

Supplementary CEDAW shadow report

Trafficking of Women in Mongolia Part II

Submitted by the Mongolian Gender Equality Center

The Centre for Citizens' Alliance and the CHRD support the submission of this supplementary CEDAW shadow report to the CEDAW committee for review

Article 6 of the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

Trafficking in women has been recognized and condemned internationally as a grievous human rights violation and as a form of gender based violence. Human trafficking is a growing issue of serious concern in Mongoliaⁱ. Since the early 1990's, Mongolia has experienced complex and dramatic transformations that have deeply affected its social, political and economic structures.ⁱⁱ The negative impacts of the macroeconomic restructuring and privatization taking place in Mongolia have been particularly pronounced for women as their economic security has been undermined, reproductive health care and childcare programs have been eroded, and women's participation and influence in public life and policy making has declined compared to pre-transition times.ⁱⁱⁱ

The lack of equal opportunities and equal rights for women in Mongolia has contributed to the feminization of poverty, which has in turn, contributed to the feminization of migration. This observation is affirmed by comment fourteen of general recommendation nineteen of CEDAW.^{iv} Further, the impact of the economic transition on women in Mongolia, the feminization of poverty in Mongolia, and the issue of human trafficking were three of the "Principal areas of concern" in the Concluding Observations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women in 2001.^v

Research by the Mongolian Gender Equality Centre and the Centre for Human Rights and Development indicate that Mongolian women are primarily motivated to migrate abroad for financial reasons.^{vi} One survey conducted in Mongolia suggested that nominal income, the stability of income, poverty and unemployment are key factors in determining the vulnerability and risk of being trafficked.^{vii} The survey also identified young, adult women with low incomes, moderate education, and living in border areas and urban centers as vulnerable to solicitation for overseas employment.^{viii} Deceptive newspaper and radio advertisements as well as relatives, friends and acquaintances recruit women and offer opportunities abroad, such as highly paid employment.^{ix} Women are provided with false information in terms of the type of work they will be doing, the working conditions they will experience and the wages they will earn.^x Traffickers impose debts for travel and other expenses on victims, creating a situation of debt bondage.^{xi}

The two predominant forms of trafficking in women in Mongolia are sexual exploitation, which includes forced prostitution, and servile marriages to foreign nationals.^{xii} Research on the issue of human trafficking in Mongolia has also revealed an upward trend of domestic trafficking that involves teenage girls being kidnapped off the streets of Ulaanbaatar and locked in hotel rooms where they are sexually exploited.^{xiii} The mining industry in Mongolia has been expanding rapidly in recent years and one of the specific focus areas of the survey (mentioned above) was mining sites in Mongolia.^{xiv} Preliminary sampling in mining areas, specifically Toson Zamaar, Byanhongor and South Gobi, noted an increased prevalence of prostitution in these areas, and suggested that in some cases, Mongolian women have been trafficked to these areas for the purposes of sexual exploitation.^{xv} According to surveys conducted in Er Lian Hao Te, a Chinese border city in Inner Mongolia, there is an increasing number of Mongolian sex workers in the city's red light district.^{xvi} Mongolian Police have estimated that there are between 200-300 Mongolian sex workers in Er Lian, and survey research suggests that a large number of these sex workers were originally victims of trafficking.^{xvii}

While the exact number of Mongolian women who have been trafficked is difficult to determine conclusively, statistics indicate that between 2003-2008, there has been a sharp rise in the number of victims of trafficking, the majority of whom are women: presumed trafficking cases reported to the Mongolian Gender Equality Centre (MGEC) have risen from 3 (of which 2 were women) in 2003 to 58 cases (of which 55 were women) in the first eight months of 2008 alone (these statistics refer only to the cases worked on by the MGEC).^{xviii}¹ These statistics reveal a disturbing trend, and illustrate the staggering increase in cases of human trafficking in Mongolia over the past five years.

Mongolian women who are victims of trafficking experience coercive, degrading and inhuman treatment. Research on the trafficking experiences of Mongolian women reveal that they are often under strict control, their mobility is limited (physically, as well as through the confiscation of their passports by traffickers), and physical abuse and sexual violence are common experiences.^{xix} A survey of 48 returned Mongolian female victims who were trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation revealed that new female trafficking victims are deprived of food, are forced to take drugs to cause weight loss, and in some instances, are forced to have breast enlargement surgery and plastic surgery on their eye lids.^{xx} Ninety-two percent of the women surveyed had been sexually and physically abused by clients, and reported experiencing regular verbal abuse and threats from clients.^{xxi} The experience of being trafficked and the various forms of physical, sexual and psychological abuse and violence inflicted on Mongolian trafficked women violate their various human rights, including but not limited to: the right to liberty and security of person, the right not to be subject to torture or to cruel, inhuman or

¹ Based on statistics from the MGEC, there were 4 presumed cases of human trafficking reported to MGEC in 2004 of which all were women, 5 cases in 2005 of which all were women, 13 in 2006 of which 11 were women, and 115 in 2007 of which 83 were women. The MGEC is a non-profit, non-governmental, social service and advocacy organization that provides comprehensive services to victims of trafficking in Mongolia, including repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration services.

degrading treatment or punishment, the right to the highest standard attainable of physical and mental health, the right to just and favorable conditions of work, the right to freedom of movement, and the right not to be held in slavery or servitude.

The severe trauma and abuse trafficked women experience deeply impact both their physical and mental health. A survey of sixteen, female, Mongolian returned victims who were forced into prostitution found that half of the women reported that their health and well being had significantly deteriorated due to failing menstrual cycles, forced use of weight loss medications, forced consumption of alcohol and drugs, limited access to food, and the relentless work schedule.^{xxii} Mongolian women who are forced into prostitution are also constantly at risk of contracting various STD's and HIV/AIDS.^{xxiii} Currently in Mongolia, there is a limited amount of support services available for trafficked women, such as shelters, legal counseling, psychosocial support, medical care, protective care and vocational training.^{xxiv}

Compounding the physical and psychological trauma of being trafficked are the challenges and stigma Mongolian women face after returning home. Interviews with Mongolian female trafficking victims indicate that these women not only suffered from severe trauma, but had also become isolated from their communities, and feared rejection and disgrace from their friends and family.^{xxv} A survey of returned female, Mongolian trafficked victims who had been forced into prostitution also indicated that they distrusted the ability of law enforcement staff to keep their experiences confidential, and feared that public knowledge of their trafficking experiences would negatively impact their future.^{xxvi}

Interviews conducted in 2003 with ten women who had been trafficked for the purpose of prostitution and who had returned to Mongolia revealed that the women suffered from anxiety and depression.^{xxvii} Some of the women interviewed also reported that they were ashamed and embarrassed by what they had experienced and hid the true details of what had happened to them from their friends and family.^{xxviii} While these ten women had initially pursued legal action against their traffickers, all of their cases were dropped before they entered court as the women were hesitant to proceed with the cases due to fear of retaliation from traffickers, fear that their privacy would be violated and that the public would learn of their involvement in prostitution and due to the limited compensation trafficking victims can claim in court.^{xxix 2}

A survey of 1212 young adults and adults in twelve different sites throughout Mongolia was conducted in 2006 and revealed that while the majority of both groups (87% of young adults and 89.5% of adults) were aware of the issue of human trafficking, their knowledge and understanding of the issue was low.^{xxx 3} According to this survey, print and broadcast media are

² The only compensation trafficking victims can claim are back wages. Under Mongolian Civil Law, in the case of non-material harm, victims cannot demand cash compensation. The assessment of a victim's mental health is used to determine their ability to testify accurately, not to assess psychological or emotional trauma for the purpose of obtaining compensation.

³ The survey was conducted in the following sites: Western region: Khuvsgul Aimag, Eastern region: Sukhbaatar Aimag, Ulaanbaatar capital city: Six central and two peripheral districts, Mine sites: Altan-Us, Bayankhonggor Aimag; Uyango, Uvurkhangai Aimag; Sharin Gol, Darkhan-Uul Aimag; Zaamar, Tuv Aimag; Suuj Uul, Umnugobi Aimag; and, Bugant, Selenge

the predominant sources of information about human trafficking across age groups, however the amount of educational programming on the issue in Mongolia is limited.^{xxxii}

Recommendations

- 1. Strengthening the regulation of various media in Mongolia through which deceptive advertisements are placed is recommended.**
- 2. Amending the civil law to allow victims to claim compensation for the psychological and emotional trauma they experience as a result of being trafficked is recommended.**
- 3. While several Ulaanbaatar based NGO's provide a modest spectrum of services for victims, it is recommended that government funded programs and assistance for victims of trafficking be provided. The number of facilities and the range of victim services available in Mongolia should be enhanced and strengthened.**
- 4. The Mongolian public's lack of in-depth knowledge and limited understanding of human trafficking as indicated through the survey suggests that awareness raising campaigns and programs are necessary and should be promoted in Mongolia in order to better inform and educate the public about the issue, prevent future cases of human trafficking, and reduce the stigma and misperceptions (blaming of the victim) associated with victims of trafficking. Both the general public and vulnerable groups throughout Mongolia should be targeted for awareness raising and educational programming.**

ⁱ "Human Trafficking in Mongolia: Risks, Vulnerability and Trauma." Research report. The Asia Foundation and MGEC: 2006. <www.stoptrafficking.mn>.

ⁱⁱ "Combating Human Trafficking in Mongolia: Issues and Opportunities." Centre for Human Rights and Development. Research report. Ulaanbataar: 2003-2004.

ⁱⁱⁱ Robinson, B. and A. Solongo. "The Gender Dimension of Economic Transition in Mongolia." The Mongolian Economy: A Manual of Applied Economics for a Country in Transition. Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd. (2000): 231-255.

Aimag, Border Points: Zamiin Uud, Dornogobi Aimag; Bulgan, Khovd Aimag; Khavirga, Dornod Aimag. The survey included border points and regions within Mongolia that are known or believed to be transit points, or areas where there is believed to be high-demand for sex-work.

^{iv} *CEDAW General Recommendation 14*. General Recommendations. United Nations. 1992.
<<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm#recom14>>.

^v Mongolia (2001)

[Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, Mongolia](#), U.N. Doc. A/56/38, paras. 234-278 (2001).

^{vi} “Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Mongolian Girls and Women.” Research report. World Vision, UNICEF, MGEC: 2007. <www.stoptrafficking.mn>
“Combating Human Trafficking in Mongolia: Issues and Opportunities.” Centre for Human Rights and Development. Research report. Ulaanbataar: 2003-2004.

^{vii} “Human Trafficking in Mongolia: Risks, Vulnerability and Trauma.” Research report. The Asia Foundation and MGEC: 2006. <www.stoptrafficking.mn>.

^{viii} *Ibid*, p. 24.

^{ix} “Combating Human Trafficking in Mongolia: Issues and Opportunities.” Centre for Human Rights and Development. Research report. Ulaanbataar: 2003-2004.

^x “Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Mongolian Girls and Women.” Research report. World Vision, UNICEF, MGEC: 2007. <www.stoptrafficking.mn>

^{xi} “Human Trafficking in Mongolia: Risks, Vulnerability and Trauma.” Research report. The Asia Foundation and MGEC: 2006. <www.stoptrafficking.mn>.

^{xii} “Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Mongolian Girls and Women.” Research report. World Vision, UNICEF, MGEC: 2007. <www.stoptrafficking.mn>

^{xiii} “Human Trafficking in Mongolia: Risks, Vulnerability and Trauma.” Research report. The Asia Foundation and MGEC: 2006. <www.stoptrafficking.mn>.

^{xiv} *Ibid*, p. 14.

^{xv} *Ibid*, p. 14.

^{xvi} *Ibid*, p. 8.

^{xvii} *Ibid*, p. 8.

^{xviii} Victims of Trafficking statistics. Mongolian Gender Equality Centre. 2003.
Victims of Trafficking statistics. Mongolian Gender Equality Centre. 2008.

^{xix} “Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Mongolian Girls and Women.” Research report. World Vision, UNICEF, MGEC: 2007. <www.stoptrafficking.mn>.

^{xx} *Ibid*, p. 8.

^{xxi} *Ibid*, p. 8.

^{xxii} *Ibid*, p. 9-10.

xxiii “Human Trafficking in Mongolia: Risks, Vulnerability and Trauma.” Research report. The Asia Foundation and MGEC: 2006. <www.stoptrafficking.mn>.

xxiv Ibid, p. 35.

xxv Ibid, p. 8.

xxvi “Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Mongolian Girls and Women.” Research report. World Vision, UNICEF, MGEC: 2007. <www.stoptrafficking.mn>.

xxvii “Combating Human Trafficking in Mongolia: Issues and Opportunities.” Centre for Human Rights and Development. Research report. Ulaanbataar: 2003-2004.

xxviii Ibid, p. 17.

xxix Ibid, p. 17.

xxx “Human Trafficking in Mongolia: Risks, Vulnerability and Trauma.” Research report. The Asia Foundation and MGEC: 2006. <www.stoptrafficking.mn>.

xxxi Ibid, p. 33.