

Human Trafficking: Modern Day Slavery

What is Human Trafficking?

The UN defines human trafficking in persons as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons for the purpose of exploitation.

A victim does *not* need to be physically transported or need to cross borders to be considered trafficked.

Who is Trafficked?

Anyone can be trafficked: men, women, and children, citizens and non-citizens. Historically, poor women and children make-up the majority of trafficked persons as traffickers typically exploit gender inequity, family violence, and a lack of educational and economic opportunities.

Who Trafficks?

Some common faces of traffickers include: pimps, local and international criminal syndicates and rings.

Statistics

The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that there are 2.4 million people throughout the world who are lured into forced labour. The International Organization on Migration (IOM) and The 2014 U.S. Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP) consistently estimate the number of people trafficked over international borders to be 800,000.

The ILO estimates that up to 17,500 people are trafficked into the U.S. each year.

During FY 2013, The Department of Justice (DOJ) convicted a total of 174 traffickers in cases involving forced labor, sex trafficking of adults, and sex trafficking of children, compared to 138 such convictions obtained in FY 2012. Of these, 113 were predominantly sex trafficking and 25 were predominantly labor trafficking, although several involved both.

Confounding factors

People are trafficked for a range of reasons including for purposes of sweatshop labour, commercial sexual exploitation, forced labour and domestic servitude.

Demand drives the human trafficking industry. Trafficking in human beings allows for high profits to be generated at low risk. Globalization is also a factor that has allowed the trafficking industry to thrive.

Human Trafficking is the fastest growing criminal enterprise and ranks 2nd after drug trafficking.

Burma - Thailand

Trusting his recruiters, Myo believed he was leaving his home in Burma to work in a pineapple factory in Thailand. Yet, when he arrived, he was sold to a boat captain for the equivalent of approximately \$430. He was held on the boat for 10 months, forced to work, and beaten regularly. On the rare occasion that the boat docked at port, the officers bribed local police to allow them to keep the fishermen on the boat rather than risking them escaping if they were allowed to set foot on shore. Myo was finally able to escape and sought refuge in a temple. He continues to struggle with deafness, having had his head and ear smashed into a block of ice on the fishing boat. (TIP Report, 2014)

The Law

US Policy

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) was written into law in 2000 as a means to prevent human trafficking, protect victims and help them rebuild their lives in the U.S., and prosecute traffickers. The federal law includes: an educational and public awareness component as well as assistance for some qualified victims of severe forms of trafficking. That assistance includes housing, education, and health care. The law also enables some victims of trafficking to become temporary residents of the US by applying for a T Visa under certain circumstances.

United States

When teenager Melissa ran away from home, she was quickly found by a man who promised her help, but was actually a pimp who intended to sexually exploit her. He used psychological manipulation and coercion to hold her in prostitution, and advertised her using online sites. Refusal to do what he said was met by beatings and threats. Despite her fear of being found and killed if she ran, Melissa one day managed to escape from a hotel room where he was keeping her. A patron at another hotel nearby helped her reach the police, who arrested her trafficker. (TIP Report, 2014)

TVPA was re-authorized in 2003, 2005, and 2008; on March 7, 2013, President Obama signed the bill to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), which included the TVPA as an amendment.

UN Convention and Protocols

The United Nations General Assembly adopted in 2000 the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, also known as the Palermo Protocol or The UN Trafficking Protocol.

The Palermo Protocol established the first global legally binding instrument with an internationally agreed-upon definition on trafficking in persons and intent to protect and assist the victims of trafficking in persons with full respect for their human rights. The Palermo Protocol recognizes trafficking as the abuse of power over a person in a position of vulnerability. It also states that consent (of the trafficked person) is never a defense.

The UN Convention and Protocols are additionally supplemented by *human rights treaties* including: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Article 6), Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 35) and its Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.

The Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report

The Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report is produced by the U.S. Department of State. The US government uses it to engage foreign governments on human trafficking. The report assesses foreign government efforts to comply with “minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking”. For more info go to: <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/>

Human trafficking impacts every country in the world. The majority of trafficking is national or regional though, long-distance human trafficking occurs. As per the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Europe is the destination for victims from the widest range of destinations, while victims from Asia are trafficked to the widest range of destinations. The Americas exist as both the origin and destination of victims of human trafficking.

A Trafficking Victim May Be Someone Who:

- Is not free to leave or come and go as he/she wishes
- Is under 18 and is providing commercial sex acts
- Is unpaid, paid very little, or paid only through tips
- Works excessively long and/or unusual hours
- Owes a large debt and is unable to pay it of
- Was recruited through false promises concerning the nature of his/her work
- Lacks knowledge of their whereabouts and/or does not know what city he/she is in
- Is in poor physical and emotional health
(*Polaris Project, 2013*)

US Human Trafficking Hotline: 1-888-373-7888

You can reach the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) hotline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in more than 200 languages. All calls are confidential and answered live by highly trained Call Specialists.

In 2013, the **National Human Trafficking Resource Center** hotline received reports of 3,609 sex trafficking cases inside the United States.

Reports

U.S. Department of State, Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Reports, 2001-2014.

<http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/>

The Road North: The Role of Gender, Poverty and Violence in Trafficking from Mexico to the US Sex Workers Project at the Urban Justice Center. <http://www.casa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/The-Road-North-The-role-of-gender-poverty-and-violence-in-trafficking-from-Mexico-to-the-US.pdf>

Summary: Global Estimate of Forced Labour, International Labour Organization (June 2012)

http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/publications/WCMS_181953/lang--en/index.htm

Collateral Damage: The Impact of Anti-Trafficking Measures on Human Rights around the World Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women.

http://www.gaatw.org/Collateral%20Damage_Final/singlefile_CollateralDamagefinal.pdf

The U.S. Response to Human Trafficking: An Unbalanced Approach The Women's Commission.

<http://www.humantrafficking.org/uploads/publications/ustraff.pdf>

Reading

- *The War on Human Trafficking: U.S. Policy Assessed* by Anthony M. DeStefano (Rutgers University Press, 2008)
- *To Plead Our Own Cause: Personal Stories by Today's Slaves* by K. Bales & Z. Trodd (Cornell Press, 2008)
- *A Crime so Monstrous: Face to Face with Modern Day Slavery* by Benjamin Skinner (Free Press, 2009)
- *Sex Slaves and Discourse Masters: The Construction of Trafficking* by Jo Doezma (Zed Books, 2010).

Reading (cont.)

- *Human Trafficking: A Global Perspective* by Louise Shelley (Cambridge 2010).
- *Trafficking and Prostitution Reconsidered (Second Edition): New Perspectives on Migration, Sex Work, and Human Rights* edited by Kamala Kempado, Jyoti Sanghera, Bandana Pattanaik (Paradigm Publishers, 2011).
- Elizabeth Bernstein (2010). "Militarised humanitarianism meets carceral feminism: The politics of sex, rights, and freedom in contemporary anti-trafficking campaigns. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 36(1), 45-71. Available online at: <http://www.sph.umich.edu/symposium/2010/pdf/bernstein2.pdf>
- Jo Doezema (2004, December). "Sex worker rights, abolitionism, and the possibilities for a rights-based approach to trafficking." In *Alliance News*, 22, 15-22. Available online at: <http://gaatw.org/publications/Alliance%20News/dec2004/gaatwnews2004dec-01.pdf>

Resources

American Center for International Labor Solidarity (Solidarity)

<http://www.solidaritycenter.org/content.asp?pl=405&sl=405&contentid=624>

Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women

<http://www.gaatw.org/>

Polaris Project

<http://www.polarisproject.org/>

Protection Project of the Johns' Hopkins University

<http://www.protectionproject.org/>

Coalition Against Trafficking in Women

<http://www.catwinternational.org/>

Freedom Network

<http://freedomnetworkusa.org/>

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