

## **FACT SHEET ON DOMESTIC SEX TRAFFICKING IN JAPAN: Trafficking of Japanese Women and Children**

Domestic trafficking – trafficking that victimizes citizens within their own country – is receiving increased focus in the global anti-trafficking movement. More and more countries, including the United States, are recognizing that many of their citizens exploited in the sex industry are either children or adults under conditions of coercion, meeting the international definitions of human trafficking under the U.N. Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons.

The Japanese government has greatly increased its focus on combating trafficking in persons, and has recently passed a new law criminalizing the practice. While much of the effort is focused on the large volume of foreign national cases, there is a parallel crackdown on some forms of domestic trafficking, particularly domestic sex trafficking of Japanese children. However, increased recognition and protection by both the governmental and the NGO sector is needed for domestic victims of trafficking in Japan.

- The National Police Agency (NPA) has recorded a sharp increase in victims under the Child Prostitution and Pornography law, the total number of which now exceeds 1500.
- Due to a lack of enforcement and very low levels of reporting, this is considered to be the tip of the iceberg. As a spokesperson for the NPA said, "We think there are actually many more victims out there." [*Mainichi Shimbun*]
- According to the NPA, criminal cases in the last years have included 181 victims who are elementary school pupils and 199 from junior high school, many of them trafficked into pornography.
- These figures demonstrate the prevalence of cases of commercial sexual exploitation of children – mainly by male perpetrators – in Japanese society.
- As evidenced by a number of government prosecutions, trafficking of Japanese women and children into brothels, hostess clubs, and pornography is also a serious problem, and often involved organized crime. The domestic traffickers have been shown to use force, debt bondage, and psychological coercion to control their victims.
- 'Enjokosai' or 'compensated dating' is just one part of the larger sex industry in Japan, and often involves commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking of children. Telephone dating clubs, *deaikei* or internet match-making websites, and other companies act as recruiters of the children and generate profits through facilitating their contact with male perpetrators, who often pay to gain access to the children.

### **Recent Examples of Cases of Domestic Trafficking in Japan**

In January 2004, two men from Kanagawa were arrested for running a brothel using “deaikei” (internet matchmaking sites) and for forcing 33 teenage girls into prostitution. The girls were made to sign contracts and had money taken away from them under the pretext of rent for short-stay apartments and fines. The men threatened the girls: “if you quit, we’ll sell your organs”.

In December 2004, a hotel manager, a brothel manager and three Yakuza members were arrested for trafficking two Japanese women into prostitution. The men were suspected of having brought the two women (19 and 20 years old at the time) from Sapporo City to the hotel in Osaka and forcing them into the commercial sex industry from the end of August to the middle of September 2002. The hotel manager, who knew the women previously, told them that “because you didn’t agree to getting involved with the Yakuza, I was given a 4,000,000 yen debt. Pay me back by selling your body!” In this way, he forced them to perform commercial sex acts in his hotel, and was handing the earnings to Yakuza members. Victims were forced to take 30 to 40 customers per day. [2004/12/9 *Asahi Shimbun*]

Two men (28 and 39) suspected of trafficking two girls (15 and 16) for several million yen were arrested by Hyogo Prefecture Police under the Child Prostitution and Pornography Law. The girls were kept in captivity and forced into prostitution. The police suspect that the two men were colluding with Yakuza members and trafficking other girls organizationally. This is the first case in which the anti-trafficking rules of the Child Prostitution and Pornography law have been applied in Japan.

[2004/05/26 *Asahi Shimbun*]

### **Few Services and Little Protection for Domestic Victims**

- Low levels of public understanding and widespread victim-blaming of children and women create a difficult environment for self-reporting of cases.
- Most anti-trafficking service providers and advocates specialize in foreign national cases, and do not provide services or advocacy for domestic victims. Domestic victims of trafficking therefore generally do not have access to service providers who understand the nature of the cases and can meet the specialized needs of the victims.
- While the government is beginning to increase prosecutions, the overall rate of enforcement is still low. Stronger government commitment is required to expand protection for domestic victims and increase prosecutions of their traffickers.
- The international community must consistently broaden their focus beyond transnational trafficking to include the domestic components when addressing the problem of trafficking in persons in Japan.