



U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking

Ending Slavery Is Everyone's Work

Who Are We?

We are **U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking**, a collaborative, faith-based national network that offers education, supports access to survivor services, and engages in advocacy in an effort to eradicate modern-day slavery. As a member of **Talitha Kum International**, we are connected to a global network of women religious working to end human trafficking.

While we work to end human trafficking by raising awareness, and supporting survivors of human trafficking on their journey of healing, we also advocate for public policies that will eradicate this affront to human dignity. We call on officials at all levels of government to recognize that human trafficking is a reality in their jurisdictions whether that be a city, county, state or the country as a whole, and to develop and implement concrete plans to eradicate this modern-day form of slavery.

What Is Human Trafficking?

Human Trafficking is the use of force, fraud or coercion in an effort to exploit someone for labor or commercial sex. The **International Labor Organization** estimates that there are 40.3 million victims of human trafficking around the world, including 24.9 million in forced labor (of these 4.8 million are in forced sex work) and 15.4 million in forced marriage.

Our Advocacy Efforts Reflect the Core Values of Our Faith

As we engage in advocacy efforts to end human trafficking and support survivors, we are guided by values articulated in Catholic Social Teaching.

- Belief in the inherent dignity of every human person
- Commitment to those who are poor and vulnerable
- Establishment of right relationships to promote the common good
- Defense of the basic rights of workers
- Solidarity with one another and the willingness to enter into another's joys and sorrows
- The need to care for all of creation, our "Common Home," on which all depend for life



Principles That Guide Our Advocacy

Transform unjust policies: Policies and practices that harm survivors of human trafficking or threaten migrants or others who are vulnerable to human trafficking must be exposed and rejected.

Demand survivor informed policy: Persons who have been trafficked should have the opportunity to provide advice and recommendations to legislators and policy makers in order to improve U.S. policy and programming efforts.

Address root causes: Governments and nongovernmental organization must be encouraged to adopt a human rights-based approach to human trafficking that addresses the roots causes of trafficking and exploitation.

Invest in girls and women: We support the development of national and local legal and policy frameworks to prevent discrimination against girls and women, guarantee their access to quality education, and secure their property, social security, land tenure, and inheritance rights.

Require business transparency: Corporations must be held accountable for any forced or child labor in their labor recruitment and hiring and in their supply and distribution chains. Businesses should be required to publicly disclose their efforts to eliminate human trafficking and child labor in their business operations.

Advocacy Priorities for the 117th Congress

Protect children: Children are a particularly vulnerable population when it comes to both sex and labor trafficking. Laws must be in place to protect children in all areas of life including online exploitation, and hold companies and individuals accountable for their complicity in forced labor and sex trafficking.

Ensure all policy and legislation is survivor-informed: Survivors are those who have directly experienced the crime of human trafficking. Therefore, they must be included as partners in drafting and/or revising legislation that will help prevent human trafficking, prosecute those responsible, and provide resources to support survivors.

Reauthorize the Trafficking Victims Protection Act: This landmark piece of legislation is crucial in the ongoing work to end human trafficking and support survivors, and must be renewed.

Reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act: Over 90% of victims of sex trafficking are girls and women. The reauthorization and enforcement of this legislation is crucial to ensuring that victims of violence, including human trafficking, receive the necessary services and support to heal and thrive.



How Does Human Trafficking Fit Into the Bigger Picture?

We understand human trafficking to be intimately connected to other challenging issues of our times including growing economic inequality, climate change, migration, gender equity, and systemic racism. Issues such as energy usage, asylum, refugee policy, education, health care, wages, rights of workers, and gender and racial equity all have an impact on human trafficking. Our policy papers explore some of these issues in greater depth.

Human Trafficking and Migration

People on the move and newly arrived immigrants are too often exploited by human traffickers because of their precarious social and economic circumstances. Undocumented immigrants are at even greater risk because they live in constant fear of apprehension, detention, and deportation.

Human Trafficking and Climate Change

Climate change is one of the major drivers of human migration globally. Floods, drought, wildfires and severe storms threaten homes, food supplies and livelihoods, forcing people to migrate in search of the most basic necessities of life such as food, shelter, and jobs. Human traffickers abound where human vulnerability exists.

Human Trafficking and Gender

Gender figures significantly among the root causes of human trafficking. Gender inequality; gender based violence, discriminatory labor, property or inheritance laws, child marriage and gender-blind policies, and conflict or post-conflict settings and humanitarian crises all contribute to human trafficking and all disproportionately affect women and girls

Human Trafficking and Neoliberal Capitalism

The prevailing economic system with its emphasis on profits and privatization turns or seeks to turn goods, services, nature, public goods such as health care and education and even human beings into commodities to be bought and sold for profit. Within this framework human trafficking is just another business transaction subject to the laws of the market.

Why We Need to Act Now

Human trafficking represents an outrageous affront to human dignity as it reduces a human being made in the image and likeness of God to the means of another's pleasure (sex trafficking), another input into the productive process (labor trafficking) or a product itself (organ harvesting). Cardinal Michael Czerny, SJ Under-Secretary of the Vatican Office for Migrants and Refugees said recently, "As long as we keep our eyes closed and our ears closed, and continue to pretend that human trafficking is something that barbarians do on the other side of the world, it's going to continue, and it's going to get worse. Human trafficking is going on in our neighborhoods; it's going on in your own neighborhood." We call on our elected officials and lawmakers to take swift, decisive action to confront human trafficking in all its forms and eradicate this evil from our world.





Want to Help in the Fight Against Human Trafficking? Join Us!



Donate to the U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking At:

SistersAgainstTrafficking.org/donate

Or send a check to:

U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking
2039 N Geyer Ave.
St. Louis, MO 63131

USCSAHT is a 501(c)3 organization. Your contribution is tax deductible.

U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking

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#SistersAgainstTrafficking #EndHumanTrafficking

USCSAHT is the U.S. member of Talitha Kum.
TalithaKum.info



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

National Human Trafficking Hotline

Call 1-888-373-7888
or text "BeFree" to 233733





We Envision a World Without Slavery

Victims of human trafficking live everywhere, unseen among us. Trafficking is happening in cities, rural areas, in your zip code and online. Currently, 40+ million people are trafficked around the world, with traffickers making billions of dollars off the sale of these human beings. ***People are not commodities and should never be bought or sold.*** Human trafficking, which is modern-day slavery, must end.



Globally, There Are 40+ Million Human Trafficking Victims Each Year

Ending slavery is our vision, but requires everyone’s work. Whether through prayer, education, advocacy, survivor services or financial support, your involvement can make a big difference.

We invite ***everyone*** – members of every faith, women, men, religious and lay, young and old, coalitions, parishes, universities, foundations and professional organizations...***everyone*** – to join us in the necessary work of eradicating human trafficking.

Inspiring Action to End Slavery

U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking is a collaborative, faith-based national network that offers education, supports access to survivor services, and engages in advocacy to end modern-day slavery. We work to inform the public, prevent this assault on human dignity, and assist survivors to live fulfilling lives.

Resources Available on our Website:
sistersagainsttrafficking.org

Education

Access videos, podcasts, reflection guides, our monthly Stop Trafficking newsletter, curriculum materials, reports and more!

Survivor Services

Find survivor stories, videos, books, and ways to support survivors through scholarships, job placement, and purchases of slave-free products.

Advocacy

Join a current campaign, find/engage your elected officials in supporting anti-trafficking legislation, write a letter to the editor or an op-ed.

Faith Resources

Find prayer services, monthly reflections, bulletin inserts, Catholic Social Teaching, and Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking.



Human trafficking is driven by an interconnected web of social injustice and human apathy.



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The Nexus between Migration and Human Trafficking

U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking (USCSAHT), a faith-based, national network that works to eradicate modern-day slavery, deplores the increase in human trafficking in the United States and around the world. Much of this trafficking results from forced migration and is exacerbated by U.S. government domestic and international policy.

People on the move and newly arrived immigrants are too often exploited by human traffickers because of their precarious social and economic circumstances. Undocumented immigrants are at even greater risk because they live in constant fear of apprehension, detention, and deportation. Xenophobia, anti-immigrant rhetoric, punitive policies, and increased enforcement only serve to push immigrants further into the shadows and gives a chilling advantage to traffickers who use people's immigration status as a tool to steal their labor or coerce them into the sex trade.

At a time when an unprecedented 70.8 million people¹ have been forced to flee their homes by violence of all kinds including poverty, armed conflict, abuse, and persecution, the United States must be true to its historic promise as a beacon for those most in need and a haven for those seeking refuge. We call on the administration and Congress to ensure that our refugee admissions goals, resettlement program, and asylum system are adequate to meet the unprecedented need.

In order to protect those in need and deal with the threat of human trafficking, we must also continue to fund important international agencies like UNHCR, UNICEF, the Bureau of International Labor Affairs, and the World Food Program, that support people on the move who are vulnerable to human trafficking.

We call on Catholics, and all people of good will, to take prophetic action consistent with Pope Francis' call to pray for, welcome, protect, promote, and integrate migrants into our hearts and our communities in order to prevent them from falling into the hands of traffickers.

We call on all elected leaders to insist that our nation "welcome the stranger" and care for those seeking refuge. We demand that U.S. migration policy focus on the prevention of human trafficking and the protection of the safety, dignity, human rights, and fundamental freedoms of all people regardless of their migratory status.

¹ UNHCR Global Trends <https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2018/>



The Nexus between Climate Change and Human Trafficking

U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking (USCSAHT), a faith-based, national network that works to eradicate modern-day slavery, deplores the increase in human trafficking in the United States and around the world. Human vulnerability is a condition that is seized by human traffickers as an opportunity for exploitation. At any given time, millions of people in our global community become vulnerable due to a number of forces and factors. Climate change is one of these forces.

“Climate change increases the risk of natural disasters and places a strain on livelihoods; it exacerbates poverty and can potentially cause situations of conflict and instability. These conditions, when combined with a mismatch between demand for labor and supply and the proliferation of unscrupulous recruitment agencies, increase high-risk behaviors and other negative coping strategies among affected populations. This may include resorting to migrant smugglers, which in turn makes them vulnerable to trafficking in persons and associated forms of exploitation and abuse. The impact of climate change, however, is rarely considered as a potential contributor to human trafficking in global discussions or national-level policy frameworks and the nexus remains relatively unexplored.”¹

Climate change is becoming one of the drivers of the increasing numbers of human migration globally. The UN refugee agency reported that in 2013, there were three times as many people displaced by natural disasters as by conflicts. This same agency predicts that by 2050, up to 250 million people will be impacted by droughts, hurricanes, floods, and crop failures, associated with changes in climate and ecosystems.²

In his encyclical letter, *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis underscores the tragic connection between environmental degradation and human migration. “There has been a tragic rise in the number of migrants seeking to flee from the growing poverty caused by environmental degradation. They are not recognized by international conventions as refugees; they bear the loss of the lives they have left behind, without enjoying any legal protection whatsoever” (LS, 25).

When people are forced to move because of insecurity or instability in their homeland, they become vulnerable and desperate to access even the most basic necessities of life such as food, shelter, and livelihoods. Human traffickers abound where human vulnerability exists. Seeing opportunities to exploit persons who are made desperate by circumstances beyond their control, human traffickers seize human vulnerability as an opportunity to exploit vulnerable persons for labor, sex, and even their organs.

¹ International Organization of Migration, *The Climate Change—Human Trafficking Nexus*, (2016). P. 3

² <https://www.unhcr.org/493e9bd94.html>



The global human trafficking network is also having an impact on global warming, climate change and environmental degradation. The availability and scale of global cheap labor has been shown to contribute to deforestation as well as to highly polluting methods of mining, brick-making, and shrimp farming.³ Ironically, persons who have been victimized themselves by environmental crises unwittingly exacerbate the problem through their exploited labor. Michael Gerrard, director of the Sabin Center for Climate Law at Columbia University, claims that the single most important thing that can be done to limit climate change and the human trafficking it engenders is to transition away from fossil fuels.⁴ Not only do fossil fuels contribute to climate change; their extraction facilitates human trafficking within local communities. The recent uptick in fracking for oil and natural gas in the northwestern United States, for example, has changed rural communities in radical ways by drawing human traffickers who hope to profit from the severe gender imbalance and high cash flow to the region.⁵ Rising incomes of fossil fuel workers, who are mostly male, has led to exponential growth in violence, drug use, domestic violence, and the trafficking of women.

The connection between climate change and human trafficking is thus a two-way street. As with all interrelated injustices, it is necessary to identify and transform the structures and systems that sustain injustice and grow the scale of their impact. Pope Francis calls us to use the lens of integral ecology in order to address the interrelatedness of human and environmental injustice today. He writes, (today) “we are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded and at the same time protecting nature” (LS, 139).

We urge policy makers at the national and international levels to immediately prioritize legislation, policies and practices that protect all of God’s creation. If we are to end the scourge of human trafficking, it is critically important that we address its root causes including the existential threat of climate change. We call on national governments to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions, create high-paying jobs, ensure that clean air, clean water and healthy food are basic human rights, and end all forms of oppression.

³ Michale B Gerrard, University of Miami Law Review. Climate Change and Human Trafficking After the Paris Agreement. March, 9, 2018 . p. 359

⁴ Wudan Yan, “The Surprising Link Between Climate Change and Human Trafficking,” *The Revelator* (2018), <https://therevelator.org/climate-change-human-trafficking/>

⁵ Aryn Baker, “She Survived Sex Trafficking. Now She Wants to Show Other Women a Way Out,” *Time* (2019), <https://time.com/longform/windie-jo-lazenko-sex-trafficking-survivor/>



The Nexus between Gender and Human Trafficking

U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking (USCSAHT), a faith-based, national network that works to eradicate modern-day slavery, deplores the increase in human trafficking in the United States and around the world. Trafficking in persons is a human rights violation that affects the lives of millions of people worldwide. The International Labor Organization estimates that there are 40.3 million victims of human trafficking globally, with hundreds of thousands in the United States.

Globally, men and boys represent about 29 percent of trafficking victims, while women and girls account for 71 percent of all trafficked persons. “The harms of trafficking are known to be more severe for women and girls... given their exposure...to specific forms of exploitation such as sexual exploitation and violence, domestic servitude and forced marriage...Females represent 96 percent of victims trafficked for sexual exploitation¹.” Labor trafficking victims are predominantly males. Boys and men account for 63 percent of those in forced labor, and 82 percent of persons trafficked for organ removal.

Nevertheless, gender figures significantly among the root causes of human trafficking. Gender inequality, gender-based violence, discriminatory labor or migration laws, gender-blind policies, and conflict or post-conflict settings and humanitarian crises all contribute to human trafficking and all disproportionately affect women and girls.²

One of the United Nations’ Sustainable Goals is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.³ It emphasizes that gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but also a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large. Implementing new legal frameworks regarding female equality in the workplace and the eradication of harmful practices targeted at women and girls are crucial to ending the gender-based discrimination prevalent in many countries around the world and limiting their vulnerability to human trafficking.

The Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons 2017 report provides recommendations for a gendered approach to prevention and response to trafficking. This report recommends an approach that responds to the tailored needs of men, women, girls and boys as different groups with specific needs. It also recommends stronger support for victims

¹ <https://icat.network/sites/default/files/publications/documents/ICAT-IB-04-V.1.pdf>, issue 04.09/2017

² <https://icat.network/sites/default/files/publications/documents/ICAT-IB-04-V.1.pdf>, issue 04.09/2017

³ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality>



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and survivors; multiple prevention strategies such as addressing the root causes and risk factors that increase vulnerability, unequal power relationships, poverty, migration, processes or discrimination in general; racism; policy coherence; and integration of gender specific anti-trafficking measures into broader programs. There is a role for states, professionals, research and data in addressing the nexus of gender and human trafficking.⁴

We call on all government officials and civil servants to ensure that laws and policies promote and protect the dignity and rights of women and girls. Ending violence against women and protecting victims of gender based violence is fundamental in the work to end human trafficking.

For additional information on trafficking and gender we encourage you to read our educational module on Human Trafficking and the Objectification of Women⁵, found on our website, and also visit the Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative.⁶

⁴ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality>

⁵ <https://www.sistersagainsttrafficking.org/education/modules>

⁶ <https://www.ctdatacollaborative.org/story/human-trafficking-and-gender-differences-similarities-and-trends>

The Nexus between Capitalism and Human Trafficking

U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking (USCSAHT), a faith-based, national network that works to eradicate modern-day slavery, deplores the increase in human trafficking in the United States and around the world. Trafficking is exacerbated by the dominant model of neo-liberal development and unfettered capitalism that creates situations of vulnerability to be exploited by recruiters, traffickers, employers and buyers.

The 19th century philosophy of liberalism, which promotes non-interference in free markets and personal freedom over government power, was revived in the U.S. in the 1970s in response to a stagnated economy and perceived government over-spending on social initiatives. This model maintains that the only goal of businesses should be the maximization of profit, and markets should be free from government interference. The global market has been formed according to this framework, and it remains the dominant model of development.

This economic model has resulted in massive increases in wealth and development for some regions. However, as Catholics we are called to consider the effect of all actions on “the least of these.” On the one hand, rewards for personal enterprise and initiative, and the freedom to pursue one’s own ends are powerful tools for facilitating development and the common good. Without safeguards in place though, unfettered capitalism fosters a mentality of profit over people that leads to the exploitation of millions who are considered only as a means to wealth.

While corporate owners and stockholders amass wealth, the middle class in the United States has shrunk under this system, and the income and wealth gap between the upper-middle class and the lower-middle class has widened. We see employees in the United States working double shifts at minimum wage and still unable to support their families. Globally, we see low-wage workers in sweatshops, unable to find other work but paid well-short of a living wage; coffee farmers in Central America, who are not paid a fair price for their crops but cannot sell them elsewhere; and children in Africa forced to mine mica and farm cocoa so that consumers can have shiny paint on their cars and eat chocolate. Further, we know that economic vulnerability is one of the primary drivers of human trafficking—when a person is desperate, traffickers are prepared to offer a lifeline.

Pope Francis condemns the paradigm at work in global markets, noting the “throwaway culture” that prioritizes individual desires and convenience, and warning that “a misguided anthropocentrism leads to a misguided lifestyle.”¹ He urges a paradigm shift that reorients human beings toward the recognition that we are connected to one another and all of creation, and our activity should further the harmony intended by God. Without this expansive horizon,

¹ [*Laudato Si'*, 122](#)



human activity becomes relative, and we are hard-pressed to limit exploitative practices like human trafficking.

Catholic Social Teaching (CST) further recognizes that “at the level of individual national and of international relations, the free market is the most efficient way for utilizing resources and effectively responding to needs.”² This includes lifting people out of poverty and providing services to those in need so that they can participate freely in society. Importantly, though, the free market is not the epitome of freedom, but merely a tool for its exercise. Today, “We see how the world of finance can dominate mankind. Possession and appearance dominate and enslave the world. ... Finance is no longer a tool to promote well-being and to support the life of [persons], but a force that oppresses [them], one which almost has to be worshipped.”³ As such, CST maintains that the market must be structured to ensure that it in fact offers freedom and participation to all affected by it—and in a globalized system, that reach is expansive. Indeed, “Charity in truth requires that shape and structure be given to those types of economic initiative which, without rejecting profit, aim at a higher goal than the mere logic of the exchange of equivalents, of profit as an end in itself.”⁴

One of the safeguards CST proposes is that the state must guarantee individual freedom. Because the current economic system engenders human trafficking through unfair trade guidelines, our faith requires us to urge our government to intervene on behalf of oppressed laborers by promoting fair trade policies and supporting those who are vulnerable to exploitation. While it will be difficult to adopt a new paradigm for the global marketplace, “the various grave economic and political challenges facing today’s world require a courageous change of attitude that will restore to the end (the human person) and to the means (economics and politics) their proper place. Money and other political and economic means must serve, not rule.”⁵

We call on all those with power whether economic or political to prioritize the health and wellbeing of all workers, to respect the inherent dignity of all those who labor, to guarantee a living wage and ensure safe working conditions. Finally, we urge capitalists and politicians to protect the rights of workers to organize and to participate fully in shaping decisions which affect their ability to realize their full potential as men and women created in God’s image.

² [*Centesimus Annus*, 34](#)

³ [*Pope Benedict XVI, Visit to the Pontifical Roman Major Seminary on the Feast of Our Lady of the Trust, February 15, 2012, reported by the VIS*](#)

⁴ [*Pope Benedict XVI*, 38](#)

⁵ [*Pope Francis, Letter to H.E. Mr David Cameron, British Prime Minister on the Occasion of the G8 Meeting, June 15, 2013*](#)