Human Trafficking

A Global Evil

Human trafficking is a modern form of slavery that exists in every country, including the United States.

- Women, children, and men work in factories, fields, restaurants, hotels, homes, and in every facet of the sex industry.
- Today, illegal sale of humans is a multibillion-dollar industry tied with the illegal arms industry as the second largest criminal industry in the world, surpassed only by drug trafficking. Moreover, it is the fastest growing criminal industry.
- According to the U.S. Department of State, approximately 800,000 to 900,000 victims annually are trafficked across international borders worldwide, and between 18,000 and 20,000 of those victims are trafficked into the United States. The FBI reports that, in the U.S. alone, trafficking and slavery generate 9.5 billion dollars a year.

- “Trafficking in women and girls has become one of the fastest growing enterprises in the world. The United Nations estimates that over two million women and girls are taken from their homeland into other countries under false pretenses for the purposes of forced labor, domestic servitude, or sexual exploitation. Trafficking and slavery are never ‘stand alone crimes.’ They are linked to money laundering, drug trafficking, document forgery, human smuggling, rape, and torture.” (Website of the Sisters of the Divine Savior, SDS)

If a global trafficking map was created, with lines tracking the flow of persons trafficked from countries of origin to countries of destination, it would show hundreds of lines crisscrossing the globe on every continent:

- from, for example, Sub-Saharan countries to Spain and Western Europe;
- from Nigeria to Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom; the Philippines to Australia, Costa Rica, Hong Kong, Japan, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Europe, the United States;
- from China to other Asian countries, Western Europe, Mexico, the United States;
- from the Russian Federation to Finland, France, Belgium, Greece, Asian countries, Israel, Australia, the United States; Honduras to other Latin American countries and Canada.

These would be only a few of the tracking lines.

Laws and protocols distinguish trafficking of persons, occurring through coercion and exploitation, from smuggling, which refers to consensual transactions. However, what begins as smuggling often becomes trafficking, as in the case of young girls who agree to be smuggled into another country, lured by the promise of a better life, and then are forced into prostitution.
Why have human smuggling and trafficking grown and spread to such a great extent?

- They need to be understood in the context of globalization and migration. “Since 1965, the number of international migrants has doubled to some 175 million persons at the turn of the millennium. Prospects of a better life abroad, poverty, economic marginalization, political and social unrest, and conflict are all incentives to move. In an increasingly interconnected world, movement is easier.” (“Trafficking, Smuggling, and Human Rights,” *Migration Information Source*, Jacqueline Bhabha, Harvard University, March 31, 2005)

Although there are multiple human rights concerns, it is the law enforcement imperative that has placed the issue higher on the international policy agenda.

- As of December 3, 2005, the United States became an official Party to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (TOC) and its supplementary Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and its Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air.

- The Convention represents the first legally binding multi-lateral instrument that specifically targets transnational organized crime.

*Sources of information:*

“Trafficking in Women and Children,” Information and Workshop Kit produced by the JPIC Commission of the Unions of the Superiors General USG/UISG.


*Migration Information Source*, Migration Policy Institute, Washington, DC.


Human Trafficking

The Causes

Looking at both the supply and demand factors that foster the growth of trafficking can identify some of its causes. Such causes can further be categorized into different aspects of life such as socio-cultural, economic, and political.

SUPPLY SIDE

Socio-Cultural

- Illiteracy and inadequate educational and employment opportunities as well as lack of gender perspective in education.
- Patriarchy, which is the main cause for the discrimination of women and girl-children.
- Erosion of traditional family values and the pursuit of consumerism which encourages the sale of woman and children.
- Racial discrimination, racism, and related intolerance which makes the women from such communities more vulnerable to trafficking.
- The media and new technologies, which through advertising and the commercialization of sex, present women’s bodies as objects solely for sexual pleasure.

Economic

- Economic disparities within countries and between countries and regions.
- Feminization of poverty because women constitute 70% of the world’s poor and support their families through precarious employment in the growing informal sector.
- Globalization and its differential impact on women through economic restructuring and transition with cuts on social spending which affect women.
- Economic liberalization which relaxes controls and opens borders between countries, facilitating population mobility and illegal migration.
- A lucrative business with high monetary returns because women are sold and resold a number of times. At the same time there are fewer dangers of being apprehended, a situation which attracts crime syndicates.
- Downfall of communist regimes in Eastern and Central Europe, resulting in the difficulties relating to any economy in transition.
Political
- **Feminization of international migration** as women enter the labor market, together with the lack of regulation of labor migration which provides increased opportunities and channels for trafficking.
- **Civil and military conflicts** which pushes people to flee their countries. Of the 25 million refugees in the world 80% are women and children. They become easy prey in the hands of the traffickers.
- **The growth of transnational crime** and the expansion of drug trafficking networks which act as mechanisms for other forms of exploitation.
- **Weak law enforcement** mechanisms and measures to penalize offenders.
- **Corruption** by police, law enforcers, officials, and peacemakers.

**DEMAND SIDE**

Socio-Cultural
- **Male attitudes** and perceptions of women in society coupled with women’s unequal socio-economic status.
- **Pornography** and its role in the growth in demand for sex.
- **Patriarchy** resulting in the unequal power relations between men and women and in discrimination against women.
- **Consumerist behavior** with the commoditization and commercialization of sex leading to the consideration of women’s bodies as commodities and objects of sexual pleasure.

Economic
- **Demand by employers for** an unskilled and cheap labor market. Women’s labor is usually in low status work in the domestic and entertainment spheres and in the informal sector.
- **An expanding commercial sex industry** and increased demand for sex. Demands include: prostitution, sex trafficking, sex tourism, mail-order brides, strip clubs, topless bars, etc. The growth in child sexual exploitation is due to male client preferences for younger women and girls because of the fear of HIV infection.
- **Development of policies** promoting tourism and patterns of development that depend on temporary migrant workers.

Political
- **Creation of an enormous prostitution infrastructure by Military bases**, both past and present.
- **Unequal and exploitative political and economic relations** dictated by the North and deteriorating the conditions of life in the South.
- **Restrictive migration policies** which decrease possibilities for regular migration.
- **Sales of arms** and increased armed conflict in countries with the consequent increase of displaced people and refugees who fall victim to traffickers.
- **Weak law enforcement** mechanisms and measures to penalize offenders.
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Fact Sheet—Women and Children

- The United Nations has estimated that 700,000 individuals are trafficked into forced labor and forced prostitution around the world each year. Recent U.S. government estimates are at 600,000 to 800,000.
- Many women and children trafficked into the United States across international borders do not speak or understand English.
- Prostitution is chosen for women by poverty, past sexual abuse, pimps who take advantage of their vulnerabilities, and men who buy them for the sex of prostitution.
- Prostitution is sexual exploitation, one of the worst forms of women’s inequality, and a violation of any person’s human rights.
- Many women in prostitution have been severely injured, some have died, and some have been murdered by their pimps and customers.
- Physical violence, confinement, rape, stripping, pornography, live-sex shows, and degradation are often inflicted on women by customers, pimps, recruiters, police, and others who gain from prostitution.
- Most women are drawn into prostitution at a young age. The average age of entrance in prostitution worldwide is thirteen.
- Women in prostitution dream of a life free from oppression, a life that is safe, and a life where they can participate as citizens and where they can exercise their rights as human beings, not as “sex workers.”
- The women in prostitution come into the United States from Belgium, Denmark, Korea, Central and South America, and the United Kingdom.
- Trafficking also takes place as labor exploitation such as domestic servitude, sweatshop factories, or migrant agricultural work.
- Often these women and children are threatened with injury or death or with the safety of the victims’ families back home.
- Often their travel documents are taken away and they are isolated, making escape difficult.
- Victims of trafficking are often subjected to debt-bondage, usually in the context of paying off transportation fees into the destination countries. They do not realize that their debts are often legally unenforceable.

Sources
Human Trafficking

Who are the Traffickers?

Trafficking is a many-layered illegal activity, involving persons from the highest echelon of organized crime, corruption, and violence to the “friend,” relative, or acquaintance paid to make a first contact with an unsuspecting victim. Access to information and informants is often limited, and in many cases impossible to obtain.

Most information on traffickers comes from victims who only have knowledge of parts of the operation. They cannot provide a detailed account of where they were or who was involved because they are either not told anything or, what they are told is false.

Where researchers have made direct contact with traffickers, the latter have tended to be small-scale operations whose knowledge extends only to the stages prior to, and following, their own involvement.

Traffickers operate globally. Chinese and Vietnamese Triads, the Japanese Yakuza, South American drug cartels, the Italian mafia, and Russian gangs interact with local networks to provide transportation, safe houses, local contacts, and documentation.

Keeping in mind that traffickers are looking for cheap or slave labor for use in various industries and for sexual exploitation, there are four levels in the crime of trafficking:

- Individuals – kidnapping and pimping
- Families – the father is head (manager/boss). Sons are the recruiters. Sisters/daughters keep the recruits in line. Mothers take the children of young women who are recruited. They use the threat that the victims will never see their children again if rules are not obeyed. All of this is done in a carefully orchestrated way. The recruits are employed in homes, factories, hotels, janitorial services, restaurants, etc.
- Gangs – usually for prostitution and drug running
- Cartels – multi-billion dollar crime

Sisters of the Holy Names
Justice and Peace Team
California Province
Human Trafficking

Government and Church Responses

United States Government

- The Thirteenth Amendment outlaws slavery and involuntary servitude.
- The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, Public Law No.106-386, effective October 28, 2000, supplements existing laws, establishes new tools and resources to combat trafficking, and requires government agencies to provide a number of services and protections for victims of severe forms of trafficking. The Protection Act was reauthorized in 2003 (P.L.108-193) and again in 2005 (P.L.109-164).
- For more information about the U.S. Government’s response to the issue of human trafficking, visit these websites:
  - Department of Justice: [www.usdoj.gov](http://www.usdoj.gov)
    Under “highlights”, click on “Trafficking in Persons”
  - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: [www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking)

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

- The Migration and Refugee Services (MRS) Office of Refugee Programs administers three grants from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement:
  - *Stop Trafficking of People Technical Assistance and Training Project*: Provides education and training to groups about the issue of human trafficking so that victims may be identified and served and traffickers may be apprehended.
  - *Services to Victims of Human Trafficking In Unserved Areas*: Provides services to victims of human trafficking. When a trafficking victim is identified, MRS recruits a local Catholic social service agency to provide case management for the victim and provides funding, training, etc. to the agency for the duration of the services.
  - *Trafficked Child Placement and Technical Assistance Program*: Places unaccompanied trafficked children with licensed child welfare agencies to ensure that they receive appropriate care.
MRS also administers two grants from the Department of Justice:

- **Services to Victims of Human Trafficking in Oregon**: Provides services locally to victims of human trafficking, training to law enforcement and service providers, and coalition-building for the state of Oregon.
- **Services to Victims of Human Trafficking in the Mid-Atlantic States**: Provides services locally to victims of human trafficking, training to law enforcement and service providers, and coalition-building in the states of Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, and parts of Maryland.

The USCCB received a large contract award from the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to provide comprehensive support services to victims of human trafficking. USCCB will receive resources for each victim actually being served and will work in concert with HHS’ ongoing campaign.

Through the office of Migration and Refugee Services, USCCB established a Catholic Coalition of Organizations Against Human Trafficking, a coalition of national and diocesan service organizations, USCCB offices, religious congregations, and other groups, representatives of which meet to learn, share information, and identify ways to collaborate.

For more information, visit [www.usccb.org/mrs/refugeeprograms.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/mrs/refugeeprograms.shtml) and click on Human Trafficking.

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**Franciscans International**

- Conducts training sessions on human trafficking and forced labor to educate about the United Nations human rights protection system. Participants take part in the UN Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery.
- Engages in advocacy activities and meetings with diplomats accredited at the United Nations in Geneva to stress that particular attention should be paid to the issue of human trafficking.
- For more information, visit [www.franciscansinternational.org](http://www.franciscansinternational.org) and enter “human trafficking” in the search box.
Human Trafficking

Theological Reflection:
Catholic Social Teaching Condemns Human Trafficking

Gen. 1:27: Every human being is created in God’s divine image.

Jer. 7:5-7: The prophet warns that we must deal justly with our neighbor and no longer oppress the resident alien, the orphan, and the widow.

Cor. 12:12-13, 26: Every human being is part of the body of Christ. If one person suffers, all of us suffer.

Pacem in Terris: Human society . . . must lay down as a foundation this principle, namely that every human being is a person … (with) rights and obligations. (that) are universal and inviolable . . . From the dignity of the human person, there also arises the right to carry on economic activities according to the degree of responsibility which one is capable. Furthermore . . . the worker has a right to a wage determined according to criterions of justice.

- Nos. 9 & 20, John XXIII, April 1963

Catechism of the Catholic Church:
The seventh commandment forbids acts of enterprises that for any reasons – 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.

- Catechism #2414

Guadium et Spes:
Whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things . . . poison human society . . . Moreover, they are a supreme dishonor to the Creator.

- No. 27, Paul VI, December 1965
Pope John Paul II: “The trade in human persons constitutes a shocking offense against human dignity and a grave violation of fundamental human rights.”
- Letter of Pope John Paul II to Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran on the occasion of the International Conference
“Twenty-First Century Slavery—The Human Rights Dimension to Trafficking in Human Beings”

The International Union of Superiors General, representing one million women religious in their Institutes, declares: “our determination to work in solidarity with one another, within our religious communities in countries in which we are located, to address insistently ...the abuse and sexual exploitation of women and children, with particular attention to the trafficking of women which has become a lucrative multi-national business.”
- May 13, 2001

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious and the Conference of Major Superiors of Men
“stand in support of human rights by opposing trafficking in women and children for purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labor, and will educate others regarding the magnitude, causes and consequences of this abuse in the U. S. and the world.”
- August 26, 2001

1. What questions arise within me as I reflect on these readings and other information I have on trafficking?

2. What may be the call to conversion inherent in the information on trafficking? For me? For our congregation?

3. What action will I commit myself to take on behalf of stopping human trafficking?

4. What action will our Area Chapter take on behalf of stopping human trafficking?
# Human Trafficking

## Recommended Actions: From Awareness to Leadership

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<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Involvement</th>
<th>Leadership</th>
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<td>Read an article on trafficking.</td>
<td>Share an article with another person. Discuss what you learned.</td>
<td>Make an article available at church or work.</td>
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<td>Watch a video on trafficking with family or friends. <em>(Ex: The Day My God Died, Sisters and Daughters Betrayed, So Deep a Violence, Prostitution, Trafficking and the Global Sex Industry).</em></td>
<td>Reflect and discuss your feelings, questions, and hopes for those who are victims of trafficking.</td>
<td>Write a short review or recommendation on the video. Organize a church or community showing of the video.</td>
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<td>Become familiar with the United Nations resolution on the trafficking of persons.</td>
<td>Write a letter to your Senator asking the U.S. to ratify the U.N. resolution without reservation.</td>
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<td>Become familiar with the United States Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000. Check to see if this bill has been reauthorized.</td>
<td>Call, e-mail, or write your Congresspersons to continue to support the anti-trafficking reauthorization bill.</td>
<td>Coordinate a church or community call-in or letter campaign. Post a sample letter at church or school or work.</td>
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<td>Watch for media coverage on the topic of trafficking of persons.</td>
<td>Ask your church or diocesan newspaper to run a story on the trafficking of persons.</td>
<td>Explore any possible sister church/agency/city relationships that might address trafficking of persons.</td>
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<td>Research the local and regional resources available on trafficking of persons.</td>
<td>Contact individual or organizations (perhaps local justice groups) about what materials, speakers, and workshops on trafficking they provide.</td>
<td>Form a committee or ask your church social concerns group to consider hosting a speaker or workshop on human trafficking.</td>
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<td>Be familiar with options for charity (direct service for victims) and for justice (addressing the root causes regarding trafficking of persons.</td>
<td>Take one action to support victims. Take one action for advocacy that addresses the systems that affect trafficking of persons.</td>
<td>Invite others to join you in your action. Post this action guide where others will see it.</td>
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Other actions that your group decides to take.

- Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center, Seattle, Washington