

Chapter 9

Victims of Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation: A Video Documentary to Analyze Measures of Prevention and Institutional Interventions

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter shows the production of a video documentary, realized to deepen the knowledge about actual interventions to assist the victims of a particular crime of international interest, namely the trafficking of women for purposes of sexual exploitation. The video documentary has been made in Italy and especially through a restricted area in the North of the Country, Emilia-Romagna region, where particularly widespread are the phenomenon and the heterogeneity of interventions brought against. The dynamics of trafficking and exploitation are described as well as the legislation on them and the interventions brought about in order to give the victims the chance to redeem from the condition of sexual exploitation. This part is accompanied with the step-by-step explanation of how the video documentary has been made. The relevant objective is to define the modalities used to set up the video, in order to examine part of the actual interventions aimed to defend the victims, and to underline how it represents a useful effective document for teaching the dynamics associated with this particular kind of crime.

INTRODUCTION

The practices of trafficking in human beings are still existing in the world, even though they evoke distant ages, and they involve different cultures in several parts of the world.

Actually at present, the discussion on women trade for sexual exploitation purpose is inevitably linked to other three subjects: migrations, prostitution, victims. The three themes are strictly associated with each other, suffice it to say that most part of the prostitutes in Italy are foreigners. On the other hand more difficult is to decide how many of them are really victims of human trafficking. If

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we speak about trafficking in human beings (for sexual exploitation purposes or others) we of course speak about a crime and, as anticipated, about victims.

Essential is to concentrate our attention on the victim experiencing a series of impositions and abuses; in the specific case, the trafficking of women for purposes of sexual exploitation leads women to be victims both physically and psychologically. In fact the woman becomes the victim of sexual violence, sometimes kidnapping and, not less important, victim of threats and impositions to force her to sell her body.

Moreover we have to consider that, in the phenomenon of trafficking, pimps take advantage from the victim's social cultural condition, depending on its country of origin, in the most deceitful way; in most cases the intermediaries in the trade, or even the promoters, are people belonging to the same ethnic group as the victim.

Women almost never succeed in throwing by themselves off their pimps, being strictly watched, with minimum chances of escape which often they cannot take since they live under constant threat.

How is a woman victim of sexual trafficking and exploitation helped and assisted? What are the answers to meet her needs?

This is the starting point of the present work.

HISTORICAL NOTES

First of all it is necessary to introduce the subject by some historic examples, in order to stress the persistence and recurring of the problem, changing in shape according to different periods.

Since ancient times women (and not only) have been sold for purposes of sexual exploitation.

In the Middle Ages, in certain areas of France, the rampant poverty produced a multiplication of women "on sale" on the street, as it happens also today in less developed countries or encountering greater economic difficulties. Then existed

houses built and governed by public authorities where girls could prostitute themselves paying a rent to the abbess.

In the medieval period prostitution started towards the 17th year of age, even if in some cases before the 15th. The sexual exploitation of the woman was often preceded by rape; a victim of such a violence had many problems in reintegrating in society and in her family because if married, at times she was abandoned by her husband, if unmarried then her possibilities to get married were very much little. At this point the situation of the woman was exploited by some individuals (as brothel-keepers) who gave her housing persuading her to sell her body to pay debts.

This pattern was used also with foreign girls, coming from poor lands or regions devastated by wars.

At the early 16th century, the level of immigrants increased so much that it saturated urban areas; farmers moved towards the towns, unsatisfied with the inequality between their income and the local one.

The Authorities tried to obstruct the arrival of new citizens by granting benefits to those who had been living in the urban area for long time, in order to spread a common sense of mistrust towards foreigners.

The number of women on the street and without a home increased; The Refuge of Penitent Girls (Refuge des Pénitentes de Paris) was then founded in Paris. The access to such a structured place was bound to give evidence of an 'immoral' past, and thus a lot of poor girls approached prostitution to be allowed to enter the shelter and several poor families forced their daughters to prostitute themselves.

Another example is represented by the Sing Song Girls, whose traffic probably started towards the middle of 19th century. Very young Chinese women who were 'recruited' in their countries, kidnapped from the street, or even sold by their parents who ignored the real destiny waiting for them. The girls were then brought to United States

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