

**Trafficking Exchanges and Economic  
Responses: Reflections from Bosnia-  
Herzegovina and Serbia**

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Trafficking Exchanges and Economic Responses:  
Reflections from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia

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Trafficking for sexual exploitation involves an exchange transaction of gifts, services and/or objects. The elements and terms of the exchange reflect the relations and forms of organization of the particular economic system in which the transaction occurs. In traditional cultures and local economies, women may be exchanged as gifts to create alliances, to make peace, and to ensure the continuity of lineages.<sup>1</sup> In market economies, women supply services for the financial benefit of sellers (others), who try to maximize their own profits by controlling the exchange relation. In a global market system, commodified bodies are exchanged across large distances to different locale offering the highest price. While these forms of exchange may be analyzed discretely, in practice there is often vertical integration between the different markets, and a woman may be initially exchanged as a gift between patriarchal lineages and eventually sold as a commodity in a London market.

As this chapter will discuss, the contemporary political economy of trafficking in women, in particular, for sexual services reflects both historical and contemporary cultural practices. Strong economic incentives and rewards further reinforce the current forms of trafficking. In contrast, counter-trafficking programs represent moral regimes that often conflict directly with the economic incentives and deep-rooted cultural practices. They also employ forms of regulation and control that may deny the woman's

agency without assuring her own security and well being. Because contemporary counter-trafficking regimes do not address the underlying reasons for sexual trafficking in women, they have at best a short term, palliative impact for a few individuals but may have little impact or even cause harm to many others.

In this chapter, I first outline the standard national and international counter-trafficking regimes and analyze some of the limitations with their approaches. I argue that the current counter trafficking regimes and arrangements do not address the underlying incentives perpetuating and promoting these exchanges. In the second section, using examples from my own work in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, I analyze three different forms of trafficking exchanges – the gift, the service, and the commodified exchange. This section concludes with an analysis of the forms of vertical integration that may have developed. Finally, given these forms of exchange, I suggest some interventions to address trafficking from an economic rights and human security perspective.

### **Counter-Trafficking Regimes**

Current international legislation treats trafficking as an international human rights' violation and the trafficked person as a victim of crime. For over two centuries, states have sanctioned and criminalized forms of trafficking, forced labor, child labor and rights, prostitution, and slavery.<sup>ii</sup> Recently, in 2000, heads of state from 80 countries convened in Palermo to sign the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and to promulgate two protocols, the UN Protocol in Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants.<sup>iii</sup> At

Palermo, the Southeastern European countries also established the Anti-Trafficking Task Force as part of the Stability Pact. The Stability Pact was organized to move its members towards eventual accession into the European Community and thus, provided incentives for member states to implement the protocols. Subsequent implementation of the Palermo protocols has focused on developing national action plans against trafficking, harmonizing anti-trafficking legislation across the region, indicting and prosecuting traffickers and tightening migration regimes and controls.<sup>iv</sup>

At both national and international levels, funding for anti-trafficking interventions reinforces the priorities of migration controls, crime prevention, and victim assistance. Most of the U.S. and Western European funding goes for: (1) returning women to their countries of origin (e.g., the U.S. supported Global Return Program Fund); (2) training for police and judges; (3) conducting journalist workshops; (4) supporting local NGO shelters; (5) information and awareness raising campaigns; and (6) assisting institutions and organizations working with trafficking victims.<sup>v</sup> As these interventions suggest, most of the assistance to prevent trafficking is used to create a counter-trafficking framework and set of institutions. Very little – other than information – directly addresses the underlying economic incentives or is aimed at preventing actual trafficking exchanges. Even in case of information, women are often well aware of the dangers of trafficking but they and/or their families may still believe that the potential advantages outweigh the risks.

Currently, most Western European states counter trafficking through the control of irregular migration: readmission agreements, forcible deportations and “voluntary” returns.<sup>vi</sup> However, increased regulation of migration may further endanger those who

policies and programs are ostensibly designed to protect. Migration barriers may have the unintended effect of forcing women migrants to seek out smugglers and traffickers to achieve their migration objectives. All too often return programs send women who wanted to migrate to a major western economy back to the same miserable economic conditions and/or back to abusive family situations that forced them to leave originally.<sup>vii</sup> Border and customs controls to stop traffickers may lead to the development of more complex and decentralized forms of organization at local levels, smaller business operations, and more diffuse networks.<sup>viii</sup> Regionally, such barriers may encourage increased flexibility and globalization of operations and thus, larger profits for the primary organizers. Such sophisticated operations, in turn, make it more difficult for women to negotiate a better situation, leave, or escape their traffickers.

National regimes to legalize prostitution, such as that of the Netherlands, are not universalized throughout Europe and they do not apply to migrant women. Within Europe, legalization within one country creates incentives for traffickers to locate there rather than in other countries where there is no tolerance for sex work. Within the Netherlands, trafficked women, however, are treated as illegal migrants and subject to deportation. As illegal migrants, they cannot avail themselves of the services and their work is illegal. Traffickers will often hold their passport, which increases their vulnerability to arrest and deportation, and will use the women's "irregular" status to pay below market rates. In turn, they are resented by national sex workers, who see them as unfair competition. Thus, partial legalization has created a two-tiered market distinguishing legal nationals from migrant sex workers. Such segmentation provides an incentive for traffickers and clients to undercut the regulated market.

Bureaucratic regulation also may also affect both the market demand and increase women's vulnerability. The U.S. State Department's Trafficking in Persons' (TIP) seeks to abolish "trafficking for sexual exploitation." That definition, which includes a disparate set of practices and conditions, effectively demarcate regimes of individual moral worthiness.<sup>ix</sup> Determining degrees of volition is seen to distinguish good, "trafficked" women worthy of support as opposed to "voluntary" sex workers, who are excluded.

The TIP report also distinguishes between origin/source, transit and destination countries. Yet, a woman may voluntarily leave her origin/source country, be trafficked as she journeys from one place to the next, and eventually join a trafficking operation in a destination county. Categorizing countries as origin, transit, and destination usually quickly breaks down from the perspective of vertically integrated markets. Within a given country, if trafficking of any kind occurs, there are generally motivations to organize other stages of the business.

The TIP reports further define moral regimes by country. The reports annually catalogue trafficking situations and categorize countries into one of three (plus) tiers. Tier One countries are those applying the strongest sanctions and Tier Three, not applying or showing little to no progress in applying sanctions. The U.S. government then uses foreign aid and the threat of withdrawing foreign aid to encourage countries to develop and implement counter-trafficking programs. Definitions of worthiness or progress, however, have little to do with economic activity and market participation but create new regulatory agencies and institutions. If economic activity were measured (and the number of trafficking incidents per capita within a given country), it is doubtful that

the same rankings would obtain. (The U.S. and the UK, for example, would probably not be ranked so positively.) The TIP report framework may also encourage countries to regulate trafficking activities in ways that may lead to either more decentralized local operations coupled with highly organized international ones. This approach has also led to a few well publicized cases and show trials of traffickers without fundamentally changing the incentives.

Different approaches between countries may also provide incentives to traffickers to seek out the most advantageous economic zones. Abolitionist approaches, as promoted by Sweden, have in practice led to regulating prostitution and sex workers. Such approaches may increase the price of the sexual transaction without controlling the traffickers themselves and their profits (who are inherently more elusive). At best, different regulatory practices establish moral regimes of rights and at worst engender new moral panics.<sup>x</sup> Not surprisingly, such efforts have been as effective in stopping contemporary trafficking as the earlier abolitionists and regulators were in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, who decried the “white slave trade”.<sup>xi</sup>

Beyond the rhetoric and debates are compelling stories and a reality that trafficking is widespread. But, there is little evidence that counter trafficking efforts to date are addressing the incentives that drive the overall trade.<sup>xii</sup> . There has also been little to no evaluation of the effectiveness of these programs. As those working on counter trafficking regularly attest, there is little evidence that sexual trafficking of women has decreased and in some regions, it appears to be increasing. NGOs also observe that trafficking in some locale is becoming more decentralized and that women are being held in more isolated bars and apartments and often subjected to greater risks.

Such decentralization may also be a response to market regulation and counter trafficking measures.

Trafficking exchanges presuppose various kinds of relationships between patriarchs, sellers (pimps and bar owners), and/or commodity traders, clients, and the “gift”, provider of services, and/or objects. Trafficking has different functions, incentives, and meanings in local, regional, and global economies. Over time, a particular trafficking event or situation often covers several different kinds of transactions and relationships. For example, a young woman may be initially abducted (or captured), then negotiate with her trafficker to gain some financial recompense from her services, and eventually become one of the organizers of a global business. From an international humanitarian or human rights perspective, she becomes part of the network and problematic of trafficking. Viewed from an entrepreneurial perspective, the woman has adapted to her environment and negotiated to enter into the exchange as an active player.

In economic and anthropological terms, trafficking for sexual exploitation may be conceptualized as an exchange relationship. Viewed from this perspective, one analyzes the different parties and their motivations in the exchange, what is transacted and how the exchange is organized (under what conditions certain forms of exchange become possible and desirable). One may then consider where in the exchange relationship particular transactions occur and/or change over time and appropriate points of intervention.

Trafficking encompass several different kinds of exchanges, those that are embedded in household and local economies as well as those involving large profits, are well organized within a larger trade tourism and entertainment industry, and are increasingly global. In contrast, the counter trafficking financial resources are quite



limited, bound by national boundaries and constrained by bureaucratic rules and procedures.

### **Theories and Practices of Trafficking as Exchange**

In Maussian terms, many traditional marriage practices -- such as “marriage by capture”, giving away a woman in marriage in Christian ceremonies, and the handing over of a bride to the grooms family -- both symbolically and de facto embody gift giving relationships.<sup>xiii</sup> Women are gifts to be given to solidify clan and kinship networks, to make peace between warring factions, and to ensure familial, ethnic, and/or religious continuity. Sexual trafficking may reflect long established beliefs and practices regarding women’s role and position in these exchanges. In rural areas, particularly, marriages still may be arranged and gifts exchanged to assure the welfare of both households (not just bride wealth or dowries). Thus, many initial trafficking exchanges resemble an abbreviated marriage exchange between families and/or clans; potentially involving less exchange of common economic and social resources.

Rubin argues that all marriage exchanges involve a form of trafficking.<sup>xiv</sup> From the young woman’s perspective, she may expect to benefit her family members and may be less concerned about issues of autonomy and rights than about the fulfillment of mutual obligations. The receivers of the gift are other village men, who have the means to provide gifts in return. Although such gift giving negotiations are usually between two patriarchs, both fathers and mothers may be involved in these discussions. Traditionally, in rural Serbia, these negotiations took place often between two families and/or clans, which often led to the formation of stem households of two brothers and their wives.

The rupture of certain beliefs and practices during periods of conflict transforms traditional relationships in ways that lead to service exchanges and commodity forms of trafficking and exploitation. During the recent conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, for example, raping one's neighbor was a clear denial of the traditional exchange relationship and a very powerful tool for ensuring ethnic purity and the denial of the other.<sup>xv</sup>

Denying or destroying the gift itself became a way of breaking down traditional ties and trust. The ensuing loss of trust and ethnic mistrust allows neighbors to sell a former friend's daughter with little censure or obligation. The raping of women in war may have also created the conditions, which rationalized the trafficking a neighbor's daughter for sexual prostitution – of course, provided the woman exchanged was from another ethnic or religious group (e.g., Roma vis-à-vis Serb or Christian versus Muslim).

Thus, rather than ensuring continuity such exchanges were designed and motivated by the desire to create discontinuity and conflict. Contemporary trafficking exchanges – particularly those that are the outcomes of vendettas between one family, mafia, or clan and the next village– reflect similar processes. For example, a young girl of 12, abducted on her way to school, was sold to traffickers because her father's business associate was seeking some form of revenge.

Economic hardship further rationalized the growth of a cottage and familial industry of trafficking. Contemporary internal trafficking in Serbia is often organized as a family business. An uncle or parent provides his niece or daughter to a neighbor who runs a local café or bar. The bar or café owner rapes the young woman to prepare her for customers and his wife is charged with providing the young woman basic necessities and for controlling her behavior. A recently celebrated court case revealed that the bar owner

used the proceeds in turn to send his own daughter to university abroad.<sup>xvi</sup> Rather than considering how the young woman could have been his own daughter, ethnic, religious and/or socio-economic differences allowed the bar owner to objectify the “gift” as the other and to derive a surplus from her labor to benefit his own daughter.

The clients in this system are reportedly local young men, who belonged to an irregular militia during the recent conflict. Many were initially attracted into service when they could not find employment and/or were released from military service. The notorious gangs and militia (such as Arkan’s Tigers or the body guards around Milosevic and his son) used rape as a tactic of “ethnic cleansing”. During the war, women of any age could be raped. Such rapes often incurred en masse as a part of identity formation of the militia itself.

Such practices continue as part of a rite of initiation into a local mafia or gang. In certain gangs, contemporary norms of masculinity may include having one or more beautiful women as trophies to be discarded when they no longer impress. Raping other groups’ women (not necessarily another ethnic group but simply those associated with a rival group) is used to develop group cohesion and identity. Alcohol and/or drugs are used to enhance and play a role in these initiations. Once implicated in acts of sexual violence, the young men have to be ever more loyal to their own while necessarily denying the humanity of others.

The unwillingness to hold many different perpetrators responsible and redress the war crimes of the recent conflicts has exacerbated the effects of post traumatic stress.<sup>xvii</sup> The guilt and denial of perpetrators may have increased the levels of domestic and local sexual violence.<sup>xviii</sup> Regardless of men’s role in the recent conflicts, many households

have experienced the effects of post traumatic stress in familial relationships. In such circumstances, trafficked women observe that they do not necessarily suffer any greater abuse than many other women currently suffering on going violent domestic violence. Consequently, for some young women, seeking immigration through trafficking does not represent a terrible risk.

Another important group of clients domestically has been the international community. Although women provided estimates that suggested they were from 5% to 25% of the clients, their ability to pay higher prices created tiers of local services.<sup>xix</sup> The “peace keepers” and international community generally created a new demand and source of financing after the war.<sup>xx</sup> Even though they may not have constituted a large part of the initial demand, they provided the contacts, networks, and financing that may have moved trafficking exchanges from local to regional markets. At the same time, many trafficking routes also followed some of the same trade routes organized for gun and drug smuggling and earlier irregular migration during and before the war. Because of proscriptions on fraternizing with local women, the international community also enhanced the demand and market for foreign women (thereby regionalizing and internationalizing the market).<sup>xxi</sup>

To move trafficking from local prostitution rings to a trade across international boundaries required explicit collusion or at least acquiescence of police and customs officials. Such officials often become the most ruthless customers and organizers of the business. They may still organize disappearances when someone comes too close to their operations. Traffickers also buy off law enforcement officials and/or blackmail them by providing them with free services.

As these examples suggest, trafficking for sexual exploitation involves exchange relationships that go beyond gifts and become transactions in which money or favors are exchanged for sexual services. An infrastructure of suppliers and distributors also develops. In such exchange relationships, sellers are interested in maximizing their profits and buyers in minimizing their costs. Thus, if a bar owner can decrease his costs by exploiting a trafficked woman rather than employing a prostitute, he will have an incentive to organize his business along these lines, particularly if the risks and protection money required are reasonable. In Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, some law enforcement officials observe that the financial and physical risks of being involved in trafficking are lower than trading drugs or weapons and that trafficking operations are used as a cover for the former, riskier trades.<sup>xxii</sup> At the same time, in this market drugs may be used to bind women. By becoming addicts, the women become dependent on and indebted to their traffickers and/or bar owners for their fix and are easier to control.

The sale of sexual services also explains the increase of trafficking in a period of economic transition with high rates of unemployment. Throughout the poorest countries of Central and Eastern Europe, for example, many women admit risking being trafficked since they see no other way out of long-term unemployment, poverty, and/or abuse. In a transitional economy with a limited supply of jobs and employment opportunities on one side and limited skills and knowledge to compete in larger regional economies on the other, there are many incentives to sell one's sexual services and for others to organize the industry. Selling one's body may be the only way for some young women to access regional and international markets. Opportunities are also highly gendered with segmented labor markets – young men are more likely to access irregular migration

routes to sell their labor while women access trafficking ones to sell sexual services.

Access to different markets and kinds of trade reflects patterns of demand – the demand for young boys, for example, is a more limited market than that of young women.

A characteristic profile of young woman who return or are returned from trafficking situations is emerging. A large number of women in shelters report coming from families with an absent father and/or with divorced parents, from impoverished families, and/or from situations of domestic sexual abuse and violence.<sup>xxiii</sup> However, it would be difficult to establish a valid control and experimental group to determine vulnerability to trafficking and/or to access the profiles of trafficked women who do not come into direct contact with social service agencies. It may be, for example, that trafficked women who end up in shelters are more likely to come from such backgrounds whereas trafficked women who negotiate their own release and/or are able to derive some benefits from the trafficking experience are more likely to be well educated, come from stable families, and/or have relatively well-off socio-economic backgrounds. The only common defining characteristic of trafficked women may be their willingness to assume a higher level of risk.

Ironically, by ignoring supply and demand factors in trafficking exchanges (and the incentives structuring the kinds of services exchanged), many social programs designed to prevent trafficking often end up facilitating its economic organization. Shelters and return programs may facilitate offloading those women who no longer bring a high price and may further the circular migration of labor. Efforts to crack down on bars selling trafficked women's services lead bar owners to move women around regularly and to diffuse their operations to one or two women in each bar (thus, making it

more difficult for the woman to negotiate a release or more favorable terms). Involving the women in such exchanges (particularly in local and regional economies where she can more easily leave) is usually the most effective means of operation because then she has a stake in its outcome. Thus, there are incentives for traffickers to implicate the women in the operation to improve the quality of the services offered and to avoid some of the costs of holding her captive, such as paying off local law enforcement officials. Enforced slavery may be an earlier and less well organized form of increasingly sophisticated and well-organized sexual exchanges.

The forcible exploitation of a woman's services is the one most analyzed in the trafficking literature because a local bar's financial transactions can often be tracked and because the presumed incentives for trafficking are the potentially enormous profits (estimated in the millions of dollars). Monopolization of a particular market though often makes bar owners and traffickers more visible and at greater risk of being raided. First, the scale of operations in local and national economies is difficult to hide and second, it is more difficult to move and launder vast sums of money without being noticed. Several major trafficking rings in Romania, Serbia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina have been recently busted; in part, according to some law officials because they were so large and visible.

Similarly, if traffickers create conglomerates involving trafficking, drugs, and arms trade simultaneously, they may be more vulnerable to arrest as their operations diversify and expand. In Serbia, for example, a few major traffickers were rounded up in the recent arrests following the Djindjic assassination (even though they were not even cited for trafficking). With this kind of market visibility and intervention, there may a greater incentive for trafficking operations to decentralize and to be smaller, more hidden,

and more diffuse with many different suppliers. This tendency is reportedly happening in Serbia. ASTRA also reports that increasingly trafficking is moving out of Belgrade to smaller cities and towns, from particular bars to small apartments and from organized large-scale mafia operations to family businesses.<sup>xxiv</sup>

Given these risks and visibility, there are likewise economic incentives for successful trafficking ventures to scale up by going transnational and to globalize its operations. The international trafficking business may franchise its operations such that there are many small suppliers (the family business) but trade and transport networks are organized on a global scale – allowing traffickers to move commodities (certain categories of women) quickly across large distances and to the most desirable and profitable markets. Women who are moved globally may be recruited and tested out first in regional markets. In a kind of beauty contest, the most resilient and beautiful are chosen for Paris, Amsterdam or London. In addition, as one young woman (who was trafficked to Sweden at 15) reported, traffickers recruit and groom young women who can be properly formed for the business.

Although the global operations are quite hidden, key destination countries offer a glimpse of the scale and sophistication of trafficking operations. For example, in London, a major destination point, women represented some 93 different ethnicities (with only 19% of the women coming from the U.K.), who were working in 730 flats, parlours, and saunas and some 79 different ethnic groups (of which only 20% came from the U.K.) in 164 escort agencies,<sup>xxv</sup> Although these figures do not necessarily represent women, working in exploitative, abusive, or dangerous situations, they depict London's global sex trade and services. That a large number are migrants also suggests that many may be



trafficked (especially given increased migration barriers). Eastern Europeans, whose models are currently in vogue, represent the largest regional group (with some 25% of those working in the industry from Eastern Europe).<sup>xxvi</sup> The British tabloid press with stories of an impoverished Russian woman marrying a British Royal contributes to an illusion many women have of marrying up or being spotted for a modeling assignment. Over time, however, different waves of migrants come according to changing routes and market demand. At the destination, there are again many small distributors – for example, 140 sites in the borough of Westminster alone.<sup>xxvii</sup> Sites for trafficking include small hotels, apartments, and escort services, which are advertised quite openly in the local media, telephone booths, hotels, and tourist sites.

The women destined for the major capitals, depending on their working conditions, do not necessarily see themselves as trafficked and/or may feel they have succeeded in attaining their migration and professional objectives. They sign up with escort services and may have the opportunity to take English language classes. When they can no longer work in the sex industry or to supplement their income, they may find jobs cleaning houses and providing other services in the underground, non-formal economy. Some are married off to traffickers, distributors, or clients. They may face continuing sexual violence and have little to no recourse. In certain capitals and locales, the less fortunate are sold for pornographic productions. While providing sexual services, trafficked women are kept in bondage largely because of their illegal migrant status and they – rather than their traffickers – are subject to legal sanctions. The fear of possible arrest, detention, and deportation gives traffickers and their distributors continuing power over these women's lives.

In the global economy, women are traded as commodities – perhaps less precious than gems, guns, or drugs -- but as objects to be transported, auctioned, and sold in different markets according to the particular demands. Autonomy and self-preservation for the particular woman at this point comes from her ability to market her own body effectively – to fit contemporary styles, trends, and tastes. Even though only some women are trafficked and commodified, the sale of women – as objects – is embedded within larger global markets of tourism, entertainment, advertising, media, and the beauty industry, all of which create the infrastructure, values, and conditions that allow women to be transported, packaged, bought and sold.

Clients in international markets are predominantly men of all nationalities. As a recent MTV campaign against trafficking suggests, many are well aware that the women are being held forcibly and mistreated – of the actual labor conditions -- but are probably afraid to confront the situation. Trafficked women are usually cheaper than local prostitutes, although not necessarily, since the costs of their movements and upkeep in more expensive locale have to be recuperated. Where prostitution is legalized, as in Amsterdam, trafficked women may be even more marginalized since they are promoted as less expensive commodities.

Economic hardship, global market penetration, and transitional economic conditions along with conflict and post war trauma have transformed many traditional relationships and gift exchanges into service exchanges. Interactions with international communities and markets, the incentive to scale up successful ventures, and the need for greater flexibility and protection in response to police raids, have created incentives to globalize service exchanges into major commodity exchanges. Although the gift of a

village girl to the sale of a top model in a London market seems far apart, such transformations and distances are covered quite rapidly. These household economies, local, regional and international markets are increasingly vertically integrated and thus, the distance from the village bar to an escort service in South Kensington becomes only a matter of determining the best market for one's product and having the means to trade in more than one market.

### **Alternatives to Trafficking Addressing Its Economic Incentives**

Given the organization, complexity and infrastructure of trafficking exchanges, it would be naïve to suggest that a particular intervention or even set of interventions will have a serious impact on countering the sale of women as commodities in a globalized market economy. Understanding some of the sources of trafficking as a gift exchange in basic familial alliances and relationships also points to the deep cultural roots and traditions underlying these particular exchanges. Most responses to trafficking, as shown earlier, address the provision of services and tend to regulate and control women's movements more than those of traffickers, suppliers, distributors, etc. Some of the regulation of traffickers through arrests may only temporarily increase the costs as long as there is a market and demand for trafficked women's services. However, addressing some of the underlying economic incentives in the different exchange relationships suggests some alternatives to business as usual and the current exploitation of women's sexual labor. An expanded definition of human rights also argues for interventions to protect women's economic rights rather than treating them post facto as victims and further victimizing and/or disempowering them. From this perspective, this section

outlines some possible alternatives to respond to each of the three kinds of exchange and to address both the demand and supply sides of the equation.

In the gift exchange, patriarchs (and sometimes their wives) seek to maximize household welfare for the future. This may include insuring care in one's old age, creating peaceful relationships, and improving the overall social and economic status of the household. The young woman has attributes ('gifts') that can be used to enhance overall household welfare and she is part of a larger corporate identity. Thus, alternative incentives are required to keep her from being exchanged.

One of the most powerful interventions in transforming some of these traditional arrangements and structures is through educating girls. Although there are numerous educational opportunities in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, the hidden and opportunity costs of schooling are causing many young women to drop out at earlier ages and/or for their parents to pull them out for financial reasons. Many trafficked women (particularly from rural areas) reported that they were never encouraged to remain in high school and to complete their high school diploma. Parents often do not see or derive the benefits of girls' education because many educated girls migrate to the major cities and do not necessarily look after their parents (particularly if they cannot find work).

What could change parental perceptions about the value of and returns to education would be to provide more scholarships and/or financial incentives for girls to complete their high school degrees (even paying young women and men to stay in school). Program evaluations in Brazil and Mexico have been shown that well-targeted, conditional cash transfer can mitigate shocks during periods of economic stress and provide an important social safety net for households.<sup>xxviii</sup> Serbia and Bosnia-

Herzegovina both have high rates of unemployment and many poor families can no longer afford either the direct or opportunity costs for their children's schooling. Although parents are likely to require children's labor, such programs do improve attendance.<sup>xxix</sup> The argument for such investments, particularly if well targeted, would be that the training and skills gained would more likely accrue in the future to the household and local economy versus losing that labor. At the same time, more attention may need to be paid in the curriculum to ensure that at the gymnasium level, young women, in particular, learn computing, driving, typing, foreign language, and business skills generally that will benefit them professionally.<sup>xxx</sup>

In the service exchange, many women are trafficked while seeking to immigrate to find jobs in Western Europe or the U.S. They would be less in harm's way if legal migration regimes facilitated temporary and circular, legal migration for employment in areas where there are shortages of qualified personnel, such as nursing, housekeeping, child and elder care, information technology, etc. In-country, training programs could then be established for young women and men to obtain the skills prior to leaving for temporary two to three year employment contracts in the West. At the end of their contracts, they could be eligible for loans to establish similar operations back home and/or receive priority for employment.<sup>xxxi</sup> Such legal migration regimes would lessen the demand for irregular migration and allow benefits to accrue to both sending and receiving countries.<sup>xxxii</sup>

In the commodified exchange, women are treated as objects to be moved around at will. They, rather than the traffickers, are more likely to risk arrest, detention, and deportation. Their skills and labor need to be revalued; however, the migration system

treats them as irregular migrants and/or criminals. Instead, they should be encouraged to evaluate their skills and expertise and to make their own investments in their migration decisions. Women trafficked across international borders are often forced to learn new languages and vocational skills. For example, amongst a group of recently trafficked young women in Serbia, several had learned foreign languages (English, Italian, and Swedish), one had gained computer skills, and another had taken a course in furniture restoration while held in Italy.<sup>xxxiii</sup> These women could be provided with job preparation and entrepreneurial training either to return to their country of origin or to find employment in the destination country (depending on their civil and legal status). Those who have had to survive by selling themselves could parlay those skills into entrepreneurial activities.

Protecting trafficked women's human rights should not inherently lead to treating them as victims or further disempowering their economic intentions. The enlarged definition of the human rights, outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, includes the protection of economic rights and obligations relating to the prohibition of slavery (UDHR, Article 4). Economic rights include core minimum obligations with respect to the right to work and core labor standards.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Protecting the right to work leads to assessing women's particular economic interests and motivations, and migration intentions in terms of seeking employment through trafficking exchanges. Protecting core labor standards, specifically with regard to slave labor and work not freely chosen, argues for considering all aspects of the exchange relationship to determine the nature and kinds of exploitative practices involved in various markets and locale.

Interventions also need to address traffickers and clients – not only the supply but also the demand side of the exchange. Demand side interventions are inherently more difficult to assess because the demand is difficult to identify and measure. However, these interventions are equally if not more important. At the household level of the gift and in local economies, assumptions about gender roles and definitions of masculinity are at stake in some of these transactions. Challenging traditional assumptions, however, may only endanger women further by invoking a backlash. Instead, concrete interventions such as encouraging sports teams and events (for both men and women) as a means of building group cohesion and support may be less threatening and ultimately, more effective.<sup>xxxv</sup> Having girls’ teams alongside those of boys is empowering and challenges traditional assumptions about male/female roles but through positive interactions and experiences.

In the case of Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, perpetrators of war crimes also need to be held responsible -- not just to heal the past but also to send important messages about current norms of political and civil behavior. The licensing of such past activities – particularly when war criminals continue to benefit economically and politically – sends the wrong messages for young people about how to succeed and what constitutes success. Schools, civil society, and religious organizations also need to reward and promote new concepts of masculinity based on mutual respect, courage, hard work, and honesty (versus images based on bullying, conspicuous wealth, and violence).

In service exchanges, clients, particularly the military, need to be made aware that they should not be buying the services of trafficked women. The current abolitionist campaign is likely to be as effective as curtailing cigarette industry profits by banning

smoking, while regulation has already been showed to create a two-tiered market (of more affluent, legal nationals versus less affluent illegal migrant sex workers). The current MTV approach along the lines of promoting “fair trade practices” stands a greater chance of having some impact on tastes and preferences.<sup>xxxvi</sup> The message is that “if you are going to frequent a sex worker, make sure she is not trafficked.” Concurrently, with such campaigns there could be serious fines and sanctions for abusive labor practices and tax evasion of traffickers and clients rather than arresting sex workers (who may or may not be trafficked but whose economic survival depends on selling sex).

Commodified exchanges need to be addressed by challenging the assumption that it is natural to sell women’s bodies.<sup>xxxvii</sup> However, moral regimes may be equally destructive by denying, hyper-eroticizing, or polluting bodies. Instead, a recent Swedish information campaign tries to achieve some gender equality in sexual image making by providing similar images of men’s bodies for sale. Such campaigns encourage people to re-evaluate gendered assumptions about what is natural. A male modeling erotic poses similar to that found in many fashion magazines, for example, may appear ridiculous or sublime – according to the viewer’s tastes and values. Such images though force a re-evaluation of how women’s bodies are routinely portrayed. Women activists and artists themselves are also challenging and changing traditional gendered assumptions about what is beautiful, erotic, and/or desirable. Rather than ignoring or banning “pornographic or erotic” material from media and popular culture, educational systems could encourage youth to develop critical perspectives, to distinguish violence from sexuality, and to question those images that glorify violence and domination of others.<sup>xxxviii</sup>



In a globalized market exchange in which women are merely the commodities, it also makes more sense to regulate buyers and sellers than the commodity itself. Put crudely, one does not imprison or fine the good being exchanged (although authorities may seize the supply) but the commodity trader. Likewise, counter trafficking efforts should focus more on regulating and/or putting traffickers out of business rather than in controlling trafficked women. Underlying trafficking is also an infrastructure that needs to be engaged in preventing the sale, transport, and exploitation of women's bodies – thus, the tourist, media, and transport industries need to be engaged or if necessary, sanctioned to stop trafficking internationally.

As the foregoing analysis suggests, addressing some of the economic incentives underlying different forms of exchange leads to a different focus on what interventions are needed for the prevention of trafficking for sexual exploitation. As the literature attests, trafficking exchanges range from small family enterprises to multi-million dollar operations each with significant economic incentives and rewards. The gift of women for a larger social benefit also has deep historical and cultural roots. Continuing to address family franchises, a vast network of suppliers and distributors, and globalized trade with 19<sup>th</sup> century morality and institutions is bound to have limited success. However, an analysis of the exchange relations would also suggest that there are powerful economic incentives not to do otherwise.

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<sup>i</sup> Trafficking occurs with children and both men and women. In this chapter, however, I focus on trafficking of women because of (1) the importance of gender relations and the particular role and position of women in marriage exchanges in many societies in relation to trafficking; and (2) the programs with which I worked and the case histories I both heard in the course of my work as well as collected in most cases involved young women and girls (with a few exceptions).

<sup>ii</sup> Between 1815 and 1957, some 300 international agreements, outlawing slavery, were promulgated. The current relevant international legislation includes: the UN Declaration of Human Rights (1948); the Convention of the Suppression of the Trafficking in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Other (1949); the Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (2000); the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (2000); the Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants (2000); the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Convention to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor; the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery; the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation with respect to Intercountry Adoption; the Convention on the Consent to Marriage, the Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages; and the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention Concerning Abolition of Forced Labor.

<sup>iii</sup> The Convention and Trafficking Protocol subsequently came into force in 2003 but no date as yet has been established for the smuggling protocol. However, regionally, the EC has and is negotiating a series of Readmission Agreements. See [www.iom.int/Documents/Governing/EN/MCINF\\_269.pdf](http://www.iom.int/Documents/Governing/EN/MCINF_269.pdf) [cimera.org/files/other/en/humantrafficking.pdf](http://cimera.org/files/other/en/humantrafficking.pdf) for further discussion of the Palermo protocols.

<sup>iv</sup> Manohar, Sujata argues that the Palermo trafficking protocols primarily deal with trafficking as organized crime while the subsequent South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution 2002 has a broader human rights' focus engaging state responsibility and cooperation and rehabilitation and focusing on trafficking for prostitution (EGM/TRAG/2002/NP.1). This focus, however, in several regions has led to some of the current abolitionist and anti-prostitution approaches, which stigmatize sex workers and deny the agency of many trafficked women.

<sup>v</sup> See [www.unodc.org/unodc/en/trafficking\\_human\\_beings.html](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/trafficking_human_beings.html) and see [www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/fs/2001/4051.htm](http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/fs/2001/4051.htm).

<sup>vi</sup> Long, Lynellyn (in press) EC Perspectives on the Albanian Readmission Agreement. Chapter in forthcoming volume on Combating Irregular Migration in Albania and the Wider Region. (to be published by IOM/Geneva).

<sup>vii</sup> Based on research conducted for the Women-to-Work Initiative in Belgrade from 2004-2006 and on interviews with "trafficked women" being returned from Sarajevo in 2002.

<sup>viii</sup> O'Neill Richard (1999) observes that in the major trafficking cases since 1990, the perpetrators tended to come from small crime groups, smuggling rings, gangs, and a loose network of corrupt individuals and that most were not up for other illicit activities.

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<sup>ix</sup> See the most recent [www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/rm.2005/47210](http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/rm.2005/47210) Trafficking in Persons report. Jefferson's (2003) critique that the criteria for Tier movement are not explained continues to be the case in the current report, which argues for abolitionist approaches with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice describing trafficking, as the "abolitionist movement of the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

<sup>x</sup> A major schism in how best to deliver anti-trafficking assistance has also emerged between a group of feminists (e.g., Gloria Steinem, Patricia Ireland, and Kathleen Barry) and conservative religious leaders, who argue for abolitionist approaches for all forms of prostitution, versus labor, reproductive and sexual rights' advocates and sex workers, who document a range of abuses within the sex industry with the goal of decriminalization and sex industry reform ([hrw.org/campaigns/hiv\\_aids/hiv\\_aids\\_letter](http://hrw.org/campaigns/hiv_aids/hiv_aids_letter)). See Doezema, Jo (2000); "Movements and Moral Panics" in 2004 Human Rights Watch Report; Agustin, Laura (2005); Barry (2005), and the Trafficking Policy Research Project for explication of the debates.

<sup>xi</sup> See Doezema, Jo (2000) and Long (2004) for discussion of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century anti "white slavery" regimes and the parallels to contemporary counter-trafficking efforts. Also, Bell (1907) for discussion at that time of "white slavery".

<sup>xii</sup> See Human Rights Watch critique that the TIP Report does not meaningfully evaluate anti-trafficking efforts (Jefferson 2003).

<sup>xiii</sup> Mauss's seminal discussion of the Gift (as opposed to the commodity) describes how this kind of exchange invokes every aspect of society of which it is a part and is the basis of societal relations. A longer discussion of marriage prestations and trafficking is found in Long (2004).

<sup>xiv</sup> Rubin, Gayle (1975); Rapp, Rayna

<sup>xv</sup> For discussion of the ethno-religious forms of the violence, see Mojzes (1994).

<sup>xvi</sup> ASTRA personal communication, Belgrade, April 2005

<sup>xvii</sup> This section is based on conversations and interactions with many different women survivors of domestic violence and trafficking in Sarajevo, Banja Luka, and Belgrade during the periods of 2000-2002 and for shorter periods during 2004, 2005, and 2006. The discussion on the impact of rape and post traumatic stress is based on my work and interviews with women in refugee camps in several countries in the region (Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Macedonia) during several trips and periods of stay from 1993-1996.

<sup>xviii</sup> Some of the failures to address war crimes have also led to more frustration and violence throughout the region – and most importantly, to a culture of impunity.

<sup>xix</sup> Rees, OHCHR and Effendic, IOM, personal communication, Bosnia-Herzegovina, 2001

<sup>xx</sup> See Vandenberg and Peratis (2002) for comprehensive analysis of role of international community in developing demand and patterns of trafficking and/or in refusing to address the phenomena and its own role in these operations.

<sup>xxi</sup> Julie Mertus, personal communication, Pittsburgh, June 2005. Aida Hozic at the same meeting also noted that this pattern of bringing outside women to satisfy local demand (and protect local prestations thereby segmenting the exchange) began earlier during the Sarajevo Olympics when women from Belgrade were imported to Sarajevo to provide sexual services.

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- <sup>xxii</sup> A local Bosnian policeman, who does not care to be identified, reported this information in Sarajevo, spring, 2001.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Interviews with women in shelters in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 2000-2002, and reports of other shelter programs, 2004, 2005
- <sup>xxiv</sup> ASTRA personal communication, March 2005; see also UNICEF et al. 2005
- <sup>xxv</sup> Dickson, Sandra (2003:10).
- <sup>xxvi</sup> *Ibid.*:10.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> *Ibid.*:15
- <sup>xxviii</sup> See Sadoulet et al. (2004) for evaluation of the impact of a conditional cash transfer program on school attendance in Mexico.
- <sup>xxix</sup> Cardosa, Eliana and Andre Portela Souza (2004) for evaluation of cash transfers on child labor and school attendance in Brazil.
- <sup>xxx</sup> Personal communication, Sonja Drljevic, Women's Network AZIN, Belgrade, April 2005.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> Micro-enterprise and SME training and mentoring could be extended to more vulnerable groups of women. Several NGO programs -- Oxfam, International Catholic Migration Commission, Women-to-Work, Integra and others -- have tried this approach with some success.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> See Ghosh (2000) and IOM (2003) for discussion of the need for legal migration regimes as alternatives to growing irregular migration. In light of security issues, migration experts (Ghosh 2000; Koslowski 2004) also argue for international or global regimes although these seem very difficult to obtain.
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> Long (2005)
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> Siegel (2002).
- <sup>xxxv</sup> See Brady (1998) and Brady and Khan (2002). The U.S. President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports is also conducting long term studies on the effects of athletic programs and team sports on girls' outcomes.
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> Barrett, Sean, personal communication, London, November 2004.
- <sup>xxxvii</sup> Without entering too much into the longer discussion of whether sex work or prostitution is inherently exploitative, I would argue that criminalizing and making sex work illegal are likely to increase the violence and exploitation in these activities. Leigh's (see her 2004 collection) suggests how a prostitute and rights' advocate approaches these issues.
- <sup>xxxviii</sup> What some consider pornographic material, others consider erotic. All too often religious and political leaders argue for censorship on religious ground and invoke moral regimes whereas traditionally, the major religions have inspired artistic, erotic expression (particularly in its imagery and movements).