A vast number of anti-trafficking interventions are conducted worldwide, funded through private and public sources. The European Commission spent a total of €158.5 million on 321 anti-trafficking projects between 2004 and 2015 (Walby et al. 2016: 7). In the context of anti-trafficking efforts, campaigns have gained importance in the last decade. Initially, campaigns mostly addressed people in major emigration regions who were considered at risk of becoming the victims of trafficking. These campaigns can be seen as addressing the supply side of trafficking. However, states are also obliged by the UN anti-trafficking protocol and the EU anti-trafficking directive to discourage and reduce ‘demand that fosters exploitation that leads to trafficking’. Campaigns are one measure through which to address this obligation.
This policy brief summarises insights into a study on demand-side campaigns. The study is part of the DemandAT research project, which analyses demand-side measures in a broader theoretical and empirical context and with regard to specific fields (domestic work, prostitution, labour exploitation) and specific types of intervention (supply chain intervention, law enforcement and communication campaigns).

Evidence and Analysis

This study defines a campaign as a series of coordinated communication activities seeking to influence what individuals think and do. The empirical analysis was restricted to campaigns seeking to influence what individuals do in these contexts:

- As consumers, they are asked to abstain from buying goods produced or services delivered under unfair and harmful conditions. Conversely, they are requested to buy responsibly – goods produced or services delivered under fair conditions.
- As the general public, they are called upon to report seemingly suspicious occurrences to competent agencies. Often, these observations are made in a consumption context.

Further, the research focused on campaigns addressing situations in which individual buyers and exploited persons are present in the same area (personal services, domestic work and sexual services, begging and the sale of goods that are locally produced, for meals or building services). Fair-trade campaigns and other interventions in globalised supply have been analysed in a separate strand of the DemandAT project (McGrath/Mieres 2017).

The demand-side study identified 55 campaigns that referred to demand in the context of anti-trafficking efforts. Based on an initial overview, a typology of demand-side campaigns was developed (see Box 1). Accessing detailed evaluative information on the impact of these campaigns proved difficult. Evidence on the functioning and impact of demand-side campaigns is scarce – as it is for anti-trafficking efforts in general. Only 5 per cent of anti-trafficking interventions were externally evaluated and only about a third provided at least a narrative report by the principal grant holder (Walby et al. 2016: 85). Given the lack of robust evidence, an adequate theory to guide the analysis of the effectiveness of campaigns was crucial. Evaluation theory was therefore adopted to provide a conceptual and theoretical frame for the analysis.

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**Box 1:**

Two types of demand-side campaign with a behavioural message

**Spending-shift campaigns** seek to influence the spending patterns of individual persons and public authorities, particularly the demand for goods and services. There are three types:

- Don’t-buy-from-children campaigns
- Don’t-buy-sex campaigns
- Buy-responsibly campaigns

**Reporting campaigns** encourage people to share observations of seemingly suspicious occurrences made in a consumption context

- Report-to-police
- Report-to-confidential-NGO-services

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Evaluation as a conceptual and theoretical frame

Evaluators ask what happened, why, and whether or not it is beneficial. To describe the effects of interventions, a model with standardised terms is used: objectives, input, output, outcome and impact. These terms are applied in most evaluations in a similar way:

Interventions are based on inputs (available funds, staff hours) that allow for activities (outputs) which are supposed to cause (intended) effects (outcomes) in line with aims (objectives). Objectives define changes that are deemed beneficial. Ultimately, campaigns aim at something beyond an outcome – namely at impact, ‘the big changes and benefits being sought for people, services, or systems’ (Coffman 2009: 6).

In the cases which are of interest to this study, the campaigns aim to have a reducing impact on exploitation and trafficking in human beings. The intended consequences of campaigns can be summarised as a logical chain of necessary effects (intervention logic) and visualised graphically (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Stylised intervention logic of demand-side campaigns

![Figure 1: Stylised intervention logic of demand-side campaigns](source: Authors)

Even this simplified model of intervention logic consists of quite a long chain of effects. An interruption of the chain at any point means that the campaign will have no impact on trafficking in human beings via the behaviour of the target group. Beyond this intervention logic, campaigns can induce side-effects – including welcome ones such as financial donations to organisations and support for policy changes – as well as undesired side-effects such as stigmatisation of social groups or false accusations.

Effects of demand-side campaigns

The exploration of a campaign’s working and effectiveness and the assessment of evaluation yielded a number of findings, which are presented as follows:

To be effective, demand-side campaigns have to go beyond awareness-raising and a narrow focus.

Many anti-trafficking campaigns aim to raise awareness that trafficking in human beings exists. There is no evidence to show that such campaigns have a real impact and lead to less exploitation and trafficking in human beings. Awareness-raising alone cannot induce intended impacts. Desired changes occur only when the relevant actors change their behaviour and these behaviour changes induce the anticipated effects.

All cases of trafficking imply exploitation, but not all cases of exploitation imply trafficking. Many anti-trafficking campaigns exclusively focus on cases of persons trafficked into exploitation. Such campaigns neglect cases in which victims are seriously exploited but not considered to be trafficked into exploitation. Effectiveness can be increased when campaigns have a sector-specific focus and address exploitation more generally. By focusing on exploitation, situations are covered...
which may turn out to be a case of trafficking in human beings only in the course of a criminal investigation.

Effects and effectiveness of spending-shift campaigns: There is no evidence.

Spending-shift campaigns seek to change individual and public spending patterns. The target group is asked to avoid spending money on goods and services which are believed to involve the work of victims of trafficking in human beings. Spending-shift campaigns are applied in three contexts.

- First, campaigns can advise members of the public to entirely abstain from buying a specific good or service – in particular, that men should no longer buy commercial sexual services. Such campaigns are based on the premise that supplying sexual services is inherently harmful and exploitative to the provider. Don’t-buy-sex campaigners believe that public tolerance of sex as a purchasable good or service is an incentive to perpetrators to continue trafficking in human beings.
- Second, campaigns can ask people to abstain from giving money to specific groups of persons. Here, the most important are campaigns which are based on the premise that giving money to children is inherently exploitative. Their aim is to spread the message to the general public that people should not give money to children who, for example, may be begging or selling petty goods like lighters or supplying services like shoe-shining, activities which prevent the children from attending school and provide an incentive for trafficking in children (Don’t-buy-from-children campaigns).
- Third, campaigns can advise people to shift their spending within one category of substitutable goods and services from those that are deemed likely to include the exploitation of trafficked persons at some stage of their production to those for which this is known or assumed to be unlikely. These campaigns promote fair or responsible consumption (Buy-responsibly campaigns).

With regard to the three types of spending-shift campaigns, evaluations did not provide any evidence that spending patterns had changed and that exploitation and trafficking in human beings were subsequently reduced. As a consequence, the campaign effects can neither be substantiated nor excluded.

Effects and effectiveness of reporting campaigns: Hundred-thousand-strong audiences are addressed in order to generate just a handful relevant suspicions per month.

Reporting campaigns ask the general public to watch out for signs of abuse, often in a consumption context, and to report seemingly suspicious occurrences either to the police or to a confidential helpline or online contact point. In the sex sector, in particular, such campaigns differentiate between forced and voluntary prostitution and ask clients to report indications of forced prostitution.

Several evaluation reports on different campaigns provide partial evidence of their impact. This evidence was sorted according to the campaigns’ intervention logic. The resulting analysis indicates that reporting campaigns expose large audiences to a message but generate only a handful of relevant suspicious occurrences per month.

Messages can be misunderstood.

As a rule, campaign messages were not pre-tested and evaluations did not analyse in detail how messages were understood. However, several reporting-campaign evaluations indicate that organisers received many irrelevant reactions – in one case a message about a helpline was thought to be an advertisement for phone sex.

Campaigns can produce harmful side-effects.
As a rule, campaigns cannot tell complex stories, although they may and often do direct attention to more-differentiated information sources. They are designed to attract attention through simple and catchy messages. However, this may lead to harmful side-effects. On the one hand, there is a trade-off between attracting attention through extreme stories and pictures and the risk that victims with less-consistent and less-dramatic stories are overlooked. On the other hand, portraying trafficking in human beings as omnipresent, hidden behind seemingly innocuous everyday situations, bears the risk of inducing mistrust, false suspicions and accusations. Some campaigns showed a high awareness of such risks and sought to minimise harmful side-effects through a conscious choice of visualisation and messages, while no consideration of such issues is documented in other cases.

Campaigns only have a positive impact on reducing exploitation and trafficking in human beings in combination with other interventions, if at all.

In order to induce a reduction of exploitation of and trafficking in human beings, campaigns rely on other measures or policies which have to be in place and effective.

- Reporting campaigns, in particular, rely on systems to provide advice and support to potential victims and the criminal justice system. If someone reports a suspicious occurrence anonymously to a helpline, the operators have to deal competently with the persons doing the reporting and need to be able to offer help to a victim. One evaluation report stated that calls led, in some cases, to the freeing of women while, in other cases, women did not accept the assistance offered but chose to stay in a potentially exploitative situation. To have a deterrent effect above and beyond the individual case, the criminal justice system has to improve the situation of victims and its effectiveness in sanctioning perpetrators.

- Spending-shift campaigns, in particular, can be effective without relying on other systems. If effective, they change what perpetrators can earn through the activities of trafficking victims in a specific place. However, former victims will need alternatives. If they were vulnerable due to helplessness or economic destitution, they are likely to fall prey to exploitation again or even to exploit others. For example, campaigns to stop the public buying goods from children need to offer alternative support for the children – for example, child subsidies for the parents or free school meals.

Evaluation of demand-side campaigns

In addition to insights into campaigns, the analysis can provide insights on knowledge-generation through evaluation.

Commissioned external evaluation is no guarantee of quality.

Out of four commissioned external evaluations, only one referred to established standards as developed by professional bodies and promoted by the United Nations (UNEG 2016). In this exceptional case, the evaluators concluded that the effectiveness and impact of the campaign could not be assessed because the relevant information and data were not available. Other external evaluators found campaigns to be successful on the basis of poor or even no evidence.

Internal evaluation reports were more learning-oriented than external reports.

Although not applying established standards of evaluation, the four internal evaluation reports offered detailed data on outputs and on some outcomes. This enabled insights to be gleaned into campaign effects. Internal evaluators were more open to indicating not only what had been successfully accomplished by a campaign but also any unexpected effects and non-accomplished targets. They shared critical reflections that can be used to improve the design of future campaigns.

Evalubility designing is crucial for better learning from past interventions.

As this study has revealed, the core problem in the evaluation of past campaigns is their lack of evaluability. For campaigns which have ended, it is too late to compile evidence. However, it is not
impossible. Even internal evaluations with modest means can compile partial evidence concerning selected aspects of such a campaign. Moreover, it should be possible to design campaigns with the specific aim of learning from previous campaigns, combined with large-scale professional evaluations. The results of different evaluation reports can be compiled in a structured way (jigsaw synthesis) and used to improve campaign design in the future and direct efforts to more promising interventions against trafficking in human beings.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

With regard to demand-side campaigns, a lack of evaluation induces a lack of evidence. Therefore, only tentative conclusions can be presented here, drawing on theoretically informed interpretation of fragmented pieces of evidence. The conclusions are directed at the European Commission, as a funding body of campaigns, and at organisations which conduct campaigns.

European Commission

Regarding the relevance of demand-side campaigns:

- Awareness of trafficking in human beings changes nothing, unless action follows. Reconsider mere awareness-raising campaigns.
- Reporting campaigns addressing several hundreds of thousands of people are likely to lead to just a handful of reports. Consider campaigns that target specific groups likely to make observations.
- Campaigns are not stand-alone measures. Make sure that campaigns are only funded when complementary efforts are in place.

Regarding the organisation of evaluation:

- Evidence is scarce. Focus on a small number of interventions for large-scale professional evaluation and remunerate the efforts of evaluators and of conducting organisations more adequately.
- Internal evaluation is better than its reputation. Promote the learning-oriented internal evaluation of selected aspects by all projects and provide for low-cost, low-threshold instruments to assist it.
- Evaluative information is not made accessible in a transparent way. Establish a publicly accessible online repository of professional evaluation reports and of key insights from internal evaluations that are suitable for public sharing.

Organisations conducting campaigns

Regarding the designing of demand-side campaigns:

- Campaigns may indeed lead to more support for the organisation but can also lead to more work, for example, when staff waste time responding to irrelevant reactions. Consider whether a demand-side campaign really promotes the organisation’s mission at this point in time.
- Messages can be misunderstood. Make sure that there is time for the pre-testing of messages.
- Verbal and visual focusing is necessary in campaigns, but is effective. Consider what the chosen focus could imply in terms of stigmatisation, and of neglecting less-typical victims.

Regarding the relevance of evaluation:

- Organisations can benefit from critically documenting and reflecting campaign experiences. Select aspects, assess them critically and store insights effectively for internal
organisational learning. Make key insights publicly available, for example in a ‘lessons-learned' briefing.

Research Parameters

**Desktop review:** In order to inform the analysis, a theoretical literature review on the impact of anti-trafficking interventions and on the evaluation of campaigns was conducted. For the empirical analysis, mainly project materials and evaluation reports on anti-trafficking interventions and related literature were used.

**Theoretical analysis:** Findings from evaluation theory served as a basis for the development of a theoretical framework corresponding to the particularities of the research issue. The framework consisted of a typology of campaigns and the ideal-typical explication of the intervention logic for each type.

**Conceptually guided sampling strategy:** Campaigns were identified in online searches through different strategies. Information in the web was screened, excluding campaigns that (a) did not match the definition or (b) did not indicate any person or organisation that could provide further information. Donors and identifiable project organisers were contacted and asked for further information. For closer analysis, campaigns as part of projects with evaluation reports were chosen. For eight campaigns or projects containing campaigns, four external and four internal evaluations were available online or, in one case, were made available by the organisers on request.

**Assessment of evaluation reports:** Interventions against trafficking in human beings usually refer to the UN definition of the trafficking offence. Therefore, the ‘norms and standards of evaluation’ drawn up by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG 2016) were adjusted for the topic and used for the assessment of the quality of evaluation reports.

**Jigsaw synthesis:** In the absence of robust evidence on the effects of campaigns in specific contexts, selected outcomes from various contexts can be mapped in a theoretically informed way – a strategy indicated in educational sciences as useful in low-evidence contexts. Information on the effects of the same type of intervention in different contexts are brought together like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. A jigsaw synthesis of reporting campaigns was compiled.

**In-depth analysis with an evaluability designing approach:** Because a lack of evaluability was identified as a key problem, an ‘evaluability designing approach’ was developed, indicating six key issues that have to be addressed: (1) the matching of campaign features; (2) campaign intervention logic (3) risks and side-effects; (4) observable or measurable indications of outcome; (5) costs and efficiency (6) storing and sharing insights. This approach was used for exploring what could have been done to improve evaluability with regard to four selected real campaigns. A manual showing the basic steps to designing evaluable campaigns was worked out.

**References**


McGrath, Siobhan/ Mieres, Fabiola (2017) – Addressing the demand side in and through supply chains: Mapping the field of initiatives around human trafficking, forced labour and slavery, DemandAT Working Paper No. 8


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<thead>
<tr>
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