

The Convention to Eliminate all Forms of Discrimination Against Women

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Submitted by

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd
an NGO in special consultative status with ECOSOC, United Nations

Clare Nolan, NGO representative, Congregation of Sisters of the Good Shepherd
211 East 43rd St., Room 302
New York, NY 10017

♀ *An international organization whose aim is the integral development of the human person, particularly women and girls.*

Phone/Fx: 1 212 599 2711

E-mail: cnolan8345@aol.com

Prepared by

Sr. Gilma María MUÑOZ CALDERON, Srs of the Good Shepherd
Jó Pásztor Növérék
Zápor utca 50
1032 Budapest HONGRIE

In collaboration with
KIUT Veled - “Way Out with You”, a Civil Society Organization
Emma Csapó

In relation to CEDAW Article 6: *the exploitation of the Prostitution of women*

Introduction of the report:

This report comes from the direct service agency, Sisters of the Good Shepherd. It is prepared in English, though English is not the first language of the authors. We ask your forbearance on any errors of grammar. Good Shepherd is a small agency and this report is based on our work and experience. We are hopeful that the government might allocate more resources to research in order to further validate the points made in this report.

With CEDAW, we seek the dignity and empowerment of all women.

Background and History:

The situation of prostitution in Hungary

Hungary signed the New York agreement in 1950. The prostitutes were forced to pursue a civil profession. Most of them were trained to become taxi drivers; others were employed in textile industry. Those who engaged in illegal prostitution were strictly punished.

However, in certain areas of the capital prostitution still was going on, such as in Rakoczi square and its surroundings and in a few more bars, eg. Poppy, Violet, Rose. Even if it occurred in other places, it was not known for the wider public.

At the time of political changes (1989) a lot of women became unemployed and Street Prostitution grew to an enormous size. As it was completely out of control, so called “zones of tolerance” were designated in order to regulate the situation. These laws were not carried out by most of the local governments. Also, where such a zone was designated, it had to be eliminated due to pressure coming from the public. These zones were simply designated without any kind of infrastructure or protection, somewhere in the outskirts of the capital.

At this time, civil society organizations and the church started to help the victims of prostitution. It was the Sisters of Good Shepherd who first visited the street prostitutes to ask what kind of help they would need. Experts were involved and they founded a civil organization: “KIUT Veled” (Way Out With You) - Ecumenical Help For a World Without Prostitution. They help women in prostitution by preparing information campaigns to avoid prostitution and they help women to find the alternatives to prostitution. The aim is to prevent prostitution or to escape from prostitution.

There are also a few other organizations and associations such as ‘Protecting the Rights of Prostitutes’ which help these women to function in prostitution without any trouble.

Current situation.

From the direct service work with women in prostitution, the analysis of Good Shepherd concludes that prostitution is gendered form of violence against women that strips her of human rights and dignity as well as her autonomy and empowerment. We are well aware that most of the women in prostitution are young women with limited economic resources. Some of them

have suffered physical or sexual abuse in their childhood. The phenomena of prostitution in Hungary is driven by poverty and patriarchy, under girded by systems of control through pimps.

The Movement for Prostitution Free Hungary fights against prostitution with publications and poster campaigns. They organise conferences and distribute publications aiming to break the one-sided information, which castigates only the women in prostitution. According to the movement it is the system and structures of pimps that encourages and profits from the prostitution of women. They are the ones who make their living by this income. And the purchasers (demand) are the ones who maintain the system going on. This organization tries to put pressure on legislative authorities to punish the purchasers, especially those who exploit children.

Estimated number of prostitutes living in Hungary:

Street prostitution	2500
Prostitution in massage saloons (5 000 saloons)	15000
Prostitutes at night clubs	300
Peep shows	40
Hostess/hotels	100
Man prostitute s	1 500

Total	19 400

The laws in Hungary do not protect women from exploitation.

The health examination of prostitutes is obligatory by the law. It serves those who purchase a woman in prostitution more than it serves the health needs or autonomy of the woman.

A single examination of a prostitute costs 100 000 Ft (€400) from taxpayers' budget. But it is essential to examine them from the point of view of public health, also of human reasons. Prostitutes must have a Health Care Booklet, which is to be shown to the policeman during a control. (Registration is prohibited by the law.) Physical checking must be done once a month, screening test once in three months. (HIV, HbsAg, Syphilis, Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea).

There has been introduced a complex programme for the prostitutes' health examination in order to achieve

- regular screening test of prostitutes
- taking care of the ones with infection
- protection of the clients from the increased risk of infections.

Regular examinations make research possible in connection with prostitution.

The plan in Hungary does not include any kind of plans for the rehabilitation of women or for greater social programs toward gender equality, including education and job skills for adequate employment. There are no published means to apply for programs as alternatives to prostitution.

In fact, with school closings, increasing expenses for education, and general social impoverishment of families, the number of prostitutes is expected to continue to rise.

Recommendations:

Our NGOs recommend that Hungary:

- Provide gender-sensitive social services that ensure education and training for all women.
- Enact public service campaigns to counteract the abuse and violence that girls and women face in their homes and in society.
- Enact laws on the lines of the current Swedish model where women in prostitution are de-criminalized and where purchasers are punished for abusing the dignity of women.
- We are in agreement with the UN Special Rapporteur, Sigma Huda on the human rights aspects of the victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, (E/CN.4/2006/62 , 20 February 2006):
 - *”The Swedish law that prohibits the purchase of sexual services is a particularly apt expression against the demand side of trafficking, for it not only formally condemns the use of prostituted persons, but does so in a context which explicitly recognizes the gendered nature of the commercial sex industry: “As with all laws, the [Swedish] law has a normative function. It is a concrete and tangible expression of the belief that in Sweden woman and children are not for sale. It effectively dispels men’s self-assumed right to buy women and children for prostitution.”*
- Set a 10-year goal, with concrete programs, in which Hungary will become a prostitution-free country where all women may enjoy their human rights without fear of gender violence.
- Include national budget allocations for services for women who seek to leave prostitution. Make application possibilities for government funding available to NGOs who are operating effective social services for women.

Budapest, 20.04.2007.

Addendum: Summary of NGO work with women in prostitution

Working against prostitution in Hungary

Since 1997, the Good Shepherd Sisters have been working against the prostitution of women in Hungary. We work in collaboration with a civil society organization “KIUT Veled” (Way Out With You).

We have two concrete actions and services:

Prevention and Formation:

to avoid more young women entering prostitution, we provide discussions and meetings with adolescents at high risk.

Accompaniment and Support:

To offer support to women in prostitution, we visit women in the street in situation of prostitution. We offer coffee, tea, cookies, and supportive friendships to offer each woman dignity in non-abusive human relationships. We find that with support, many women hope that sometime they will go out of prostitution.

Most of the women in prostitution are young women, with limited economic resources. Some of them suffered physical or sexual abuse in their childhood.

We give them a free telephone number so that they can find us whenever they want and ask for help. If someone would like to go out of prostitution, they have the possibility to live in our women's shelter and to be protected from the dominance of her pimp. She has time to seek a job, stabilize her situation, and make choices about her future.

The problem is that the shelter always is full and it's only for alone women with their children. Sometimes the pimps find them. Then, many times we have troubles to bring safe accommodation to them. When we asked help of other non-governmental organisations who operated the shelter for victims of trafficking in persons the answer wasn't so positive, because if the woman decide that she wants to go to the shelter, she can't communicate with nobody, even with us. She has to be completely isolated of all her relationships. Then, many times they don't accept the offer of the shelter. We would like to open a specific shelter for women in prostitution, but we don't have the resources.

We have the experience of knowing women who have left prostitution and found a job. They have recuperated their dignity and their esteem and are able to function independently as empowered women.

We have conscience that prostitution is a big whip of our society and we have a lot of challenges in front of us. We believe that the attention of the CEDAW process to the discrimination of women in prostitution will help empower the women of Hungary.

Respectfully submitted,

Sr. Gilma María MUÑOZ CALDERON
Jó Pásztor Növérék (1892)
Zápor utca 50
1032 Budapest, HONGRIE

Telephones: (1) 250 39 45 -Apost. Fax (1) 250 39 46
E-mail: gilmamaria@yahoo.com
