

## EPISODE 3: Dr. Tina Davis Interviews Ina Hut

**TINA:**

My name is Dr. Tina Davis. I am the assistant editor for The Journal of Modern Slavery, and the host for this podcast series. Today I want to warmly welcome Dr. Ina Hut, who's the executive director for CoMensha in the Netherlands.



**INA:**

Thank you. Thank you for paying attention to the problem of human trafficking.

**TINA:**

Thank you. I'd like you to first start by telling us about CoMensha who are CoMensha and what is your work in the Netherlands.

**INA:**

Now CoMensha is the Dutch Coordination Center against human trafficking. We focus mainly on the Netherlands but also on other countries we have linked with other countries, especially in Europe as well. And what we do is we register the victims of human trafficking in the Netherlands. We do it also on behalf of the National Human trafficking and the coordinated care of these victims. Victim have the right to safe shelter, medical care and legal assistance and We coordinate the initial reception and care of victims. And we do that in close cooperation with the police, Social Affairs inspectorates, and the Royal Military Police.

**TINA:**

Can you give me a brief overview of the situation of human trafficking within the Netherlands? Is it mainly destination country or sort of transit country? And what type of human trafficking do you see?

**INA:**

The most victims that we register are Dutch victims, young girls minor also, mostly, and they are a victim of a lover boy with the situation in Netherlands is rather complicated because the registration of victims in the Netherlands is far below the real number of victims. We believe that the real number of victims in Netherlands is much higher than the registrate. A lot of victims are unseen in the Netherlands. That's a big problem. The most victims in the Netherlands who are seen are victims of sexual exploitation that the victims of labor exploitation and criminal exploitation are less seen in the Netherlands.'

**TINA:**

What sectors do you think that labor trafficking will take place and in what types of crime will it also happen?

**INA:**

Now, it happens in the agricultural sector, in the transport sector, in the hotel sector, most victims are exploited in sectors where the work is dirty and hidden. So the public doesn't see much of it. You have to open your eyes for human trafficking. Otherwise, you can't see it. You have to be aware of the signals and pay attention to it.

**TINA:**

You have done an estimate recently in the Netherlands of, of the amount of victims. How many victims are you aware of or potential victims in the Netherlands at the moment who are in trafficking?

**INA:**

The estimates are about between five thousand and a seven and a half thousand victims and the International Labour Organization estimates the number of victims in the Netherlands much higher. I think it's more than five to seven half thousand - a lot of victims are not seen in Netherlands. I think what we see is a lot of victims of sexual exploitation with us I think that the nature of victims can be Victims of labor organization or labor exploitation.

**TINA:**

You have over the last year or so, had a campaign where you have had a public exhibition. It's a campaign you've done with an organization called Open Mind. And the exhibition is an exhibition about human trafficking called Open Your Eyes To Human Trafficking. Can you tell me about this exhibition?

**INA:**

Yes, we have an exhibition of 30 victims of human trafficking in the Netherlands. Real victims, we have portrayed them on big billboards, and we travel with these billboards around the Netherlands. A lot of municipalities are really eager to have our exhibition because they want to pay attention to human trafficking and they want to open the eyes of the Dutch public for this crime in the Netherlands.

**TINA:**

So what was the idea? How does this exhibition come about?

**INA:**

Well, CoMensha existed 30 years in 2016. And we wanted to, to make an exhibition or something to raise more awareness of human trafficking in the Netherlands. And I came into contact with Open Mind and with the photographer Ernst Coppeians. And together, we have developed this concept and its really fairly successful. It has already been in about 40 municipalities in the Netherlands and we have already about 28 million contact moments with the Dutch public.'

**TINA:**

That's incredible. So I saw this exhibition 18th of October in 2018, which is the European Anti-Trafficking Day and it was put up in Strasbourg at the Council of Europe on the streets on the avenue outside. It's a very powerful striking exhibition with big billboards. And each of the 30 survivors have a very colorful, different colors bandana on and then there's the text with the stories. How did you work with the victims and the photographers to develop this type of concept? So what was the idea of bringing it out to the public as fare.

**INA:**

I was myself I was a little afraid to start with this exhibition because I did not want make that the victims were recognized by the perpetrators, and also not by the Dutch public. So they have a bandana. Indeed, with the victims tell this. You don't have to be very because we want to tell our story. We want to open the eyes of the Dutch public. Even in the Netherlands, human trafficking exists. Most people don't know that in the Netherlands. And we want them to know that and they told their stories, and it's really very, very heartbreaking to hear the stories.

**TINA:**

So what are the stories because there's 30 different stories. Can you tell a little bit about the selection of stories that you made?

**INA:**

Well, we have about 20 female victims and about 10 male victims, we have portrayed them. And we have victims of sexual exploitation of labor exploitation of criminal exploitation and also a child of one of the victims because when you are a victim of human trafficking, it also affects affects your family. So that's why we also portrayed one child of a victim of sexual exploitation. That child for example, is alone at night. And he is waiting for his mother crying and in the morning, she comes back after she has been raped several times during the night because of forced prostitution. And will that is for for the child very scary to to see this happened to his mother. I also have a portrait of a young girl, she was forced into sex for prostitution in prostitution. She was sexual exploited during four and a half years. She has a child of a pimp, and she has a child of a client of her. And she has a guild of about 90,000 euros and she is still young. And now how can you survive this? I have to say this is a fairly strong lady. She came out very powerful because there are a lot of victims, now, who who are still in the situation? How do you survive?

**TINA:**

It is a very powerful exhibition indeed. And when you take time to read these stories and meet each of these individuals and really shares the the heartbreaking and the brutal, real quality of people who are being trafficked and exploited in different ways. Can I ask you how has the Dutch public responded to this

exhibition? Have you had it publicly out on the streets? Or where has it been? And what has the response been?

**INA:**

No, the response was very positive in general. Some people didn't like the bandanas of the victims, because it associated them with the Muslim people in the Netherlands. And, but mostly the Dutch public was very positive and it has really opened eyes for human trafficking in the Netherlands, but we are still not there. We have to do more to raise more awareness.

**TINA:**

So you said it, the exhibition has had 28 million contact moments through interaction with the public and through the photo journals and you've had other activities. Tell me a little bit about the activities you've done around the exhibition and how you've been putting this up in different municipalities and councils around the Netherlands.

**INA:**

The Dutch municipalities are obliged to develop policy around human trafficking, and to take care of the victims of human trafficking. They are obliged to they have to install also a care coordinator for the victims of human trafficking. And they are obliged to have these already in 2022. So our government is also very eager to support the municipalities and us to raise awareness around human trafficking. So that's why we already visited with our exhibition, about 40 municipalities in the Netherlands, the biggest ones, and we still continue with traveling around with the exhibition. And mostly we organize seminars, workshops, etc, around the exhibition to get the professionals and the partners in the chain to give them more awareness of human trafficking, and to let them know what they can do, how they can take action towards human trafficking.

**TINA:**

So would you say this campaign has been good both in terms of creating awareness amongst the general public, but also with other stakeholders who are working in municipalities and who have a responsibility of implementing anti trafficking policy.

**INA:**

Yes, for sure. Yes. Is really supports it very much.

**TINA:**

And how was the exhibition funded?

**INA:**

We funded ourself mostly with also the Ministry of Justice. And one of our banks in the Netherlands, ABN AMRO and municipalities. when exhibition is placed in a municipality. They paid the cost we make to place the exhibition.

**TINA:**

What would you say is the power of having campaigns like this one or others, to raise awareness? What is your experience that, you know, putting on a campaign like this? What difference does it make?

**INA:**

Well, it really opens the eyes of the general public in the Netherlands. We also had a lot of attention from the media with this exhibition. So that helps. Of course also, most people don't think human trafficking exist in the Netherlands. But it is a large problem in the Netherlands. It happens more and more I think also because of internet. The victims can be easily found via internet. The perpetrators choose the film about violence and force them. They've been a few weeks to do things. They shouldn't have want to do it before.

**TINA:**

Why do you think that people in the Netherlands are not aware of the the scale of the problem of human trafficking.

**INA:**

Because a lot of people don't see it. And because they still have to raise more awareness. But still, there is a kind of attitude. This is really happening in the Netherlands? I can't believe it.

**TINA:**

My last question is, would you encourage others to do something similar in terms of putting up campaigns?

**INA:**

Yes, it is very, very necessary to do this. Also in the countries of origin, it has to be more formed about human trafficking. Because people from the countries of origin they think, to travel to, for example, the Netherlands, to have a good job here. But at the end, they end up in forced prostitution or something, or labor exploitation. Also in the countries of origin, we have to raise more awareness. For example, in Eastern Europe, but also in Africa and Latin America, Asia, there has to have to be a lot more awareness. campaigns to raise awareness.

**TINA:**

And before we finish up may I ask you this particular exhibition is this would this be available for others outside of the Netherlands if anyone should want to put it up?

**INA:**

Yes, it is. We have have the exhibition in the Dutch language but also in an English language. And if needed, we also can translate it in other languages. That maybe it depends on which country maybe the victims we have portrayed it. Maybe in some countries, we have to choose other victims, because that appeals more at the public of their country maybe. But of course, we would like to go to other countries also with this exhibition and to raise awareness of human trafficking.

**TINA:**

People can learn more about this exhibition called Open Your Eyes to Human Trafficking on our website, we will put the link there so they can see and they can learn more about it and they can also get in touch with you, should they be interested in knowing how to put this exhibition up. Thank you so much, Ina Hut, for taking time to speaking with me, and all the best with the work that you're doing with the exhibition and all the other work that you're doing, moving forward.

**INA:** Thank you so much.