

Short Report on Trafficking in Women from Ukraine Research Project

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Introduction

Ukraine is a major sending country for women trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation throughout the world. The trafficking and exploitation is highly profitable, with relatively low risks for the traffickers and pimps in sex industries. The combination of high profit and low risk has attracted many criminals who operate in networks of varying size. The transnational trafficking in women for the purpose of sexual exploitation is based on supply and demand from sending and receiving countries. Countries with large sex industries create the demand and are the receiving countries, while countries where traffickers easily recruit women are the sending countries. Poverty, unemployment, inflation, and lack of a promising future are compelling factors that facilitate the ease with which traffickers recruit women.

The goal of this joint research project on trafficking in women was to characterize the victims and trafficking networks operating in Ukraine. This research was carried out in full cooperation with Tatyana Denisova, Zaporozhye State University.

This short report will focus on two subprojects of the overall research project: First, the construction of a research project Web site entitled "Trafficking in Women from Ukraine." Second, the recruitment of women to go abroad, including the construction of a database of women recruited in Ukraine by online marriage agencies.

Design and Construction of the Web Site "Trafficking in Women from Ukraine Research Project"

The goal of the "Trafficking in Women from Ukraine Research Project" Web site is to provide useful information to researchers, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), government officials, and students on the ongoing research project and the situation of trafficking in women from Ukraine. The Web site also publicizes the work of the research project and partnership.

The Web address of the site is <http://www.uri.edu/artsci/wms/hughes/ukraine/> (See Figure 1).

To date, the site has 85 pages. They include an overview of the U.S.-Ukrainian Research Partnership Project and information specific to trafficking of women from Ukraine. Most of the non-governmental, research, and media reports are in English and Russian. (Translation was done by Kate Zuzina, Rule of Law Foundation, Kiev.)

Russian was the language chosen for the translations to make the information available to a wider audience, including researchers, officials, and NGO personnel from other former Soviet Union countries. For example, the Angel Coalition, an anti-trafficking organization with members throughout the countries of the former Soviet Union, is able to use the information posted there. Many of the reports posted on the Web site include information on women from other former Soviet countries. Also, Ukrainian women are frequently trafficked to and through these countries, so it is important to reach a broad base of users.

Figure 1

Home Page of “Trafficking in Women from Ukraine Research Project” Web Site



The site includes links to the research partners' institutions affiliated with this project – The University of Rhode Island, Zaporozhye State University, and the National Institute of Justice. There are 40 media stories about trafficking in women from Ukraine that mention destination countries where Ukrainian women have been found in conditions of sexual slavery or exploitation (Bosnia, Turkey, Israel, Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Greece, Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, Italy, Great Britain, and the United States). Research publications from NGOs and U.S. and Ukrainian government sources are included. In May 2000, Tatyana Denisova and her colleagues organized a Roundtable at Zaporozhye State University entitled “International Roundtable on Combating Trafficking in Women and Children with the Purpose of Their Sexual Exploitation and Involvement in the Sex Industry.” The conference program and resolution are listed on the Web site. Also, there are links to other Web sites with information on trafficking in women from Ukraine.

The site has publications resulting from our research on trafficking in women from Ukraine. The information on this Web site will be updated as more information becomes available and papers and reports are published from the research project.

Recruitment of Ukrainian Women For Marriage Abroad

Determining the number of Ukrainian women who have been trafficked or exploited in sex industries abroad has been difficult and controversial. Several figures, ranging from 10,000s to 100,000s have been given as estimates. In fact, no one really knows how many women have been trafficked from Ukraine. There have been many documented cases (see Trafficking in Women from Ukraine Web site) of Ukrainian women being rescued from slave-like conditions in brothels in all major regions of the world. The clandestine and illegal nature of trafficking of

women in Ukraine and destination countries makes the precise determination of the numbers impossible, at this time.

In an attempt to understand how many Ukrainian women are being recruited to go abroad, and determine the sending regions of Ukraine, we turned to a very public forum for recruitment and advertisement of women who wish to go abroad-the “mail-order-bride” sites on the Internet. Some women’s NGOs consider the “mail-order-bride” business to be a type of trafficking. Others accept the surface claim that they are “introduction agencies,” which bring together Western men and women seeking Western marriage partners.

Whether “marriage agencies” are involved in trafficking in women and children for sexual exploitation in sex industries abroad is not known. There are known cases of women being sexually exploited, raped, and beaten by the men they married or intended to marry. In at least one case, the man posted pornographic images of the woman on the Internet. In Russia, NGOs have determined that the same “tour,” “employment” and “modeling” agencies that traffic women also run “marriage agencies.” In this case, it is easy to see that once a woman expresses an interest in going abroad, she may be recruited to go abroad for “employment,” instead of marriage, only to end up in the sex industry.

Although the exact nature and operation of “marriage agencies,” is not known, they do provide an excellent source of information on the countries, cities and towns from which women are being recruited. Most “marriage agency” Web sites list not only the country, but also the hometown of the woman. Using this information, a database of Web sites, agencies and hometown of women was constructed for women from countries of the former Soviet Union. To date, 177 English language marriage agency Web sites totaling more than 100,000 women have been indexed in the database.

Almost 90 percent of the women on these sites are from the Russian Federation, Ukraine, and Belarus (See Table 1).

Table 1

Number of Women Recruited by Marriage Agencies from Countries of Former Soviet Union

Armenia	32
Azerbaijan	203
Belarus	12,411
Estonia	532
Georgia	5
Kazakhstan	2473
Kyrgyzstan	3875
Latvia	1750
Lithuania	624
Moldova	719
Russian Federation	52,493
Tajikistan	8
Turkmenistan	25
Ukraine	28,686
Uzbekistan	1,058

Ukraine ranks second, after the Russian Federation, in the number of women who have been recruited by marriage agencies.

The hometowns of the women listed on the Web sites were counted according to oblast to determine the number of women being recruited in each oblast in Ukraine (See Table 2).

There are large differences among oblasts in the number of women who have been recruited, ranging from just a few in oblasts in Western Ukraine to thousands, in several, and over 5000 in the Crimea. Generally, the highest numbers of women recruited by marriage agencies are in oblasts on the Black Sea-Crimea and Odessa- or in oblasts with cities with high populations, such as the capital Kiev, Kharkiv, and Dnipropetrovsk (See Figure 2).

Advertisements on the some of the “marriage agency” Web sites indicate that they have connections to sex industries abroad, and some sites offer nude photographs and videos of the women. On several of the sites, girls as young as 10, 14 and 16, are advertised.

Table 2

Number of Women Recruited by Marriage Agencies in Ukraine, by Oblast

Cherkas'ka	144
Chernivhivs'ka	32
Chernivitsi	29
Dnipropetrovsk	2465
Donetsk	501
Ivano-Frankivsk	10
Kharkivs'ka	1181
Khersons'ka	1047
Khmelnys'ka	26
Kiev	2550
Kirovohrads'ka	10
Luhans'ka	264
L'viv	40
Mykolayiv	494
Odessa	3115
Poltava	166
Respublika Krym	5018
Rivnens'ka	2
Sums'ka	1993
Ternopil'	12
Vinnytsya	440
Volyns'ka	19
Zakarpats'ka	14

Zaporizhzhya	484
Zhytomyr	103
Unknown	8466

The relative ranking of the oblasts for recruitment of women for “marriage agencies,” is in agreement with the findings by Tatyana Denisova on the regions with the highest rate of women and children being trafficked abroad and the high percentage of young women stating that they are eager to go abroad, even when they don’t have appropriate language skills or professional training.

Figure 2

Number of Women Recruited by Marriage Agencies from Ukraine, by Oblast



Further analysis is underway to determine the city and oblast location of “marriage agencies,” and their connections to larger agencies in other countries, such as Russia and Belarus and the receiving countries, such as U.S. and Western Europe. Tatyana Denisova and her colleagues are researching these agencies to determine the nature of their operation, and their possible involvement in the trafficking of women for sex industries abroad.

Joint publications of the findings from the “Trafficking in Women from Ukraine” research project are anticipated in the near future.