The Rehabilitation and Reintegration Process for Women and Children Recovering from the Sex Trade

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Introduction

Women and girls have endured numerous forms of violence, exploitation, and repression worldwide. Indeed, the only trends consistently found around the world are rape, domestic violence, and son preference (Mies and Shiva, 2001). Thus, regardless of their cultural roots, race, ethnicity, nationality, religious affiliation, or economic status, women and girls live in volatile environments in which their female identity automatically places them in varying degrees of vulnerability and inferiority. Under these conditions, it is no surprise the sex trade continues to thrive. ¹

While an understanding of the overall size and scope of the sex trade is necessary in order to design effective amelioration initiatives, women and children involved in the sex trade should not be reduced to a series of statistics and generalizations as a result. Moreover, the rehabilitation and reintegration of individuals seeking to escape the sex trade has been largely ignored and/or underrepresented by academics, governments, and international organizations. Though local and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have increasingly recognized the importance of rehabilitation and reintegration from the sex trade, such efforts have not received the attention or assistance needed to provide effective short-and long-term care.

Aims of the Paper

This paper addresses the challenges, strategies, and support systems regarding the rehabilitation and reintegration process for women and children recovering from the sex trade. In order to address issues surrounding the rehabilitation and reintegration process, it is important to understand the complexities of the sex trade in a broader sense. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a detailed analysis of the sex industry, I will present a brief sketch sufficient to understand its general size and scope. Thereafter, I address the violence and exploitation experienced by women and children both prior to and during their involvement in the sex trade while also providing an overview of the forms of support and protections available to them. I also summarize the primary strategies that NGOs, interested governments and international organizations are now employing to support the rehabilitation and reintegration of women and children seeking to leave the sex trade. Next, the paper sketches the principal political, economic and institutional obstacles that assisting organizations and governments encounter as they seek to support women and children who are trying to overcome the sex trade. Finally, I provide a brief assessment of rehabilitation and reintegration strategies as well as recommendations for how existing efforts may be made more effective.

¹ The sex trade can be broadly defined as the exchange of sexual services for money within a global context.
Overview of the Sex Trade

Accounts and descriptions of the sex trade may be divided into two groups. For some, sex trafficking\(^2\) and prostitution\(^3\) are conflated into one issue. This group argues that all sex for sale is exploitation against women regardless of ‘choice’ and thus should be illegal. In opposition, others separate sex trafficking from prostitution. This group condemns sex trafficking and other forms of forced sex work, yet at the same time accepts prostitution as an acceptable form of labor that should be legalized and regulated. While addressing this debate is beyond the scope of this paper, it should be understood that whether sex trafficking and prostitution are conflated or separated, they propagate the same sex trade. Furthermore, regardless of how a woman, man, or child is incorporated into the sex trade, the majority of sex providers experience similar forms of violence and exploitation. It is also important to note a rise in male sex workers, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean\(^4\) (Brennan, 2004; Kempadoo and Doezema, 1998). However, the sex trade is overwhelmingly sustained through male purchases of sexual services provided by women and children. Consequently, the sex industry is characterized by the violence and exploitation experienced by women and children as sex providers.

While sex trafficking and prostitution both proliferate violence and exploitation against women and children, it is necessary to contextualize these incidents within the sex trade. Sex trafficking is often considered one of the most exploitative forms of human trafficking and slavery. Annually, around 70% of the one to four million trafficking victims are pressed into sex work\(^5\) (Global Fund for Women, 2008). The terms ‘sex slave’ and ‘victim of sex trafficking’\(^6\) exemplify the “control over a person for the purpose of exploitation” (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2004). Sex slaves typically are held in debt bondage and do not receive payment for providing sexual services. On the other hand, prostitutes sell sexual services to generate income. Those

\(^2\) Sex trafficking is defined by the United Nations as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, or fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.”

\(^3\) The common definition of prostitution is the act or practice of engaging in sexual intercourse for money as an unworthy use or cause.

\(^4\) Male sex workers are often found in the context of sex tourism, selling sexual services in both homosexual and heterosexual relations.

\(^5\) Statistics reported on the sex trade vary depending on definitions, methods, and resources.

\(^6\) ‘Sex slave’ and ‘victim’ will be used interchangeably in order to refer to women and children who were bought and/or sold by traffickers within the sex trade.
engaging in prostitution are commonly referred to as ‘sex workers.’ Sex workers may work for themselves or for an employer such as a brothel owner or a pimp. While sex workers are generally considered to have a larger degree of agency than sex slaves, sex workers’ ability to control their bodies and income varies considerably based on individual circumstances (Brennan, 2004; Kempadoo and Doezema, 1998). Millions of sex workers are employed through selling sex, dancing, stripping, pornography, and escort services (Farr, 2005).

It is necessary to distinguish women and children in the sex trade as either sex slaves or sex workers as this distinction affects how each group is regarded in prevention initiatives, migration laws, criminalization of activities, and rescue strategies. However, regarding rehabilitation and reintegration initiatives the sex slave/sex worker distinction may be more harmful than beneficial (Dewey, 2008). As mentioned above, regardless of how women and children became involved in the sex trade, they experience similar forms of violence and exploitation. Within the context of rehabilitation and reintegration, the distinction may place unnecessary political, social, or cultural limitations on women and children in need of services. In other words, women and children recovering from the sex trade should be viewed purely as individuals seeking assistance from the violence and exploitation they endured.

Almost every country worldwide has been incorporated into the sex trade as a source, transit, or destination site (Farr, 2005) The industry is organized around two distinct phenomena – sex trafficking and sex tourism. In sex trafficking, women and children travel away from their homes, either within or beyond their national borders in order to accommodate demand for their services. Conversely, in sex tourism foreign men travel to source countries (predominately those in the Third World) in order to purchase sexual services. Again, while expanding upon the sex trafficking/sex tourism distinction is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to note the dual flow of men, women, and children between and within source and destination sites. Like sex trafficking/prostitution, sex trafficking and sex tourism are part of the broader sex trade.

While it is critical not to ignore the complexities of the sex trade, its foundation can be reduced to supply and demand. Put another way, as an economic analysis would explain, “certain market forces create a demand for a product; other market forces create a supply to meet that demand” (Kara, 2009). Thus, the sex industry cannot exist without both forces. There are many factors that contribute to the supply side of the sex trade including “poverty, bias against gender or ethnicity, lawlessness, military conflict,

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7 The term ‘sex worker’ suggests an “income-generating activity or form of labor” as opposed to ‘prostitute’ which suggests a negative identity of those selling sexual services (Kempadoo and Doezema, 1998).
8 Due to the illicit nature of the sex trade, reliable statistics documenting the number of sex workers is unavailable.
9 Source countries identify where individuals originate, transit countries are those which individuals pass through from source to destination, and destination countries are where individuals are received.
social instability, economic breakdown,” and power relations. The demand side of the sex trade is created and sustained by two main forces: male demand and profit. Male demand for sexual services sustains the profitability of the sex trade as a multi-billion dollar industry (Kara, 2009). The reach of the sex trade has been exacerbated by the recent phenomenon of globalization through increased economic integration, transnational migration, and international tourism (Brennan, 2004).

In sum, the sex trade is a global issue requiring an international response (Global Fund for Women, 2008). Governments, international organizations, and NGOs have developed numerous conventions and strategies targeting the sex trade. However, since there is not a universal agreement on the nature of the sex trade or how the industry should be regulated, efforts to implement these strategies vary considerably. Nevertheless, the sex industry continues to thrive due to its enormous profitability and a seemingly endless number of sex providers and buyers.

Violence and Exploitation within the Sex Trade

Before addressing the violence and exploitation experienced by women and children within the sex trade, it is important to mention similar forms of abuse that occur prior to their involvement in the trade. In many cultures, women and girls are regarded as inferior to men and boys. That situation makes them vulnerable to violence and exploitation within the home, the community, and if they can locate employment, at work. Moreover, those experiences often directly shape how women and children initially became involved in the sex trade.

Many women and children often voluntarily migrate to obtain sex-related work or to follow false promises for employment in order to escape abusive relationships at home, either from their families, husbands, or boyfriends. In Moldova, since the year 2000, seven of every ten sex trafficking victims assisted by the NGO, La Strada, reported domestic violence including rape, beatings, and psychological abuse by their husbands, uncles, or fathers as the primary factor in their decision to accept work abroad (Kara, 2009). In Kerala, India the Foundation for Integrated Research in Mental Health (FIRM) found that more than fifty percent of sex workers were previously married and “experienced domestic violence, desertion by their husbands, being sold by their husbands or having their property seized by their husbands and later divorced” (Jayasree, 2004). Since these women had been economically dependent on their husbands and were not employed, they went in search for work. However, in India, as in many other countries, there are few economic opportunities available for poor women. Furthermore, when they found employment they earned minimal wages and were often

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11 FIRM is a nongovernmental organization that works among stigmatized and marginalized groups in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.
sexually exploited by their male employers. In the end, many women resorted to sex work for payment as a means of survival (Jayasree, 2004).

Irrespective of how individuals were integrated into the sex trade, women and children continue to experience extreme and often sustained forms of violence and exploitation while working in it. They experience various forms of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. Such experiences before, during, and after the sex trade occasion a variety of short-and long-term personal problems which can be divided into three main categories: physical, psychological, and behavioral effects. While each individual undergoes and internalizes their involvement in the sex trade differently, several studies of children, youth, and adults who had previously been engaged in the industry offer broadly similar conclusions.

*Physical Effects*

Whether a sex worker or sex slave, the conditions in which these women and children live while engaged in the sex trade are generally equally horrendous. Many individuals lack adequate sleeping conditions and often sleep and provide sexual services in the same bed. Facilities for bathing, washing clothes, and personal hygiene, if available, are poorly maintained. Additionally, they are routinely denied or unable to acquire proper nutrition and health care. As a result, women and children can suffer from a range of health conditions. Survivors of sex trafficking report chronic symptoms such as frequent headaches, stomach pain, lower abdomen pain, skin disease, body itching, and fatigue (Crawford and Kaufman, 2008). In addition, sex workers also experience asthma, and other rheumatic disorders (Jayasree, 2004).

Engaging in sexual activity with numerous partners, especially without a condom, results in a high probability of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV/AIDS. Individuals are also highly susceptible to other genital tract infections and pelvic inflammatory diseases (PID) due to frequent and sometimes violent sexual activity. Recurring pregnancy resulting in either delivery or abortion, especially followed by immediate sexual activity can overwhelm a female’s body and can sometimes cause permanent damage including future infertility. In situations where women and girls have little or no control over their bodies during sexual activity, they are more susceptible to infection, disease, and pregnancy because they are unable to negotiate safe sex practices. Furthermore, young adolescent girls experience a higher risk of infection and long-term damage because their immature reproductive tracts are more sensitive (Chatterjee, Chakraborty, Srivastava, and Deb, 2006).

The prevalence of violence within the sex trade also has extreme effects on the physical health of women and children involved. Due to the large degree of control and exploitation involved in sex trafficking, almost all victims experienced various forms of violence by their captors, including but not limited to “rape, gang rape, burning of breasts and genitals with cigarettes, beating, and chaining with fetters” (Crawford and
Moreover, of the two hundred sex workers interviewed from the drop-in clinics of Tamil Nadu, India, over ninety-five percent experienced violence by their clients, street criminals, and/or the police.\textsuperscript{12} Reported forms of violence included “beatings, acid attacks, stabbing or cutting with knives, breaking arms or legs, sexual harassment, rape, hitting with hard objects, throwing stones, shaving heads, putting chili powder in the eyes, beating the soles of feet and then forcing them to jump up and down, and murder” (Jayasree, 2004).

\textit{Psychological Effects}

Repeated acts of physical, mental, and sexual violence and exploitation have significant repercussions for the mental health of women and children incorporated into the sex trade. Counselors for sex trafficking victims report an array of emotional problems including: “impatience, irritability, short-temper and violence, lack of obedience, distrust towards others, lack of self-confidence, emotional instability, depression, stress, feelings of isolation, hopelessness or desperation for the future, shame and guilt, humiliation, loss of virginity, negative attitudes, withdrawal, post-traumatic stress disorder, and self-mutilation” (Chatterjee et al, 2006). Forty percent of the sex workers going to the clinics in Tamil Nadu, India suffered from “depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTS), mood disorders, and schizophrenia.” It was also common for sex workers to attempt suicide and engage in deliberate self-harm by “cutting their veins, taking poison, and burning themselves” (Jayasree, 2004).

\textit{Behavioral Effects}

The physical and psychological trauma experienced by women and children involved in the sex trade alter their short and long-term behavior. In one study, children and youth survivors of sex trafficking were reported to have the following behavioral problems: “inability to express feelings, poor communication skills, inability to make friendships, frightened of adults and/or strangers, addiction to drugs and substances, sexual activeness, vulnerability to sexual abuse or exploitation, difficulty with sleeping or nightmares, commitment of suicide, and difficulty with adjustments” (Chatterjee et al, 2006). Another study in Nepal reported behavioral symptoms among sex trafficking survivors including “social withdrawal, altered behavior in front of males, lack of motivation, and aggression.” Additionally, survivors reported an inability to dream and hope and a lack of aspiration and vision for the future (Crawford and Kaufman, 2008). Sex workers also reported similar behavioral effects (Jayasree, 2004).

\textit{Social Ramifications and Personal Identity Crises}

\textsuperscript{12} Information was gathered by FIRM from case histories between 1999 and 2001 from the Drop-in Centre Clinics in Thiruvananthapuram and Thrissur.
The physical, psychological, and behavioral effects experienced by women and children as a result of the violence and exploitation they experience both before and during the sex trade linger far into their futures. Regardless of how they were introduced into the industry, families and communities often refuse to accept individuals upon their return. Also, men often view women and children previously engaged in the trade as spoiled and refuse to marry them (Chatterjee et al, 2006; Crawford and Kaufman, 2008; Jayasree, 2004; Kara, 2009; Kempadoo and Doezema, 1998). Without the support of families or husbands, it is extremely difficult for many women to survive on their own. As a result, not only are they often condemned to penury, but also to a lifetime of isolation and discrimination.

Moreover, women and children have difficulty formulating their identity apart from being a sexual object (Chatterjee et al, 2006). Women and children recovering from the sex trade often cannot remember the person they used to be prior to their incorporation into the industry. Nor can they perceive a life away from their occupations. Often, women and children develop distorted images of themselves and their futures. In addition, when they are unable to cope with their experiences, mental and physical destruction occurs (Robinson and Páramo, 2007).

Primary Forms of Support and Protection for Rehabilitation and Reintegration

When societies and families reject individuals and those affected relinquish hope, their rehabilitation and reintegration can be extremely challenging. However, despite these difficulties, governments, international organizations, and NGOs continuously strive to provide support and protection for women and children involved in the sex trade.

Support and Protection from Governments and International Organizations

While governments and international organizations provide support and protection for women and children affected by the sex trade, the majority of such efforts are focused on migration control, security, and prosecution of illegal activity. A portion of efforts and legislation advocates for the provision of legal and financial support for the reintegration of women and children recovering from the trade. It is important to note, however, that the majority of legislation incorporating rehabilitation and reintegration strategies focuses on victims of sex trafficking, not sex workers (Farr, 2005).

Several international conventions have focused on the sex trade, including the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the U.N. Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons, and the 2000 U.N. Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. In addition to many others, there are also national conventions such as the
United States Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA) and the 1956 Immoral Traffic Prevention Act (ITPA) in India. International and national conventions advocate for support and protection in two different arenas: 1) destination countries and 2) source countries. For destination countries, provisions for victim protection services, assistance in obtaining special residency status, temporary shelter, medical care, and psychological support are provided. However, legal protection and financial support promised by some legislation such as the U.S. TVPA is only provided if the victim agrees to testify against the traffickers. In addition, support is only provided until the victim is deported (Farr, 2005). In some countries, including India and Thailand, conventions against the sex trade often go unenforced or instead are used to punish women and children within the industry (Jayasree, 2004). Ultimately, in some nations including Thailand and India, prostitution is socially sanctioned and even demanded despite its illegality.

The fact that rehabilitation and reintegration of sex workers is not provided by the majority of legislation has significant repercussions for recovery programs in source countries. In order to receive support from some governments and international organizations, such as the United States and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) service providers must distinguish between sex slaves and sex workers. In countries where prostitution is illegal, if the distinction is not made, service providers are ineligible to receive funding. In many source countries, corruption is also a large issue. Corrupt government and law enforcement officials often siphon off resources provided by national conventions and, accordingly, these do not reach rehabilitation and reintegration programs (Farr, 2005; Kara, 2009).

Moreover, government legislation allows “the powerful to speak for the marginalized and to define their circumstances” (Dewey, 2008). There is a significant distinction between the views of policy makers and institutions and those of women and children involved in the sex trade. Often, legislation and services provided by governments and institutions do not reflect the demands of sex workers and sex slaves. Instead, women and children in the industry are frequently used to develop and advocate political agendas (Dewey, 2008).

Support by Nongovernmental Organizations

Overall, support and protection by governments and international organizations for the rehabilitation and reintegration of women and children recovering from the sex trade is extremely limited. Consequently, the majority of rehabilitation and reintegration programs must be developed and implemented by NGOs.

While both local and international NGOs provide recovery services to previous sex slaves and sex workers, the majority of organizations and centers working in this area are small, autonomous women’s groups (Ploumen, 2001). As often as possible, NGOs work with governments and international organizations to provide legal and
financial support, recovery facilities, counseling, medical care, and education. Following is an overview of the range of rehabilitation and reintegration efforts offered by NGOs.

Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programs and Strategies

Rehabilitation and reintegration programs and strategies targeting individuals recovering from violence and exploitation within the sex trade require multifaceted approaches involving a variety of actors. Recovery efforts must simultaneously address the physical, psychological, behavioral, social, and economic issues encountered by these individuals. Moreover, successful recovery must include service coordination by governments, international organizations, NGOs, local agencies, surrounding communities, and families (Crawford and Kaufman, 2008).

Regardless of how women and children first became involved in the trade, whether as sex workers or sex slaves, the rehabilitation and reintegration strategies for their recovery are similar. All survivors require a central location for support, counseling, education and skills training, medical services, and a supportive community (Crawford and Kaufman, 2008; Farr, 2005; Jayasree, 2004; Kara, 2009; Kempadoo and Doezema, 1998). However, for those who were removed from their original communities counselors often suggest that a period of recovery based on individual need precede reintegration into society (Chatterjee et al, 2006).

Shelters versus Drop-in Centers

Many women and children recovering from the sex trade require temporary housing. Such individuals were more than likely trafficked into the sex trade and are unable to return to their communities due to distance, danger from criminal networks, or community rejection. Recovering sex slaves may also require extensive psychological counseling and long-term care (Chatterjee et al, 2006; Crawford and Kaufman, 2008). Other women and children entered the sex trade near their own homes and therefore require local facilities in which they can access services. Some of these individuals may also remain active in the industry and seek services to improve their experiences such as condom distribution, safe-sex training, health clinics, sleeping and bathing facilities, childcare, and security (Jayasree, 2004).

Counseling

Because of the extensive psychological and behavioral effects arising from involvement in the sex trade, counseling services are imperative. Few nongovernmental organizations are able to employ staff counselors of their own. Instead, recovery centers
often partner with private care facilities and public social workers in order to offer counseling services. Increasing numbers of NGOs are recognizing the importance of providing counselors with previous experiences of violence and exploitation as well as the same ethnic and cultural background of survivors. Individuals participating in counseling are better able to identify with someone who has undergone similar experiences or suffered similar ethnic or cultural discrimination. Additionally, group therapy sessions and family integration are also increasingly incorporated into counseling programs (Chatterjee et al, 2006; Kempadoo and Doezema, 1998; Robinson and Páramo, 2007). Overall, counseling services are developed to accommodate each individual as appropriate.

_Medical Care_

Most shelters or drop-in centers are only capable of providing basic health services such as nutrition, hygiene, and primary care. Similar to counseling services, medical care is provided largely by private or public healthcare providers. Doctors or nurses periodically visit rehabilitation centers or individuals must be taken to clinics or hospitals (Chatterjee et al, 2006; The Ministry of Women and Child Development of India).

_Education and Employment_

The incorporation of women and children into the sex trade is often attributed to a lack of educational and economic opportunities. Thus, education and employment play a large role in their rehabilitation and reintegration. Because each community has unique cultures and industries, education and employment training must be locally applicable. For example, an organization in Nepal focuses on providing education and skills such as driving, hotel cooking, community heath, and micro-credit opportunities (Crawford and Kaufman, 2008). A local organization in India called Shakti Samuha provides vocational training to prepare women for electrical work, roles in beauty salons and office work the NGO also provides loans to support small businesses such as goat-rearing, a stationery shop and a grocery shop (Shakti Samuha, 2007). Because many women and children were often denied access to school and educational opportunities, it is important for them to learn to read and write. Rehabilitation centers seek to provide literacy programs.

_Empowerment_

While the rehabilitation and reintegration process depend on a variety of services, developing increased self-esteem and a sense of self-empowerment among recovering women is perceived as the most important element for recovery from
violence and exploitation, especially sexual abuse (Crawford and Kaufman, 2008; Jayasree, 2004; Kara, 2009; Kempadoo and Doezema, 1998; Shakti Samuha, 2007). As mentioned above, affected individuals involved in the sex trade develop a distorted perception of themselves as sex objects with their only skill to please men. Empowerment programs enable women and children to recognize the sources of their low self-esteem and to construct a more positive identity. Robinson and Páramo (2007) refer to this process as cognitive restructuring “which enables the identification and alteration of abuse-distorted thoughts, beliefs and assumptions...by gently challenging abuse-distorted views of oneself and of others, as well as of one’s future and the world.”

Empowerment programs often include leadership training, education, employment skills, and legal support (Crawford and Kaufman, 2008). In addition, some organizations use art therapy as a means of emotional and economic empowerment. For example, FAIR Fund, a nonprofit organization focused on the empowerment of young girls recovering from gender violence, has implemented a program titled JewelGirls in which survivors of sex trafficking make and sell jewelry. These girls report a sense of self-worth in their ability to create something that others want to purchase (FAIR Fund). Many programs have also found when survivors of violence and exploitation assist other survivors in their recovery they develop a larger sense of purpose in their own lives. Mentorships and peer education by those who have experienced similar situations also enable women and children to envision a future without violence and exploitation (Chatterjee et al, 2006; Crawford and Kaufman, 2008; Jayasree, 2004; Ploumen, 2001).

Reintegration

Ultimately, shelters and drop-in centers for individuals recovering from involvement in the sex trade seek to reintegrate their clients into society, preferably in their home communities. However, reintegration is often one of the greatest challenges for individuals because of the stigma attached to the sex trade regardless of how they were involved. Without the support of their families or the possibility of marriage, many women and children require marketable skills to be self-sufficient, a large challenge in economically poor areas. Nonetheless, despite the difficulties inherent in reintegration, many NGOs report that successful strategies include family visits during rehabilitation, gradual reintroduction into the community, job training, and seed money to establish a self-sufficient livelihood (Chatterjee et al, 2006; Crawford and Kaufman, 2008).

Most aid organizations advocate that the recovery process not end once reintegration into society has been achieved. Women and children recovering from the sex trade need consistent and reliable access to counseling, medical care, and training. Most importantly, they continuously need to feel empowered in order to confront the many obstacles they will encounter. In other words, the rehabilitation process should continue far into the future and potentially may never end.
Obstacles Confronting Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programs and Strategies

There are many challenges in developing effective rehabilitation and reintegration programs for women and children recovering from the sex trade. In addition to the complex physical and psychological obstacles confronting survivors, there are several political, economic and institutional obstacles hindering programs designed to assist them.

Lack of Sensitivity to and Understanding of the Sex Trade

The complexities of the sex trade are often reduced to specific concerns such as migration, prostitution, global economics, international politics, or individual cultures. Each of these factors uniquely shapes the sex trade, but in order to understand how and why women and children are incorporated into it, it is imperative to analyze the sex trade holistically.

In every country, many government and law enforcement officials, service providers, and citizens remain insensitive to the challenges and obstacles facing women and children in the sex trade. Their situations are both oversimplified and judged by people who do not understand their complex circumstances. Often, sex trafficking victims are viewed as naïve or stupid. Just as often, sex workers are perceived as immoral and dirty. In order to provide effective rehabilitation and reintegration programs for both sex slaves and sex workers, it is necessary for governmental representatives to understand and empathize better with their situations.

Often, before governments or international organizations provide funding or legal support for sex trafficking survivors, stipulations to testify against their traffickers are required. However, due to threats against themselves and their families as well as humiliation and trauma from their experiences, survivors often refuse to testify. In the end in these scenarios, survivors are denied assistance and are forced to return home without rehabilitation or reintegration assistance (Kara, 2009). Government and international organization policies do not account for external factors that may be influencing survivor’s decisions.

Additionally, many government’s policies attribute incorporation into the sex trade, as sex slaves or sex workers, to lack of economic opportunities. Therefore, educational and skills training is often promoted as the best way to rehabilitate and reintegrate women and children back into society. While economic stability is an important dimension influencing both participation in and rehabilitation from the sex trade, it is by no means the only factor at play. Often, governments, international organizations, and communities overlook the need to address the physical, psychological, and behavioral repercussions of violence and exploitation experienced by
women and children both before and during the sex trade. Nevertheless, the source of and solution to women and children’s involvement in the sex trade continues to be focused on the economy.

Funding

While there are many organizations seeking to help those exploited by the sex trade, there are fewer groups providing rehabilitation and reintegration services for women and children who have been rescued or are fighting to get out of the sex trade. As mentioned above, the majority of organizations and centers providing services to previous sex slaves and sex workers are small, autonomous women’s groups. It is difficult for these organizations to obtain and secure funding for several reasons. First, many of these organizations and centers are unaware of potential funding opportunities. However, when possible funding is located, large grant-making bodies often are not well equipped to deal with small grants requested for grassroots projects (Ploumen, 2001). Also, grants and other forms of donations are rarely given without “extensive applications, audited financial reports, visits to or from the donor” and other requirements that these centers are unable to provide due to time and resource constraints (Kara, 2009). Finally, rehabilitation and reintegration programs are often viewed by donor organizations as risky and politically and socially sensitive (Ploumen, 2001). When governments and international organizations do provide funding for rehabilitation and reintegration programs, it often comes with extensive reporting requirements. Moreover, this type of funding is also highly political and unreliable.

Funding organizations often overlook outreach intervention as an important dimension of rehabilitation strategies. In order to locate victims of sex trafficking and build relationships with sex workers, many service organizations must engage in outreach intervention before rehabilitation and reintegration programs can even begin (Kempadoo and Doezema, 1998). Also, since many women and children return to the sex trade in the midst of rehabilitation or after reintegration, service organizations must continue to reach out to them when their services are needed again (Robinson and Páramo, 2007).

Service Coordination

One of the primary obstacles facing rehabilitation and reintegration strategies is service coordination. Recovery centers rely heavily on governments and international organizations for financial and legal support, for additional financial assistance, public and private facilities for medical and psychological care, and communities for reintegration support. Without strong external support and the services such implies, it is difficult to provide reliable, long-term, and effective care. Additionally, due to the limited resources available to each service provider, dedication and development of personal relationships is difficult to achieve (FAIR Fund).
Long-term Commitments

Rehabilitation and reintegration requires long-term commitments from participants, service providers, and donor organizations. However, with frequent returns/relapse to the sex trade and/or lack of reliable funding, providing long-term care can be challenging (FAIR Fund; Robinson and Páramo, 2007). Also, it is difficult for survivors of the industry to confront their experiences and undertake intense counseling to overcome them. Under these circumstances, service providers and donor organizations are often unable to provide the time and financial resources necessary to achieve successful rehabilitation outcomes.

Outcome Assessment

Similar to many programs and strategies aimed at individual and societal change, evaluation and assessment of the rehabilitation and reintegration of those recovering from the sex trade remain inadequate. Some analyses report the need for more “systematic diagnosis, record keeping, and outcome studies” (Crawford and Kaufman, 2008). Others, however, emphasize the contextual and personal experiences of women and children involved in the sex trade. Thus, these groups advocate for improved assessment of recovery services based on the needs expressed by individuals themselves, arguing that they know better than anyone what they need (Ploumen, 2001).

Resistance to Rehabilitation and Reintegration

Despite the ultimate goal of rehabilitation and reintegration, it is important to recognize the danger to and resistance of women and children who have been incorporated into the sex trade. Returning to their communities may condemn sex trade workers and their families to severe poverty, community rejection, or even death (Kara, 2009). Some who have attempted rehabilitation have encountered facilities were with poor living standards comparable to prison. Women and children often felt stripped of their agency and isolated from their children and/or society. Many also reported accounts of discrimination and prejudice from service providers (Chatterjee et al, 2006; Crawford and Kaufman, 2008; Jayasree, 2004). In addition, sex workers often express feelings of oppression by rehabilitation centers through moral condemnation of their involvement in the sex trade (Jayasree, 2004; Kempadoo and Doezema, 1998). In the end, aid organizations report numerous decisions by both sex slaves and sex workers to reject rehabilitation and reintegration and instead remain in the sex trade (Jayasree, 2004; Robinson and Páramo, 2007). Despite the experiences of violence and exploitation, some women and children view the sex trade as the only means of survival for themselves and their families (Kara, 2009).

Analysis of Rehabilitation and Reintegration Strategies and Recommendations
In the end, the best way to combat the obstacles confronting the rehabilitation and reintegration of sex slaves and sex workers is by consulting the women and children themselves. For example, sex trafficking survivors supported by Shakti Samuha in Nepal perform street theater as a way of interacting with families, communities, and border police in order to raise awareness and challenge societal norms surrounding the sex trade (Ploumen, 2001). Additionally, “there must be constant collaboration with [victims of sex trafficking] and sex workers, in which a space is created to allow them to define their own needs and priorities, to create their own materials and activities, and to make their own demands” (Kempadoo and Doezema, 1998). They must also be involved in the implementation of programs and mentorship of other sex trafficking victims and sex workers (Ploumen, 2001).

Local women’s NGOs that work along side sex slaves and sex workers have the most promising opportunities to engage with the women and children incorporated into the sex trade. These organizations have the capacity to build relationships with individuals and tailor their programs to meet each person’s specific needs. As local organizations, they also know how to navigate political, cultural, and economic challenges surrounding the sex trade in order to change attitudes and shift policies. Moreover, direct funding to local NGOs may break imperialistic relationships between Western countries and the Third World (Ploumen, 2001).

However, while the most successful rehabilitation and reintegration programs are those developed and implemented by local women’s NGOs, the involvement of other interested actors is imperative. Successful recovery must include coordination by governments, international organizations, NGOs, local agencies, surrounding communities, and families (Crawford and Kaufman, 2008). For example, an NGO in Kolkata called Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee found it necessary to build partnerships with local and national governmental organizations such as the Department of Health and social welfare offices and public/private actors such as doctors, lawyers, counselors, and the police force in order to provide a full range of services for women and children in recovery (Gayen, 2006).

By incorporating the involvement of women and children recovering from the sex trade and developing a dedicated network of service providers, long-term commitment to the rehabilitation and reintegration of sex slaves and sex workers is possible. Furthermore, outcome assessment is more attainable with increased personal involvement in the lives of individuals. TAMPEP, the European Network for HIV/STI Prevention and Health Promotion among Migrant Sex Workers\(^\text{13}\) uses a method of outcome assessment based on participation and collaboration with individuals in rehabilitation and reintegration programs. Programs and strategies are examined through a “continuous process of investigation, production of material, implementation,

\(^{13}\) See their website at http://www.tampep.com/
and evaluation” in order to develop recovery strategies tailored to individuals needs (Kempadoo and Doezema, 1998).

Increased involvement and dedication by all actors focused on the recovery of sex slaves and sex workers, can improve program interventions and strategies designed to address the physical, psychological, behavioral, social, and economic needs of those involved in the industry. All organizations working with women and children recovering from the sex trade recommend a variation of the following services: a central location for support; proper health care; psychological care; counseling and therapy; vocational and job training; and literacy education (Crawford and Kaufman, 2008; Farr, 2005; Jayasree, 2004; Kara, 2009; Kempadoo and Doezema, 1998). In addition, the most successful programs have exhibited the following characteristics: maintenance of confidentiality; elimination of stigmatization and discrimination by service providers; and frequent contacts with families (Chatterjee et al, 2006).

Conclusion

The sex trade is a multi-billion dollar industry sustained by consistent demand for sexual services provided by countless women and children suffering from poverty, gender and ethnic discrimination, and social, political and economic instability. It is unclear how many women and children are involved in the sex trade. However, it is clear that sex slaves and sex workers frequently endure violence and exploitation by their clients, employers, pimps, police, and families.

Small, autonomous women’s NGOs have developed successful strategies to help women and children who wish to escape and recover from the sex trade. Rehabilitation and reintegration programs simultaneously address the physical, psychological, behavioral, social, and economic issues encountered by these individuals. All survivors require a central location for support, counseling, education and skills training, medical services, and a supportive community. Programs are best implemented by organizations operating in the same countries as sex slaves and sex workers in order to ensure cultural sensitivity. However, with reliance on numerous external resources, successful recovery programs must also assure service coordination by governments, international organizations, other NGOs, local agencies, surrounding communities, and families.

Several political, economic and institutional obstacles hinder programs designed to assist women and children recovering from the sex trade. Often, a narrow analysis of the industry masks the reasons why women and children became involved in it and therefore makes it more difficult to create strategies by which they may be rehabilitated and reintegrated into society. Governments and international organizations overwhelmingly stipulate very specific conditions for the provision of services. Funding is also highly political and unreliable. Additionally, with the need for service
coordination and long-term commitment by all actors involved, rehabilitation and reintegration programs are difficult to maintain and assess.

Ultimately, the rehabilitation and reintegration of women and children recovering from the sex trade is a long and challenging process. Many women and children rely on assistance to escape and recover from the violence and exploitation they have endured. However, despite their abusive experiences, some women and children view the sex trade as the only means of survival for themselves and their families. Therefore, while the rehabilitation and reintegration of sex slaves and sex workers is imperative, governments, international organizations, and NGOs must also continue to eradicate the violent and exploitive nature of the sex trade itself.
References


