

Forum: Human Rights Council

Issue: Measures to combat international human trafficking

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Introduction

“Human trafficking is a crime against humanity. We must unite our efforts to free victims and stop this crime that’s become ever more aggressive, that threatens not just individuals, but the foundational values of society” – Pope Francis

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), there are currently 40.3 million victims of human trafficking globally, with 81% trapped in forced labour and over one in four under the age of 18.

Human trafficking is defined as the crime of buying and selling people, and or making money from work they are forced to do. The three most occurring forms of human trafficking are sex trafficking, forced labour (involuntary servitude), and bonded labour which, according to the U.S. Department of State, is the biggest sector of trafficking in the world. Apart from prostitution, victims may be forced into a wide range of industries including domestic servitude, agricultural work, manufacturing, hotel services, construction, hair and nail salon, strip club dancing and elder care.

Human trafficking is an ongoing problem that has persisted for decades. This form of modern slavery not only harms the lives of trafficked victims, but also poses as a problem for nations worldwide, in areas such as:

Economy: especially areas where people seeking migration opportunities for employment end up being trafficked, resulting in remittance losses. Trafficked workers encourage the market for

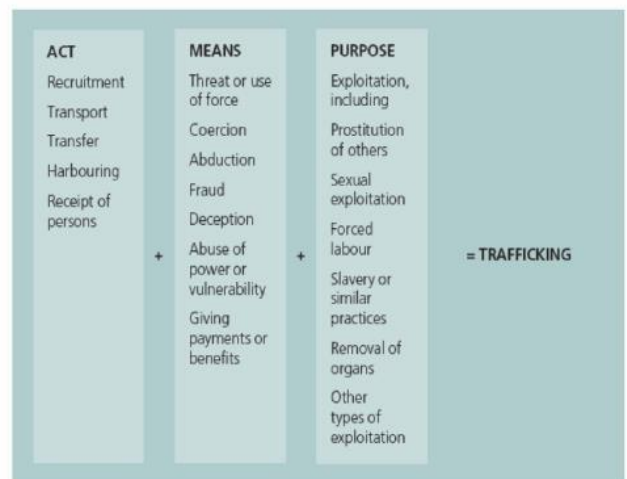


Figure 1: Elements of human trafficking by the UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime)

modern day slaves as markets become dependent on cheap labour and consumers become accustomed to cheap goods.

Health: trafficked victims are at risk of sexually transmitted infections and spreading the diseases among the general population after being trafficked in dangerous conditions and being forced to engage in unsanitary practices.

Law: not only does human trafficking go against the law, the activity the trafficked engage in is often illegal as well, such as prostitution and trafficking of drugs. The exploitation of victims is also a major business for organized criminal groups, funding future illegal activities.

Victims are either kidnapped, or deceived by traffickers, such as “mail-order” brides who are told that they are going to a new country for marriage, but instead, are enslaved. Another example (forced labour) would be parents giving up a child to an adoption centre, and the child is then sold to a sweatshop owner where he/she receives minimal nutrition and no education.

The basis of trafficked labour is essentially built on exploiting the young, vulnerable, and economically struggling by luring them (victims) with false offers. Bradley Miles, chief executive of Polaris (see Key Players), says “One of the common threads we see through all types of human trafficking is that it thrives on targeting vulnerability and this does the same,” said Miles. Additional vulnerabilities are created once the victim is brought far from their home country. “The modus operandi is high-pressure recruitment: as soon as they say yes, they swiftly pick them up and drive them far away from any area where they have relationships or family. It’s very conscious and pre-meditated and nefarious recruitment.”

Definition of Key Terms

Human trafficking

The term ‘traffic’ stands for dealing or trading something illegal. The United Nations defines human trafficking as *“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.”*

Bonded labour

Sometimes known as debt bondage or debt slavery, bonded labour is the most common form of slavery, where a person in debt must work to pay off the debt. It occurs most commonly in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal (the majority of the world's slaves live and work in India in a form of bonded labour), when an individual gives themselves into slavery as a loan, or when an individual inherits a debt from a relative. Bonded labour is often disguised as an employment agreement where the worker starts with a debt to repay (usually in brutal conditions) only to find that repayment is near impossible.

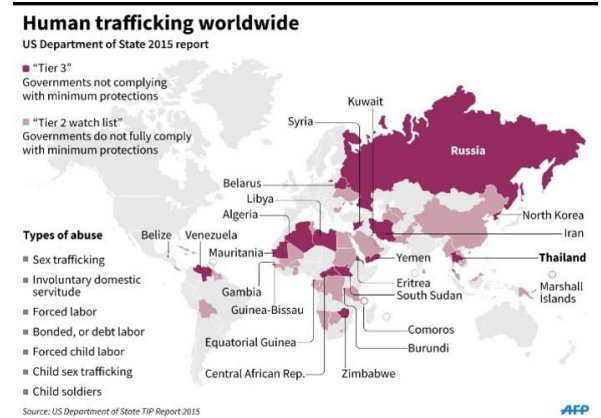


Figure 2: an infographic from international news agency Agence France-Presse illustrating human trafficking

Citing the organization EndSlaveryNow, "For instance, a labourer may begin with an initial debt of \$200. While working and unable to leave, this worker needs a shelter, food and water. The employer tacks on \$25 per day to the debt to cover those expenses. Consequently, the employee only grows his debt while continuing to labour for his debtor, and repayment is impossible".

General Overview

Victims of human trafficking range in all races, ages, and genders from immigrants, previous assault victims to runaway/homeless youths. A study by the Covenant House found that nearly half of the runaway and/or homeless youths (interviewed) had experienced sex trafficking due to financial reasons. Just like the variety of victims, human trafficking comes in many forms:

Hotels

One of the most well-known results of human trafficking is labour involving sex. Since 2007, there has been over 1,400 reported cases of human trafficking to the National Human Trafficking Resource Centre (NHTRC) and the BeFree texting helpline. Victims of sex trafficking and those purchasing sex often meet at hotels and motels, arranged by sex traffickers, or 'pimps' (a man who controls prostitutes and arranges clients for them, taking a percentage of their earnings in return). The National Human Trafficking Hotline explains that commercial sex is most frequently advertised through online platforms such as Eros.com and backpage.com. "In some hotel/motel based commercial sex, the trafficker may not be taking on the role of an intimate partner or caretaker, but rather that of a business

manager. Sex trafficking networks operating under the premise of an escort service may have a business manager who is responsible for setting up dates, but who is also compelling victims to provide commercial sex against their will.”

Temporary Visas

There have been numerous cases where victims have found themselves lured into inhumane working and living conditions instead of being granted a job in developed countries including the United States. Statistics compiled from Polaris’s BeFree Textline and the National Hotline estimate that 40% of labour trafficking and exploitation cases involve temporary visas. Often, victims enter the United States with temporary visas, the most frequent categories being the A-3, B-1, G-5, H-1B, H-2A, H-2B. Trafficked victims involved in forced labour often see no alternative than to work for their employer not only due to mounting debts, isolation and not being able to speak the language of a country, but also due to threats to their loved ones and legal issues; as most temporary visas tie an employee to a single employer, victims would lose their legal status and face deportation proceedings if they choose to quit.

Sales Crews

Incidents reported show that trafficked victims are not only lured by sales crews but also found working in sales crews. It is often the young and unemployed that are being targeted by recruiters offering promising jobs (high earnings, travel) such as sales teams. As employers confiscate their earnings, victims become reliant on their employers for basic necessities including food, transport and accommodation. A previous victim who was put in touch with the NHTRC helpline described long hours and starvation when crew members complained or didn’t meet daily quotas, and made to sleep on the street instead of at a hotel. “He wanted to leave but was far from home with no money.” The Guardian writes, “between January 2008 and February 2015, more than 400 reports of labour trafficking cases were made to the National Human Trafficking Resource Centre (NHTRC) hotline and special text service. That represents a higher reported level of exploitation than any other industry except domestic work.”

Key Players

International Labour Organization (ILO)

Multiple conventions have been held since the 1930s in hopes of abolishing human trafficking: Labor Convention (1930), Abolition of



Figure 3: the official logo of the ILO

Forced Labor Convention (1957), Minimum Age Convention (1973), Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention (1999). The century-old organization has 187 member states and seeks to eliminate the causes of human trafficking, lack of employment, and inefficient labour migration systems.

Polaris Project

Founded in 2002, Polaris is a nonprofit, non-governmental organization which aims to end human trafficking and modern-day slavery. Polaris combats this issue through establishing a National Human Trafficking Hotline which reached over 40,000 cases of human trafficking victims. It also contributes through means such as working alongside corporates “to establish slavery-proof environments”, developing training plans for staff on trauma-informed identification and engagement with the trafficked, and accepting donations from the general public to “disrupt the human trafficking networks that rob people of their lives and freedom”. Its partners include Google, Walmart, Delta, and Wyndham.

Airline Ambassadors International (AAI)

Founded in 1996 by former flight attendant Nancy Rivard, Airline Ambassadors is a registered 501 non-profit organization that is affiliated with the United Nations. The organization “leverages partnerships with the airline industry to help vulnerable children” by providing “medical escorts, humanitarian aid to communities around the world” and advocating for awareness of “human trafficking prevention in the aviation industry”. The AAI also trains volunteer flight attendants to spot and deal with potential traffickers and victims by working in conjunction with local legal forces of their destination. Airline Ambassadors has contributed over \$US 50 million to fund for aid across 52 countries, and is in collaboration with a wide range of corporates and companies, including Air Asia, United Airlines, American Airlines, WanderSafe, Crime Stoppers, and the UNODC Blue Heart Campaign.

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (UN TIP Protocol) was established along with The United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims in Persons, Especially Women and Children, a part of the UN Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons in 2010. The Trust Fund is directly disbursed to 34 NGO projects which reached 30 countries during the first and second grant cycles. Over \$US 4.2 million has been donated by a wide range of supporters since the April of 2018, which goes towards providing victims with “access to justice,

legal advice and assistance, including legal representation for victims to obtain legal status, compensation and/or aid packages.”

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) produces research and issue papers regarding trafficking of persons, through projects, notably the Blue Heart Campaign against Human Trafficking. It works on promoting the “Protocols and capacity-building” and engages with all member states and practitioners through providing “legislative assistance, strategic planning and policy development, technical assistance for strengthened criminal justice responses, and protection and support to victims of trafficking in persons and smuggled migrants”, as well as raising awareness through public service announcements. “Donations to the Blue Heart Campaign go to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, which provides vital assistance and protection to the victims of trafficking through specialized organizations across the globe.”

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
12 th December, 2000	United Nations General Assembly of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking In Persons, Especially Women and Children
4 th September, 1995	<u>Fourth World Conference on Women</u>
30 th July, 2014	First World Day against Trafficking in Persons

Possible Solutions

Forced labour and human trafficking worldwide is a \$US 150 billion industry. Below solutions that have been brainstormed and or are being carried out by some of the Key Players mentioned above:

Encouraging transparency of supply chains “is the first step to eradicating goods and services made by forced labor” from all marketplaces. A study by the Polaris Project concluded that around 90% of global consumers would boycott a company if it was involved in irresponsible, unethical behavior (such as human trafficking).

After long periods of time in a foreign country, human trafficking victims often experience trauma and anxiety even after their escape. **Immediate, short term support** such as medical care, housing, and food should be made more accessible. Increased funding should be provided to other areas of assistance

like legal advocacy and job training, as well as the development of social support systems to empower and ensure a smooth transition for victims to rebuild their livelihoods.

Another solution would be **to raise awareness**. Education plays a major role in preventing and ending the practice of human trafficking. The general public should be notified on the issue of human trafficking and taught how to identify potential signs of scams and risks in offers, signs of trafficking victims, and be introduced to all forms of aid available including but not limited to hotlines and text-lines.

One other solution should be focused on **protection and prosecution**. Though there have been previous crackdowns on human trafficking, more legal measures need to be taken in order to protect citizens from being trafficked, whether it be increasing the severity of punishments, rehabilitating offenders, to enforcing and updating laws and regulations.

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