



ALLIANCE TO END HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Founded and Supported by U.S. Catholic Sisters

alliancetoendhumantrafficking.org

Human Trafficking & Children

Awareness

Human trafficking, also known as trafficking in persons (TIP), is a crime under state, federal and international law. It is currently the second largest type of global criminal activity, exceeded only by the illegal drug trade, and involves the use of force or fraud to control another person for purposes of exploitation.

Anyone can be trafficked regardless of race, class, education, gender, age, or citizenship when forcefully coerced or enticed by false promises. (UNICEF USA)

The two major types of human trafficking are:

1. *Sex trafficking*, in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud or coercion, or in which a person induced to perform such an act is under 18 years of age;
2. *Labor trafficking*, which is the recruitment, harboring, transporting, provision or obtaining of a person for labor services through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery.

Human Trafficking and Children

Who fits the definition of a child? Definitions vary; according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is a person below the age of 18. However, some cultures consider a person an adult after a rite of passage, which may or may not correspond to the time of puberty.

According to UNICEF, the global market for child trafficking alone brings in over 39 billion dollars a year; children account for nearly one-third of identified trafficking victims globally. The United States is a source and transit country and is also considered one of the top destination points for victims of child trafficking and exploitation.

ECPAT-USA reports that at least 100,000 children in the USA are sexually exploited every year. LGBTQ young people are especially vulnerable and heavily trafficked. “Pimps market and sell children for sex—openly—at popular online classified sites, at truck stops, on streets in every city in America.” (National Center for Missing and Exploited Children)

Other ways that children are trafficked include forced labor, service as child soldiers, begging, drug smuggling, forced marriage, as domestic servants, for illegal adoptions, or for the removal of their organs.

Because the trafficking of children is often more hidden than the trafficking of adults, this crime is usually under-reported.



Child Labor: What is it?

The International Labor Organization (ILO) defines child labor as any labor that deprives children of their childhood, their potential, and their dignity, which is harmful to physical and mental development. It includes employment below the minimum age as established in national legislation. It refers to work that is mentally, physically, or morally dangerous and harmful to physical and moral development. It also interferes with their learning by preventing them from attending school or requiring them to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

Almost 1 of every 10 children worldwide is involved in child labor. Estimates indicate that 160 million children – 63 million girls and 97 million boys – were in child labor globally at the beginning of 2020.

Many unsafe, hazardous, and worst child labor practices equate to child trafficking, which may involve children being enslaved and/or separated from their families, and includes:

- All forms of practices similar to slavery, such as the sale of children, debt bondage, and forced compulsory labor, including forced recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
- The use, procuring or offering of a child for sexual exploitation, for the production of pornography or pornographic performances;
- The use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs;

- Work, which by its nature is likely to harm children's health, safety, or morals. (*Article 3 of ILO Convention No. 182*)

Effects of Trafficking on Children

There are several ways that child labor and other forms of trafficking can affect children and vary, depending on which industry the child is working in. Generally, child laborers suffer from long-term health problems due to malnutrition, exposure to chemicals, abuse, injuries, exhaustion, and psychological harm.

- In agriculture, children may be exposed to toxic pesticides or fertilizers. They work with dangerous blades and tools and carry heavy loads. Seventy percent of all children in child labor are in agriculture. (*Child Labor: Global Estimates 2020, Trends, and the Road Forward, 2021*)
- In mining, children may use poisonous chemicals, face the risk of mine collapse, and sometimes work with explosives.
- In construction, children may carry heavy loads, work at heights without safety equipment, and risk injury from dangerous machinery.
- In manufacturing, children may use toxic solvents, perform repetitive

tasks in painful positions, and risk injury from sharp tools.

- In domestic work, children risk abuse, work long hours, and often live in isolation.
- In sexual exploitation, children suffer long-lasting physical and psychological trauma, disease, drug addiction, pregnancy, malnutrition, social ostracism and death.

Why is this happening?

Poverty: Parents who voluntarily sell their children to traffickers often do so because they live in poverty and cannot afford to feed their children, or think that it represents an opportunity for a better life for the child. Girls usually have fewer prospects for employment--with lower potential salary contributions--or require dowries which the family cannot afford.

Gender Inequity: Girls are the most powerless of all vulnerable populations because of social and cultural factors that devalue women and girls. Girls often have no control over their destiny, and their lower status makes them more likely to be voluntarily sold by their families.

Gender Imbalance: Countries with extreme gender imbalances have a high number of kidnappings from poor areas and from neighboring countries.

Families may buy a son or buy and sell girls and women as commodities.

Pornography: The greatest single factor in the increase in child sex trafficking is the growth of pornography. It is becoming more explicit, more violent and more degrading, and the internet has made it even more accessible to teens and young adults.

Increased vulnerability: Any factor that increases the supply of vulnerable people, such as natural disasters, migration, unemployment, lack of education or domestic violence will tend to increase the incidence of trafficking in all people, including children.

COVID pandemic: Traffickers and buyers shifted to more online recruitment and grooming of children as children spent more time online for virtual learning due to school closures, often with little parental supervision. (*TIP Report, 2021*)

What can we do? Action!

No cultural excuses can justify the sexual exploitation of children; trafficking in children is a gross violation of human rights. The sexual exploitation of children is prohibited in most countries around the world. United Nations documents such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child forbid the exploitative use of children for labor, armed conflict, prostitution, and pornography (Art.31 and 34).

They urge nations to "take all... measures to prevent abduction of, sale of, or traffic in children." (Art. 35) That document also promotes measures that contribute to the "physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration" of the child (Art. 39), preventing re-victimization.

- Find out which countries have ratified internationally-agreed commitments designed to prevent human trafficking, protect victims and prosecute traffickers, particularly the United Nations Palermo Protocol, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.



Both boys and girls are trafficked for forced labor. The mineral tantalum in your cell phone may have come from an artisanal mine in Africa, dug out of the ground as coltan ore by a child. It probably financed serious conflict in the DR Congo in which child soldiers fought, died or served as sex toys for their fellow soldiers.

Boys, especially, are in high demand for the fishing industry in Asia. After carrying heavy boxes of fish and pulling out loaded nets from dawn to dusk, seven days a week, the boys may collapse from exhaustion and be thrown overboard like broken tools.

- Has your country ratified the full UN Convention on the Rights of the Child? The United States has not ratified it.

Advocate for legislation or strengthen existing legislation to:

- Prosecute the purveyors (pimps, gangs, pornographers) of trafficked children and adults.
- Prosecute the purchasers (johns) of sex-trafficked children and adults.

See how the factors that increase demand for trafficked persons fit into your life.

- You can check with suppliers to see if the things you buy (clothing or food) are made/gathered by trafficked children.
- Hold the stores from which you purchase goods accountable for all steps of their supply chain.
 - Ask the manager:
 - Did the cheap shrimp at your grocery come from a child labor ship in Thailand?
 - Were the cocoa beans in your chocolate candy picked by trafficked children?
 - Insist on Fair Trade or certified Slave Free merchandise.
- See if local publications advertising adult entertainment feature child porn.
- Ask airline employees, hotel workers, policemen or taxi drivers if they have been trained to recognize the signs that children are being trafficked. Legislation and/or licensing protocols that require comprehensive Victim Identification Training for these professionals would empower them to do so.
 - Advocate for legislation or certification that requires Victim Identification Training for these professionals.
- Intensify efforts to prosecute people who exploit children in brothels, massage parlors, strip clubs, and in street prostitution.
- Promote sanctions against law enforcement agencies that refuse to enforce laws against trafficking and dismantle criminal networks that profit from the sale of human beings.

- Recommend more stringent sanctions on the publication or transmission of pornography in electronic or paper form.

- See if your country or state has a Safe Harbor Law that exempts children from prosecution for prostitution, provides training for those assisting victims, provides consistent guidance/monitoring by professionals and provides financing for the development of programs.

- Work for the passage of a national Safe Harbor Law and a nationwide system of care for children.

- Publicize the illegal nature and penalties for trafficking and promote media campaigns dealing with human rights for children.

- Provide gender-centered education and information/awareness campaigns to warn children about the dangers of trafficking and campaigns targeting males. This strikes at the demand side of the issue. (*United Nations Population Fund*)

- Provide information/awareness campaigns to warn children about the dangers of trafficking, social media and the internet.

- Men are the major source of demand for trafficked sex and child pornography. Provide education/awareness campaigns targeting boys and men on the objectification of girls and women and healthy sexual relationships.

- Support the provision of safe places and treatment for child victims/survivors of trafficking, as well as programs to reintegrate them into their society. As of 2012, there were fewer than 250 shelter beds for commercially exploited children in the US. (*ECPAT-USA*)

- Increase development aid to organizations that target the creation of legitimate income-generating possibilities for women and families with children and those that educate/empower girls.

Reflection

How do my actions contribute to the international trafficking of children?

What are the sources of our values and hope for a better world?

Scripture (New Jerusalem Bible)

- *Psalms 10: 12-18* Do not forget the helpless, defend the oppressed...
- *Psalms 72:4-5, 12-14* May God defend the afflicted and save the children of the needy...
- *Micah 6: 6-8* God requires that you act justly, love mercy, and walk...with your God...
- *Amos 5: 21-24* Let justice roll like a river...
- *Proverbs 31: 8-9* Speak up for those who cannot speak, defend the poor and needy...
- *Matthew 25: 34-40* Whatever you did for one of these least, you did for me...
- *Luke 10: 25-37* Love for those in need...
- *John 3: 19-21* People loved darkness instead of light...

Resources

Informational Websites

Slavery Footprint – www.slaveryfootprint.org/survey.

Polaris Project – polarisproject.org.

World Crafts – worldcrafts.org. Has gifts from artisans who escaped slavery.

Just Faith – www.justfaith.org.

ECPAT International – ecpat.net.

Shared Hope – sharedhope.org.

ECPAT USA – ecpatusa.org.

US Conference of Catholic Bishops – USCCB.org.

Alliance to End Human Trafficking is a collaborative, faith-based network that offers educational programs and materials, supports access to survivor services, and engages in legislative advocacy to eradicate human trafficking.

In order to protect the identity of trafficking victims, models have been used in identifiable photos.