DIGITAL DANGERS

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION
TECHNOLOGIES AND TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN

Kathleen Maltzahn

A 19-year-old is filmed by her 30-year-old lover while they have sex. They break up, and years later, without her consent, the video hits the internet. Suddenly, the woman's image is crossing the world, making some people a lot of money in the process. Is this trafficking? The woman herself hasn't been transported across any international boundaries – but her image has.

Virtual Traffic

The word 'trafficking' suggests something very physical. Stories of trafficking of women often include details of stolen passports, border crossings, and foreign countries. But what happens when a concept that suggests the actual movement of people is taken into the virtual world of the web? What happens when trafficking is combined with information and communication technologies (ICTs)?

It seems unlikely that whoever coined the term 'information superhighway' anticipated that the traffic on the internet would be in people, as well as information. How, and how much, the internet and other ICTs are implicated in trafficking is the subject of this paper.

Conventional Crime, ICT Efficiency

In 1998, police in the southern Australian state of Victoria raided hotels property of a local bar owner, Gary Glazner, and seized his computer. What they found confirmed what a Thai woman had told them – Glazner was a trafficker. He was involved in bringingThai women to Australia on 'contracts'. The women were compelled to pay off fabricated 'debts' of up to US$40,000 and were regularly prostituted at least six days a week. They had little to no right to refuse sex with particular men, specific types of sexual activity, or sex without a condom. They were also literally locked in at night.

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When police examined computers seized in the raid, they found files containing picture after picture of Thai women and scans of fake passports that had been emailed by Glazner's contacts up the trafficking chain. Without leaving his office, he was able to order specific women and have them sent to Australia.

This was Australia's first public trafficking case, and although public attention was focused on the conditions of the women once they were in Australia, it is clear that email facilitated communication between the traffickers and the transactions that brought the women to Australia in the first place.

Real Time, Real Women, Real Trafficking?

By the beginning of the new millennium, Glazner's operation seemed very low tech. In a US case reported by a Council of Europe expert group, Japanese women were brought to Honolulu, Hawaii, to do live performances on the internet for audiences in Japan. "Due to more restrictive pornography laws in Japan," the group explains, "the men decided to operate the website from Hawaii and broadcast the live shows back to Japan. The women performed strip shows by webcam and responded to requests from men watching in Japan. They used wireless keyboards for live sex chat with the men at a rate of US$1/ minute. The Japanese men used digital cameras to capture the live video chat, then transmitted it to a server in California run by a 'not respectable, but not illegal' Internet Service Provider (ISP). Japanese viewers accessed the performance through the California server," thus avoiding Japanese regulations.[1]

What do these accounts tell us? They certainly raise many questions about women's rights and exploitation. For example: Was Glazner's use of email an isolated case or part of a broader trend? Are traffickers simply using ICTs as we all do, to make communication easier, or are they using them in different ways? Have ICTs

shaped and changed the operations of traffickers? Where does pornography end and trafficking in images start? And does any of this matter to women's rights and development?

The convergence of trafficking and ICTs raises important issues about both sides of the equation. For example, if one of the violations experienced by women whose images are sold online is their right to privacy, what impact does that have on the quest to find the perpetrators – should the men who traded in women's images have *their* right to privacy respected by law enforcers? If the invasion of women's privacies produces pornography for mass consumption and mass distribution, can counter-trafficking activists avoid debates about pornography? If we are going to problematise ICTs, should we also be writing papers about the negative role of the national postal services in delivering pornography or about airlines and bus companies in facilitating trafficking – in other words, are we confusing a technical tool with the culture that uses it for harm? And finally, is discussion about the role of ICTs in trafficking a luxury and a diversion at this time because most trafficking is likely to be less technology dependant but nonetheless devastating? This paper seeks to explore these and other questions about the possible relationships between trafficking women, information and communication technologies, with a view to advancing understanding of these complex issues.

The first section of this paper lays the foundations for discussing ICTs and trafficking and defines these terms. It asks what we know about how ICTs are and can be used both in the trafficking of women and in countertrafficking efforts. The examples were provided by activists and advocates around the world who are working on trafficking or ICTs or on both issues.

The paper then goes on to explore three pivotal and at times controversial questions in relation to the role of ICTs and trafficking. Does the role of ICTs matter or is it a fashionable distraction from serious countertrafficking work? Can we talk of trafficking in images or does trafficking only apply to people? Is consideration of privacy in relation to ICTs contrary to counter-trafficking work or an essential part of a broader movement to create safety and freedom for individuals and communities?

Finally, the paper asks what action can and is being taken, by governments, feminists, NGOs, and other actors.

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1. Council of Europe, Group of Specialists on the Impact of the Use of New Information Technologies on Trafficking in Human Beings for the Purpose of Sexual Exploitation, Final Report, Strasbourg, 17 February 2003, p. 28. Available on-line at: http://www.coe.int/T/E/human_rights/trafficking/3_Documents/Reports/02_EG-SNT%282002%2909revE.asp#TopOfPage.

I. TERMS AND MECHANISMS

It is important to be clear what the terms 'ICTs' and 'trafficking' mean. Both terms are contested and at times complicated, but there are some agreed-upon definitions.

Defining Information and Communication Technologies

The Association for Progressive Communications Women's Networking Support Programme (APC WNSP) talks about ICTs in terms of three interlinked categories: information technology using computers, telecommunication technologies such as the telephone/fax and radio and television broadcasting, and networking technologies, ranging from the internet to mobile phones, Voice over IP telephony (VOIP), satellite communications, and more.

If you send a text message, a fax or an email, order a book online, or use your computer to make a cheap phone call, you are using ICTs. Most conduct within contemporary modern society is in some way linked to information and communications technology.

According to ACP WNSP:

> ICT use is increasing everywhere. In particular, women are using ICTs to strengthen their organization and movement building at the local, regional and global levels. ICTs, however, can also pose a potential threat to women. ICTs can be used in ways that replicate or perpetuate gender stereotypes and biases, and can have unintended negative impacts.[2]

One area of possible negative impacts is trafficking in women.

Defining Trafficking

In the 1990s, there was much debate about what trafficking meant. There was a wide range of definitions, many related to divergent understandings of what prostitution, migration, and/or labour meant. In the year 2000, after considerable discussion, the United Nations adopted a trafficking protocol, called the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and* Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women *and Children*.[3] This provided a shared international framework for trafficking and defined the term in a way that was acceptable to a wide range of people, institutions and countries. While the protocol has not ended the debate about what trafficking is, it has provided much firmer common ground.

There are a number of important elements in the *Trafficking Protocol* definition and in the protocol generally. First, it defines trafficking in a way that does more than cover exploitation achieved through overt violence or total deception. It recognises that women are often in an unequal power situation and make decisions because of their lack of choices or the authority of the person or persons with whom they are dealing. Second, trafficking as defined in the protocol covers a wide range of activities, including sexual exploitation, forced labour, and organ removal. Third, the protocol holds that a person's consent is not absolute – where someone's consent is secured through threats, deception, abuse of power, or other ways of securing control over another person, her consent is irrelevant. And finally, trafficking is not just about crossing international borders. The protocol recognises domestic trafficking as well.

The Attractions of ICTs

Because ICTs are being increasingly used in more social activities, the inevitable question is: what is the relationship, if any, between trafficking and ICTs? To date, very little has been written about this question. Interestingly, both the counter-trafficking and ICT experts interviewed for this paper frequently commented on how much we have to learn in this area.

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2. "Why was GEM developed?", Available at http://ww.apcwomen.org/gem/understanding_gem/allabout.htm

3. Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, G.A. Res. 25, annex II, U.N. GAOR, 55th Sess., Supp. No. 49, at 60, U.N. Doc. A/45/49 (Vol. I) (2001), entered into force Sept. 9, 2003. Available online at: http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree trafficking.html.

For a more in-depth discussion of the context and definitions of ICTs, please see the Association for Progressive Communications Women's Programme

Web site: http://www.apcwomen.org

One of the first, and clearest, things to emerge from the varied responses was how little is known about intersections between trafficking and ICTs.

Donna Hughes has studied the use of ICTs in trafficking, and other forms of abuse against women and children, since the mid-1990s. She explained why ICTs are attractive to traffickers and other sexual predators and how they can be used:

> New information technologies enable sexual predators to harm or exploit women and children efficiently and anonymously. The affordability and access of global communications technologies allows users to carry out these activities in the privacy of their home. The increase in types of media, media formats, and applications diversifies the means by which sexual predators can reach their victims.
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> There are a number of venues and media formats with different technologies for the transfer of files and communications, including Usenet newsgroups, world wide web, email, live synchronous communication (text and voice chat), bulletin or message boards, webcams for live transmission of images or videos, live video conferencing (live video chat), streaming video, peer-topeer servers, and file sharing programmes.
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> How each is used for sexual exploitation depends on the legality of the activity, which varies from country to country, the techniques adopted by the sex industry or individual users, and the level of privacy or secrecy attempted by the users. Perpetrators have taken advantage of each new technology and application to stalk victims, transmit illegal materials, and avoid detection by law enforcement.
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> Pimps and traffickers use the web to advertise the availability of women and children to be used in the making of pornography. Pimps also use websites to advertise their brothels or escort services directly to men. These sites are often used to attract foreign businessmen or tourists. Increasingly, the prostitution websites include photographs of the women, sometimes nude. This prac-

tice exposes women, identifying them to the public as prostitutes. Many of the photographs look like modelling photographs, and the women may never have intended for those photographs to be used to advertise them as prostitutes. Some of the women may not even know their photographs are on websites.[4]

Technologies for Trafficking

There is currently limited information about how – or indeed if – traffickers are going beyond the obvious use of ICTs for communication and if ICTs are shaping the experiences of trafficked women. Much more is known about the way ICTs are used in child pornography and in other exploitation of children than how they are used in trafficking adult women. However, the Council of Europe Group of Specialists has identified ways that ICTs are being and could be used in relation to trafficking. Their report identifies a range of new and old technologies that can be used for trafficking and other forms of violence against women and children.

- The group points out that ICTs are not all new – 'old' technologies such as **cable TV** could be used to transmit images of trafficked women. According to the group, "satellite and cable

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4. There remains considerable disagreement about how trafficking and the related area of prostitution should be understood and the terminology that should be used in discussing it. This disagreement is reflected in the language used by activists with particular views on trafficking. For example, some who believe that prostitution is a stigmatised profession with no intrinsic relationship to trafficking or who believe that it can make a positive contribution both to individual women's lives and to broader communities tend to use the terms sex work and sex workers. Those who believe that prostitution reflects and reinforces violence against women and social inequality or that it depends upon trafficking to continue tend to use the term prostitution. In this paper, I have maintained the language used by individual contributors in relation to their specific examples. Consequently, a range of terms including sex work, sex worker and prostitution are used. In the rest of the text, I have aimed to use language that does not alienate any woman concerned about trafficking. Whether or not this is successful will be a judgement of individual readers.

5. Council of Europe, Group of Specialists, Final Report, p. 15.

companies say that the more sexually explicit, the greater the demand. The explanation is that pornography on TV is increasing the total market by finding new buyers."[5] In this context, using trafficked women would provide ways of both creating and meeting demand. Similarly, the internet can be used to transmit images of trafficked women, for example in chat rooms.

- **DVDs** provide interactivity that gives users a sense of control and power. The relevance to trafficking is as much because of its impact on culture as because of its technical promise. Technology such as DVDs, says the group, "may further distance some men from meaningful relationships." Similarly, increasingly popular and accessible technologies such as **video streaming** provide lifelike and responsive images.[6]

- **Chat rooms**, **instant messaging,** and similar ways of communicating can create relatively private spaces for traffickers and others. The group says: "No messages are archived or stored and no log files are maintained," making it a safe space for traffickers to talk to each other or their customers.[7]

ICTs meet different needs for different users. They can work for traffickers and for others in at least six ways:

- **Communication between traffickers** is made easier by ICTs ranging from mobile phones (including prepaid phones that can be discarded and therefore not traced) to email. These technologies are not creating options that did not previously exist, but they are making trafficking easier. As the Group of Specialists predict, "as more cases of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation are uncovered, the details of their operations will most likely reveal an increased use of electronic communications."[8]

- Traffickers may also use the internet to **communicate with and recruit victims**. While cases of children and young people being groomed for sexual exploitation over the internet are well documented, concrete links

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6. Ibid., p. 16-17.

7. Ibid., p. 18.

8. Ibid., p. 22.

CREATING DEMAND FOR
TRAFFICKING VIA THE INTERNET

The most obvious example [of ICTs being used for trafficking] that comes to mind is the current fad in using the internet to advertise trafficked women before they arrive somewhere, as a way of making the trafficking much more demand-responsive and efficient. The examples I have heard of are East European and Balkan girls, being advertised as 'coming soon', and providing contact details if you want to reserve some time with that girl. If they get sufficient demand for a girl in a particular place, off she goes. Really simple, and really hard to crack. ▪

Brian Iselin, Iselin Consulting,
Damascus, Syria

between internet recruitment and trafficking are less clear. However, there is concern about the ease with which this could happen. For example, Danish Police reported suspicious advertisements for nannies, waitresses and dancers on websites in Latvia and Lithuania:

The traffickers used internet sites to post job advertisements for jobs in Western Europe just as they do in magazines and newspapers. The magazine ads give mobile phone numbers for contacts, while the internet sites give email addresses.[9]

- In addition, traffickers can use the internet to **advertise trafficked women** and to identify markets.[10]

- Men using trafficked women can **share information about accessing women** over the internet. Such communication is both prac-

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9. Ibid., p. 23.

10. Ibid., p. 27.

11. Ibid., p. 28.

tical (outlining where and how to buy women) and cultural (reinforcing and normalising negative attitudes towards women).[11]

- ICTs can also be **tools for preventing trafficking** and for **protecting trafficked victims** once they have been trafficked. NGOs have been using ICTs in a range of ways to prevent trafficking and help minimise women's vulnerability to trafficking. For example, NGOs use the internet to provide education and information to women going abroad and to policymakers and others addressing trafficking.

- Tools such as the internet can also be used in **aiding women's recovery**. ICTs are being used to provide women with support and protection and can be a powerful tool for finding women who have disappeared abroad, allowing quick exchange of information amongst groups.

II. ASKING SOME TOUGH QUESTIONS

The Connection between ICTs and Trafficking – Does It Matter?

At present, there is little data establishing that ICTs are anything more than basic communication tools for traffickers. This raises an important question: Is it the case that we just do not know what the connection is, or could it be that there is no significant connection? We therefore need to consider whether it be that ICTs have little significance in relation to trafficking, and if discussing them is a distraction from the real task of stopping trafficking.

Across the globe, trafficking is both lucrative and low tech; it relies on age-old strategies for recruiting women and children. While Professor Liz Kelly, a researcher on trafficking who has just returned from Central Asia, acknowledges that ICTs are undoubtedly the way of the future, she feels that there is a danger in placing too much focus on the role of new technologies in trafficking:

> I'm sure [ICTs are] being used, but [I'm not sure about] the extent. And I'm also sure that probably it's more important in terms of the way it enables the traffickers' networks to organise.

> I think there's a certain class and group

of young people who are vulnerable to this, who are the ones who live in the cities and have access to the technology ... but thinking about Central Asia, lots of them don't have access to anything that would count as new technology. They are being recruited down at little informal labour markets, in the cafes, in the ways that people always were.

It is true that ICTs are used at times in traffick-

ICTS AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The power of the internet when providing consultations to women who seek employment abroad cannot be understated. Consultants have immediate access to up-to-date information on visa requirements to almost any country, which they can show to the client.

During workshops on looking for a job, trainers talk about the internet as a potential source of legitimate job announcements for employment within Ukraine. Participants are given lists of websites where they can find vacancy announcements or post a resume.[12]

When sex workers have direct access to information about travelling to other countries and how to engage directly in the sex industry [without having] to go through a third party, then they are less likely to be in contract situations where they may experience exploitation. The internet is a great source of information, and I personally have heard of sex workers from South East Asia using the Femmigration website ... to gain direct information. ∎

Amy Heyden, Winrock International

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12. Use of Information Communication Technologies in Trafficking Prevention Efforts in Ukraine, Winrock International, June 2003.

ing, and they certainly could play a far greater role. How important are they are overall in the trafficking industry is perhaps a question that will only be answered with more knowledge of trafficked women's experiences and more research on the role of ICTs.

Picture or Person? Pornography, Prostitution, and Trafficking in Images

There are (at least) two ways of looking at the significance of ICTs in relation to trafficking and other violence against women. One is to look at them primarily as mechanisms. With this framework, **ICTs provide a fundamentally** different way of being violent to women and **children**; they allow types or frequency of behaviours that were previously rare or unusual. ICTs are seen as unique, creating a cyberworld that is out of sync with 'real' life.

In this context, ICTs need to be addressed in technical terms and measures need to be taken to limit their application. At present, there is little evidence that ICTs are playing a significant role in changing the way that trafficking is done. If we use a mechanistic approach to ICTs, there seems little reason to look at their implications for trafficking in particular.

A second way to look at ICTs in relation to trafficking is as **a forum for influencing culture.** In this context, it is not so much that ICTs allow a different type of violence in themselves but rather that ICTs can effect cultural changes that significantly extend the acceptance of violence and normalise practices previously said to be unacceptable.

Clearly, traffickers and others use ICTs to shape public norms about women in ways that make trafficking and sexual exploitation more acceptable. Representations of women in pornography, sex-tourism and marriage sites, and

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TRAFFICKING FOR PORNOGRAPHY

[In 1997] a group of Lusaka-based prostitutes approached MAPODE [Movement of Community Action for the Prevention and Protection of Young People against Poverty, Destitution, Diseases and Exploitation] with information about some of their colleagues who had apparently been trafficked to Johannesburg, South Africa [to] work in Japanese-operated pornographic boutiques. They had pornographic magazines featuring five of their friends. They claimed that each pornographic pose fetched as much as South African Rand (SAR) 1,000 (US$130). As a result of this information, a MAPODE representative travelled to Johannesburg and

was able to confirm the validity of the information. She found a number of Zambian prostitutes operating in a pornographic boutique in Hillbrow. She also saw the magazines the Lusaka women had talked about, which were clearly tailored for the Japanese market.

MAPODE researchers interviewed a 26-year-old Lusaka-based prostitute who operates a website

in a Lusaka-based four-star hotel's business centre through which she posts photos of younger girls she traffics to as far as Detroit, Michigan in the USA. She was able to narrate how she is able to easily communicate with her customers in the USA using the website, and how they are able to view and chose the girls from the site, how she then receives money to facilitate travel documents and visas for her victims, and how she gets paid. This young woman's story made it quite clear that there is a direct relationship between ICTs and trafficking in Zambia. ∎

Merab Kambam, Director, Movement of Community Action
for the Prevention and Protection of Young People against
Poverty, Destitution, Diseases & Exploitation (MAPODE)

in other online ads, all work to compound acceptance of violence against women. UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking Sigma Huda (speaking in her personal capacity) raises concern about the way ICTs are used to diminish women's dignity:

> Obviously if we tend to ignore [the use of ICTs in violence against women], it's like living in a fool's paradise... Someone else is benefiting off our ignorance. That cannot be so.

> It's like pornography, sex strip shows, you tend to ignore it, you tend to say okay we'll legalise it, it only hurts a few. But with [the] internet [it] is not so, anyone can go on-line and see violations of the human body being displayed… It is also their human rights that are being violated by these intrusions. For example, you have so many pop-ups that come up [that it is difficult to ignore images of trafficked women]…

> We have to look at this whole issue if it hurts the dignity of women and harms them. Sometimes they don't even know this imaging of them is on the internet... We must see that this is really a very critical issue from a human rights perspective, and we must address the negative effects of ICTs.

This concern about ICTs in reflected in a recent Amnesty International campaign against violent video games. In a report called *Discriminación y violencia contra las mujeres en los videojuegos más populares de estas navidades* [Discrimination and Violence against Women in the Most Popular Videogames this Christmas], Amnesty International's Madrid and Barcelona branch revealed that:

> In our research on videogames, we have discovered assaults on women, murder, rape, slavery, torture, forced prostitution, child abuse, the treatment of women as objects, and other violations of human rights, … and what is worse, minors have free access to most of these games on the internet,…

> Examples of videogames:

> • *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* – the game targets prostitutes as the objects of aggression and murder. The player, after paying for the services of a prostitute, gets his money back by beating her to death.

> • *Benki Kuosuko* – a Japanese woman, gagged and tied up, sits with her legs open on a toilet bowl practically naked. The player, cheered on by the phrase "Make her like it" can insert syringes, eggs, a can of milk or pills into the woman's vagina or anus.

> • *Sociolotron* – a multiplayer role-playing game whose plot includes raping women and sexual slavery resulting in sexually transmitted infections and forced pregnancies.[13]

Given this second way of looking at trafficking and ICTs as an influence on culture, we could be concentrating on ICTs that are used as vehicles to normalise human rights violations and, by implication, make trafficking more acceptable. What happens when a woman is not physically moved but profits are generated from images of her body which are made available around the world? Is her consent, or lack thereof, relevant? We also need to consider whether pornography and trafficking should be treated as separate or overlapping issues. When virtual images can be detrimental to real people, determining whether the concept of trafficking necessarily involves physical movement takes on new urgency from a women's rights perspective.

There are obvious links between physical trafficking in women and dissemination of their images, as illustrated by MAPODE's research.[14] In the absence of information about women displayed in pornography, it is difficult to rule out the possibility that they may have been trafficked. As Donna Hughes points out:

> One of the biggest challenges is connecting the abstract images seen on the internet to actual cases of trafficking of women and children. This requires finding and identifying the victims, and building cases against the traffickers. As long as the images on the internet are of anonymous women, the perpetrators

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13. Amnesty International, *Discriminación y violencia contra las mujeres en los videojuegos más populares de estas navidades. Nuevo Informe de Amnistía Internacional sobre videojuegos, discriminación y violencia contra las mujeres*; December 30, 2004. [Translated from the original Spanish by Nicole Lisa.]

14. Available at http://www.mapode.freewebpages.org.

are often beyond the reach of the law because what they are marketing are just images, not crimes.

But what if we can establish that the women themselves were not trafficked? Does the movement of their images by other people represent trafficking? Donna Hughes suggests that it may:

> Perpetrators and profiteers of sexual exploitation will argue strongly for maintaining the disconnection between acts and images. Human and women's rights advocates and those defending the democratic rights of citizens to dignity and freedom have to connect the acts and images. Asking about the use of new technologies and trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation takes us into cyberspace, a place that seems to exist without physical embodiment, but in fact is a very real, physical network of electronic components, wiring, cables and program codes. The images and videos of sexual exploitation that are found on the internet have just as much basis in reality as cyberspace. With the exception of virtual or animated images, every image is produced by recording the acts of real people.[15]

Hughes makes the important point that we often pretend that what is real is in fact virtual. ICTs provide a new way to do what has been done for millennia – minimising or denying real harm, saying that women's lived experiences are made up or exaggerated or imagined. It is important, as Hughes reminds us, to link images to the real people involved.

This, though, should not be the end of the process. There is a danger that in our commitment to show real harm to real women we will fall back on the presumption that harm is individualised. Even if we were to accept that no individual woman was harmed in the direct making of images, it should be possible to argue more generalised harm. Here, as when we link specific women to specific acts, we need a definition of trafficking that can address this.

This presents a challenge to the existing UN definition of trafficking and, more broadly, to our understandings of the harm of trafficking. As the 'traffic in images' increases, it is impor-

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15. Council of Europe., Group of Specialists, Final Report, p. 54

ICTs as Recruitment Tools for Trafficking

From my observations in Nigeria the 'new' ICT/ internet wave which our youth are currently enjoying has also been a source for recruitment of trafficking victims often through initially 'harmless' relationships borne through internet chat rooms. Cybercafes spring up in major cities in Nigeria with rapidity, their major patrons are young single men and women, and there is not much censorship of the kinds of information they access.

I have recently had a personal experience of being propositioned on the internet through an unsolicited personal email to live, work and study abroad (whatever my needs are). I curiously probed the website offered and discovered it was fake. In reality many young girls in Nigeria who use the internet would simply respond to such a personal mail without bothering to check its credibility. ∎

Victoria Ijeoma Nwogu, from Abuja, Nigeria

tant that we grapple with this issue. This in turn may change how we look at pornography, an area on which feminists have traditionally struggled to find common ground. If at least some pornography is in fact trafficking in images, do we not need to further problematise our understandings of pornography and re-engage in the debates about pornography causing harm to women?

The Right to Privacy

Tightly tied to the issues of trafficking in images and pornography is privacy. Privacy has always been a double-edged sword for women. On the one hand, freedom from familial and social control and a place beyond prying eyes was a central tenet of early liberal feminism. As asserted as far back as Virginia's Woolf's classic essay, *A Room of One's Own* (1929), we understand that privacy gives women necessary space to imagine, to plan and to forge alliances.

LOW TECH TRAFFICKING –
ICT-FREE ZONE

In the Indian context, particularly with regard to tribal/rural women, trafficking is widely prevalent in some communities. The tribal girls are very often trafficked at a younger age, lured by claims of a better and easier life, affluence, high class meals, new clothes, jewellery, etc, which never come to them, and ultimately they are inducted into sex work... I don't think there is any relationship of this kind of trafficking with ICTs. ∎

Bhawani Shanker Kusum, Secretary and Executive Director, Gram Bharati Samiti, Jaipur, India

Privacy allows time for rebellion to ferment and for women to demand a better world, and also provides protection from criticism and censure. Today, the internet is one clear place that privacy can be realised and used for women's individual and collective development.

On the other hand, the concept of private space has long been a barrier to scrutiny of violence against women. Too often police ignore male violence with the off-hand appraisal that it was 'just a domestic', that is, a private matter beyond state intervention. Men's privacy has been sacrosanct, and much activism and education to end violence against women and children has centred around challenging the notion of private space. Feminists have argued that rather than being an individual man's domain, the state has a responsibility for so-called 'private' actions, and should be ultimately accountable for continuing violence against women and children.

What does this mean for trafficking and ICTs? Donna Hughes sees privacy as a foundational element in men's increasing comfort with violence against women. Global communications forums, she says, "have increased the privacy and decreased the isolation of the men who

16. "Prostitution Online," Journal of Trauma Practice 2, no. 3/4 (2003):115-132.

exploit and abuse women and children. The internet provides an anonymous network of support for perpetrators to share their experiences, legitimise their behavior, and advise and mentor less experienced men."[16] It looks like the same old dynamic of privacy is being a screen for men's violent behaviour.

Privacy International's Gus Hosein has a different take on the issue of privacy. He looks at the ways governments have tried to address trafficking and the implications these strategies have for privacy. While the intentions of governments may be noble, he says, the policies can infringe on the rights of many people:

For instance, the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime enables countries to co-operate in shared investigations, to collect and distribute evidence, to compel internet service providers to intercept communications and hand over 'traffic data' of who visited what sites, and the names of users. Other international institutions have worked on similar policies, including the G8 and the EU that are calling upon all internet service providers to store the habits and customs of all users for extended periods of time, in the eventuality that at some point this user will be of interest to law enforcement agencies and they will then be able to access three years' worth of information regarding emails received, telephone calls made, locations and movement, and on-line resources accessed.

Hosein points out that while the Council of Europe Convention and other international agreements can be used to clamp down on illegal uses of ICTs to enable trafficking, these agreements also lack fundamental protections of civil liberties and due process:

In particular, an investigation can be pursued between two countries even if a law has not been broken in one of those countries. This is the revocation of the age-old principle of dual criminality, where a country can only ask another to hand over a citizen if an equivalent law has been broken (eg. the US cannot hand over an American to Saudi Arabia for having committed blasphemy). So in the case of the Hawaiian and Japanese trafficking and website usage in California, if Japan and the US ratified the Council of Europe Convention, then the US authorities and ISPs would have to

TEMPTATIONS OF A BETTER LIFE

Women who are poor and looking for survival would be convinced through internet chatting and emails, and hence accept invitations for trafficking. They think they have got an opportunity without knowing where they are going. Later on they regret it, but they cannot come back to their homes. ∎

*Aurelia Ngirwa, Vice-President (Chairperson),
National Association of International
Federation of University Women (IFUW)*

respond to a request from the Japanese to clamp down on this activity, even though it is perfectly legal conduct within the United States. While we may agree with a situation such as this because it would help combat trafficking, these same international agreements are also used to curb the free expression of journalists, and legitimate conduct of NGOs, amongst other unfavourable deprivations of liberty.

These developments raise a range of interesting questions. Frequently, concrete measures to limit violence against women are rejected on the grounds that they impact negatively on civil liberties (e.g., limits on pornographic material). Yet such objections seem to hypothesize a male victim whose rights are being constrained, overlooking the point that when women are trafficked, their civil liberties are violated in ways that threaten their survival and rob them of their freedom. These violations of women's civil liberties are also significant and leave women with an increased vulnerability to violence.

III. WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Perhaps technical responses to the use of ICTs in harming women are misplaced. One approach is to ignore mechanistic questions of how traffickers and others perpetuate violence in technical terms and instead address the cultural values and political systems that allow such violence. ICTs would be seen simply as tools, including ones that could be harnessed to bring about the social change necessary to stop trafficking and uncover perpetrators. The fact that webcams were used would then be as unremarkable as the act of putting a fake passport in the mail: the ideology that allowed the violence, and not the technology, would become the focus.

This may be a more challenging way to address violence involving ICTs and, consequently, one that governments would resist. Concentrating on ICTs as the problem in trafficking (or indeed pornography) gives ICT experts – who are often men – control over an area that women have traditionally dominated. It diminishes women's expertise about stopping violence, and repackages counter-trafficking as a high tech exercise in which only ICT experts can engage. Instead, seeing how existing laws can be used to address crimes such as trafficking, regardless of whether ICTs are used, should instead be our focus. Just because criminal actions are connected to cyberspace, for example, does not mean that the crimes cannot be pursued. Women's understanding of violence and the criminal justice system would be re-emphasised instead of being ignored in technical discussions about ICTs.

The role of ICTs in trafficking raises important issues about the way women's expertise in addressing violence can be marginalised, the link between cultural values that promote violence and technical tools to perpetrate violence, and the scope for ICTs to reshape how and why we communicate. This paper has raised some of these preliminary questions about ICTs and trafficking. Clearly, it is just the beginning. As technical advances continue apace, questions about the role of ICTs in both advancing and compromising women's development will continue. ∎

APC

ASSOCIATION FOR PROGRESSIVE COMMUNICATIONS
Internet and ICTs for Social Justice and Development

APC is an international network of civil society organisations founded in 1990 dedicated to empowering and supporting people working for peace, human rights, development and protection of the environment, through the strategic use of information and communication technology (ICTs).

We work to build a world in which all people have easy, equal and affordable access to the creative potential of ICTs to improve their lives and create more democratic and egalitarian societies.

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The ASSOCIATION FOR PROGRESSIVE COMMUNICATION'S WOMEN'S NETWORKING SUPPORT PROGRAMME (APC WNSP) is a global network of over 100 women in 38 countries who support women networking for social change and women's empowerment through the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). The APC WNSP engages in research, evaluation, training, information facilitation, and network support activities in the fields of gender and ICT policy advocacy, capacity - building and skills - sharing in strategic use of ICT, and women's network-building and sustainability.

The Gender and ICT Policy Monitor - GenderIT.org - is a tool for women's movements, ICT advocates and policy makers to ensure that ICT policy meets women's needs and does not infringe on their rights. The APC WNSP also developed the Gender Evaluation Methodology for Internet and ICTs (GEM), an online tool to integrate a gender analysis into evaluations of initiatives that use ICTs for social change.

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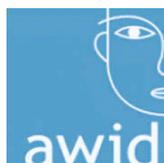
The ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN DEVELOPMENT is an international membership organization connecting, informing and mobilizing people and organizations committed to achieving gender equality, sustainable development and women's human rights. A dynamic network of women and men, AWID members are researchers, academics, students, educators, activists, business people, policy-makers, development practitioners, funders and others, half of whom are located in the Global South and Eastern Europe.

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