Reducing the Demand for Human Trafficking

Awareness

Human trafficking, also known as trafficking in persons (TIP), is a modern-day form of slavery. It is a crime under state, federal and international law. It is currently the second largest type of criminal activity, exceeded only by the illegal drug trade.

There are two major types of human trafficking: (a) sex trafficking, in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act is under 18 years of age; and (b) labor trafficking, which is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision or obtaining of a person for labor or services through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery.

The links between human trafficking and other social justice issues, such as poverty, immigration, and violence against women and children are complex. Human trafficking is largely a hidden crime, making accurate numbers of trafficking incidents difficult to determine. However, many studies have shown that there is a growing demand for both labor and commercial sex services. Due to this demand, egregious abuses occur. In labor trafficking, the abuses may be wage theft, unsafe working and living conditions, and a lack of access to state-guaranteed social services that affect migrant and foreign workers in particular. A lack of access to appropriate social services such as safe housing, employment, addiction rehabilitation and mental health services directly impacts victims of commercial sex trafficking.

Why Is This Happening?

An increase in tourists seeking entertainment, including commercial sex, increases the potential risk for exploitation and human trafficking. Traffickers are opportunistic hunters and see major crowds of people who flock to concerts, sporting, or other large-gathering events and venues as an opportunity for huge profits with very little risk of penalty or punishment. Human trafficking is a business, and traffickers will take advantage of what they perceive to be good business opportunities.

Traffickers “advertise” the availability of commercial sex using online escort ads and social media sites, such as Backpage.com or Craigslist.

In monitoring these sites, law enforcement officials have observed that as the date of a major sporting events nears, ads for escorts and commercial sex services increase on a weekly (and sometimes daily) basis. The internet is a major source for predators’ hunting, recruitment and trapping unsuspecting and/or innocent victims.

Education is a key factor in reducing public ignorance on this issue and the ability of predators to meet their demands. If the children (or adults) are aware, they are better able to avoid getting trapped.
Shared Hope International ([www.sharedhope.org](http://www.sharedhope.org)) notes that child protection organizations have developed safety tools to help combat children’s ignorance and vulnerability to online predators.

One example is The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). They have developed NetSmartz ([www.netsmartzkids.org](http://www.netsmartzkids.org)), a program that creates interactive, educational safety resources for children ages five to seventeen that prepares children to respond effectively when confronted with issues such as cyber bullying, inappropriate content, online exploitation, revealing too much information, sexting and scams.

In addition, NCMEC has created NetSmartz411, an online service to answer questions about internet safety, computers and the web. The site provides an online library for parents to find answers to their online safety questions. Visit [www.netsmartz411.org](http://www.netsmartz411.org) for more information.

End Child Prostitution and Trafficking, ECPAT-USA, ([www.ecpatusa.org](http://www.ecpatusa.org)) is another organization that protects children from commercial sexual exploitation. They undertake research, training, awareness raising, policy development and advocacy to protect children. Their website includes the code of conduct and urges hospitality industry organizations to sign. The Tourism Child-Protection Code of Conduct is the only voluntary set of business principles that travel and tour companies can implement to prevent child sex tourism and trafficking of children. The Code is a joint venture between the tourism private sector and ECPAT companies. The code can be found at [www.ecpatusa.org/wp/what-we-do/tourism-child-protection-code-of-conduct](http://www.ecpatusa.org/wp/what-we-do/tourism-child-protection-code-of-conduct).

With more than 27 million human trafficking victims around the world, the Sisters of Mercy’s concern for women and children extends to these victims.

Mercy Investment Services, ([www.mercyinvestmentservices.org/human-trafficking-resources](http://www.mercyinvestmentservices.org/human-trafficking-resources)) actively works with corporations to improve their policies and identify human trafficking victims within their industries. The resources provided on Mercy Investment Services website are intended to help you, whether as a consumer or hotel staff member, take an active role in ending this global tragedy. Resources include: Letter to deliver to hotels at which you are a guest, fact sheet to share with hotels, guide for meeting planners, survey for hotel management, Trafficking in Persons Report, ECPAT Code, International Labour Organization 2012 Global Estimate of Forced Labour, and corporate strategies to address human trafficking.

However, no one action, event, or internet site is the root cause of human trafficking. The root causes that allow trafficking to flourish are (a) a culture that accepts treating people, especially women and children, as objects that can be bought and sold; (b) poverty, lack of access to education and health care, and desperation which maintain a pool of vulnerable victims; and (c) the ready market for cheap labor and cheap goods.

Human trafficking is a crime that preys on society’s most vulnerable
Reflection

What resources from our faith tradition reinforce and strengthen us in our work to end human trafficking?

If any of your neighbors are reduced to such poverty that they sell themselves to you, you must not treat them as bonded workers. Their status is to be that of hired hands or resident laborers with you, and they will be subject to you only until the jubilee year. They may then leave your service with their children and return to their own ancestral property. You were all bonded workers in Egypt, and I freed you from your bondage. They must not be sold as bonded workers are sold. You are not to work them ruthlessly; you are to revere Yahweh.

― Leviticus 25:39-43

More Scripture passages:


Other faith-based resources:


“The trade in human persons constitutes a shocking offense against human dignity and a grave violation of fundamental human rights. …Such situations are an affront to fundamental values which are shared by all cultures and peoples, values rooted in the very nature of the human person.”

Guadium et Spes, Part I, Chapter II, Section 27.


“The seventh commandment forbids acts of enterprises that for any reason—selfish or ideological, commercial, or totalitarian—lead to the enslavement of human beings, to their being bought, sold, and exchanged like merchandise, in disregard for their personal dignity. It is a sin against the dignity of persons and their fundamental rights to reduce them by violence to their productive value or to a source of profit.”


Source Notes:


Actions & Resources

Polaris Project
www.polarisproject.org
This organization works on eradicating all forms of human trafficking and serves victims. Polaris Project operates a 24/7 national hotline: 1-888-3737-888 or text “BeFree” (233733).

Celebration Without Exploitation
www.iccr.org/resources/2012/CelebrationWithoutExploitationToolkit.pdf
A Toolkit for Planning Trafficking-Free Sporting (and Other) Events is available from the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) Human Trafficking Group.

Truckers Against Trafficking
www.truckersagainsthumantrafficking
Educates, equips, empowers and mobilizes members of the trucking and travel plaza industry to combat domestic sex trafficking.

Mercy Investment Services
www.mercyinvestmentservices.org/human-trafficking-resources
MIS actively works with corporations to improve their policies and identify human trafficking victims within their industries. The resources provided are intended to help you, whether you are a consumer or hotel staff member, take an active role in ending this global tragedy.

Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center
www.ipjc.org
The Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center, Seattle, WA, is sponsored by eighteen religious communities. Provides classroom webinars, prayer resources and faith based presentations on human trafficking.

Save Our Adolescents from Prostitution (S.O.A.P.)
www.free-international.org/soap.html
SOAP is an outreach that distributes thousands of bars of soap with the National Human Trafficking Hotline number and key identifying questions FREE to local motels.

I’m Not Buying It
www.traffick911.com/page/im-not-buying-it
This is a national campaign to raise awareness about the trafficking of children.

Shared Hope International
www.sharedhope.org
This international organization’s mission is to eradicate sex trafficking.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)
www.netsmartzkid.org
NCMEC has developed NetSmartz, a program that creates interactive, educational safety resources for children ages five to seventeen.

End Child Prostitution and Trafficking
www.ecpatusa.org
This website promotes the Code of Conduct which urges hospitality industry organizations to endorse it, and to train employees to recognize and safely report possible incidences of human trafficking. The Code can be found at www.ecpatusa.org/wp/what-we-do/tourism-child-protection-code-of-conduct

U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking is a collaborative, faith-based network that offers educational programs and materials, supports access to survivor services, and engages in legislative advocacy to eradicate modern-day slavery.