

POSITION PAPER on PROSTITUTION

DEFINITION

In this paper, prostitution is defined as “Buying and selling sex for money, goods or services, either regularly or occasionally”.

BACKGROUND

Prostitution takes many forms and involves all genders. It has a long tradition and is mainly demand-driven. However, buyers are normally missing in definitions and discussions. Predominantly, men are buyers and women are providers of sex. The global economy and the Internet have created new arenas and boosted growth of prostitution.

It is not possible to draw a sharp line between voluntary and forced prostitution. Consenting adults may be involved in prostitution on a voluntary basis. Children cannot consent; they are always vulnerable and must be protected from prostitution. In forced prostitution, persons are exploited by means such as violence, coercion, and abuse of vulnerability.

Prostitution can also be closely linked to trafficking in women. Conflicts between and within countries and unequal social and economic conditions can cause migration of vulnerable human beings. Such migration is often initiated or utilized by international organized crime. Poverty and drug addiction are common among victims who often end up in forced prostitution.

Prostitution is generally recognized as harmful, both for individuals and societies. It is a threat to the health and well-being of human beings, not least through the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Methods to prevent prostitution vary among countries and can be grouped as follows:

- **Criminalization**
 - o of ‘selling sex’ mostly aims to prevent disorder and public nuisance. It is ineffective; it further degrades prostitutes and hampers attempts to address health issues.
 - o of ‘buying sex’, the ‘Nordic model’, has had some success and has held trafficking at bay. It is gaining support in the public opinion of other countries.
- **Decriminalization** of prostitution often aims at ‘containment and control’, safer sex practices and social security for prostitutes. Studies show that the health and well-being of prostitutes fall below those of the general population and decriminalization has proved to facilitate trafficking.

Neither criminalization nor decriminalization has proven to prevent prostitution. Prevention methods require more research and follow-up and the results achieved so far clearly indicate that the current legislation is not sufficient.

References:

- www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/hiv aids/English/HIV-2012-SexWorkAndLaw.pdf
- www.government.nl/documents-and-publications/reports/2015/06/01/prostitution-in-the-netherlands-in-2014.html
- www.aic.gov.au/publications/current%20series/tandi/461-480/tandi464.html
- www.regeringen.se/contentassets/2ff955c847ed4278918f111ccca880dd/forbud-mot-kop-av-sexuell-tjanst-en-utvardering-1999-2008-sou-201049 (pages 29-44)
- www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/lang--en/index.htm

POSITION STATEMENT

Zonta International is an organization pledged to empower women at the global and local levels, and to promote justice and universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Zonta International calls on governments to

- address prostitution and related issues from a human rights perspective. Women are not commodities; they are human beings and have rights to dignity and equality.
- protect children (every human being below the age of eighteen) from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, as detailed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 34, and the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography
- take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of trafficking in women (within or across borders) and exploitation of prostitution of women, in accordance with the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, CEDAW, Article 6, and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, CETs 197, and the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention).

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