of men to have sex," insists another, while a third john writes, "wanting to have sex with beautiful women is a natural male tendency."⁹⁹

⁸⁹ Gerdes, 195.

⁹⁰ Malarek, 1.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid., 2.

⁹³ Donna Hughes, "Prostitution: Causes and Solutions," *Santiago de Compostela, Galicia, Spain*, (July 1-3, 2004), 4.

http://www.uri.edu/artsci/wms/hughes/prostitution_spain_july04.pdf

⁹⁴ Ibid., 3.

⁹⁵ Malarek, 10.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Farley, "Prostitution: A critical review," 29.

⁹⁸ Malarek, 82.

⁹⁹ Malarek, 96.

Another john, who goes by name of “Loaded,” stated: “I feel no guilt whatsoever. I am getting what I need and I am helping them get what they need. No one is being hurt ... I do not believe that God would send me to hell for acting on my natural instincts.”¹⁰⁰

2) The exploiters: Men drive demand within prostitution, but the entire sex industry is organized by the exploiters. These are the facilitators of prostitution and can include traffickers, pimps, brothel owners, organized crime members, and corrupt government and police officials.¹⁰¹ They make money from the sale of sex as a commodity. In Amsterdam, where prostitution is legal, the sex industry continues to be dominated by organized crime and is rife with money laundering, trafficking, exploitation and drug abuse.¹⁰²

Legal escort prostitution in Nevada, where prostitution is legal in some counties, generates tens of millions of dollars annually, according to *The New York Times*.¹⁰³ A 2007 study of the illegal underground economy of the sex industry in seven other US cities reported that “these economies ranged in value from \$39.9 million [in Denver] to \$290 million [in Atlanta].”¹⁰⁴ Many of these escort businesses are operated by Russian, Armenian and Mexican organized criminals.¹⁰⁵ According to many sources, the sex industry and its ancillary operations in Nevada (such as loan fraud, money laundering, falsifying income tax returns and grand theft) generate between \$1 billion and \$6 billion per year.¹⁰⁶ In Nevada and many parts of the world, these “estimates include both legal and illegal activities such as lap dancing, extortion monies paid to taxi drivers for delivery of customers to specific strip clubs, illegal escort and massage prostitution, and tips to valets and bartenders for procuring women.”¹⁰⁷

Where prostitution is illegal, corruption is also rampant, with the operation of brothels requiring the collaboration of officials and police, “who must be willing to ignore or work with pimps and traffickers.”¹⁰⁸ Pimps and brothel owners advertise to men that women are available for commercial sex acts, and officials often ignore this blatant advertising.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, a 2007 empirical study of prostitution in Chicago found that prostitutes were “officially arrested only once per 450 tricks, with johns arrested even less frequently.”¹¹⁰ Police were actively complicit in the continuation of prostitution in Chicago, as a “surprisingly high prevalence of police officers demand[ed] sex from prostitutes in return for avoiding arrest.”¹¹¹

3. The State: By tolerating or legalizing prostitution, the state, at least passively, is contributing to the demand for victims.¹¹² The more states regulate prostitution and derive tax revenue from

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 93.

¹⁰¹ Hughes, “Prostitution: Causes and Solutions,” 4.

¹⁰² Malarek, 220.

¹⁰³ Friess, Steve. “Nevada Brothels Want to Pay Tax, but State Says No.” *The New York Times*. N.p., 26 Jan. 2009. Web. 22 Oct. 2014.

¹⁰⁴ Dank, 2.

¹⁰⁵ Farley, “Prostitution and trafficking in Nevada,” 123.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 112.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 112-113.

¹⁰⁸ Hughes, “Prostitution: Causes and Solutions,” 4.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Leavitt, Steven D., and Sudhir A. Venkatesh. *An Empirical Analysis of Street-Level Prostitution*. Rep. University of Chicago, Sept. 2007. Web. 22 Oct. 2014. <<http://economics.uchicago.edu/pdf/Prostitution%205.pdf>>. 5.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Hughes, “Prostitution: Causes and Solutions,” 4.

it, the more actively they become part of the demand for victims.¹¹³ Many governments protect commercial sex businesses because of the huge profits. In many places in the world where prostitution is legalized, the state is put in the role of pimp.¹¹⁴ Like slavery, prostitution is a lucrative form of oppression.¹¹⁵

According to various reports:

- The sex industries of Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines account for 2 to 14 percent of the Gross Domestic Product of those countries.¹¹⁶
- In Japan, where prostitution is not legal but widely tolerated, the sex industry is estimated to make \$83 billion annually.¹¹⁷
- In Germany, where prostitution and brothels are legal, an estimated 400,000 prostitutes serve 1.2 million men a day in an industry with an annual gross of \$18 billion.¹¹⁸

Sex trafficking of women also drives revenue for states. In destination places, strategies are devised to protect the sex industries that generate hundreds of millions of dollars per year for the state where prostitution is legal, or for organized crime groups and corrupt officials where the sex industry is illegal.¹¹⁹ While some question the link between sex trafficking and prostitution, many agree the two cannot be separated. According to Lisa Thompson, liaison for the Abolition of Sexual Trafficking of the Salvation Army USA, “I like to make the example between the demand for prostitution and trafficking like the relationship of rocket fuel to the space shuttle. It’s the stuff that makes it go.”¹²⁰

Traffickers ensure there is an endless supply ready to satisfy the burgeoning demand—women of all ages, ethnicities, shapes and sizes, women trained to submit to the full range of what johns demand. There’s no question that “the skyrocketing demand has contributed to global sex trafficking.”¹²¹

States are also complicit in sex tourism, with sex tour companies organizing trips for their customers to another country for the primary purpose of engaging in prostitution.¹²² For example, in Cuba and in many other countries, governments seeking low investment, high-yield industries have turned to this “service industry” to facilitate the

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Woolman, Stu, and Michael Bishop. "State as Pimp: Sexual Slavery in South Africa." *Development Southern Africa* 23.3 (2006): 385-400. Taylor & Francis Online. Taylor & Francis Group. Web. 22 Oct. 2014.

¹¹⁵ Farley, "Prostitution, Trafficking and Cultural Amnesia," 102.

¹¹⁶ International Labour Organization. "Sex Industry Assuming Massive Proportions in Southeast Asia." (August 19, 1998).

[http://www.ilo.org/global/About the ILO/Media and public information/Press releases/lang--en/WCMS_007994/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/About%20the%20ILO/Media%20and%20public%20information/Press%20releases/lang--en/WCMS_007994/index.htm)

¹¹⁷ Suvendrini Kakuchi. "Sex Work, Illegal Status Add to Risks for Trafficked Women." *IPS News*, (2003). <http://ipsnews.net/migration/stories/sexwork.html>

¹¹⁸ Beer, Jeff. "Legalizing Brothels Doesn't Pay, Expert Warns - Canadian Business." *Canadian Business*. Rogers Media, 16 Apr. 2012. Web. 28 Oct. 2014.

¹¹⁹ Hughes, "Prostitution: Causes and Solutions," 4.

¹²⁰ Marielena Zuniga, "Caged Birds," *Soroptimist International of the Americas Best for Women*, 15. (September/October/November 2000).

¹²¹ Malarek, 294.

¹²² Martin, Phillip. "Underground Trade Part Three: The Business of Trafficking." *The Huffington Post*. The Huffington Post Media Group, 11 Feb. 2013. Web. 28 Oct. 2014.

generation of income for state coffers. In doing so, states have become integral players in the selling of their own citizenry.¹²³ Sex tours originate mainly from Australia, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United States, among others, and go to developing countries such as the Philippines, Thailand, Mexico and the Dominican Republic.¹²⁴

A seasoned john said, “Go to a monger [john] destination and give it a try. As you probably know, you will be risking addiction to cheap rental p----. Keep a close hold on your wallet. You might be a prime candidate for exploitation by a cheap rental girl. All is not lost. Enjoy.”¹²⁵ Today, the expansion of sex tourism continues unabated due in part to the promotion of tourism as a development strategy, particularly in developing countries where poverty forces women into prostitution.¹²⁶

In addition, laws against prostitution in many countries are enforced rarely and unevenly. These laws have traditionally represented one of the most direct forms of discrimination against women. Whether through the statute’s explicit design or through discriminatory enforcement of the law, a woman who engages in prostitution is usually punished criminally and stigmatized socially, while her male customer is normally left unpunished and unscathed.¹²⁷

4.) Culture: Culture, particularly as it is influenced by mass media, plays a large role in normalizing prostitution by portraying prostitution as a glamorous way for women to make a lot of money quickly and easily.¹²⁸ Media depiction of prostitution and other commercial sex acts, such as stripping and lap dancing that romanticize or glamorize these activities, influence public knowledge and opinions about the sex trade. These images suggest that prostitution is a victimless crime.¹²⁹ They also reflect the sexual objectification of and sexual violence against women occurring in a cultural environment where women are legal objects for sale.¹³⁰

One example is the movie *Pretty Woman*, which portrays prostitution as a way to “get the guy.” Ann K. Ream, a past recipient of the Soroptimist Making a Difference for Women Award and a public advocate for rape survivors, labels this dangerous myth as part of the ever-growing culture of “Prostitution Chic.” In an editorial for *The Chicago Tribune*, Ream writes of popular “Pimp and Ho” nights in clubs and uptown benefit parties and the use of the name “Turning Tricks” for pole-dancing classes increasingly offered at gyms. Ream also points to television shows like HBO’s “Entourage” and “Cathouse” for perpetuating this culture. In the latter, a Nevada pimp and his “girls” are normalized as one big, happy, sexually uninhibited family. Finally, she cites Chicago’s Discovery Center’s Sex Tour brochures that “promise to take tourists to the ‘freaky and little-known locations of Chicago’s sex industry.’”¹³¹

¹²³ Thomas F. Carter. “Of spectacular phantasmal desires: tourism and the Cuban’s state’s complicity in the commodification of its citizens.” *Leisure Studies*, (July 2008) 241-257. <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/section?content=a794698060&fulltext=713240928>

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Malarek, 63.

¹²⁶ Stjernrup, Kristin. “Sex-tourism as a Development Strategy.” Thesis. Lund University, 2006. *Lund University Publications*. Lund University Libraries, 2006. Web. 28 Oct. 2014.

¹²⁷ ProCon.org. “Should prostitution be legal?” (2009) <http://prostitution.procon.org/view.answers.php?questionID=1315>

¹²⁸ Hughes, “Prostitution: Causes and Solutions,” 5.

¹²⁹ Hughes, “Best practices,” 2-3.

¹³⁰ Farley, “Prostitution and trafficking in Nevada,” 179.

¹³¹ Anne K. Ream and R. Clifton Spargo. “Prostitution Looks Chic but the Truth is Ugly.” *Chicago Tribune*. April 27, 2008.

A more recent “normalization” of prostitution has made its way into the advertising of household chores, with Sun Products Corporation’s “Pimp My Laundry Room” contest. The makers of Wisk detergent simply offer a laundry room makeover for the winner of the contest. Yet in using the word “pimp,” the company (unwittingly or not) glamorizes what pimps really do – sell and exploit women and young girls in commercial sex.¹³²

In addition, in the past few years, sex industries have increasingly utilized the Internet for the business of selling sex.¹³³ The Internet is almost without regulation because its international reach has made local and national laws and standards either obsolete or unenforceable.¹³⁴ In a comprehensive 2014 study of prostitution in seven US cities, forty-nine percent of pimps reported using Internet advertising to attract and book new clients. The study concludes that the “spatial limitations that once governed the underground commercial sex economy are gone. Now people who once would not have ventured to their city’s stroll in search of commercial sex are able to anonymously connect with sex workers.”¹³⁵

Countless Johns use the Internet to seek sex closer to home, scouring local web sites and discussion boards for ads and reviews. The World Sex Guide is an Internet-based trove of information informing men about what country, what brothel, and even what women to exploit if the man prefers a certain ethnic group, a certain kind of sex, and a certain preference in women.¹³⁶

The website Craigslist also profited from the buying and selling of women and girls. However, the site closed its erotic services category in 2009 under pressure from critics who said it fostered prostitution and other illegal services.¹³⁷ Craigslist announced the changes as several highly-publicized cases converged that put the site under heavy scrutiny. The case of Philip Markoff, a 23-year-old medical student accused of killing a woman who offered masseuse services through Craigslist, received national attention.¹³⁸ Craigslist released a statement promising to more closely monitor the sex advertisements and double the posting price to \$10. Given this price increase, it may be no coincidence that Craigslist experienced an estimated 22 percent increase in profits from 2009 to 2010. Lawmakers and activists claim that Craigslist is not doing what it said it would do. Rachel Lloyd, executive director of Girls Educational and Mentoring Services stated that “Craigslist has not given any indication that they are outraged and disturbed that their site is the primary way children are bought in the country. All they have done is made cosmetic changes.”¹³⁹

In addition, intense competition on the Internet has led pornographers to attract buyers with more extreme images, such as bondage, torture and bestiality. Increased violence against women has been documented, as more

http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2008-04-27/news/0804260404_1_prostitution-sexual-pussycat-dolls

¹³² Amanda Kloer. “Tell Wisk: Don’t Glamorize Exploitation with Pimp My Laundry Room,” *End Human Trafficking*. March 11, 2010.

<http://humantrafficking.change.org/blog/view/tell-wisk-dont-glamorize-exploitation-with-pimp-my-laundry-room>

¹³³ Hughes, “Men create the demand,” 4.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Dank, Meredith. *Estimating the Size and Structure of the Underground Commercial Sex Economy in Eight Major US Cities*. Rep. The Urban Institute, 12 Mar. 2014. Web. 22 Oct. 2014. <<http://www.urban.org/publications/413047.html>>.

¹³⁶ Janice C. Raymond, Public Hearing on “The Impact of the Sex Industry in the E.U.,” Committee on Women’s Rights and Equal Opportunities,” European Parliament, *The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women*, (January 19, 2004).

<http://action.web.ca/home/catw/readingroom.shtml?x=53795>

¹³⁷ Brad Stone, “Under pressure, Craigslist to remove erotic ads,” *The New York Times*. (May 13, 2009).

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/14/technology/companies/14craigslist.html>

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Stone, Brad. Sex Ads Seen as Adding Revenue to Craigslist. *The New York Times*. (April 25, 2010).

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/26/technology/26craigslist.html?pagewanted=1&th&emc=th>

degrading and violent images, videos and live performances are made and marketed. An American in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, for example, set up a live video chat site to broadcast the pay-per-view rape and torture of women.¹⁴⁰ These hardcore porn images perpetuate the objectification of women and the institutionalization of gender inequality.

What is most disturbing about all this information is that not only is the sex industry big business on the Internet, but that the selling of its “products”—pornography, prostitution, sex tourism, mail-order brides—all depend on the commodification of women and has become “more acceptable, more normal, and even fashionable and cool.”¹⁴¹

In addition, the perpetuation of stereotypes in advertising, television, magazines and music videos continue to solidify women’s sexual roles and unequal gender relations in multiple ways. Provocative images of women’s partly-clothed or naked bodies are especially prevalent in advertising, sexualizing women to grab the viewer’s attention.¹⁴² Women become sexual objects when their bodies and their sexuality are linked to products that are bought and sold. Furthermore, women’s bodies are often dismembered into legs, breasts or thighs, reinforcing the message that women are objects rather than whole human beings.¹⁴³ Commodification of women at stag or bachelor parties has also become normalized in many cultures. Today, men may hire a stripper or lap dancer for such parties, and it is becoming common for these parties to extend to three or four nights in a foreign city where visiting a prostitute becomes part of the events.¹⁴⁴

SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESSING PROSTITUTION

There are four general approaches to addressing the issue of prostitution: prohibition, legalization, decriminalization, and abolition.

PROHIBITION. With the prohibition approach, prostitution is defined as a criminal activity, and all activities related to prostitution are criminalized: soliciting, procuring, pimping and brothel keeping.¹⁴⁵ No distinction is made among those who sell sex, those who buy sex, and those who facilitate the buying and selling of sex or who manage establishments where prostitution takes place.¹⁴⁶ U.S. law enforcement, with the exception of a few counties in Nevada, takes a prohibitionist approach to prostitution.¹⁴⁷

Some U.S. state statutes punish the act of prostitution, and other state statutes criminalize the acts of soliciting prostitution, arranging for prostitution, and operating a house of prostitution. On the federal level, the Mann Act

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. Stone, 2009.

¹⁴¹ Raymond, Public Hearing on “The Impact of the Sex Industry in the E.U.”

¹⁴² Media Awareness Network. “Sex and relationships in the media.” (2010)

http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/women_and_girls/women_sex.cfm

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Just Thoughts Salvation Army blogspot. “Stag parties fuel sex trafficking.” (January 24, 2010). <http://justhumantraffick.blogspot.com/2010/01/stag-parties-fuel-sex-trafficking.html>

¹⁴⁵ Donna M. Hughes, “Approaches to Prostitution: Impact on Sex Trafficking,” Women’s Studies Program, University of Rhode Island, PowerPoint Slide 5.

<http://www.uri.edu/artsci/wms/hughes/approaches.ppt>

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Donna M. Hughes. “The Demand for Victims of Sex Trafficking.” 37. (June 2005) http://www.uri.edu/artsci/wms/hughes/demand_for_victims.pdf

(18 U.S.C.A. § 2421 [as amended 1986] makes it a crime to transport a person in interstate or foreign commerce for the purpose of prostitution or for any other immoral purpose.¹⁴⁸

Other governments, however, such as Thailand, legally prohibit prostitution activities and enterprises but in reality tolerate brothels and the buying of women for commercial sexual exploitation, especially in its sex tourism industry.¹⁴⁹ And in the Philippines, where prostitution, brothel ownership and pimping are illegal, the area continues to be a capital of prostitution, with an estimate of at least half a million prostituted women.¹⁵⁰

The prohibitionist approach often results in discrimination against victims of prostitution and trafficking, for laws are more vigorously enforced against women than against men who purchase sex acts and exploiters who market sex acts.¹⁵¹

LEGALIZATION. Legalization means that the state imposes regulations under which women can be prostituted legally. This is the case in several counties in Nevada, the only state in the United States where brothels are legal. Under the legalization approach, prostitutes become sex workers, men are accepted as legitimate consumers or clients; pimps are seen as managers; brothel owners become third party businessmen; and traffickers are employment agents who assist migrant sex workers to destination countries to find jobs.¹⁵² Additionally, the state expects to collect tax revenue from the industry and income earners, as is the case in the Netherlands, Germany and some states of Australia.¹⁵³

According to the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women International, “ordinary people believe that, in calling for legalization or decriminalization of prostitution, they are dignifying and professionalizing the women in prostitution. But dignifying prostitution as work doesn’t dignify the women, it simply dignifies the sex industry.”¹⁴⁹ While some label prostitution a “victimless crime,” whose legalization could lead to benefits like tax revenue and labor rights, the expected benefits of legalization have yet to materialize. For example, in Germany, officials predicted that legalization would enable women to get health insurance and retirement benefits and to join unions, but few women have signed up for either benefits or unions. And, in fact, organized crime groups continue to traffic women and children and run illegal prostitution operations alongside the legal businesses.¹⁵⁴ Studies indicate that legalization actually increases the inflow of trafficked women, creating a safe haven for traffickers and organized crime.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁸ Legal Dictionary. Prostitution. <http://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Prostitution>

¹⁴⁹ Janice C. Raymond. “Ten Reasons for Not Legalizing Prostitution and a Legal Response to the Demand for Prostitution,” *Journal of Traumatic Practice* (2003). 315-332.

<http://action.web.ca/home/catw/attach/10%20Reasons%209-15-03%20FINAL%5B1%5D.doc>

¹⁵⁰ ProCon.org. “100 Countries and Their Prostitution Policies.” (June 11, 2009).

<http://prostitution.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=000772>

¹⁵¹ Hughes. “The Demand for Victims of Sex Trafficking.” 38.

¹⁵² Donna M. Hughes, “Combating sex trafficking: Advancing freedom for women and girls,” Keynote address Northeast Women’s Studies Association Annual Conference, (March 5, 2005), 4.

http://www.uri.edu/artsci/wms/hughes/combating_sex_trafficking.doc

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Hughes, “The Demand: Where Sex Trafficking Begins,” 4.

¹⁵⁵ Cho, Seo-Young, Axel Dreher, and Eric Neumayer. “Does Legalized Prostitution Increase Human Trafficking?” *World Development* 41 (2013): 67-82. *Social Science Research Network*. Web. 28 Oct. 2014.

DECRIMINALIZATION. Decriminalization is defined as the removal of laws against prostitution. In other words, buying a woman would be socially and legally equivalent to buying cigarettes.¹⁵⁶ Decriminalization eliminates all laws and prohibits the state and law-enforcement officials from intervening in any prostitution-related activities or transactions.¹⁵⁷

In New Zealand and Australia, for example, prostitution was decriminalized at the national level, meaning they removed all laws criminalizing prostitution, such as brothel keeping, etc. But decriminalization of prostitution in those countries resulted in an increase in illegal, hidden and street prostitution, and promoted sex trafficking.¹⁵⁸ In Sweden, those who sell sex are decriminalized, but the buyers, pimps and traffickers are criminalized. In this case, decriminalization was part of an abolitionist approach.¹⁵⁹

ABOLITIONISM. The term “abolitionism” refers to the 19th century movement for the abolition of slavery in the United States. As in the 19th century, when abolitionists fought for the abolishment of slavery, modern abolitionists fight for the abolishment of prostitution as “sexual slavery.” Analogous to the traditional concept of slavery, prostituted women are seen as slaves that need to be freed and to be made conscious of their oppression.¹⁶⁰

Central to this model is that prostitution in itself is not an offense, but any “exploitation of the prostitution of another person” is criminalized. In essence, the involvement of a third party - johns, pimps, brothel keepers or traffickers – is illegal.¹⁶¹ This view casts prostituted women not as deviants or criminals, but as victims.¹⁶² The model proposes that prostitution persists only through the efforts of johns, procurers and pimps, and all those “third parties” who induce women into prostitution. Therefore, the abolition of prostitution can best be achieved by penalizing johns and those third parties that recruit for, profit from or organize prostitution. However, the prostituted woman herself is not penalized, as she is a victim.¹⁶³

The global abolitionist movement is growing, seeking to provide assistance to victims and to hold perpetrators accountable. In 1999, Sweden passed the Swedish Law That Prohibits the Purchase of Sexual Services criminalizing the buyers of commercial sex acts and decriminalizing the sellers of sex acts.¹⁶⁴ Prostitution was denounced as “an aspect of male violence against women and children,” and the government increased funding both toward services to help women exit the sex trade and toward public education.¹⁶⁵ Police and prosecutors were trained intensively

¹⁵⁶ Prostitution Research & Education, “Myths and Facts About the Decriminalization of Prostitution.”

http://www.prostitutionresearch.com/Decrim_fact_sheet.htm

¹⁵⁷ ProCon.org, “What is the difference between the decriminalization and legalization of prostitution?” (February 15, 2008).

<http://prostitution.procon.org/viewanswers.asp?questionID=114>

¹⁵⁸ Prostitution Research & Education. “Myths and Facts of Decriminalization of Prostitution.”

http://www.prostitutionresearch.com/Decrim_fact_sheet.htm

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Marjan Wijers and Marieke van Doorninck, “Only rights can stop wrongs: A critical assessment of anti-trafficking strategies,” *Paper presented at European Conference on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings*, European Parliament, Brussels, Belgium, (September 18-20, 2002).

<http://www.walnet.org/csis/papers/wijers-rights.html>

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Gerdes, 189-190.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 190.

and pushed to enforce the law. Within five years, Sweden drastically reduced the number of both women in prostitution and johns.¹⁶⁶

In addition, Stockholm saw reductions of between 60-80 percent in the numbers of the men prostituting women. Other cities have almost completely rid themselves of street prostitution and massage parlors and brothels are steadily disappearing. Sweden also has been able to almost completely cut out the trafficking of foreign women and girls into the country. In 2002, Sweden passed legislation increasing the government's law enforcement capabilities targeting recruiters, transporters, and hosts involved in human trafficking.¹⁶⁷

Boriana Jönsson, member of the Stockholm-based Kvinna til Kvinna Foundation, a women's group, said, "The ban demonstrates the ethical and political attitude of the state toward prostitution and gender equality in general. From the viewpoint of human rights, there can't be such a relationship in which a man would purchase and own the body of a woman as a commodity. No civilized society, regardless of the possible fiscal or other benefits, should allow for that. Furthermore, prostitution is treated in Sweden as a crime of violence and sexual exploitation in which the women are the victims."¹⁶⁸

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Many argue that prostitution has become an integral part of culture, impossible to eradicate and futile to regulate. But the abolitionist model belies that claim and indicates that perhaps the focus of the debate must shift from the role of the prostitutes to the role of johns. As Victor Malarek argues, "If prostitution is about choice, it's about the man's choice to pay women for sex."¹⁶⁹ Men choose to commodify women by renting their bodies and using them for sexual gratification; men choose to turn a blind eye to the harsh reality that women and girls suffer; men choose to go on sex junkets to impoverished countries and prey on vulnerable women.¹⁷⁰

Advocates who focus on the demand of prostitution advise: 1) targeting the johns and all players in the demand of prostitution; 2) abandoning the idea of legalization; 3) changing societal attitudes; 4) educating boys and men; 5) enforcing the laws; and 6) helping the women involved.¹⁷¹

1) TARGETING ALL COMPONENTS OF THE DEMAND SIDE OF PROSTITUTION. Governments, non-governmental organizations and religious communities need to focus on reducing the demand for victims of prostitution and sex trafficking. This entails penalizing all components of the demand side, including the men, or johns, who purchase sex acts; the traffickers and pimps who profit from the sale of women for sex; and the states that act as pimps. Greater awareness also needs to be created about the culture that distorts the nature of prostitution.¹⁷²

Men who buy women for sexual exploitation are the least discussed aspect of prostitution. States could address this demand by penalizing, criminalizing and sentencing the men who buy women, as well as by providing

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Zurita.

¹⁶⁹ Malarek, 294.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 295-298.

¹⁷² Hughes, "Prostitution: Causes and solutions," 7.

comprehensive educational programs on the risks and consequences of prostitution.¹⁷³ Sweden's law against the buying of "sexual services" has been a model that could be emulated elsewhere. Sweden has clearly chosen to resist the legalization/regulation of prostitution and to address prostitution as a form of violence against women.¹⁷⁴

In addition, men soliciting sex from women in prostitution need to face consequences for their behaviors, and a john school is a good first step.¹⁷⁵ The late Norma Hotaling, an ex-prostituted woman, started "john schools" in the 1990s for men arrested for soliciting a prostituted woman. The goal was to educate men about the harm they were doing to women and girls and the risks to themselves when they engaged in illegal activity.

Hotaling said that the number of victims would only decrease when men's "demand" for victims was counteracted. Her "john school" project has become a model and is replicated throughout the United States and the world.¹⁷⁶ According to Terry Jackson, former assistant district attorney in San Francisco, the First Offender Prostitution Program (a john school started by Hotaling) "gets people thinking. It makes them think about prostitution. It makes them think about the exploitation of people and the social ramifications."¹⁷⁷

The strategy behind the city's john school—set up 15 years ago—appears to be working. A study by the U.S. Justice Department in March 2010 concluded that the program has been effective in substantially reducing recidivism among men arrested for soliciting prostituted women.¹⁷⁸ The study found that men who went through the program were about 30 percent less likely to be rearrested for soliciting a prostituted woman than men who did not attend.¹⁷⁹

In addition to john schools, Melissa Farley also advises prison time, a letter to the family of johns (most johns are married with children, according to researchers and former prostitutes) or posting their photo online or in the media. "They really don't like letters to their family," she said at the National Prostitute Diversion Conference in Dallas.¹⁸⁰

Criminalizing and penalizing the exploiters and traffickers is equally important. Prosecuting individuals and criminal networks that traffic and pimp women could eliminate a significant portion of transnational organized crime and corruption involved in prostitution and trafficking.¹⁸¹ Additionally, governments should be encouraged to pursue economic benefits beyond tax revenue. In investing in the futures of prostituted women, these women could have real opportunities to better their health, education, and well-being. States would reap similar economic benefits, for research shows that investing in women has the power to boost a country's GDP by 5 percent to 34

¹⁷³ Malarek, 295.

¹⁷⁴ "Sweden - Prostitution Put Back on the Agenda." *EWL News*. European Women's Lobby, 28 Sept. 2012. Web. 28 Oct. 2014.

¹⁷⁵ Malarek, 295

¹⁷⁶ Chen, Stephanie. "'John Schools' Try to Change Attitudes about Paid Sex." *CNN*. N.p., 28 Aug. 2009. Web. 28 Oct. 2014.

¹⁷⁷ Hughes, "Best Practices," 31.

¹⁷⁸ PBS Now. "John Schools: Can men who hire prostitutes be reformed?" May 30, 2008. <http://www.pbs.org/now/shows/422/prostitution.html>

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ Megan Feldman. "OK, so Dallas is changing the way it deals with prostitutes, but what about the johns?" *Dallas Observer/Dallas news blog*, (November 6, 2009).

http://blogs.dallasobserver.com/unfairpark/2009/11/something_about_johns.php

¹⁸¹ Hughes, "Men create the demand," 2.

percent.¹⁸² Finally, limiting false media messages about prostitution would work to dispel the myth of prostitution as a “glamorous or legitimate job” and to change accepted cultural attitudes toward the sex industry.¹⁸³

2) ABANDONING THE IDEA OF LEGALIZATION. Over the past decade, the most popular proposed solution to prostitution and sex trafficking is legalization. According to aforementioned research, however, legalization simply serves to “dignify the sex industry,”¹⁸⁴ and its assurances of sanitation and an end to the violence and degradation of prostitutes have yet to materialize.¹⁸⁵

While prostitution has been legalized with the expectation that it would bring positive outcomes in Australia, the Netherlands, Germany and New Zealand,¹⁸⁶ legalization has not, in fact, reduced prostitution or trafficking. In actuality, both activities have increased due to the ease and legality of buying and selling sex acts.¹⁸⁷ Although proponents of legalization argued that the policy would reduce criminal elements in the sex business, the strict legal regulation of the industry has not resulted in significantly reduced criminal engagement in the sex industry.

For example, Amsterdam is infamous for its open prostitution policy. Its red light district draws tourists from around the globe in search of sex and voyeurism. The visibility of the district prompts the question - how has legalization played out in Amsterdam? The city’s mayor, Job Cohen, admitted that the Dutch experiment to end abuse by legalizing prostitution has failed.¹⁸⁸ He has been quoted in the media as saying: “Almost five years after the lifting of the brothel ban in 2000, we have to acknowledge that the aims of the law have not been reached. Lately we’ve received more and more signals that abuse still continues.” Dutch police admit, “We are in the midst of modern slavery.”

3) CHANGING SOCIAL ATTITUDES ABOUT PROSTITUTION. Society must confront just how damaged “masculinity is today and how destructive male behavior has become, both inward and outward.”¹⁸⁹ In the US, a consumer-driven society prioritizes individualism and praises the unrestrained consumption of people and things. Similarly, deeply embedded in patriarchal cultures is the idea that it is a woman’s duty to satisfy men sexually, in marriage or in prostitution.¹⁹⁰ Music, videos, TV, commercials, magazine ads, Hollywood movies and pornography can all sexualize and demean women and teach young men to view women, girls and sex as a commodity that can be bought and sold.¹⁹¹

For instance, various filming techniques, such as camera shots that pan over women’s bodies or present fragments of women’s bodies as a number of disconnected body parts, can dehumanize women and trivialize assault and violence against women. Countries and communities desperately need intervention programs that change the attitudes of men, women and society at large.¹⁹² While men are largely responsible for the demand side of prostitution, women in society are often complicit in their tacit acceptance of prostitution and the sexualization of

¹⁸² Elborgh-Woytek, Katrin, Monique Newiak, Kalpana Kochhar, Stefania Fabrizio, Kangni Kpodar, Philippe Wingender, Benedict Clements, and Gerd Schwartz. *Women, Work, and the Economy: Macroeconomic Gains from Gender Equity*. Rep. International Monetary Fund, Sept. 2013. Web. 29 Oct. 2014.

¹⁸³ Hughes, “Prostitution: Causes and solutions,” 7.

¹⁸⁴ Raymond, “10 reasons for not legalizing prostitution,” 1.

¹⁸⁵ Malarek, 295.

¹⁸⁶ Hughes, “Prostitution: Causes and Solutions,” 2.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Zurita.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Gerdes, 80.

¹⁹¹ Malarek, 297.

¹⁹² Ibid.

girls. Although some women's rights groups are attempting to create awareness about the violence against prostituted women, all those concerned with human rights—men and women—must work to uncover the hidden, normalized consequences of prostitution.¹⁹³

4) EDUCATE YOUNG PEOPLE—ESPECIALLY BOYS. In order to combat prostitution, there must be educational programs for young men and women that dispel unhealthy and unequal representations of women. Men, in particular, absorb mass quantities of images and messages about women and their bodies at a young age.¹⁹⁴ For instance, one study found that 60 percent of boys have seen porn by age 16, and that, on average, boys start watching pornography at 11 years old. This age precedes the start of sex education in schools, and thus, for many boys, pornography is their first exposure to what sex and relationships should be.¹⁹⁵ There must be a space for young men, in particular, to learn about sex, sexuality and healthy relationships in an open way and at a young age.

Prostitution and violence against women can be counteracted by teaching boys about loving, lasting relationships built on respect for girls and women. The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), for example, sponsors projects that works with boys and young men to change their sexual attitudes toward girls and women. Their video "First Time" critiques the "coming of age" rite in which teenage boys are encouraged to have their first sexual experience with a prostituted girl or young woman.¹⁹⁶ And in the Philippines and Mexico, the CATW disseminates an educational manual that challenges concepts of masculinity centered around sexual violence and exploitation.¹⁹⁷

5) ENFORCING THE LAWS. Every country has laws in place regarding trafficking, abduction, coercion, assault and rape.¹⁹⁸ Missing in many cases, however, are successful prosecutions of individuals and criminal networks that traffic and pimp women. Successful prosecutions would go a long way towards eliminating a significant portion of transitional organized crime and corruption that exist in countries throughout the world.¹⁹⁹ In this case, Sweden again serves as a role model in criminalizing the buying of sexual services.

6) HELPING THE WOMEN. According to sex industry advocates, providing prostituted women with contraceptives and labor rights would alleviate many of their problems. The research, however, shows that women not only want contraceptives and unions, but also they wish to get out of prostitution.²⁰⁰

¹⁹³ Farley, "Prostitution is Sexual Violence."

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 298.

¹⁹⁵ Alex DeBranco. "Porn Teaches Boys that Sexual Assault is A-Okay." *Women's Rights*. (January 27, 2010).

<http://womensrights.change.org/blog/view/porn_teaches_boys_that_sexual_assault_is_a-okay>

¹⁹⁶ "Ending the Demand." *Projects and Campaigns*. Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, n.d. Web. 29 Oct. 2014.

<<http://www.catwinternational.org/ProjectsCampaigns/Ending>>.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Malarek, 297.

¹⁹⁹ Hughes, "Men create the demand."

²⁰⁰ Farley, Melissa, Ann Cotton, Jacqueline Lynne, Sybille Zumbeck, Frida Spiwak, Maria E. Reyes, Dinorah Alvarez, and Ufuk Sezgin. "Prostitution and Trafficking in Nine Countries." *Journal of Trauma Practice* 2.3-4 (2004): 33-74. Web.

According to research, when prostituted women were asked what they needed to get out of prostitution, they responded:²⁰¹

- a home or safe place to live, 78 percent
- job training, 73 percent
- alcohol and drug treatment, 67 percent
- health care, 58 percent
- peer support, 50 percent
- individual counseling, 48 percent
- legal assistance, 42 percent
- child care, 28 percent.

In order to “get out” of prostitution, women need a variety of supportive services. One such model is the Breaking Free program in St. Paul, Minnesota. The program, struggling under government cutbacks, works with about 400 women a year in all venues of prostitution—on the street, on the Internet, in escort services, or with international victims of sex trafficking. Breaking Free offers a 12-week support group and aftercare; life skills classes; 18-to-24 month transitional housing for at least seven women; and a “john school.”²⁰²

The Council for Prostitution Alternatives (CPA) in Portland, Oregon, is another example. The mission of CPA is to support women and children affected by the sex industry to find safer, healthier life paths by exploring alternatives in a safe and supportive structure. Their services include case management, emergency services, and educational and peer support groups.

CONCLUSION

Today, men are no longer invisible in their role of perpetuating prostitution and sex trafficking. A more comprehensive view of the global sex trade has brought the “demand” side to the attention of activists, scholars, and officials.²⁰³ The bottom line is that if there were no demand, prostitution would not exist. “If men the world over

²⁰¹ Annie Lobert. “Prostitution statistics – The real truth.” *Powerhouse Ministry*.

http://powerhouse-ministry.org/annielobert_prostitution.aspx

²⁰² Pat Pfeifer, “A way out of prostitution.” *StarTribune.com*, (October 14, 2009). www.startribune.com/local/63937547.html

²⁰³ Donna M. Hughes, “Demand for Child Victims,” *Fafo Institute for Applied International Studies, Brussels*, (December 1-2, 2004), 14.

http://www.uri.edu/artsci/wms/hughes/child_victims.doc

did not demand sex, there would be no need to corral, break and submit millions of women and children to this dehumanizing experience.”²⁰⁴

The conversation about perpetrators must continue into the general population. Men who buy sex must be held accountable, take responsibility for their behavior, and stop buying and sexually exploiting women and girls. Governments and non-governmental organizations must continue to speak out and act against these buyers and perpetrators, while simultaneously finding ways to assist women out of prostitution. Those at the grassroots level must continue to critique the undervaluation and sexualization of women and girls in the media and to advocate for programs that support girls in developing a healthy self-image.

Abolishing prostitution is certainly an incredibly complex, difficult mission. Prostitution is an ugly yet pervasive practice that remains deeply entrenched in many different cultures and circumstances, and an attitude of indifference and futility towards the issue is almost understandable. At stake in this mission, though, is the dignity of women and girls worldwide. In prostitution, there is no dignity, no empowerment, no equality in any form. Global gender inequality will perhaps continue indefinitely if men continue to feel entitled to rent, buy and sell the bodies of women and girls. This practice is indescribably detrimental to the women involved, to their communities and their countries. Each must do all that lies in his or her power to end this practice, to abolish prostitution in the service of universal equality and human rights.

HOW SOROPTIMIST WORKS TO END PROSTITUTION AND TRAFFICKING

Soroptimist International is a global volunteer organization for business and professional women who work to improve the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and economic empowerment. Soroptimist clubs undertake a number of different projects to confront local realities facing women and girls. Many projects help victims of prostitution and women and girls vulnerable to prostitution by providing these women with the economic tools and skills they need to achieve financial empowerment and independence. As an organization, Soroptimist supports the following programs:

SOROPTIMISTS STOP TRAFFICKING—In 2007, Soroptimist launched a public awareness campaign to address the sex trafficking and slavery of women and girls. A launch event was held on December 2, the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery (non-U.S.) and on January 11, the National Day of Human Trafficking Awareness (U.S.). Soroptimist chose an awareness-raising project because a necessary first step in ending sex trafficking and sex slavery is ensuring that everyone knows it exists. Soroptimist clubs also pursue initiatives addressing prevention, advocacy for better laws, and victim services.

Soroptimist International of Makati, Philippines, focused on providing at-risk women with economic alternatives to prostitution. The club conducted a nine-month livelihood skills training program for trafficked and prostituted women ages 14 to 18. Recognizing these women lacked skills that would make them otherwise employable in the professional world, the club developed skills training modules in partnership with the Third World Movement against the Exploitation of Women. Each module included practical lessons in “How to Start a Small Business,” “Values Formation/Guidance Counseling,” and “Skills Training Demonstration.” The aim of the project was to educate and empower trafficked and prostituted women to become financially self-reliant entrepreneurs. The

²⁰⁴ Malarek, 293.

participants worked in teams with each creating a business plan eligible for a loan (from the Makati club) to start from its own business.

Soroptimist International of Dazaifu, Japan, advocated for trafficking victims' rights by partnering with nine other Soroptimist clubs and a local women's empowerment organization to carry out a signature collection campaign. The campaign called for legislation provisionally titled "Protection of Sex Trafficking Victims Act." By the end of the project, the club and its partners had collected more than 2,000 signatures that were sent to the Women's Empowerment Center in Fukuoka for further action.

Soroptimist International of Ripon, California, supported Lighthouse, a program that offers friendship and hope to prostituted women in the red light district in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The club donated funds to Lighthouse for a resource center on human trafficking aimed at educating the prostituted women. Twice a week, Lighthouse members serve coffee and tea to the women in their "display windows," providing practical help and resources on how to start a new life. The program also started a weekly support group, offering immigration referrals, access to healthcare, job training, counseling, rehabilitation, and legal assistance.

SOROPTIMIST LIVE YOUR DREAM: EDUCATION AND TRAINING AWARDS FOR WOMEN—The Live Your Dream Awards program (formerly Women's Opportunity Awards) is Soroptimist's major program. The awards improve the lives of women and their families by giving them resources to improve their education, skills, and employment prospects. By helping women receive skill and resource training, Soroptimist provides women with economic alternatives to prostitution.

Many Live Your Dream Award recipients have overcome enormous obstacles in their quest for a better life, including poverty, domestic violence, substance abuse, prostitution and trafficking. Each year, about \$1.5 million is disbursed through the awards to help women achieve their dreams of a better life for themselves and their families. Since the Live Your Dream Awards program began in 1972, it is estimated that \$25 million has been disbursed and more than 30,000 women have been assisted.

One recent recipient, Minda Pascual of the Philippines, endured years and years of abuse—first at the hands of her mother's live-in partner and then as a trafficked woman working in the sex trade. She was drugged and her life was destroyed. She had three children by foreign men from the nearby military base and feared that her children would suffer as she had. Even when she did try to leave prostitution, she couldn't find other work that would pay enough to feed her children. Finally, with the help of an NGO, she enrolled in a vocational course. She managed to continue her education until she ran out of money. She was introduced to Soroptimist International of Sampaloc and received the club's 2008-2009 Live Your Dream Award so she could continue her education. Minda dreams of becoming a social worker but it hasn't been easy—the temptation to return to the sex trade was strong at some points. But she never returned because of her children and her passion to help other women victims regain their dignity. She plans to help prostituted women with practical help, specifically in rescuing women and helping them to find gainful employment.

SOROPTIMIST CLUB GRANTS FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS— Often the abilities and ambitions of Soroptimist clubs exceed their financial resources. Soroptimist introduced the Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls in 1997 to assist with community projects that improve the lives of women and girls. Each year, grants are given to clubs working on projects that help foster economic independence, provide job skills training and education, and provide women with the resources necessary to move themselves and their families out of poverty. Projects of this type give women economic alternatives to prostitution. In the 2009-2010 club year, Soroptimist is awarding thirty-one projects with a total of \$175,000 in funding. Since the program's inception, more than \$2.5 million has been

awarded for 427 projects assisting more than 200,000 women and their families. Several grants have supported anti-trafficking projects around the world.

SOROPTIMIST DISASTER GRANTS FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS— Soroptimist Disaster Grants for Women and Girls provide funds ranging from \$1,000 to \$20,000 to assist women and/or girls prepare for or recover from disasters or acts of war. Disaster grants can be used for projects that address disaster risk reduction or recovery. Disaster risk reduction projects are projects designed to lessen the intensity and adverse impacts of a disaster, such as early warning systems. Disaster recovery projects are longer-term projects, such as job training and community revitalization. Clubs are encouraged to conduct research in their community to find out what types of disaster services are needed by women and/or girls. Grants can be used for projects administered by Soroptimist clubs or regions or to assist other organizations that specialize in disaster support nationally or internationally.

While disasters create hardships for many, women and girls are disproportionately vulnerable because of existing gender inequalities that are magnified during and following a disaster. Poor women and single mothers—the poorest of the poor—who lack access to support services and aid following disasters are especially vulnerable to traffickers. Because relief efforts targeted to women are often overlooked during a crisis, and because women and girls have special needs in times of crisis and disaster, the Soroptimist Disaster Grant program provide grants for projects targeting the special needs of women and girls prior to, during and after disasters.

After Hurricane Katrina in 2005, SIA donated \$20,000 to the SARA Center which helps victims of domestic and sexual abuse. Following a flood in 2008, SIA donated \$20,000 to Soroptimist International of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, which partnered with Waypoint, a safe house for women victims of domestic and sexual violence. Funds were used to rebuild the commercial laundry facilities at the safe house, which had been destroyed by the flood.

Soroptimist International of the Americas is a 501(c)(3) organization. In December 2004, Soroptimist received the Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations (PANO) Seal of Excellence for its successful compliance with the Standards for Excellence program. Soroptimist was re-certified in 2007. Soroptimist programs have won many awards for their ability to help women and girls transform their lives.