

**Ludmila Bogdan**

**ANTI-TRAFFICKING AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS:  
HOW GOOD INTENTIONS LEAD TO BAD OUTCOMES**

**Abstract**

Whereas academics argue that most information campaigns are ineffective in addressing social problems, policymakers have been heavily relying on information campaigns to tackle social problems. However, little research has focused on the ways information campaigns have influenced public perception about social problems. I look at the anti-trafficking campaigns in Moldova, which has experienced intense awareness campaigns for a prolonged period of time, to understand how these campaigns have influenced public perception about human trafficking. For over two decades, counter-trafficking organizations have relied on raising awareness activities to prevent human trafficking without having any evidences of the success or efficiency of these campaigns. I bring empirical evidence directly from Moldova to show that awareness campaigns (1) have prevented people from informing themselves about safe migration, (2) have prevented people from seeking help in trafficking situations due to guilt and shame, (3) have led people to internalize that they are more likely to become victims of trafficking, and (4) have created the impression that the problem is widely spread. These findings suggest that awareness campaigns can have negative consequences on public perception about a social problem and can impede on solutions.

**Keywords**

Information campaigns, awareness-raising, human trafficking, organizations