

# Lessons learned

Contribution to the call for input to the report  
of the Special Rapporteur on violence against  
women and girls to the Human Rights Council  
on prostitution and violence against women  
and girls

Mist, 2024



Mist is a French NGO created in 2020 by a group of women who have been victims of human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and who mobilize themselves to participate in a process allowing them to enhance their experience by helping other victims, speak for themselves and empower themselves by taking part into action and governance, working on the production of recommendations, fighting for a better access to right and justice for victims and against violence and coercion among peer groups.

On January 2024, a group of Mist members gathered in order to reflect on the questions addressed by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls :

*« The Special Rapporteur would like to receive input to better understand the relationship between prostitution and violence against women, to clarify terms, approaches and actions States should take in order to maintain the spirit of international human rights law and to effectively protect women and girls from all forms of violence. », Call for input, Special procedures, deadline 31 January 2024.*

Ten Mist members participated in this workshop : women from Nigeria, France and Congo.

They chose to answer only to some questions among the 15 questions asked by the Special Rapporteur and to focus to the questions 13, 14 and 15 :

**13. What are some of the lessons learned about what works and what does not when it comes to stemming any negative human rights consequences from the prostitution of women and girls?**

**14. Are frontline organizations and survivors' organisations sufficiently included in policymaking at the national and international level?**

**15. What recommendations do you have to prevent and end violence associated with the prostitution for women and girls?**

Two meetings were set up : one simple debate and one debate organized after watching a movie about a victim who choses to take revenge by herself (*Promising young woman*).

We choose to address 4 main topics :

## **1. STIGMA AND LONELINESS**

Victims of sexual exploitation face difficulties in accessing protection (assistance, accommodation, asylum) or access justice (little or no prosecution) when they say that they agreed with being involved into prostitution. They suffer from moral judgement and might have to hide informations to get help. For instance, Nigerian victims who leave their country through trafficking networks knowing that they will have to prostitute themselves in Europe as part of debt bondage.

Victims experience loneliness because they are rejected by families and friends and they might believe they are the bad ones. They lose hope and they don't believe in law and justice anymore.

## 2. POWER AND FREEDOM

Associations of survivors must benefit from a dedicated place to be able to participate, with the means to ensure their training and remuneration in order to produce independent work. Survivors must be free to speak and not in the service of policies or ideologies of other groups. The protection of data and private lives must be secured such as their continuing education to allow them to participate in a meaningful way for the production of opinions based on feedbacks and not simple testimonials.

To take action, survivors need to be fully prepared, to have power, to have people to back them up, to have people who believe them, to have people who accept them the way they are, to have the other girls who understand your pain and to have counselling.

## 3. UNFAVORABLE MIGRATION POLICY

There is a lack of assistance for the victims especially for foreign women due to an **unfavorable migration policy** :

- **Not enough emergency accommodation** and access to social housing ;
- **Not enough access to programs to exit prostitution**, called in France « Parcours de sortie de prostitution » : many women are waiting to access to those programs but there is no will to assist them everywhere in the country because some local authorities (*préfectures*) are not willing to give them a temporary resident permit to allow them to work. Those programs are dedicated to assist any person according to the French law since 2016. But according to the French administrative court, the law excludes now the women who stopped prostitution too long ago to benefit from the program : the time period is not specified though ;
- **Not enough information on their rights** particularly for foreign women who are soliciting in the streets and who are arrested ahead of the **Olympic Games of Paris 2024** ; they are chased and intimidated by police officers, dragged to the station while almost naked, locked up in very tiny rooms. The police officers give them Court notification to leave the country which they have only 48 hours to contest and they arrest them Friday nights so they know they will struggle to find a lawyer during weekends. Moreover, some of them are victims of trafficking and they are not supposed to be punished for something they are forced to do by traffickers according to the non-punishment principle protecting victims of human trafficking.

## 4. CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM IN CRISIS

There is an insufficient fight against French sexual exploitation due to a child protection system in crisis :

- Not enough resources and budget allowed by French state to fight against recruitment in the welfare system shelters which are in poor condition and targeted by traffickers to lure girls into sexual exploitation ;
- Not enough resources provided to treat girls and wean them off chemical submission ; we alert the Special rapporteur on the very worrying use of nitrous oxide.
- No prosecution for human trafficking, trivialization of prostitution of minors.

Mission d'intervention et de sensibilisation contre la traite des êtres humains (Mist)

France

[www.mist-association.org](http://www.mist-association.org)