

Combatting Women Sex Trafficking in the Northern Region of Mexico

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Introduction

- Sex trafficking of women is a predominant issue in the northern region of Mexico; cities near the U.S/Mexican border, such as Tijuana, are hot spots for sex trafficking. Every year over 10,000 women are trafficked internally; most of the victims are young women who live in poverty.
- Victims often suffer from both physical and mental problems due to the fact that they are forced to sleep with several men; they are exposed to sexual transmitted diseases as well as post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Mexico created the Project to Support Shelters for Victims of Trafficking in Mexico (PROTEJA) and the Special Prosecution Unit for Crimes Against Women and Human Trafficking (FEVIMTRA) with aid from U.S organizations like USAID in order to try to alleviate this problem.
- PROTEJA aims to spread awareness about sex trafficking to the public and to provide educational programs to professionals so that they can identify and treat victims properly.
- FEVIMTRA is a special prosecuting unit that investigates crime against women and human trafficking. It also provides shelter to women.



Strategies

PROTEJA:

- The program chose to combat sex trafficking through spreading public awareness and strengthening shelters that aid victims.
- It held outreach events in order to teach organizations how to make their communities become aware of sex trafficking.
- It created a brochure and a film in which it explained what sex trafficking is; staff members held radio and television interviews in order to reach a larger audience.
- It worked with the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Public Security, among others, in order to educate officials on how to treat victims.
- To strengthen shelters, PROTEJA provided 5 shelters with technical and financial assistance to help shelter staff be able to identify victims, promote awareness to their local communities, develop ways to effectively service victims, and to enable them to collaborate with each other.

FEVIMTRA:

- It partners with social and academic institutions to create programs that strengthen the prevention and investigation of sex trafficking and that provide aid to victims.
- The officers who work for FEVIMTRA receive training sessions for human sex trafficking; this includes information on how to detect and prosecute cases.
- It runs a shelter that aids trafficking victims; the shelter provides legal information as well as social, medical, and psychological support to victims.

Results

PROTEJA:

- The PROTEJA project increased public understanding of sex trafficking and trained government officials and health professionals to identify and treat victims.
- From July 2006- March 2009, the program delivered more than 10,000 hours of training and education through the workshops it created.
- Through the workshops, PROTEJA discussed with 14,000 government officials concepts of sex trafficking and the importance of passing legislation that would protect and provide services to victims.
- It worked with 4,790 NGOs and taught them how to effectively spread awareness; it provided them with materials, such as pamphlets, that contained information about sex trafficking.
- The program was mentioned in the media a total of 163 times.
- From May 2007, the 5 shelters it supported assisted 517 victims, of which more than half were women. They provided 2,500 medical services, 914 social prevention services, and 700 mental health services to victims.



A PROTEJA staff is being interviewed by *Televisa*, Mexico's most important mass media company.

YEARS	ACTIVITIES	Government Representatives	NGOs/CSOs	TOTAL
2006	13 activities	226	1,874	2,100
2007	64 activities	4,210	1,226	5,436
2008	86 activities	5,179	1,690	6,869
2009	6 activities	428	0	428
Total	166 activities	10,043	4,790	14,833

This chart details the number of representatives and non-governmental organizations PROTEJA worked with from 2006-2009.

FEVIMTRA:

- During its first year, it investigated 24 human trafficking cases, resulting in 2 formal indictments and declared lack of jurisdiction in 4 cases.
- In 2011, it investigated 67 cases but none resulted in a prosecution nor sentencing.
- FEVIMTRA's ability to prosecute is impeded by defects in Mexico's existing legislation regarding sex trafficking; most have vague definitions for what sex trafficking is.
- Between March 2008 and February 2009, its shelter provided support to 52 victims. In 2011, it supported 97 women. They all received medical, psychological, and legal services.

Conclusion

- PROTEJA and FEVIMTRA have helped many women that are victims of sex trafficking but it has been nearly impossible for researchers to identify if these programs have reduced the number of women in sex trafficking; this is due to lack of research.
- PROTEJA's success in spreading awareness demonstrates that the media is a great source to use to spread awareness to the general public.
- FEVIMTRA's inability to prosecute sex traffickers shows that there is a need to create appropriate sex trafficking legislation.
- These programs reveal that there is a need to provide more funding for research.
- If Mexico improves sex trafficking legislation and provides more funding to programs like PROTEJA and FEVIMTRA, it can dramatically reduce the number of women who are victims of sex trafficking.



This image was used in one of FEVIMTRA's sex trafficking awareness videos. It was taken in Ciudad Juarez.

References

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