

A Step-by-Step Pathway: Rescuing Women from Modern Day Slavery

Spain 1980 – Ongoing

Rescuing Women from Modern Day Slavery: an urgent need in today's Europe

Summary

Rescuing Women from Modern Day Slavery is a comprehensive step-by-step pathway to release women victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation from their situation of violence and associated poverty and to enable their full integration in society and in the labour market. The steps include: identifying the women; supporting them into safe spaces; providing pre-employment supports to them; and enabling them to take up training and employment possibilities. The promoter of the initiative, ARAMP Association for the Prevention, Reintegration and Care of Prostituted Women (*Asociación para la Prevención, Reinserción y Atención a la Mujer Prostituida*), is an NGO with 25 years of expertise in supporting women and girls who are victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation in Spain.

Victims of human trafficking face particular barriers in seeking to move out of poverty. These include the psychological and emotional consequences of sexual exploitation that remain for a long time after their release, economic dependence on the procurers, lack of awareness of their situation where, as a psychological defence, they can even end up accepting and regarding it as “normal”, the intersections of being women and irregular migrants, and stigma from society that perpetuates their isolation and vulnerability.

These women have to first be liberated from the violence of sexual exploitation in order to address their poverty. Their poverty includes and goes beyond this violence to encompass low self-esteem and stigma, lack of family or social links, lack of Spanish, low education levels, distance from the formal labour market, and irregular legal status.

More than 500 women are released from sexual exploitation every year. More than 700 women receive economic, social, training and employment support annually. Their employability is enhanced and economic independence becomes possible. The participation of women who have escaped human trafficking as volunteers has contributed to the success of the initiative.

The initiative involves strong networking collaboration with public sector bodies, such as the police, judicial system, healthcare and social services, and with other NGOs. It contributes to the further development of these services.

An NGO action in line with current policy responses

The “Palermo Protocol”¹ and several guidelines and recommendations of the United Nations set the context at a global level for the fight against human trafficking. The “EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings 2012–2016”, and the “Directive 2011/36/EU, on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims” offer a comprehensive and integrated approach to the issue at a European level. They focus on law enforcement and on prevention of the crime and ensuring that victims of human trafficking are given an opportunity to recover and to reintegrate into society.

In Spain, the “Plan to fight against human trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and girls” (September 2015) provides a context that includes activities to raise awareness and promote cooperation with countries of origin through diplomatic bodies. It provides for psychological and social rehabilitation of

¹ The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children. It is one of the three protocols adopted by the United Nations to supplement the 2000 Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (the Palermo Convention).

victims of human trafficking and employment pathways for them. It reinforces police strategies to fight against the criminal networks involved and improves institutional coordination. It includes the development of research and studies to improve knowledge about and understanding of the problem.

APRAMP is a Spanish NGO with 25 years of experience in supporting women and girls who are victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. ARAMP works in line with this broad policy context and implements this initiative of a step-by-step pathway to rescue women from modern day slavery.

About 40,000-50,000 people in Spain are victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation

About 40,000-50,000 people in Spain are victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation purposes, according to estimates by the Ministry of Home Affairs. This data reflects just a portion of the overall problem. Women and girls are more susceptible to trafficking and to experiencing more negative consequences due to the abuse and the stigma they endure. The gender specific nature of this issue can be seen where the percentage of women among these victims is around 95%.

Human trafficking networks deceive women and girls in their countries of origin, such as Morocco, Sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Europe and Latin America, by promising them a job in Spain as an escape from poverty. The victims then face pressure, including psychological pressure, and threats, including threats of violence to themselves and their families at home that erode their self-determination and build a virtual gaol to incarcerate them. This is compounded by their lack of legal status as migrants, the exorbitant debts that have to be paid back, their isolation from society and educational, cultural and language barriers.



Poverty in their country of origin has rendered these women and girls susceptible to this gender based violence. Gender based violence in turn has trapped these women and girls in situations of criminal exploitation and poverty on arrival in Spain. It is necessary to liberate these women and girls from this violence in order to address their poverty. This poverty includes and goes beyond this violence to encompass low self-esteem and stigma associated with prostitution, lack of family or social links, lack of Spanish, low education levels, distance from the formal labour market, and irregular legal status, in spite of the fact that victims of sexual exploitation are entitled to asylum under Spanish legislation. The women and girls face particular vulnerability in lacking economic independence in a context of sexism and violence.

There are particular barriers faced by women and girls who are victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation that need to be addressed if they are also to escape from poverty. They are subject to:

- Psychological and emotional consequences of sexual exploitation that are long-term
- Economic dependence on the procurers
- Lack of awareness of their situation where, as a psychological defence, they can even end up accepting and regarding it as “normal”
- The intersections of being women and irregular migrants
- Stigma from society that perpetuates their isolation and vulnerability.

The step-by-step pathway initiative

The initiative is organised across several stages of a pathway to release women who have been trafficked for sexual exploitation from this violence and from the poverty that accompanies and is exacerbated by it. It seeks to integrate them into society as free people with dignity and social inclusion.

The first step is the identification of the victims. This is done by a Mobile Rescue Unit that covers areas where the women are likely to be found. It involves collaboration with the police, judicial bodies and other NGOs. An emergency 24-hour phone line is made available. The various supports required by the women such as police and judicial support to escape from trafficking networks and violence, and legal support to access a legal migrant status are coordinated.

The second step takes the women out of their high-risk situation. A network of sheltered housing is available. Psychological rehabilitation and emotional assistance is provided.

The third step is the provision of pre-employment support for the women. This includes training in such as digital literacy, job seeking skills, Spanish language, and some vocational training. Employment possibilities and access to economic benefits offering an alternative to exploitation are explored during this step.

Women supported by APRAMP work in the textile sector. Source: El PAÍS



The next step is called the Integral Assistance Programme. It involves proposing training and employment alternatives to the women, once they are ready for them. This training and employment proposal lasts usually for one year. It requires a commitment to actively participate in the Individual social and labour insertion project. Insertion in the labour market and inclusion in society are both promoted, enabling the economic independence and the empowerment of the women.

The initiative depends on the valuable collaboration of women who have been victims in the past and now work as volunteers with the initiative. The experience of these women is crucial in finding and identifying victims of human trafficking, as well in providing an empathic approach throughout the pathway.

Working together against modern slavery in lifting victims out of poverty

The initiative invests in strengthening networks and collaboration with existing resources in the public sector such as the police, judicial system, healthcare and social services, and with other NGOs. These organisations and services are essential to securing the pathway from sexual exploitation and poverty to social inclusion and labour market insertion.

This collaboration includes knowledge sharing with other professionals involved in the response to the problems. It seeks to promote a common understanding of human trafficking for sexual exploitation. In this way the initiative contributes to the development of institutional capacity, which is an important and long-term impact. In 2014 Specific Guides were published by the initiative for the intervention of healthcare professionals, journalists and police in relation to this issue.

More than 500 women freed from sexual exploitation and entered on a pathway out of poverty

The initiative supports more than 500 women every year out of sexual exploitation and violence. More than 700 women are supported annually on pathways towards social inclusion and labour market insertion. In 2014, for example:

- The “Mobile Rescue Unit” entered 287 places where victims of human trafficking could be found, with an ongoing intervention in 229 of them - 22 closed spaces, such as clubs; 12 open spaces, such as streets; and 195 hidden spaces, such as flats.
- The emergency 24-hour phone line responded to 1,485 phone calls.
- 3,867 women received initial information and guidance.
- 1,284 women were registered in the various services.
- 703 women participated in pre-labour training such as digital literacy or job seeking skills.
- 336 women participated in specific training such as textile, handcraft and care of older people.
- 351 women received social and labour guidance and support.

APRAMP, the project promoter, has received numerous awards and recognitions including: the Human Rights Award 2015 from the Association for Human Rights, Spain; the Golden Cross for Social Solidarity 2013 from the Spanish Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality; the Cross for Police Merit with White Distinction 2013 from the Ministry for Home Affairs, as proposed by DG Police; the Diploma from the Guardia Civil (police forces) 2013 for its coordinated work that has resulted in benefits for citizenship; and the Human Rights Award 2011 from the French Republic: Libert , Egalit , Fraternit .

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Further information:

Additional materials available (in Spanish; the written titles are translations from Spanish):

Short film "Isabella" (2013), available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0jXBE-QYlo>.

Documentary film "New girls 24 hours": <http://www.proyecto-chicas-nuevas-24horas.com/videos/>

Conference/conversation "Prostituted women. Against human trafficking and trade with human beings". Rocío Nieto dialogue with Marta Gómez Casas (<https://vimeo.com/123321001>).

Guide of Intervention for Victims of Human Trafficking for Media professionals: <http://apramp.org/download/guia-de-intervencion-con-victimas-de-trata-para-profesionales-de-los-medios-de-comunicacion/>

Guide of Intervention for Victims of Human Trafficking for Police professionals: <http://apramp.org/download/guia-de-intervencion-con-victimas-de-trata-para-profesionales-de-la-seguridad-del-estado-3/>

Guide of Intervention for Victims of Human Trafficking for Healthcare Sector professionals: <http://apramp.org/download/guia-de-intervencion-con-victimas-de-trata-para-profesionales-de-la-salud/>

Guide of Intervention for Victims of Human Trafficking for local councils and Social Services professionals: <http://apramp.org/download/guia-de-intervencion-con-victimas-de-trata-para-ayuntamientos-y-trabajadores-sociales/>

Publication: "Sexual slaves in Spain. Human trafficking of Paraguayan women and girls. Proposals for effective international cooperation": http://apramp.org/download/dosier_esclavas_sexuales_ninas_paraguayas/

Publication: "Basic guide for the identification, referral and protection of victims of human trafficking aimed at exploitation": http://apramp.org/download/guia_basica_identificacion/

Publication: "Human trafficking aimed at sexual exploitation": <http://apramp.org/download/la-trata-con-fines-de-explotacion-sexual/>

Publication: "Prostitution. Keys for reflection on a problem": <http://apramp.org/download/la-prostitucion-claves-para-reflexionar-sobre-un-problema/>