

Stop Trafficking!

Awareness Advocacy Action

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FOCUS: This issue highlights the findings of the Global Trafficking in Persons Report.

Global Trafficking in Persons Report

In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. The Global Plan reiterated the collective effort behind the UN Trafficking in Persons Protocol and gave UNODC the mandate to collect data and report biennially on trafficking in persons patterns and flows at the national, regional, and international levels. This edition of the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons provides a comprehensive analysis of the crime of trafficking in persons and how countries are responding to it.

This fifth global report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime was released on February 2, 2021. The data is from 2018, prior to the pandemic, and therefore does not reflect the changes that have occurred since early 2020. However, UNODC notes that the economic fallout from COVID-19 has left millions more people vulnerable to trafficking. With more women, men and children in every part of the world out of school, out of work, without social support and facing diminished prospects, targeted action is urgently needed to stop crimes like trafficking in persons from adding to the pandemic's toll.

The report draws on data from 148 countries and explores issues of relevance in the current crisis, including the impact of socio-economic factors, drivers of child trafficking and trafficking for forced labor, and traffickers' use of the internet. Although present in every country and every region, trafficking in persons remains a hidden crime, with perpetrators operating in the dark corners of the internet and the underbelly of the global economy to entrap victims for sexual exploitation, forced labor, domestic servitude and other forms of exploitation.

Migrants account for a significant number of victims in most areas of the world. Children living in extremely poor households are especially vulnerable, and countries in West Africa, South Asia, Central America, and the Caribbean report much higher rates of child victims. Globally, one in every three victims detected is a child, but in low-income countries, children account for half of the victims detected, most of them trafficked for forced labor.

By bringing visibility to this crime, and shedding light on trafficking patterns and flows, this report can assist governments and stakeholders in developing solutions capable of addressing root causes and risk factors, prosecuting offenders, protecting the vulnerable and better supporting victims.

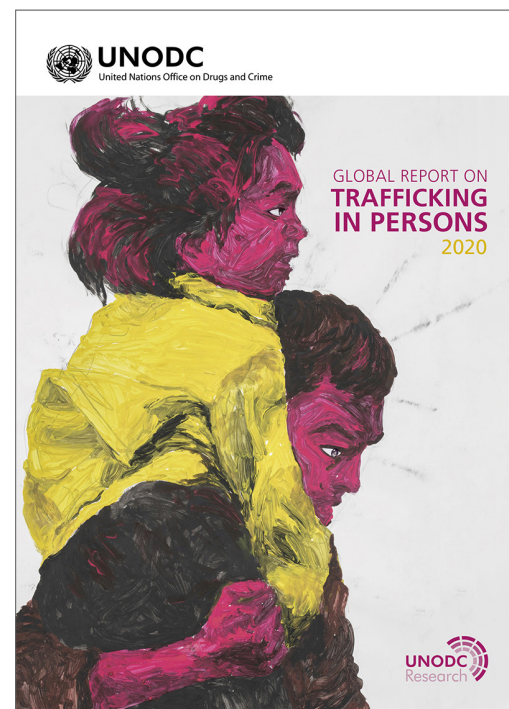
An increasing number of countries have criminalized trafficking in line with the Trafficking in Persons Protocol under the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. We cannot allow the pandemic recession to reverse this progress or put more women, men and children in danger of becoming victims of human trafficking.

As the Trafficking in Persons Protocol highlights, to prevent trafficking governments need to address poverty, underdevelopment, and a lack of equal opportunity, and raise awareness. That means investing in people - in education and jobs, as part of systemic solutions. An inclusive recovery from the pandemic must create opportunities and give hope to young people and the disadvantaged and tackle the structural inequalities that leave women as well as children and marginalized groups vulnerable to human trafficking.

Systemic solutions also rely on broad, cross-border partnerships between governments, with the support of international and regional organizations. Civil society and private sector cooperation are also crucial - businesses and tech companies represent essential partners in addressing supply chain integrity to stop trafficking for forced labor and other forms of exploitation, and in countering recruitment and exploitation via the internet.

Educating the public raises awareness and fosters a sense of responsibility - as bystanders, consumers and concerned citizens, we all have a part to play in preventing and countering human trafficking. Moreover, trafficking prevention must be part of the recovery efforts of the pandemic.

This and previous editions of the Global Report are available [here](#).



Victims of labor trafficking may be hidden in plain sight laboring for well-known companies

There are many ways to exploit human beings for labor. Victims may be trafficked for labor in sectors that are part of a population's ordinary consumption, such as food production, construction, and textile manufacturing.

Trafficking for forced labor accounts for about 38 percent of the total trafficking cases detected globally in 2018. Some regions of the world, namely Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia, report more cases of trafficking for forced labor than other types of trafficking.

Globally, most victims trafficked for forced labor are adult men. Meanwhile, adult women account for about one-fourth, while children account for more than one-third of detected victims (15 percent are girls and 21 percent are boys). These numbers vary throughout the world.

In North Africa, the Middle East and South Asia adult women represent most victims trafficked for forced labor while in European countries adult men make up most victims of human trafficking. The sex and age profiles of victims of trafficking for forced labor are connected to the types of employment where victims are exploited. Each sector presents different trafficking patterns, in terms of victim profile or type of organization of traffickers.

About 70 of the 489 court cases collected by UNODC for the Trafficking in Person Report involved forced labor of approximately 900 victims exploited in 11 different types of work. This included victims laboring in domestic work, car washing, textile production, and street trading. These cases represent only a limited number of examples and the literature points to many other types of forced labor.

The examples below reveal distinct exploitative patterns and victim profiles based on the type of industry.

Domestic Work

The preamble to the 2011 International Labor Organization Domestic Workers Convention (No. 189) describes domestic work as “undervalued” and “invisible.” The Convention also notes how this type of work is normally conducted by members of disadvantaged communities particularly “discriminated” against in terms of working conditions. Domestic work is a significant industry globally. In 2013, it was estimated that about 67 million domestic workers were employed worldwide, and of these, 11.5 million of them (about 8 percent) were migrant workers. However, authorities state that this may be an underrepresentation of the size of this economic sector.

Domestic work takes place inside private homes and, in some cases, the work is done by undocumented migrants. As with other migrants with undocumented status, domestic workers remain, to a large extent, under the radar of labor inspection. This leaves these workers vulnerable to exploitation. Trafficking for domestic servitude has been documented in all regions including Europe, the Middle East, the Americas, Africa, and Asia.

Trafficking for domestic servitude primarily affects women. Most domestic workers around the world are female (80 percent) and most victims of trafficking for domestic servitude are adult women. Moreover, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), 88 percent of the victims trafficked for domestic servitude included in the Counter Trafficking Data Collaborative (CTDC) database are females.

Data from individual countries on victims of trafficking in persons confirms that both in high- and low-income countries, most victims of trafficking for domestic servitude are females, mainly adult women, though many younger girls work in domestic servitude in some countries and regions. Studies and analysis of court cases around domestic servitude present a pattern of extremely high levels of violence, abuse, and exploitation at the hands of persons not typically considered as “professional” criminals but rather as members of the household where the victim is employed and exploited.



Trafficking in the Construction Industry

Working in the construction sector traditionally is a male-dominated activity. Compared to other economic sectors, the number of people employed in the construction industry is limited but expanding. This expansion is particularly marked in lower-middle income countries, where the share of employment in the construction industry has tripled in less than 30 years. This allows for an increased demand for construction workers, frequently filled by low-skilled and migrant workers. This form of employment is characterized by a lower level of mechanization compared to manufacturing and is generally more dangerous than others. More people die while working in the construction sector than in any other economic activity. Furthermore, the employment in this sector is often short-term and of a project-based nature.

Fishing Industry and Trafficking

The consumption of fish has been steadily increasing worldwide over the last 70 years. Similarly, over the last few years, the market price of fish has increased. This has led to a significant expansion of the fishing industry. Also, the fishing industry has diversified as it has expanded.

The industry has introduced new sources of supply with advances in aquaculture production or the farming of aquatic organisms, however, capture production continues to be prevalent. People employed in the most labor-intensive sector of the industry are concentrated in Asia and Africa. The African continent reports a high percentage of non-motorized vessels suggesting African production is even more labor-intensive than in other parts of the world.

In the fishing industry, workers are typically underpaid, working under hazardous conditions. A structural factor exacerbating the exposure of workers to trafficking is overfishing. The increasing consumption of fish, although compensated by aquaculture, has led to the depletion of fish stocks in traditional fishing areas. Faced with the scarcity of fish along the coastlines, over the last decade, fishing vessels have started working further out in waters away from shore to locate more abundant fish stocks. Distant captures require crews to stay prolonged periods at open sea, increasing costs for a catch while reducing the possibilities of labor or police inspections. These factors allow the use of trafficking victims to remain hidden. Trafficking in persons for forced labor in the fishing industry has been widely documented all over the world.

Migration and Labor Trafficking

Human trafficking is always an exploitation of vulnerability and migrants are among the most vulnerable people on earth. Particularly in wealthy countries, trafficking for forced labor is more commonly identified among migrants than national citizens. Traffickers abuse different vulnerabilities of migrants, starting with the fact migrants may not always have a regular status to work or legal permission to stay in the country of exploitation. According to official data on 71 cases of trafficking for forced labor prosecuted in Argentina between 2009 and 2013, about 70 percent of the 516 victims were foreigners, and 56 percent of them were in a precarious legal situation, such as experiences of illegal entry into the country (26 percent). From the investigations in these cases, it emerges that traffickers use this irregular status to exploit victims. Similarly, research conducted in the European Union among irregular migrants shows that residence status is perceived as the most important factor contributing to labor exploitation.

Traffickers typically threaten to report victims to migration authorities if they do not comply with exploitative working conditions. In a court case provided by Israel, the persons convicted for trafficking restricted the movement of a domestic worker, warning her she could be arrested if she left the house as she did not have her travel documents in order. Similar cases are reported throughout the world.

The fear of being returned to their country of origin may discourage migrants with irregular residence status from seeking support or justice, even in extremely exploitative situations. As with many forms of trafficking, labor traffickers may be involved in facilitating the irregular migration of the victims. This typically happens based on a debt these victims have to pay back to cover the costs of being smuggled into the country. Charging migration fees is not only practiced by migrant smugglers, but also widely used in regular migration processes and by officially registered companies. Many migrant workers fall victim to debt bondage when they take on an initial debt for the migration journey as part of the terms of a regular registered employment contract. In some instances, the fees charged for regular migration are more expensive than those for irregular migration.

Linking labor contracts and migration status makes migrant workers bound to their employer. In some countries of the Middle East, for example, migrant workers are not allowed to leave the country without the employer's permission. The employer can legally withhold the passport of the employee until the migration debt is paid.



Awareness

The internet and social media are increasingly being used by traffickers to exploit their victims

Common digital platforms are used to advertise deceptive job offers and to market exploitative services to potential paying customers. Victims are recruited through social media, with traffickers taking advantage of publicly available personal information and the anonymity of online spaces to contact victims. Webcams and livestream have created new forms of exploitation and have reduced the need for transportation and transfer of victims.

Two emerging patterns used by traffickers are to use the internet to either actively “hunt” for vulnerable victims or to passively “fish” for potential victims by posting advertisements and waiting for replies. The UNODC gathered reports on court cases containing these elements to produce the Global Report. The cases involved a total of 491 victims and cover more than 30 national jurisdictions. Through the internet, perpetrators can reach many potential victims or clients with minimal risk, while simultaneously increasing the scale of their operations through minimal effort.

Among the cases studied by the UNODC, the first which reports the use of the internet dates to 2004. This case described how traffickers used a free-standing webpage to promote sexual services and to connect with interested consumers in a tourist destination. Today, internet-based trafficking has become increasingly varied. Traffickers use communications platforms to broadcast exploitation abroad, interact with potential victims or transfer money between trafficking group members, coerce victims into establishing rapport with customers in chat rooms monitored by the traffickers, and share child sexual abuse material online, some of which is related to trafficking in persons. Traffickers have coerced their victims into forced crime, forced labor or have

used internet technologies to advertise the selling of organs, such as kidneys harvested from poor and vulnerable individuals.

Traffickers use the internet to gain access to an increased pool of customers, particularly sex buyers. One court case is particularly illustrative: a single trafficker, working alone, managed to sexually exploit one victim with over 100 sex buyers over a period of 60 days using online advertisement.

The internet has become integrated with exploitation and has introduced new ways for traffickers to expand their businesses. Traffickers increasingly use free-standing webpages to publicized victims through an escort service. For example, one case described the use of a social media site as resembling the experience of ‘window shopping’, whereby customers could inspect which victims they intended to ‘buy’. The platforms used for advertisements tend to be broadly accessible. These include some regular online marketplace sites, on which anyone can post or browse advertisements to sell or buy products.

The internet is also used by traffickers to connect with the targeted victims for both sexual exploitation and forced labor. Technology-based recruitment hinges on the anonymity of communications via the internet. It may prove difficult to identify the author of online advertisements or the genuine identity of people writing from social media accounts. In one case, the trafficker used multiple online profiles to recruit the victims. The trafficker stayed in contact with each victim through two fake identities: one was used to write abusive text messages, while the other was used to express understanding and compassion. This technique was instrumental in building trust with the victims.

The disclosure of personal information on social media platforms may easily be misused by traffickers. One group of traffickers, for instance, used Facebook to browse through user profiles and, on basis of the information that people shared, selected potential victims who could be more susceptible to being courted and tricked into exploitation. Job advertisements are also used as recruitment fronts. Examples of advertisements used to attract victims often describe the possibility of living a luxurious life or promising jobs in industries such as modeling or entertainment.

The internet also plays a role in the exploitation of victims. The internet can be used to broadcast or livestream acts of exploitation, reaching a large base of consumers in different locations throughout different regions of the world. In one case, a group of traffickers organized and managed a “cybersex den” to exploit victims through coerced performances in front of webcams. Other forms of trafficking involve child sexual abuse ‘on demand’. One court case reported by Norwegian authorities, for example, reported one male trafficker who was found guilty of forcing children, both girls and boys, into sexual performances, which were livestreamed over Skype.

As technology-based trafficking has become more commonplace, social media has been increasingly used by traffickers, making this method of trafficking an emerging threat, especially for youth. Since 2009, the share of victims trafficked using a form of social media has grown from zero to 51 percent. Social media platforms are used for criminal business activity that requires quick responses and the ability to connect with people without delay. The rapid pace of communication on social media is instrumental to the recruitment of the victims, but also

enables traffickers to easily link up with clients interested in purchasing an exploitative service.

The use of different platforms appears to relate to the age profile of the victims. Younger victims are reported in cases of trafficking through social media as compared to trafficking perpetrated across other platforms. The average age of those using internet-based tools is decreasing; more children have started using the internet from an early age. Children and teenagers are often groomed by traffickers on social media platforms and they are susceptible to deceptive strategies in the search for acceptance, attention, or friendship.

Adult victims are more exposed to trafficking through free-standing websites such as escort sites, where advertising of victims is not hidden. These public sites do not typically involve child victims, possibly due to the heightened risk of drawing the attention of law enforcement. Although the use of public sites for child exploitation is limited, the availability of such materials is not limited. In addition to the platforms here considered, the so-called “dark-web” has gained the interest of criminals to facilitate their illegal trades. Although the distribution of this abusive material does not constitute trafficking in persons, the production of images of child sexual abuse is very often the result of trafficking children for sexual exploitation.

Internet technology has broadened the geographical scope of traffickers’ operations. The internet helps traffickers to operate across borders and in multiple locations at the same time, while physically exploiting the victims in a single location. By making use of internet technologies, traffickers can overcome geographical distances using ‘cyberspace’ to connect themselves, victims and the final consumers of exploitative services. This form of trafficking may or may not require the transportation of the victim, although some cases have shown that victims may be transferred between countries.



Most trafficking cases facilitated by the internet are conducted on a small scale. Traffickers may possess different levels of computer literacy. Some use rather unsophisticated internet-based technologies. For example, many cases of trafficking for sexual exploitation were perpetrated with a smartphone equipped with a camera. Other cases refer to more complex applications, such as the case of a trafficking group sexually exploiting large numbers of children and producing several hundred thousand images for online distribution through illicit sites.

Sophisticated technologies allow traffickers to scale up their activities. It has been documented that organized criminal networks have attempted to recruit hackers or cyber experts to support their operations. One court case describes how a trafficking network had one ‘dedicated’ person responsible for online advertisement.

Traffickers appear to adopt two different approaches in the way they use internet technologies. The first is one in which traffickers proactively look for a specific type of victim (‘hunting’). Hunting strategies are used both for getting access to victims and establishing connections with potential buyers of exploitative services. In this approach, the targets of the traffickers are not random but are chosen based on specific characteristics such as economic, emotional, or other vulnerabilities, which consequently make them more susceptible to exploitation or abuse. A key characteristic of the hunting strategy is that the trafficker proactively pursues the victim or the potential customer online. Social media provides traffickers with a large pool of potential targets and the ability to collect personal information

on individuals whom they might otherwise never meet. This may be due to the accessibility of personal information shared on social media which enables perpetrators to identify vulnerable individuals relatively easily, assess their situation and approach them to build a relationship.

The second approach used by traffickers to attract potential victims is called ‘fishing.’ The fishing strategies involve traffickers posting advertisements online and waiting for potential clients or victims to respond. According to the cases studied by UNODC, this strategy was more commonly used than hunting. Traffickers use fishing strategies to recruit victims by advertisements accessible to everyone, typically offering well-paid jobs, prompting potential victims to make initial contact with traffickers. In several of these cases, perpetrators used deception to attract victims by advertising jobs in a foreign country.

In one case, traffickers used fake profiles on social media to advertise modeling jobs in a foreign country. Traffickers eventually sexually exploited the women who were deceived by the advertisements. In this single case, approximately 100 women were recruited through fishing strategies. Fishing strategies are also used to attract potential clients. In these cases, traffickers typically post advertisements for escort services or prostitution and invite interested customers to contact them. In one example, traffickers set up two websites advertising sexually exploitative escort services. Clients would call or send messages over the internet to make appointments for prostitution services. In this case, more than 30 women were advertised online and forced to engage in sexual activities with customers.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING: Regional Overviews

North and Central America and the Caribbean

Most of the victims of human trafficking in North American countries are adult women. In Central America and the Caribbean, almost eighty percent of victims are underage girls and adult women. These countries have the largest percentage of girl victims of trafficking recorded worldwide. The majority of victims in North America, Central America, and the Caribbean are trafficked for sexual exploitation. In North America, victims are also trafficked for mixed forms of exploitation, sexual and forced labor, as well as for exploitative begging, forced criminal activity, and forced marriage. In Central America and the Caribbean, children are also trafficked for exploitative begging, forced criminal activity, and for illegal adoption.

In North American countries, most of the women are trafficked within their own countries. In terms of transnational trafficking, the most significant flows into North America originate from countries in other parts of the Americas. A significant trafficking flow to North America also originates from countries in Asia. The key origin countries are in South-East Asia, but also consist of other Asian countries on a smaller scale. At the same time, very few North American victims are detected in other subregions of the world.

In Central America and the Caribbean, most of the victims are either from within their country or from South America. Moreover, many trafficking victims from Central America and the Caribbean are brought to the richer countries of North and South America.

South America

About 75 percent of trafficking victims in South America are female. Most are trafficked for sexual exploitation with about one-third of all victims trafficked for forced labor. Argentina and Chile reported more victims who had been trafficked for labor than for sexual exploitation. Most victims are trafficked within the South American countries and in Central America and the Caribbean. However, victims from South America have been found in North America, Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia. The majority of traffickers in South America continue to be men, accounting for around two-thirds of those investigated/arrested, prosecuted, and/or convicted of trafficking in 2018 in the subregion. Most of these men were arrested in their own country.

Eastern Europe and Central Asia

In this region of the world adult women make up the majority of trafficking victims and most are trafficked for forced labor. The region is also characterized by women making up a large share of traffickers and most of the trafficking occurs domestically. However, victims from these countries are also found in Central and South Eastern Europe, Western and Southern Europe, and in the Middle East.

North Africa and the Middle East

Most trafficking victims are adult women and men. The North African countries have more child victims than in the rest of the region. Victims in North Africa and the Middle East are trafficked for sexual exploitation, forced labor and exploitative begging in almost equal proportions. The majority of the victims detected in North African countries are domestically trafficked. There are also victims trafficked from East and West Africa.

Western and Southern Europe

Adult women comprise a majority of victims of trafficking although the number of men and boys who are victims is increasing. Western and Southern Europe reported the greatest shares of male victims globally, both men and boys, comprising 49 percent of the total.

Most are trafficked for sexual exploitation. However, trafficking for forced labor and trafficking for other purposes, mainly for criminal activity and exploitative begging, are being increasingly detected. Many boys are trafficked for the purpose of drug trafficking in the United Kingdom.

Most of the traffickers are adult men, in their own country. However, a large share of persons convicted for trafficking in persons is made up of foreigners. Most of the victims are from other countries with many coming from Sub-Saharan Africa, primarily from West Africa. While victims from West Africa are detected in almost every country of Western and Southern Europe, victims from East Africa are reportedly mainly trafficked to the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, France, and several other countries.

South Asia

In South Asia, both children and adult women each account for about 45 percent of trafficking victims. Most are trafficked for forced labor. There are a significant number of victims trafficked domestically, however victims are also trafficked to East Asia, Western and Southern Europe, and North America.

Central and South-Eastern Europe

A majority of the victims are adult women and the profile of the victims does not appear to have changed significantly over the years. Most continue to be trafficked for sexual exploitation, though there have been minor increases in the shares of victims trafficked for forced labor. Adult men living within the country continue to be the main traffickers. Most of the victims are also from within the country, though victims from East Asia and Eastern Europe have also been detected in these countries.

East Asia and the Pacific

Adult women account for about half of trafficking victims in this area, while children account for about one-third of victims. Most of these are victims of sexual exploitation and most traffickers are adult women. Victims are trafficked domestically and globally.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Most victims of human trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa are children, both boys and girls in equal proportion. West Africa tends to have the most child victims, while Southern African and East African countries tend to have more adult victims than children. East African countries have more adult male victims, while Southern African countries have more women.

Countries in West Africa have significantly more victims than other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, regional analyses regarding the profiles of victims largely reflect data from this part of the African continent. Most victims in Sub-Saharan Africa are trafficked for the purpose of forced labor. Among the other forms of exploitation, countries in this region reported trafficking for forced criminal activity, forced marriages, and mixed forms of exploitation. While most victims of trafficking from this region are found within their own countries or across the border from neighboring countries they are also found globally, in Western and Southern Europe, in North Africa, North America, East Asia, and in the Middle East.



Advocacy

Children account for about one-third of victims of trafficking worldwide



According to the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the 2000 UN Trafficking Protocol, a child is any person younger than 18 years of age. Children account for about one-third of victims of trafficking worldwide. Children living in extreme poverty are most at risk for trafficking, especially in those countries with overall low-income levels per capita. Countries in West Africa, South Asia, Central America, and the Caribbean typically present a much higher percentage of all child trafficking victims.

The age profile of the victims appears to change drastically across different regions. The age of the child trafficking victim appears to be related to the income level in the country of origin. The main forms of child trafficking are forced labor and trafficking for sexual exploitation. Trafficked children detected in low-income countries are more likely to be exploited in forced labor; this is particularly the case for Sub-Saharan African countries. Conversely, children in high-income countries are more frequently trafficked for sexual exploitation.

Children Trafficked for Forced Labor

Countries where most victims of human trafficking are children, are also those countries where child labor is prevalent. This trend is particularly relevant for West Africa. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), countries in Africa have the highest percentage of children (between 5 and 17 years of age) in labor. The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) estimates confirm this geographical pattern. It is estimated that more than 40 percent of the total population aged between 5 and 17 are engaged in child labor in some countries in West Africa.

Studies have shown that child labor has been found to possibly deteriorate into children working in exploitative situations. In one case reported by Cote d'Ivoire, for example, authorities identified more than 30 children

working on one cocoa plantation site. After assessing each case, authorities determined that about one-third of these children were victims of trafficking.

The cultural acceptance of children in the labor market can aid traffickers seeking children to exploit in labor activities. Some of these children start to work between the ages of six and nine. It is easier to exploit children in areas where communities are accustomed to sending children to work than in communities where child labor is generally not an acceptable practice.

Child trafficking victims may be hidden in plain sight. In some socio-economic contexts, trafficking of children may occur on a community scale, often involving family members. Families in dire need may encourage their children to work and children may feel the pressure to economically contribute to the family, leaving them vulnerable to exploitative practices.

In West Africa, children trafficked for domestic labor are mainly females, with younger girls often doing childcare and older girls responsible for cooking.

Children Trafficked for Sexual Exploitation

Most child victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation are girls. This occurs in every part of the world but is largely concentrated in Central America, the Caribbean, and East Asia. As with forced labor, countries with lower income per capita have the highest percentage of children trafficked for sexual exploitation.

Early marriage is a practice that is rooted in the culture of some countries. It is sometimes regarded as a family survival strategy. As such, it is a form of human trafficking when the girl is married off in return for some economic or other material benefits. Child trafficking for forced marriage is heavily dependent on the household's income as it can be perceived to generate income while reducing

the costs associated with raising a daughter. For example, in South Sudan, forced marriage is more common during periods of drought and economic hardship. Similarly, in South Asia, the practice of forced marriage is more prevalent after natural disasters like floods.

Another practice that has been found to affect the risk of child trafficking is the sending of boys, and in some cases, girls, to residential religious schools. In North and West Africa, some religious teachers force students to beg, thereby engaging in child trafficking for forced begging.

Child trafficking for sexual exploitation may also be related to some form of tradition or cultural norms. Some families, under the ancient customs in South Asia, such as the Devadasi, the Joginis, and others, maintain the tradition of forcing girls into sexual exploitation. These girls are not only trafficked within their communities but also in the large urban areas of the country. Again, the extremely poor socioeconomic situation in these countries remains one of the main drivers behind the persistence of this form of sexual exploitation.

Covid-19 Economic Downturn Increases Trafficking

One outcome of the COVID-19 pandemic is a significant downturn in the global economy. Evidence suggests low earners have been hit the hardest by spiking unemployment caused by the pandemic. Some economists predict that we will experience the most severe recession since the end of World War II, increasing inequality both at global levels and within countries, and directly increasing the level of trafficking flows to more affluent countries.

As with previous economic crises, the sharp increase in unemployment rates brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to increase trafficking in persons, particularly from countries experiencing the fastest and most persistent drops in employment. As unemployment rates rise, increasing numbers are likely to be trafficked from the poorest communities to those parts of the world recovering faster. Job seekers from the hardest hit countries are likely to be more willing to take high risks in the hope of improving their opportunities.

Action



Central American Women and Children Protection Act

Click [here](#) to write and call your Members of Congress urging them to support the reintroduction of the Central American Women and Children's Protection Act. This federal legislation addresses the root causes of migration so that women and children in particular are not forced to migrate and become extremely vulnerable to human traffickers. This legislation specifically prohibits any funds going to the governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Instead, the funds must be channeled through civil society.



Action

U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021

Call or email your legislators and ask them to support the U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021 (H.R. 1177/ S. 348) which will address the root causes of forced migration. This bill would:

- ◆ Fund a \$4 billion four-year inter-agency plan to address the underlying causes of migration in the region, including by increasing assistance to El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, conditioned on their ability to reduce the endemic corruption, violence, and poverty that causes people to flee their home countries.
- ◆ Create safe and legal channels for people to seek protection, including by establishing Designated Processing Centers throughout Central America to register and process displaced persons for refugee resettlement and other lawful migration avenues—either to the United States or other partner countries.
- ◆ Re-institute the Central American Minors program to reunite children with U.S. relatives and creates a Central American Family Reunification Parole Program to more quickly unite families with approved family sponsorship petitions.
- ◆ Support asylum seekers and other vulnerable populations by eliminating the one-year deadline for filing asylum claims and provides funding to reduce asylum application backlogs.
- ◆ Increase protections for U visa, T visa, and VAWA applicants, including by raising the cap on U visas from 10,000 to 30,000. The bill also expands protections for foreign nationals assisting U.S. troops.

What are the root causes of Human Trafficking?

Please click [here](#) for more information.

Root Causes of Human Trafficking

Click [here](#) to write your Members of Congress calling for legislation that ensures sufficient income for a person to support themselves and their families, ends the gender wage gap, ensures transparency in the supply chain, enacts compassionate immigration laws, and ends racism. Further, we need to ensure that we do not punish the victims but rather criminalize the “johns” and those who profit from the prostitution industry.

Address Root Causes of Human Trafficking

Governments and nongovernmental organizations must be encouraged to adopt a human rights-based approach to human trafficking that addresses the roots causes of trafficking and the exploitation of women and men and girls and boys. We urge elected officials to craft legislation and policy that addresses the underlying conditions that cause human trafficking including: climate change, forced migration, neo-liberal capitalism, and gender discrimination. Click [here](#) to learn more.

Immigration System as Root Cause

Click [here](#) to write your Members of Congress urging them to address the link between immigration policies and human trafficking. When people cannot safely provide for themselves, they have a right to migrate. Because of our dysfunctional immigration policies, many people seeking our help are put further at risk. Our priority should be to help impoverished nations to become self-sufficient while fixing our own broken immigration system.

The infographic 'Root Causes of Human Trafficking' is divided into several sections:

- Awareness:** Discusses the need for public awareness and the role of media in highlighting the issue.
- Root Causes of Human Trafficking:** Lists factors such as economic inequality, gender discrimination, and climate change.
- Why Is This Happening?:** Explains the role of globalization, technological advances, and the demand for cheap labor.
- Addressing the Root Causes:** Proposes solutions like strengthening labor laws, improving social safety nets, and promoting sustainable development.
- Public, Legal and Criminal Causes:** Discusses the role of law enforcement and public policy in combating trafficking.

The word cloud below features 'trafficking' as the largest word, surrounded by related terms like 'human', 'sex', 'technology', 'sites', 'data', 'research', and 'information'.



Invest in Girls and Women

The U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development must be encouraged to promote programs that build the capacity of countries' national and local legal and policy frameworks to prevent discrimination against girls and women, guarantee their access to quality engendered education, and secure their property, social security, land tenure, and inheritance rights. Click [here](#) to learn more.

Support COVID-19 Funding and Protections for Refugees

Contact your legislator to advocate on behalf of refugee populations who are vulnerable to trafficking to ensure they are protected and cared for in COVID-19 funding decisions. Please click [here](#) to take action.

Advocacy Resources

Click [here](#) to find your legislator, tips on setting up an office or virtual visit with your legislator and other advocacy resources.

Nexus between Migration and Human Trafficking

Click [here](#) to learn more.

Capitalism: Role in Human Trafficking

To read more on the relationship between Capitalism and Human Trafficking, please click [here](#).

www.sistersagainsttrafficking.org



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