



Awareness

Advocacy

Action

January

Human Trafficking Awareness Month

Stop Trafficking! Newsletter www.stopenslavement.org/index.html

Human Trafficking: An Overview

Human trafficking is a \$10-billion growth industry. Conservative estimates of the number of people trafficked into forced labor and prostitution range from 700,000 to 2 million people — primarily women and children — annually.

In 2000, as a result of increasing public concern, the international community agreed on and expanded the definition of trafficking. This definition comes under the United Nation's 'Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime' and its 'Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children'.

Definition:

Trafficking in persons is 'the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation includes, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.'

The essence of human trafficking is in its force, fraud and/or coercion of vulnerable people. Disproportionately, trafficking affects poor women, children and members of disadvantaged minority groups.

Trafficking does not exist in isolation. It is connected to economic, political and social forces that increase the vulnerability and desperation of the poor, refugees and migrants, and women and children. Trafficking is one of the most horrific end results of economic and social disparities that increase the vulnerability of millions of people. Such vast inequality allows many within our societies to be considered little more than disposable commodities.

Root Causes

In order to effectively combat trafficking long-term, we must understand and respond to the factors that first create an environment for trafficking and which then sustain and expand that environment.

Economics

Trafficking has been described as the 'dark underbelly of globalization.'

It is an end result of rapid global economic, technological and social change. Such rapid change has created or exacerbated people's vulnerability, as well as expanded the opportunities for predators to exploit that vulnerability.

Economic factors driving the increase and expansion of human trafficking include not only poverty itself, but also:

- Lack of employment options, which may have existed in the past;
- Increased economic disparity;
- Rapid and severe economic decline in some countries.

Additionally, greater vulnerability has been created by:

Elimination of social safety nets — many countries have been mandated to restructure their economies and minimize social spending in order to qualify for multilateral loans and international economic support.

Fluidity of capital — recent advances in information systems have made the profits from criminal activity, such as trafficking, easier to transfer and launder rapidly across the globe.

Race to the bottom on labor standards/cost of production — increased international competition to produce consumer goods at the lowest cost possible can, and has, exacerbated abusive labor practices, the most severe, that of forced labor and slavery-like practices.

Corruption — state corruption is a serious concern in many societies and is closely tied to the spread of trafficking. Corruption of state representatives responsible for public order and social welfare can be exacerbated by economic decline.

Economic migration — As economies are increasingly integrated and investment and employment quickly move from one part of the globe to another, workers generally do not have the legal freedom of movement to go where employment exists. Even as wealthier nations with aging populations and declining fertility rates increasingly rely on migrant labor, prohibitive immigration laws have been created, which make the act of migrating both difficult and dangerous. In the absence of safe and legal options for migration, large numbers of migrants can be left with little choice but to place themselves at the mercy of migrant smugglers and in the worst cases, unknowingly in the hands of traffickers. (Excerpted from: http://crs.org/public-policy/in_depth.cfm)

Go to the following websites to learn more:

- <http://www.ungift.org>
- <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking/>
- <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/index.htm>
- <http://www.polarisproject.org/human-trafficking/>
- <http://www.freetheslaves.net/>
- <http://slaveryfootprint.org/>