



U.S. Catholic Sisters **Against Human Trafficking**

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 children's 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) 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, 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 for more information.

End Child Prostitution and Trafficking, ECPAT-USA, (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 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 <http://ecpatusa.org/wp/what-we-do/tourism-child-protection-code-of-conduct>.

While Shared Hope International, NCMEC and ECPAT-USA are focused on children, there are resources for human trafficking of adults as well. The Polaris Project (www.polarisproject.org) contains valuable information along with access to a 24/7 hotline and text message "BeFree" (233733) to report incidents of trafficking anywhere in the U.S.

Another group working to break the demand for human trafficking is Truckers Against Human Trafficking (www.truckersagainsthumantrafficking.org). Their website includes short videos, informational materials and flyers. They are a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization that educates, equips, empowers and mobilizes members of the trucking and travel plaza industry to combat domestic sex trafficking.



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) 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 people. Viewing human trafficking from a business perspective requires that we consider the relationship of supply and demand to the driving force of profit. No matter how many criminals are prosecuted, there will be other opportunists to step into their shoes. No matter how many victims are rescued, there will still be a steady supply at the ready. So long as the supply, demand, and profit remain unchanged, modern-day slavery will continue. In order for this to change, society must fundamentally alter the equation and make the business of human trafficking the opposite of what it is today: a high-risk, low profit, readily-recognizable crime.



People of all ages, races, religions and nationalities, of all political outlooks – people across every conceivable divide are coming together and address this issue. Human trafficking is a crime against the dignity of the human person. The profit must be squeezed out of both the supply and demand of this equation, and replaced by justice and hope.

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:

Genesis 37:23-28; Lamentations 5:1, 11, 13, 15; Acts 16:16-19, 23

Other faith-based resources:

Pope John Paul II, Letter on the Occasion of the “Twenty-First Century Slavery-The Human Rights Dimension to Trafficking in Human Beings” International Conference, 2002.

“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.

Pope Benedict XVI, *Message for the 92nd World Day of Migrants and Refugees*, 2006; U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Migration, Statement on Human Trafficking, 2007.

“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.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Part Three: Life in Christ, Section Two: The Ten Commandments, Chapter Two: “You Shall Love Your Neighbor as Yourself,” Article 7: The Seventh Commandment, paragraph 2414.)

Actions and Resources



The National Human Trafficking Hotline

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-resoures

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.

Save Our Adolescents from Prostitution (S.O.A.P.) -- <http://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 <http://ecpatusa.org/wp/what-we-do/tourism-child-protection-code-of-conduct>.**

Source Notes:

Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, Pub. L. No. 106-386 (2000), available at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/10492.pdf>.

Klaas Kids Foundation, Backpage.com Multi-State Monitoring Report (Dec. 2011- Jan. 2012); Klaas Kids Foundation, Tackle the Traffickers Outreach and Monitoring Initiative (Feb. 2, 2012 and Feb. 3, 2012).

“Economics of Human Trafficking: The Common Thread.” September 2012; Sisters of the Holy Cross, Notre Dame, Indiana.