

# LearningNetwork Brief 05

## **Do Not Harm: A Human Rights Approach to Anti-Trafficking Policies and Interventions in Canada**

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## Do Not Harm: A Human Rights Approach to Anti-Trafficking Policies and Interventions in Canada

In the last decade, and particularly since the United Nations *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children* came into force in 2003, human trafficking has received growing international attention. National Governments have sought to combat this crime against persons through the enactment of criminal laws and border security measures as well as the implementation of various policies aimed at the prosecution of traffickers, the prevention of trafficking, and the protection of trafficked persons. Canada is no exception to this and these elements have been incorporated into the 2012 National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking. In addition, global alliances and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have worked to raise awareness about the issue and to establish and coordinate service regimes to assist trafficked individuals. I began this work when Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW) Canada was founded in 1996 (before the implementation of these initiatives), I was very idealistic but at the same time, my work and that of my international colleagues in GAATW continue to be guided by certain fundamental values.

### Human-Rights Based Approach

Coming from a human-rights based approach, I and my colleagues see anti-trafficking work as centered on supporting and assisting people who have experienced particular human rights violations or crimes against the person (deception and

coercion, forced labour and servitude). In this work, we are being attentive to the individual's story and the complexities of transnational, regional, and domestic routes into multiple sites, including sex work; respecting their capacity to define their own experiences rather than having them defined by me, state officials or Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) as de facto victims or worse cast as "sex slaves" – an unacceptable and stigmatizing term (in my estimation); and respecting their capacity to make decisions about or articulate their desires for the future rather than assuming they do not have that ability or that I or state officials or NGOs or service providers know what is best for them.

### Root Causes of "Uprootedness"

This work for us/me was also about exposing and addressing what is often termed the root causes of "uprootedness", movements, as well as vulnerabilities to human trafficking – the destructive forces of neo-liberalism, globalization and neocolonial/colonialism, which have led to the destruction of livelihoods and ecological integrity, rising levels of poverty in much of the world, a crisis of displacement and human insecurity, and deepening inequalities within nations and between nations (e.g., as in Global North/Global South or the presence of Third or Fourth Worlds in the rich First World). Political instability, internal civil strife or conflict, war and militarization also serve as context in which the supply of uprooted and displaced populations is created.

No wonder that, for example, global migrant population statistics are so staggering as people move from regions of disadvantage and lack of opportunity (economically or otherwise) to regions of greater advantage & opportunities. According to statistics released by the UN Population Division in 2008, the global migrant population has been growing in the millions each year since 1975, reaching 214 million people or 3.1% of the world's population in 2008; of that population, about half are women, many of whom seek work in informal, invisible, unregulated, and stigmatized sectors of economies. For similar trends, we only have to look at Canada with the ongoing movements of people from rural to urban areas or the depopulation of men of all ages in the Maritimes and Newfoundland as they seek work and opportunities in the oil rich regions of Alberta.

The UN Population Division's 214 million migrant population estimate does not include the approximately 15 – 30 million irregular migrants worldwide who are illegal and undocumented. As many scholars argue, the imposition of increasingly impenetrable borders and immigration policies of nation states especially in countries of the Global North have created the conditions for a growing market for “clandestine migration services,” such as “irregular labour services, smuggling, facilitation of illegal migration, provision of false passports and visa permits, underground travel operations, and trafficking.” Under globalization, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and neo-liberalism, capital can move freely across borders, but people cannot, despite

the fact, that freedom of movement and mobility is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Finally, in Canada, as Sarah Hunt has argued, multiple factors -- most notably colonial violence, the root causes of exploitation, racism, and the complicity of the Canadian state -- need to be taken into account in discussions of the trafficking of Indigenous women and youth for the purpose of sexual exploitation, a growing focus of anti-trafficking work in the Canadian context. What I am trying to suggest here is that in the years since 1996, with the growing machinery or dare I say bureaucratization of anti-trafficking work in many countries (especially in the Global North), some key fundamentals continue to be sidelined: respect for the human dignity and capacities of the exploited and the wronged; and the taken for granted systems, structures, and ideologies that prohibit human dignity/potential from becoming realized especially among marginalized, vulnerable, and stigmatized populations.

## **Do No Harm Framework and Principles**

With the above as critical context, my focus is on what is sometimes called “do no harm” as a guiding principle when developing anti-trafficking policies, measures, strategies, and campaigns. A principle that I did not see incorporated in the 2012 Canadian National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking.

What “do no harm” entails is that ends do not justify the means in efforts to combat human trafficking. This principle requires

that governments, law enforcement, and NGOs seriously consider the possible harmful impacts of particular anti-trafficking strategies, interventions, and campaigns. This includes harmful consequences on the rights and safety of those who are meant to benefit from specific anti-trafficking measures and those who by virtue of being marginalized, vulnerable, or stigmatized are caught in the web of effects.

In 2002, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and Human Trafficking, stressed that “the human rights of trafficked persons shall be at the centre of all efforts to prevent and combat trafficking” and that “anti-trafficking measures shall not adversely affect the human rights and dignity of persons, in particular, the rights of those who have been trafficked, and of migrants, internally displaced persons, refugees and asylum seekers.” She also urged States, intergovernmental agencies and NGOs to monitor and evaluate “the relationship between the intention of anti-trafficking measures which may have the effect of transferring the problem from one place or group to another.”

In 2007, GAATW (whose international secretariat is in Bangkok, Thailand) took this one step further in *Collateral Damage: The Impact of Anti-Trafficking Measures on Human Rights Around the World (Collateral Damage)*. In assessing the transnational anti-trafficking measures in eight countries (Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Nigeria, Thailand, the United Kingdom, and the US), the researchers concluded that despite the investment of “many hundreds of millions of dollars” (with biggest investor

being the US) in an effort to eradicate trafficking in persons globally, and despite the good intentions of countless non-governmental organizations working on this issue in the most regions of the world, there is now “substantial evidence” to suggest that anti-trafficking measures have had “unacceptably negative consequences for marginalized categories of people, such as migrants and refugees” and that these measures “have been counter-productive for some of the very people they are supposed to benefit most directly.” The researchers also outline a number of principles for “limiting the unacceptable side effects of anti-trafficking measures” that often are implemented in the name of “protection” of presumably at risk groups. For example, governments in some sending countries in, for example, South Asia and Southeast Asia, have responded to the issue of trafficking by implementing strategies to curb or prevent women’s cross-border movements in the name of protecting them from potential abuse and exploitation. Such a conflation of trafficking with migration, as critics have pointed out, reinforces the notion that women need to stay at home under the protection of male guardians and /or the state. It is also based on the assumption that reducing or stopping the flow of female labour migration, without considering the root causes of cross-border movements, will not solve the problem of trafficking in women. *It does not take into account that controlling or hindering women’s right to migrate in the name of protecting them from harm, does not prevent or curb reliance on third parties and illicit channels to facilitate migration, but has enormous potential to drive these processes further underground.*

## Statistics and the Importance of an Evidence-based Approach

In the last decade, estimates as to the number of persons who are trafficked each year at the global level have varied dramatically, ranging from 600,000 to 4 million to 21 million to 27 million, and 80 per cent are said to be women.

It is generally argued that compiling comprehensive and accurate human trafficking statistics is difficult given the clandestine character of the activity, challenges in identifying persons affected by it, and the reluctance or inability of trafficked individuals to contact authorities or NGOs. Given such vast discrepancies, some researchers (including the U.S. Government Accountability Office) have begun to ask pertinent and critical questions about the compilation and recycling of global and national trafficking statistics. Key questions being asked are: what methodology is being employed? Who is making that determination? How is trafficking being measured?

In part, such vast numerical variations are the result of entrenched ideological differences as to what constitutes human trafficking. Notwithstanding legal definitions that specify that, except in the case of children and youth, threats, coercion, and deception are necessary components of trafficking persons into situations of forced labour and servitude, there are those who argue that any woman (men and transgendered persons are never invoked in these arguments) who is engaged in the sex trade has been trafficked. The latter position is based on the notion that prostitution when it involves women – regardless of how she

may define her experience – is itself a form of coercion, violence, and exploitation. In other words, prostitution and trafficking are conflated.

In addition, statistical estimates that are not based on evidence can also be used to pursue particular agendas. For example, to justify police raids of sex trade establishments as an acceptable anti-trafficking measure, or for rhetoric purposes. For example, unsubstantiated projections about a spike in “sex trafficking” prior to and during mega-sporting events can fuel crackdowns on sex trade establishments, racial and gender profiling at border entry points, and sensationalist and harmful anti-trafficking awareness campaigns.

Hence, one of the key recommendations contained in the *Collateral Damage* report emphasizes the importance of taking “an evidence-based approach when adopting anti-trafficking measures and to ensure that the measures taken are both proportionate and appropriate to address the patterns of abuse KNOWN to be occurring.”

## Canada’s Legislative/Policy Framework

The UN Trafficking Protocol was signed by Canada in 2000 and came into force in 2003. The definition of human trafficking (which was debated for over a year) refers to three distinct elements: a set of actions that involve recruiting or moving someone; the means by which those actions are carried out (abduction, deception, coercion); and a purpose (force labour, forced services, or servitude).

While the trafficking definition is meant to apply to all labour sites, it is certainly the case that trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation has been the main focus and target of anti-trafficking laws, policies, interventions, and campaigns by both state governments and NGOs at the global and national level. As a consequence, until very recently, trafficking in persons into other labour sites (the agricultural sector, factory work, the construction industry, domestic service, etc.) has often been ignored or sidelined.

Some scholars have argued that this focus on trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation has conveniently helped to eclipse what is often considered to be the more mundane or economically justifiable “state-sponsored exploitation of migrant people” base on the logic of labour market flexibility.

During recent GAATW Canada’s interviews with British Columbia legal and NGO representatives who work directly with migrant workers, participants emphasized that with the general focus on sexual exploitation in anti-trafficking discourses in British Columbia and in Canada, the inference is that “sex trafficking is the sole (or most odious) type of trafficking,” or that those persons affected by human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation are considered to be, or have been cast as “second class victims.” This trend, together with what was described as the “growing acceptance among policy makers, enforcement officers, and the general public that the Canadian immigration system is being systematically

defrauded by so-called ‘low skilled’ workers,” has meant that “the gravity of labour trafficking” has largely been ignored.

In addition, as suggested in the *Collateral Damage* report, “the main emphasis of most governments when it comes to migrants is to ‘control’ and limit migration (and in some cases such regulatory policies are directly linked to combating human trafficking)...Indeed, the narrow focus on trafficking seems in many countries to act as a justification for not taking action to end all abuse to which migrant workers in the formal and informal sectors of the economy are subjected.”

## Canada’s Law Enforcement Measures

Since 2000, the federal government has established substantial law enforcement measures to detect prosecute and punish traffickers.

For example, with respect to transnational trafficking, the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Action (IRPA)* (2002) contains provisions for more vigilant border surveillance, harsh penalties for those convicted of smuggling and trafficking, and extended grounds for and enhanced state power of deportation and detention, including the highly controversial provisions that allow for the “protective detention” of suspected trafficked persons. In strongly critiquing “protective” detention practices, the *Collateral Damage* report calls for the repeal of “all legislation and regulations which allow for the detention of people who have been trafficked, whether this is de jure detention

by a law enforcement agency or de facto detention by an NGO.” For example, confinement by traffickers is designated a crime, but confinement by the state or NGOs is designed as protection.

Canada’s *Criminal Code* provisions on trafficking in persons (2005) are applicable to both transnational and domestic trafficking and cover various offences, including recruiting, transporting, harbouring a person or exercising control or influence over the movements of a person for the purpose of exploitation, financially or materially benefiting from the exploitation, withholding or destroying documents for the purpose of exploitation.

So under current systems of accountability (and most notably the US State Department’s annual Trafficking in Persons report which ranks countries of the world each June in terms of their efforts to combat human trafficking), the Canadian government has established as a key priority a significant law enforcement and border control infrastructure which seemingly will continue to expand under the new National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking with the creation of an integrated enforcement team led by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), with support of the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), that is focused on proactive investigations to intercept and/or disrupt all forms of trafficking in persons domestically and internationally.

## Human Trafficking Offences in Canada

Although the extent of human trafficking in Canada is difficult to determine, the

following available statistics, as of April 2012, provide some context:

- 25 convictions (41 victims) under human trafficking specific offences in the Criminal Code enacted in 2005. This does not include the numerous other convictions for human trafficking related conduct under other criminal offences.
- Approximately 56 cases currently before the courts, involving at least 85 accused and 136 victims.
- At least 26 of these victims were under the age of 18 at the time of the alleged offence.
- Over 90% of these cases involve domestic human trafficking; the remaining, less than 10% involved people being brought into Canada from another country.
- 3 charges have been laid under section 118 of IRPA, which prohibits trafficking into Canada. While no convictions under that section have been registered, accused persons have been convicted under related IRPA provisions.

## Protective Measures and interventions

On the protection front, in 2006 and 2007, Citizen and Immigration Canada (CIC) also introduced a 120-day and the 180-day fee exempt Temporary Resident Permits (TRPs) for those identified as trafficked persons.

With respect to TRPs, the practice in many countries of making assistance to persons classified as trafficked conditional on their agreeing to cooperate with law enforcement officials has been critiqued as incompatible with a human rights



approach. Under Canada's TRP guidelines, it appears that persons eligible for a TRP are "encouraged" but not required to participate in criminal investigations or proceedings. *In Canada, victims of trafficking are not required to testify against the trafficker to gain temporary or permanent resident status.*

Since Citizenship and Immigration Canada began issuing Temporary Residents Permits to victims of trafficking in May 2006 to the end of December 2001, 178 TRPs were issued to 73 foreign nationals. This number includes subsequent permits issued to the same victim to maintain legal status in Canada. Of these victims identified by CIC,

- 16 were males and 54 were females (including one under 18 years old)
  - 3 others were minor dependents of adult victims
  - 54 of the victims suffered labour exploitation
  - 14 suffered sexual exploitation
  - 1 victim was subjected to both labour and sexual exploitation
  - 1 reported another kind of abuse.
- (Key source countries included Thailand (30), Moldova (10), the Philippines (9) and Mexico (6)).

In another protective move, under Bill C-10 (although this has been in the works since at least 2007), immigration officers are authorized to refuse work permits to vulnerable foreign nationals when it is determined that they are at risk of humiliating or degrading treatment including sexual exploitation and human trafficking. This is specifically designed to shut down the granting of exotic dancers visas in the name of protecting vulnerable women; however, various migrant and

exotic dancer advocacy groups have responded by arguing that such a policy is paternalistic and "may harm the very people it is trying to help by driving foreign exotic dancers to resort to illegal channels to facilitate migration and into underground establishments where they will be beyond the reach of those monitoring workplace health and safety standards."

While the exotic dancer visa program has been shut down in the name of protection, it appears that state officials have no problem accepting migrant women to work as domestics for 24 hours per day for 7 days per week despite all of the well documented abuses associated with this unregulated labour sector.

Finally, since 1997, various enforcement agencies, including RCMP and local police, CIC and CBSA have conducted periodic raids on massage parlours and other sex trade establishments in cities like Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary, and Edmonton. These raids were justified as operations to root out the operations of transnational organized crime networks and to rescue the women in the establishments from forced sexual servitude; they have however yielded very mixed results for enforcement and in some cases, have had highly detrimental consequences for the women working in the establishments.

In 2006, for example, 18 licensed massage parlours on the British Columbia Lower Mainland were raided. The parlours were all suspected to be connected to "the sex trade, organized crime and human trafficking operations". There were 200 enforcement officers involved with the media and NGOs standing by. These raids

yielded no trafficked women as all were Canadian citizens (78) or permanent residents (6); nonetheless, the women in the establishments were handcuffed, photographed, and interrogated, their personal possessions confiscated, and their rights to privacy and future work were severely disrupted. Also, the work of NGOs who have conducted peer-based outreach in the massage parlours in the area was significantly interrupted.

In this case, there was no system of accountability or recourse in place for women affected adversely. While much is often said about accountability to tax payers, to donors, to the US Trafficking In Persons reporting mechanisms, it seems to me, that systems of accountability to the human rights impacts of particular anti-trafficking policies and interventions on those who are supposed to benefit from them or are swept up in such initiatives, need to be considered much more carefully and seriously. This can be accomplished by more rigorously applying the principle of do no harm.

### **Case Study -- 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games**

Between January and August 2010, GAATW researchers (Shauna Paull, Sarah Hunt, and myself) conducted a study on human trafficking in the context of the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games.

The study involved research into a broad spectrum of sources: studies that assessed the connection between human trafficking and previous international sporting events; and, extensive analysis of available print media, focusing on national and provincial

coverage in the period between 2006, when discussions about the link between human trafficking and the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games first surfaced in the media and August 2010, the endpoint of the study. The media analysis was supplemented by a review of publicly accessible data, which documented various public awareness campaigns initiated by NGOs and faith based groups prior to the commencement of the Olympic Games. GAATW researchers also gathered relevant quantitative and qualitative data through 61 interviews with representatives from the following:

- federal government
- provincial government agencies in BC, law enforcement, immigration, and border security personnel on the Lower Mainland and Vancouver
- local Indigenous organizations
- service provision, outreach, and advocacy organizations (youth, sex trade, migrant workers, etc.)
- legal and human right advocates
- academic researchers with expertise on human trafficking.

### **Why the focus on Mega Sporting Events? Assumption and Evidence**

Since 2004, international sporting events have come under greater scrutiny and have been targeted by some as highly fertile environments for human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. This is premised on the assertion that traffickers will capitalize on the expected spike in male demand for paid sexual services during such events by trafficking women and youth into sex industry.

Prior to the 2010 Winter Olympics, the 2006 FIFA World Cup in Germany had received the greatest international attention, media coverage, and subsequent scholarly analysis. The controversy began with a April 2005 prediction that 40,000 “foreign prostitutes” would be trafficked into the country to service male sexual demand during the event. Because Germany had officially legalized prostitution in 2002, it was seen a fertile haven for “sex trafficking”.

However, according to a number of official reports, the anticipated increase in human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation did not materialized nor did an increase in the demand for paid sexual services.

Two reports produced prior to and during the 2006 FIFA World Cup sought to expand the conversation about the connection between this tournament and trafficking.

In May 2006, the European Commission’s Expert Group on Trafficking in Human Beings presented a series of recommendations including:

- the need of facts-based information so as to avoid the fueling of unsubstantiated predictions;
- the need to make a careful distinction between prostitution and trafficking, presumably in response to some of the international and national public awareness campaigns;
- the need to remember that trafficking does not occur for the purpose of sexual exploitation only, but also in many other unregulated segments of the labour market that may be connected to such major international sporting events.

Also in 2006, a Berlin-based organization

founded in 1988 that runs a shelter for Southeast Asian women, a counseling centre for migrant and trafficked women, and an anti-trafficking coordination centre circulated a statement in which they presented a number of reasons why the 2006 FIFA World Cup was not a conducive environment for a massive increase in transnational human trafficking for the purpose of “forced prostitution”. The authors maintained that, given heightened levels of security and an enhanced enforcement presence in host cities, as well as the substantial investment required to move women across borders, it would be too risky and not cost effective for traffickers to set up operations for a four-week period. They also challenged the notion that the influx of male spectators at mega sporting events necessarily resulted in a significant rise in the demand for paid sexual services. They suggested that the priority of fans was by and large to watch the tournament. Anecdotal evidence from previous hallmark events tends to support this claim, but there has been no evidence-based research conducted that has analyzed the fan bases of or measured the often assumed high male demand for paid sexual services during international sporting events.

Both documents also emphasized that more attention to the human rights impact of counter trafficking measures prior to and during the 2006 World Cup was needed; for example, in the name of rescuing ‘foreign women’ from situations of sexual exploitation, police in Berlin and other host cities aggressively targeted sex workers, raided brothels and sex clubs, etc. These interventions yielded no evidence of trafficking. As the European Commission’s Expert Group on Trafficking in Human

Beings noted, “all activities in connection with this or other similar events should not be instrumentalized to discriminate against prostitutes or to further marginalize or stigmatize them, thus increasing their vulnerability to trafficking and other forms of violence and abuse... All policies have to be assessed against their impact on human rights.” In addition, the proposed enhanced gender and national profiling at German border entry points prior to the World Cup as a justifiable counter/trafficking measure was questioned, the argument being that such tactics also violated human rights principles.

Despite the accessibility of a number of reports, including a major study conducted by the International Organization on Migration in 2006-2007 prior to and during the Vancouver Winter Olympic Games, held in February 2010, predictions about an anticipated spike in transnational and domestic trafficking at the event were integral to a number of NGO-sponsored public awareness and prevention campaigns.

## Prevention strategies

### Government Initiatives (Federal and Provincial) and Local Enforcement.

While NOG discussions about an anticipated jump in transnational and increasingly domestic trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation prior to the 2010 Vancouver Olympics began to emerge in early June 2006 – one week before the much-scrutinized FIFA World Cup – and

then continued to intensify in subsequent years, media reports and interviews indicated that relevant federal officials and local enforcement personnel remained cautious in making any definitive predictions. Internal intelligence data and available information about the lessons learned and the prevention measures implemented by previous host nations were the main reference point for strategic planning prior to the Games.

It was further suggested that high security measures at the Canadian border, strict passport and visa requirements, and an enhanced enforcement presence in Vancouver and Whistler would serve as deterrents to traffickers. Other prevention strategies included public education on trafficking, coordination and partnerships between federal, provincial, and service provision agencies, and the training of enforcement officers (police) and first responders in trafficking indicators.

### Local NGO Debates -- Varying Definitions and Understandings of Human Trafficking

At the NGO level, however, the countdown to the Olympics was marked by escalating and fierce debates between two main coalitions: sex worker organizations and advocates whose primary concern was the rights, safety, and well-being of their constituents during the Games, especially in the face of traffic re-routing as well as the influx of tourists, the media, law enforcement, and security personnel in the downtown area. These groups devised and implemented various strategies to address sex worker safety – information sessions

and resource materials about what to expect during the Games, location of safe spaces and supports, and legal rights in regard to interactions with the media and law enforcement, etc. During the event, some organizations increased their on-street outreach efforts and extended hours of drop-in centers. One organization distributed a pamphlet directed at potential clients which include contact information for NGO working with trafficked persons should visitors encounter them.

A number of Vancouver sex workers organizations and advocates were also members of the Sex Industry Worker Safety Action Group, a multi-stakeholder collaboration with local law enforcement and other service provision agencies. Such a collaborative model, it was noted in interviews, was designed to address concerns about criminalization, surveillance, and harassment of marginalized and stigmatized communities including female, male and trans street-based sex workers, and street involved youth prior to and during the Games. Based on their position that coercion, violence, and exploitation are unacceptable in all sectors, participants further emphasized that active consultations with sex workers, marginalized local populations, and front-line workers – groups attuned to the everyday, on the ground realities in all their complexities – should be integral to the development of national and provincial anti-trafficking policies, measures and campaigns in general and within the context of mega events in particular.

The other main coalition focused their efforts on raising public awareness about

transnational and especially domestic trafficking of Indigenous and non-Indigenous women and youth into Vancouver's sex industry, the operations of pimps and traffickers, and the extent to which male demand for paid sexual services fuelled "sex trafficking." This coalition believed that all of the preceding concerns would be exacerbated during the Olympic Games. These public awareness initiatives include the *Buying Sex Is Not a Sport* campaign (involving public and media forums, poster campaigns, T-shirts and silent direct actions outside various exotic dance clubs and public venues). The latter actions however drew criticism from local exotic dancers who argued that "spreading the message that exotic dancers in Vancouver are sex slaves" was not only "demeaning" and misleading, but it also put "dancers at risk" and "interfered with their ability to make a living."

However, the campaign that sparked the most local controversy was titled *The Truth Isn't Sexy* campaign. The campaign's first phase included billboard, transit shelter, and men's washroom ads which depicted the image of a young woman and a letter addressed to "dear john" and contained first person narratives of the woman's experiences of deception, abuse, being sold by a family member/boyfriend, drug addiction, etc.. The tag line was "I am a slave" and "save me". Other materials depicted the bruised faces of women from various racial backgrounds with the statement, "I am the face of sex trafficking."

Not surprisingly, this campaign generated intense criticism from Vancouver-based sex worker activists and advocacy organizations who viewed it as unduly

graphic and disturbing. Critics were also offended that local organizations had not been consulted prior to the launch of the campaign and they questioned the ads' educational value. For instance, critics thought the ads were designed to evoke emotional responses from the public rather than engendering an informed and meaningful understanding of the systematic causes, nature, and realities of trafficking into multiple sites and how to engage with the issue. Concern was also expressed about the traumatizing, marginalizing, and stigmatizing effects of the "shock and awe" ads on local sex workers. As one interviewee put it, "Having a billboard of an underage girl in her underwear being stomped on can be triggering. It's selling sex and violence to prevent them."

As a number of interviewees noted, NGO discussions and associated campaigns that emerged in the pre-Olympic period tended to focus more on the long-standing and polarized prostitution debated (harm reduction versus abolition) than on trafficking per se. In this sense, these two coalitions were ideologically and strategically divided, holding different positions on prostitution, divergent understandings of human trafficking, and conflicting strategies of how to address both phenomena. At the same time, organizers of some of the high profile public awareness campaigns appeared to be oblivious to the traumatizing and stigmatizing consequences of certain intervention and campaigns.

## Accountability

Buried beneath this unfolding debate, there were a few muffled voices that raised

the possibility of human trafficking into other labour sites in the run-up to the Olympic Games. However, there appeared to be no extensive public monitoring or concern about the working conditions (based on international labour standards and the principles of ethical purchasing practices) under which workers in the Global South produced the dizzying array of consumer goods available at Olympic venues and on-line,.

## Key Recommendations

A number of recommendations emerged from the GAATIW study:

- Examine the histories of and the lessons learned from previous international sporting events as well as the policies and practices implemented by other host nations/regions. This would include an analysis of the anticipated fan base.
- Engage in an early assessment of the risk of human trafficking in the host country/region/city using an evidence-based approach, and develop appropriate prevention strategies accordingly. Labour trafficking should receive equivalent attention to trafficking in persons for the purpose of sexual exploitation, and prevention initiatives, including guiding principles for employers, should be initiated during the infrastructure and venue construction phase.
- Strategic planning and implementation should include the development of a clearly defined human trafficking prevention plan; the fostering of partnerships, networks, coordination, and information sharing among

relevant government agencies, enforcement bodies, and the NGOs; establishment of appropriate investigative protocols and referral mechanisms to monitor the situation on the ground and to respond to the support needs of trafficked persons. Key partnerships and consultations on strategic planning should also involve Indigenous, youth, sex worker, and migrant worker organizations/advocates as well as grassroots community-based groups.

- Conduct targeted trafficking in persons awareness training of enforcement personnel (police officer, immigration and border officials), criminal justice officials, labour inspectors, first responders and NGO partners, as well as private sector employers and employees in such areas as construction, hospitality services, and transportation. This instruction should also include “sensitivity training” of all security and enforcement officers seconded to the event. Special attention should be paid to non-discriminatory treatment of foreign nationals at ports of entry and temporary foreign workers regardless of labour site, as well as to the rights, safety, and needs of marginalized, stigmatized, vulnerable, and diverse local populations whose lives and work might be negatively impacted by the influx of tourists, enhanced security and enforcement apparatus in their communities, as well as by certain anti-trafficking interventions.
- Devise and initiate a national or regional trafficking-in-persons public awareness campaign, with input from

all relevant community stakeholders. Such a campaign should be accurate, evidence-based, and adhere the principle of “do no harm”.

## Do No Harm Practices and Centering Human Rights

The recommendations that emerged from the interview data in the GAATW study, as highlighted above, are consistent with those presented in previous reports on mega sporting events.

- As documented here, in the highly polarized “prostitution debates” in British Columbia prior to and during the 2010 Winter Olympics, common ground did appear to exist based on the general principle that coercion, violence, and exploitation are unacceptable in all sectors, including the sex industry. Nonetheless, divergent understandings of what constitutes human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and differing strategies to combat it produced a critical challenge to the development of a coordinated and, according to some interview participants, a measured and balanced public awareness and media campaign.
- Second, the establishment of partnerships among government, enforcement, and service provision agencies was also recommended as an important component of human trafficking prevention strategies prior to and during international sporting events. Data from interviews conducted further emphasized the importance of fostering collaborative partnerships and consultations on

strategic planning with communities with on-the-ground knowledge of trafficking in persons and those whose lives and work might be adversely affected by the enhanced security and enforcement presence and anti-trafficking interventions during international sporting events. In the context of the 2010 Olympic Games, the beginnings of such an approach were evident. In an effort to achieve a balance between enforcement, protection, and rights, a collaborative multi-stakeholder community partnership was established, which involved local law enforcement, sex worker organizations, and service provision agencies. Such a localized collaboration could also be extended to include additional groups, such as Indigenous, youth, and migrant worker

organizations/advocates as well as other grassroots, community-based organizations.

- Finally, in keeping with previous assessments of anti-trafficking prevention measures in the context of mega sporting events, a major theme that emerged from this research was the crucial and ongoing necessity of adopting an evidence-based strategic approach and practice. Applicable to governmental, enforcement, and non-governmental agencies, this underlying principle would shape the planning and implementation of anti-trafficking prevention strategies, public awareness and media campaigns, as well as necessary assistance measures for trafficked persons should the need materialize.