**Question 2.**

**Describe the profile of women and girls affected by prostitution in your country.**

We assist women in prostitution in the red-light district in Zürich (Langstrasse neighborhood, the illegal zone), Switzerland.

The women’s age is approx. between16-65 years. Their families are all affected by poverty. Poverty and prostitution are closely linked. By working in prostitution, the women finance their families and their children including paying for their education and sick family members.

It is extremely rare to find Swiss women in the Langstrasse red light district.

The women come from the following regions: Africa (Nigeria), Central and South America, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and Asia. Many of them are recruited in their countries by pimps and human traffickers. They are given false promises regarding the conditions of work and their prospective earnings. Sometimes the women have to undergo religious rites in their home country. This is how pimps and traffickers make them dependent and obedient.

Pimps and traffickers blackmail women with threats of violence against their family members when the women attempt to get out of prostitution. Pimps and traffickers also make the women dependent by making them oblige to make financial payments.

Most women move around in the red-light district without a residence permit or with a tourist visa. They have therefore no rights in terms of social support or treatment in the event of physical or mental illness. Due to the lack of a residence permit and often a lack of education, it is also impossible for them to leave prostitution: to pursue decent work of their own choice and to find their own accommodation.

Their illegal status also prevents the women from turning to the police/authorities in the event of violence in various forms. They are afraid of being deported by the police and punished by the traffickers/pimps. Most women suffer from severe psychological disorders and trauma-related disorders as a result of the psychological and physical violence and financial dependence they experience at the hands of clients, pimps, madames, supervisors and traffickers. The pressure they endure often leads to depression, addiction (medication, alcohol, drugs), dissociation, self-harm, suicide attempts/thoughts...

The women in the Langstrasse neighbourhood live in extremely inhumane conditions at horrendous rents (CHF 100-150 per day): 2-6 people share a room with two or three beds, up to thirty share a single toilet/shower and a desolate kitchen. The landlords of the rooms and the owners of the properties are also part of the pimping system.

The situation in the neighbourhood has changed since the corona crisis: many women are competing for fewer customers who buy sex in the streets.

Violence has also increased and is still on the rise. The prices for sex acts are between 20-50 CHF. Very young girls from the Eastern Europe sometimes offer the sex acts for 10 CHF. Women who do not want to offer unprotected sex often find it difficult to find customers. They tell us about monthly incomes of CHF 600. In addition, clients and pimps often demand very perverse practices. For example, heavily pregnant women are forced by their pimps to have various forms of sex with their clients until shortly before they give birth.

The most common question we are asked by women is: "Do you have decent work for me?" This shows us that prostitution has never been something they wanted to do out of their free will. Exit options such as houses where women can receive long-term psychological support, integration (language, job, residence permit...) and protection are not available here in Zurich.

\*meaning ‘humane’