

# Target Group: Clients

## POSSIBILITIES OF ADDRESSING CLIENTS OF PROSTITUTES

Summary of three modules in the context of the project  
“Trafficking in Women and Addressing Clients of  
Prostitutes – Background Research and Draft of a  
Concept for Addressing and Sensitising Clients”



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The summary “Target Group: Clients. Possibilities of Addressing Clients of Prostitutes” is based on three modules within the framework of the project “Trafficking in Women and Addressing Clients of Prostitutes – Background Research and Draft of a Concept for Addressing and Sensitising Clients”.

The first module – “Evaluation of Implemented Approaches and Campaigns Targeting Clients of Prostitutes against the Background of Trafficking in Women” – was written by Christiane Howe, Qualified Sociologist.

Harriet Langanke, Journalist, is the author of the second module – “Internet, Clients of Prostitutes and Trafficking in Women. Research into the question as to whether and how clients can be addressed and sensitised via the Internet towards the topic of trafficking in women.”

The third module – “Concrete Possibilities of Addressing Clients via the Internet. Experiences with ‘clients’ fora’ and ‘client chats’ as well as with the presence of the topic of trafficking in women and prostitution in non-specific fora and chat rooms” – was written by Reinhold Munding, Educationalist and Sex Therapist. All three modules can be obtained through the Sector Project against Trafficking in Women.

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## 0. INTRODUCTION

Trafficking in women for the purpose of prostitution is a complex phenomena that is determined by several factors: By the living conditions of the women in their home countries, by their often too optimistic concepts of their possibilities and by legal regulations and working conditions in the destination country. Equal attention should be given to the factors that concern the demand side.

The women concerned are nearly always exploited in the shadow economies of the destination countries, sometimes through coercion or under the treat of violence; they themselves can hardly stand up for their rights or claim appropriate support.

Different approaches are conceivable in order to counteract this form of human rights violation. One approach to reduce the extent of trafficking in women and to relieve its consequences for the victims targets the demand side. Whether and how this is possible through information, sensitisation or cooperation with clients, forms the backdrop to this documentation.

Clients enter into the focus of social science research only slowly, and mostly in connection with specific ... e.g. health instruction. Until the beginning of 2004, little information was available on clients of prostitutes, how to reach them and how to address them. In order to close this gap the Sector Project against Trafficking in Women, which has been implemented through the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, jointly with the German Federal Ministry for Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ), has commissioned three specific reports on background information compiled in three modules:

The reports followed three different approaches:

- Module 1 researched and commented on projects for the target group clients that have been implemented so far (in Germany as well as in Switzerland);
- Module 2 shows the basic possibilities that the Internet offers in addressing clients (German clients);
- Module 3 puts to the test some concrete empirical forms of addressing clients via the Internet (on homepages that are hosted by German providers).

Christiane Howe, Sociologist from Frankfurt/Main, has written Module 1. Module 2 originates from Cologne Journalist Harriet Langanke, and Module 3 has been composed by Reinhold Munding, Educationalist and Sex Therapist from Oer-Erkenschwick, Germany.

The aim of all three reports was to investigate whether and how the different approaches can be used to address and sensitise clients of prostitutes for the topic of trafficking in women.

The documentation in hand summarises the results of the studies in three segments: First, it presents all those projects targeting clients that have already been put into practice in the chosen countries. The second part gives an overview of the options for addressing clients that the Internet offers, and the third part combines the recommendations of the authors.

# 1. IMPLEMENTED PROJECTS FOR THE CLIENTS' TARGET GROUP

Until now (spring 2005) only few approaches and projects addressing clients have been implemented in Germany. For this documentation five different approaches, which have been put into practice by summer 2004, could be determined and analysed. Four of those projects originate in the HIV and STD<sup>1</sup> prevention (one of them from Switzerland), one project dealt specifically with the topic of trafficking in women.

## 1.1 Terres-des-Femmes Campaign "Men are setting examples"

The concept of the campaign "Men are setting examples" by Terres des Femmes has been implemented in Baden-Württemberg and in Hamburg in 1999 and 2000. Its predominant aim was to fight trafficking in women. In developing it further, an independent "male campaign" emerged, aiming to sensitise clients of prostitutes with regard to the topic of trafficking in women. Apart from that, the campaign intended to motivate clients to call only on those women who choose to work as a prostitute without being coerced to do so.

The campaign consisted of several components and comprised:

- Posters in the two of the Federal States of Germany: Baden-Württemberg and Hamburg;
- advertisements in those sections of newspapers where prostitutes offer their services promoting a hotline for men as well as a counselling hotline for affected women;
- information brochures and flyers;
- offering information through the Internet;
- the patronage of a prominent TV-presenter as well as
- accompanying press and media work.

The campaigns were running for one week (in Hamburg) and three weeks (in Baden-Württemberg). Defined target group was the total of the male population.

On the one hand, the campaign conveyed information on the fact that trafficking in women is a violation of human rights. For this the organisers put together a list of indications that could alert clients to being witness to trafficking (e.g. traces of abuse; cutting down the freedom of movement of women by taking away their passports; testimonials of the women stating that they do not prostitute themselves of their own accord).

On the other hand, the campaign appealed to clients (and men in general) to declare their solidarity with the affected women. It demanded of the men a sense of responsibility and corresponding courage to stand up for their beliefs, and stated that only a business relationship with equal rights between prostitute and client could lead to a satisfying and enjoyable service.

The persons involved marked the response to the campaign as positive:

- The response in the media was good and reached a wider circle than just the involved two Federal States of Germany: Baden-Württemberg and Hamburg.
- The phone hotline in Baden-Württemberg was used about 100 times within three weeks; in Hamburg the number was dialled 50 times within a week.

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<sup>1</sup> STD: sexually transmitted diseases

- Most of the callers were described as interested and approving of the cause. Many demonstrated compassion for the victims of coerced prostitution and trafficking.

According to these findings it would generally seem possible to reach and sensitise clients through such a campaign. However, a point of criticism was the lack of sustainability of the short-term project. Apart from that, it remained unclear as to whether clients within the framework of the campaign were indeed being motivated to behave in a desired way.<sup>2</sup> Since it is easy to misjudge a situation as to which degree a woman works as a prostitute out of her own motivation or whether she is in fact a victim of trafficking.

## 1.2 The Swiss Project “Don Juan”

“Don Juan” is a health-related HIV/AIDS prevention project, implemented by Swiss AIDS Federation and addressing clients directly since 1999.

Within the context of the project qualified personnel of the AIDS federation (“educators”) address potential clients of prostitutes directly, in a so-called face-to-face client outreach education. In cooperation with local authorities suitable venues near hostess bars and nightclubs were identified, and the prostitutes working there received information about the campaign beforehand.

Until the end of 2003, more than 20 of those campaigns were carried out in various Swiss towns; several thousand clients were addressed, mainly in the public arena, i.e. on the street. The in-depth evaluation of the project shows inter alia that the qualification of the educators plays a vital role for the success of the campaign.

The educators use a tent as actual basis and centre of attention for their work in the public arena; it is erected near the prostitution areas. Conversations with clients, however, are mostly conducted directly on the street. In the course of their work the educators give away information materials (brochures about HIV etc.) and promotional gifts (e.g. condoms or matches).

About half of the clients took up the offer of a conversation about prevention and safer sex. Prostitutes and other suppliers (e.g. club owners) felt mostly not disturbed in their business through the campaign.

Overall, the personal conversations revealed many insecurities and a great need for information around the topic of prostitution. The campaign is viewed as successful because it supports motivated clients in their health-conscious behaviour and at least reminds the less motivated ones of the safer sex recommendations. Most clients were generally open to discuss prostitution in more aspects than just HIV and STD and also had, for example, questions around the issue of trafficking in women.

## 1.3 The Berlin Campaign “Walking Condoms”

The Berlin “Working Group Healthy Client” consists of the Public Health Department Berlin-Charlottenburg, the Federal Association of Sexual Services, the agency HighLights, the prostitute project Hydra as well as some prostitutes. The working group has developed campaigns that aim at motivating clients to naturally use condoms when having sex with prostitutes and to behave in a respectful way towards women working in prostitution. For the campaign “Walking Condoms” they developed several condom costumes covering the whole

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<sup>2</sup> Undesired behaviour demonstrated for example some clients through inappropriate rescue actions, desired behaviour on the other hand would be to involve experts.

body, each of which are worn by one person (“walking condoms”). In public areas, especially in areas where you find many men and thus also clients (e.g. at exhibitions and fairs), these walking condoms – or the accompanying specialist staff – make contact with men as well as women. During their interactions they give out information brochures (e.g. a list with “Golden Behaviour Rules for Clients”) and condoms. Priority in their conversations take the issues of the use of condoms and the behaviour of men.

The campaigns are described as very successful; the walking condoms drew attention to the topic and were used as a funny reason to enter into a conversation. Some of the men addressed have indicated that they are clients.

#### **1.4 The Jingle Project, Nuremberg**

Since April 2004, business cards sporting the question “Taboo-free?” have been promoting a hotline set up by the STD-counselling service of the Nuremberg Public Health Department, addressing clients of prostitutes. If you dial this number a so-called jingle starts up, that is a prefabricated acoustic statement, which has been developed in cooperation with the prostitute project *Kassandra*. The jingle comprises the conversation of a prostitute with a client, addressing the issue of using a condom. It also informs about the existing STD service and reminds the listener that apart from being more expensive unprotected intercourse can be risky. The phone number is promoted through the business cards that prostitutes hand out to their clients. In addition, classified advertisements with the phone number are placed between advertisements from prostitutes in the daily newspapers and in a regional Internet contact magazine.

Within six months the jingle was listened to about 1,200 times; this is seen as a success by the organisers, motivating them to continue the campaign and to develop another jingle in Turkish. Some other towns and cities are considering using the jingle that has meanwhile been awarded with a prize.

#### **1.5 Further Projects**

Within the context of their street work German projects for prostitutes address selectively clients; background for this are generally sexual health issues. The other way around, some clients also take the initiative of actively contacting projects for prostitutes known to them when they need information – e.g. about correctly managed establishments – or also about help – e.g. in case they suspect the use of coercion with regard to women they know.

Cross-border projects for prostitutes have experience with addressing clients too. The Saxon/Czech project *Karo* for example has established a monthly table reserved for regular sex tourists and offers the opportunity to take up contact anonymously through a street mobile.

## 2 ADDRESSING CLIENTS VIA THE INTERNET

Other parts of the study examined to what extent the Internet can serve as a platform for measures sensitising clients to the issue of trafficking in women and informing them about the circumstances in which women and men in prostitution live and work. The present documentation summarises the results of both parts of the study.

### 2.1 Basics

#### 2.1.1 Prostitution and the Internet – Figures, Data and Structures

The Internet is a particularly dynamic medium with platforms changing within short period of time. The results ascertained for this study originate from the period between May and August 2004 as well as January 2005.

Even though the content of the Internet often presents itself as rather unstructured, some structures could be determined on the part of the adult<sup>3</sup> suppliers in Germany. Different groups have joined up: Groups of webmasters, associations, agencies, disseminators, clients' fora.

The Internet plays an important role not only within the segment of the occasional prostitution in the public (e.g. in the red-light districts) or non-public areas (e.g. private chats). Also for the traditional prostitution in brothels, clubs and e.g. in flats (half-public and non-public area), the Internet represents an increasingly important additive to the print marketing (posters, pages in catalogues) for making contacts.

Besides, clients use the Internet to clearly enlist sexual services (searching for real life contacts per Internet, making contacts with the intention of buying sexual services). Moreover, the Internet serves as medium for clients to communicate among themselves about the topic of sex and prostitution and to present themselves (fora, chats<sup>4</sup>).

So far no detailed data is available on the importance of the topic of prostitution and clients in the (German) Internet; therefore the present data had to be concluded from data of market research and suppliers, from projections as well as from the author's own plausibility reflections. An extremely conservative calculation would result in about two million users per month, who engage in the German part of the World Wide Web with clearly prostitution relevant interests. In an equally conservative assessment, the number of users who more or less regularly attend so-called clients' fora is estimated at a minimum of 100,000.

Clients' fora are websites of suppliers, editors and presenters (webmasters) who specifically address clients to provide them with information but also to enable them to communicate among each other. Traditional clients' fora are set up according to the community principle, i.e. they are operated by clients for clients.

In clients' fora users can address the community of clients or the Webmaster with certain questions (e.g. "where in Munich would I find a petite Thai?") or topics (e.g. "why are there no Japanese prostitutes working in Düsseldorf?"). Access to the websites is partly regulated,

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<sup>3</sup> The adult section is the segment of the Internet reserved for adults only (in particular erotics, pornography etc.)

<sup>4</sup> Chats are communication platforms in the Internet where the participants can 'talk' via text keyboard more or less in real time; a forum is a similar communication platform where the contributions, however, can be accessed for a longer period of time as they are stored in archives according to topics and are accessible for all users of the forum.



users have to register as members<sup>5</sup>, pass an age control and/or pay money. Next to community fora there are also clients' fora operated by purely commercial suppliers.

Clients searching the Internet for sexual services are usually fast and accurately – inter alia through specific erotic search engines – put through to the relevant portals. A further means of establishing contact are platforms that either in the form of catalogues unmistakably promote sexual services or offer prostitution in a more concealed way (e.g. in chats). Through the catalogues a multitude of prostitutes openly offer their various services; usually those catalogues are structured according to regions.

### **2.1.2. Clients on the Internet**

Experiences with a German Internet portal around sexual health issues<sup>6</sup> that was developed specifically for clients demonstrate that clients indeed can be reached through the Internet. The possibility to surf the Internet relatively discretely, in an efficient and economical way, with a low psychological threshold, has fostered a decided self-image of clients as “clients”. They meet up in specific clients' fora, communicate with each other, exchange information about their “hobby” and document their competence.

Before the Internet became accessible as a medium clients only rarely had the opportunity to present themselves with their interests, which on the one hand are very expensive and on the other hand are not regarded in a positive light by our society (“there you have an excessively expensive hobby and are not even allowed to talk about it...”).

Concerning the presence of clients in specific Internet platforms (clients' fora) experts speak of a change of paradigm with regard to the identity (clients are experts for their “hobby”) and accessibility of clients (clients' fora in the Internet): The confidence of clients increases, they do not view themselves any longer as scattered individuals that meet by chance in clubs or bars. They know that they share their preferences with others and can pass their expertise on to interested people. They can as much own up to their insecurities (e.g. “how do I behave in the red-light district?”) as boasting about their performances (e.g. as “power-pricker”).

Within the Internet clients appear in the same great variety and difference as they do outside the Web. However, in order to surf the Internet, clients have to meet the same technical, intellectual, financial and other criteria as all Internet users. The present data suggests that clients using the Internet tend to be younger (less than 55 years) and dispose of a solid basic education as a minimum. This group can be viewed as peer group setting the agenda for other clients.

### **2.1.3. Trafficking in Women as Topic in Clients' Fora**

Five different fora, which are classified as “fora by clients for clients”, i.e. community fora, have been examined as examples for the study.

Within the period of several years (since 2001) all fora sported numerous postings on the topic of trafficking in women. It can be seen as a returning, more or less always topical issue in all analysed fora.

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<sup>5</sup> The user can register under a pseudonym (nickname).

<sup>6</sup> [www.sexsicher.de](http://www.sexsicher.de) / [www.sex-safe.info](http://www.sex-safe.info): among others, clients were directly involved in developing this service.

Thus the community in the fora is already sensitised respectively open to being further sensitised towards the topic of trafficking. The existing threads around this subject have a different degree of differentiation but generally achieve high attention; at times they are the ones clicked on and commented upon most, out of all the content threads available. It is not unusual to come across long, sometimes controversial discussion series, often going deeper with the input of emotional and personal experiences<sup>7</sup>.

Nearly all contributions are marked by considerable helplessness. Again and again comments like “But what can one do?” or “One has to be very careful here can be found. Along with the helplessness goes a certain amount of fatalism to accept the conditions as they are because they are perceived as unchangeable on the part of the clients.

Trigger and peg for the relevant postings are often articles out of print media or TV reports. Topical incidents like police raids in certain clubs or personal encounters also stimulate the discussion of the problem of trafficking in the fora.

## **2.2 Empirical Interventions**

In order to elicit further possibilities for intervention apart from the already existing postings in the clients' fora around the problem of trafficking in women, several other options for addressing clients have been tested empirically. In doing so, on the one hand the actual issue was put forward (“Looking for interview partner for discussing the topic of trafficking in women...”), on the other hand fictitious postings were chosen (“I have met a woman who seems to be a victim of trafficking...”). Neither of these cases prompted any lasting contacts.

### **2.2.1 Platforms**

In order to surf on websites registered in Germany that sport X-rated topics – most clients' fora belong to these – certain barriers have to be transcended, e.g. so-called age verifying systems.

Furthermore users have to reckon with webmasters and presenters in charge of adult web pages scrutinising the postings from an editorial viewpoint; they for example supervise and edit the choice of words or move some postings into more appropriate sections.

Commercial fora which are affiliated to the contact catalogues (prostitute markets) were particularly resistant to postings addressing trafficking in women. Such contact catalogues can best be used for cross-references to other domains that are competent around the topic of trafficking.

Postings in chat rooms have generally short validity and are only open to few users. Therefore they require a lot of time and effort and are markedly less useful for empirical addresses than fora, for example.

Next to commercial fora (contact markets) and community fora (“by clients for clients”) other, non-specific fora were used for postings. Particularly fora providing content on related topics like (sexual) health or medicine. With these non-specific platforms it has to be taken into account, however, that prostitution in general is still tainted with great prejudices.

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<sup>7</sup> In one forum, for example, a rather sophisticated and thoughtful discussion series developed, which registered 57 answers and altogether 1,830 clicks within only six days.

### **2.2.2 Contents of the Information Communicated**

The empirical attempts of addressing clients through various platforms demonstrated that only under certain conditions lead postings to new findings about the behaviour of clients. The attempts showed that the topic of trafficking in women is generally met with interest; merely mentioning the term calls for attention and makes for increased visits of the relevant postings.

However, the topic has to be placed carefully and with much delicacy. In the commercial fora (contact markets) there is the risk involved that the postings can “get on somebody’s nerves” or be perceived as damaging for the business and therefore be censored.

In general postings have to be designed with as much sensitivity that they neither support the view that the users are criminals nor a climate of spying. Many clients and webmasters of platforms reacted with suspicion towards inquiries about the topic.

The few successful attempts to make contact were predominantly met with little sophisticated and unobjective comments about the issue of trafficking in women; there was neither a clear definition of the term nor helpful advice for those who wanted to help a possible victim. Apart from that, clients had very controversial discussions about involving the authorities or the police.

As not all users are prepared to discuss the problem of trafficking in women openly in the fora, it is advisable to also work in a different modus, e.g. with e-mail related “private news” that are only accessible for chosen addressees.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PROJECTS**

#### **3.1 Basics**

Men in Germany who can be identified as clients are generally approachable in real life as well as via the Internet. With certain reservations they are accessible for conversations around the issue of trafficking in women.

The majority of clients identified within this study are against coercion and violence in the context of prostitution.

Independent of the place of contacting the clients – in real life situations or via the Internet – making contact has to be geared towards the needs of the target group. For this it is important to make low threshold offers for conversations that are characterised by an accepting attitude towards the clients. Moreover, the cultural backgrounds of the target group have to be taken into account.

Experience gained in HIV and STD prevention can also be used for a preventive approach to the problem of trafficking in women. It can be safely assumed that normative (“I am only allowed to have sex with legal prostitutes”) or even sanctioning (“You will become an accomplice and a criminal!”) messages will have visibly less success than those which are in positive accord with the identity of the target group. Appellative messages, on the other hand, that incorporate this aspect (“let’s at least make the job easier for the women”), seem to be more sustainable. Face-to-face client education around the topic of trafficking in women is also conceivable.

With regard to content and approach campaigns targeting clients should take into consideration the emotional state of the target persons (clients are generally geared towards lust fulfilment) as much as their cognitive rationale competences (clients are not generally ignorant).

As a matter of course all measures addressing clients should be continuously monitored, evaluated and if necessary modified.

#### **3.2 Modalities for Campaigns**

All potential projects, campaigns or actions should be conceived in cooperation with experts and representatives of the target group, i.e. with clients. This includes among others prostitutes and their organisations as well as operators of brothels, webmasters, police, experts in the areas of trafficking in women, migration etc. These experts from various disciplines can support the developments of projects with their expertise as well as move into being project partners.

Some men react positively when they feel addressed as support for women in need; thus measures could well be tied in with this helpfulness but should be monitored very closely in order to prevent unreflected attempts to rescue perceived victims.

It seems helpful to integrate the target-specific campaigns in broader marketing and public relation measures.

Apart from that campaigns and projects should preferably be planned in cooperation and networking with existing institutions and organisations. The consent of sex workers to the planned campaigns should be ensured.

Potential Internet postings or contributions, e.g. with the topic “men and sexuality”, should be installed in form of an independent and therefore creditable portal or homepage; they could be linked to further information like e.g. counselling hotlines. Such Internet propositions could be promoted on the pages of adult suppliers through links or banners.

Permanently installed hotlines offering advice through competent contact persons and also the possibility for talking “from man to man”, have proven successful as low threshold instrument in campaigns.

In some projects it also worked well to establish teams of men and women for the direct approach of clients.

### **3.3 Contents of Campaigns**

Among the clients there was often a great need for objective information (What is the legal situation? What are the consequences if one reports a situation?) and concrete help (Where do I get further advice?). They want to know how to recognise victims of trafficking and how they can help them. Checklists cannot provide enough answers to these questions as the relevant signs are often ambiguous and can be easily misinterpreted.

Nevertheless, potential campaigns should reach out further than a general sensitisation around the topic trafficking in women in the area of prostitution. It is absolutely necessary to offer clients concrete options for action. However, all suggestions and advice should be adaptable to the clients' individual needs, e.g. the client in love needs different advice to the client whose “only” motivation is to save a victim.

It is essential for potential campaigns to integrate sustainable, low threshold and anonymously accessible counselling schemes. Such schemes are also supposed to lessen the risk of single men turning into informers or aspiring to become personal saviours or ‘heroes’.

## 4. APPENDIX

### Extract from a community clients' forum

Extracts from a posting of August 2003 in a community clients' forum that stands as an example for others and opened a longer thread:

*Hello everyone,*

*During the last months there has been one topic dominating the Press and the headlines again and again: Trafficking in women from the Eastern Bloc.*

*The first bigger headline in the imminent past was a lead story by "Der Spiegel" about two months ago with some appalling details and perspectives. Then last week an article in the FAZ that about 75 % of Eastern Bloc prostitutes working here have been trafficked to come here and about as many have been forced into prostitution. The articles described approaches and conditions of labour that I think can also be recognised in our region here.*

*As much as I like to fuck, one thing I do not want in any way: to support trafficking in persons and coerced prostitution. When I imagine myself being treated like a piece of meat, beaten, "broken in"...had to fuck every day with a few stinking, ugly, uncultivated vixens against my will, was not even allowed to keep hardly any money from that...my usually quite well-working imagination completely fails me when I try to imagine this for myself.*

*You probably share my feelings: Yes to all without condom but only when it is clear that it is no forced prostitution.*

*With this posting I would like to encourage you to think about what is happening in those places where you fuck. Whether you find signs that there is coerced prostitution happening there. And that you consider then whether you want to go there again.*

*Let's not close our eyes to this issue. Let's be aware of the fact that there are boundaries of humanity that we should not cross.*

*Enjoy,*

*axxx*