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phone service (within the local area) and has an extensive database with contact information of organizations, social services, hospitals, etc. Some grassroots migrants' organizations that do not have their own infrastructure frequently use these services.

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Special Groups of Concern (3.5.)

Women (3.5.1.)

Behshid Najafi,
AGISRA

Women and Migration

Women migrate because of political, economic, social, and individual reasons. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), globally almost half of all labor migrants are women. Furthermore, 80 to 90 percent of all refugees worldwide are women and children. The gendered nature of the labor market forces most women to work only in certain jobs: Many have to sell their bodies or their reproductive capacities. These jobs are rarely recognized as a profession, are poorly paid and are not socially valued. Examples include work in the informal and unregulated sectors of prostitution, domestic work, the entertainment industry, and "marriage". Paragraph 41 in the final report of the Beijing + 5- Conference of the United Nations in New York in June 2000 states:

"The patterns of migratory flows of labor are changing. Women and girls are increasingly involved in internal, regional and international labor migration to pursue many occupations mainly in farm labor, domestic work and some forms of entertainment work. While this situation increases their earning opportunities and self-reliance, it also exposes them, particularly the poor, uneducated, unskilled and/or undocumented migrants to inadequate working conditions, increased health risk, the risk of trafficking, economic and sexual exploitation, racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia, and other forms of abuse, which impair their enjoyment of their human rights, and in some cases, constitute violations of human rights." (UN 2000)

Women who decide to migrate are courageous, strong, powerful and willing to take the initiative. They leave their country of origin in the hope of finding improved living conditions based on responsibility for their family and children for whom they are usually sole provider. These women do not fit the stereotypical picture of the "poor woman".

Despite the active roles women take, they frequently lack information regarding living conditions, social conditions, laws, etc. in the country of destination and need support. Difficulties in entering the country of destination legally make it easier for traffickers to recruit women. Often women are forced to work with a recruiter. Increasingly more women are coerced into living in Europe without legal residence title or are dependent upon their spouse. Their lawless status, preventing access to health care and education is a condition which undocumented persons all have in common. But a woman with children or a single mother, or a pregnant woman, certainly lives under different conditions than a single man.

Assistance Provided to Women

Some organizations that focus on general women's issues also provide help on particular issues faced by female undocumented migrants. One organization, highlighted below, focuses specifically on female victims of trafficking.

AGISRA, Cologne (Germany)

Agisra (Arbeitsgemeinschaft gegen internationale sexuelle und rassistische Ausbeutung/Working Party against international sexual and racist exploitation) is a Cologne-based organization that has given advice to migrant women since 1993. They mainly work with women who have been brought to Germany for forced prostitutions, for forced marriage or as domestic worker, women who are experiencing or experienced domestic violence, and refugee women. The restrictive aliens law, discrimination, racism and the structures of trafficking make a special support for these women necessary.

They provide medical, legal and emotional assistance, as well as educational sessions about women's rights. The support that is provided aims at the independence of the women, so that they can organize their own lives. The counseling provided by Agisra is free of charge for all women and anonymous. Workers at Agisra are qualified professionals, many of whom have migration experiences themselves.

Agisra also holds round table discussions on the problem of trafficking and invites a variety of individuals and institutions involved (public authorities, police, women's shelters, lawyers, advice centers, public health office) to participate in the debate. Agisra takes part in networks at the national and European levels.

Unaccompanied Minors (3.5.2.)

The special attention needed by children of undocumented migrants and unaccompanied minors is a particular area of work of some organizations interviewed. Parents wanting to protect their children for wars and persecution, and to improve their living conditions send their children to Europe. (BIVS 2000/2001) Also undocumented migrants, driven by desperation of a life in clandestinity may leave their children in a shelter, in the hopes that they will have better chances of survival when they are found alone.

Many of the interviewees stressed the vulnerability of this group and the necessity to have special assistance for them. 't Huis in Belgium is an example of an organization providing a special shelter only for children in such situations.

't Huis/The House, Aalst (Belgium)

This organization provides shelter to unaccompanied minors. Some of them are residing in Belgium without a legal residence permit, and most of them do not have an adult who is legally responsible for them. The first aim of the organization is to be a "safe haven" for these youth to recover from what they experienced. The minors are also given advice, guided and supported to gain concrete and realistic perspectives on their future. In all the organization's activities, the interest of the minor and the International Convention on the Rights of the Child are taken as a starting point.

Undocumented Migrants in Detention (3.5.3.)

Another special group of concern to several organization are the detained undocumented migrants. The help that is provided to them varies.