



# Stakeholder results

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# Research questions

- Main research questions:
- What are psychological consequences of human trafficking?
- What are the effects of counter trafficking interventions?
  - (How) do they complicate procedures?
- How can interventions be improved in order to mitigate negative consequences?

# Methodology

- 50 participants
  - > 9 Law enforcement
  - > 5 Criminal justice
  - > 10 Policy & lawyers
  - > 26 Assistance and support
- Three themes
  - > Victim identification
  - > Participation in criminal proceedings
  - > Assistance and support

# Brief overview of our findings

- Identification
  - > Lack of self-identification
  - > Intellectual disabilities and PHIT
  - > Cultural aspects
- Participation in criminal proceedings
  - > Dependence on victim testimony
  - > Secondary victimization
  - > Interpretation of outcome
- Assistance and support
  - > Assistance dependent on cooperation
  - > Multi-problem victims

# Brief overview of our findings

- Stakeholders have a lot of specific knowledge on the subject.
  - > Implementation of knowledge not consistently done
  - > Complicated by regulations and policy
- Victim cooperation remains essential for criminal investigations.

# Main topic for today

- How law enforcement professionals struggle to find balance between best interest of the investigation and the well-being of the victim.
- This is complicated by:
  - > Regulations and procedures
  - > (In)sufficient empathy
  - > Use of the recordings during criminal proceedings

Complications due to

# REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES

# Informative conversation

- To offer assistance, indication of trafficking is needed.
- When investigative indications are heard, law enforcement should investigate.
- Investigation is not always best interest of the victim.
- Dilemma's:
  - > If victims know that information may be used for investigation, they may not want to talk.
  - > Which role should receive priority.



# Informative conversation

- Some teams have found adequate ways to deal with this. Not nationally and consistently implemented.
- Law enforcement acknowledges that they are primarily focused on the investigation rather than assistance.
- Suggested improvement is to involve assistance employees or psychologists in the informative conversation.
- This improvement was suggested by both law enforcement, criminal justice and assistance stakeholders.

Complications due to

# **(IN)SUFFICIENT EMPATHY**

# Empathy

- Two groups of stakeholders with different opinions
  - > There should be more empathy for victims and their problems and behavior
  - > Too much empathy may stand in the way of critical evaluation and questioning of a case

# Victim behavior complicating interaction

- Attitude toward police
- Inconsistent testimonies
- Ceasing collaboration with police
- Self-blame
- Protect trafficker
- Return to trafficker

# “Easy” to grasp concepts

- Fear of retaliation
- Fear of police
- Fear of prosecution
  
- Language barrier
- Cultural barrier
- Shame of talking about prostitution

# What does the victim understand?

- Stressful moment
- Intellectual disability
  - > More easily distinguished in Dutch victims.
  - > What do victims know? Concept of trafficking? Sex?
- With West-African victims the distinction between intellectual disability and cultural factors is not clear.
- With West-African victims the distinction between PHIT and cultural factors is not clear.

# Understanding the victims' situation and behavior



That victims cannot return to their families/parents. They don't want a *filthy prostitute* living with them.



Why victims blame themselves for their victimization. Why they keep returning to the trafficker after all the harm that has been done.



# Complications with West-African victims

- All have the same narrative
- Does not contain investigative indications
- Can not remember any places or details
- Faint or have seizures
- If any criminal case is started, often results in a discontinuation of this case/ investigation.
- Consequence: West-African victims' charges are very brief and they are not questioned in-depth.



# Complications with West-African victims

- Problem is twofold:
  - > Indeed difficult group with complicated trafficker strategies. Culture, trauma and voodoo.
  - > Self-fulfilling prophecy. Law enforcement expects problems and therefore treat the cases differently.

# Increase awareness

- Awareness of culture
- Awareness of voodoo
- Awareness of signs of PHIT
- Awareness of background of victims and adverse childhood experiences
  
- For more empathy? For more understanding.

Complications due to

# USE OF RECORDINGS DURING CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS

# Complications with empathetic approach

- Recordings of interviews with victims often used in court.
  - > Strategic use of recordings by defense lawyer
- Too much empathy = “pressure by police to admit to being victimized”
- Too critical = “even the police did not believe the victim”

# Complications with empathetic approach

- Law enforcement personnel finding balance between empathy and critical evaluation.
- Treatment in court is responsibility of the president of the Court; more awareness and sensitivity among criminal justice actors.
- Legal representation for victims can help preventing secondary victimization.

# Questions?

- Thank you