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What Human Trafficking & Slavery May Look Like?

- A young girl in Russia is promised a good job in France as a child care worker, ends up in Germany as a brothel worker.
- A child in India is abducted from his parents' home and taken to work in a carpet factory hundreds of miles away.
- A young girl in Thailand is sold by her parents to work in the big city, is forced into prostitution, and trafficked to Tokyo.
- A young 7 year old boy in the Sudan is captured by marauders and made to live with herd animals for 10 years in servitude to a local family.
- A young Mexican man is captured at the U.S. border and forced to work in agriculture in Florida or in construction in Iowa, or in prostitution in Los Angeles.
- A Moldovan woman is promised restaurant work and is trafficked via Ukraine to Turkey for prostitution.
- A West African woman asked by her aunt to come to the U.S. on a domestic worker visa, is on call 24 hours a day, abused and never allowed to leave the household.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN-DAY SLAVERY

By Elizabeth Pathy Salett, LICSW

INTRODUCTION

Human trafficking, the modern-day slave trade, is a world-wide phenomenon that refers to the “illegal trade of human beings, through abduction, the use or threat of force, deception, fraud, or ‘sale’ for the purposes of sexual exploitation or forced labor.” (*UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children.*)

The number of people held in slavery worldwide is estimated to be between 12-27 million, more than at any time in world history. (International Labor Organization and United Nations) Each year, according to the United Nations, between 700,000 – 900,000 people fall victim to trafficking across international borders and are bought, sold, transported and held against their will worldwide. The U.S. Government estimates that between 14,500 –17,500 victims are trafficked into the United States annually and that there are currently 200,000 people in this country who have been trafficked. A large proportion of the victims are women and children.

One of the undersides of globalization, human trafficking exists in at least 127 countries and has become a highly lucrative business. Not only is it the second most lucrative illicit enterprise in the world after drug trafficking, it is also the fastest growing, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The International Labor Organization estimates global profits from human trafficking at \$44.3 billion USD per year.

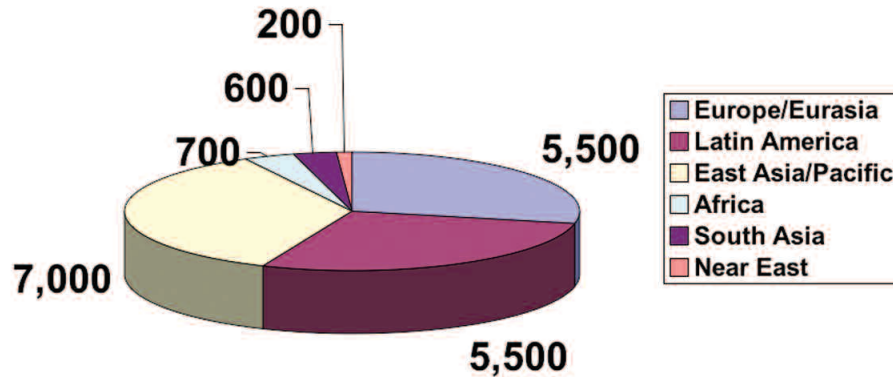
BACKGROUND

Human traffickers force people to be slaves in a wide variety of industries and circumstances. The most prevalent on a worldwide level are agriculture, mining and forced prostitution. Victims may be women and children who have been abducted, sold or tricked into commercial sex; or women, children and men in forced labor, in industries such as domestic servitude, agriculture, construction, restaurant, mining or manufacturing, and are held by force with no remuneration or opportunity to leave. Some people are enslaved through debt bondage, where the slaveholder forces a victim—or entire families—to work without pay to pay off a bogus, illegal ‘debt’. Other victims are captured and used by marauders in armed conflicts.

Trafficking in human beings is not new, but the complexity of this phenomenon has grown exponentially in the past fifteen years, and continues to grow in scope and magnitude each year. This is facilitated by a number of interconnected factors including the substantial increase in the number of people in the developing world as a result of high rates of population growth; the changing social and economic conditions that have brought large numbers of people from rural areas into urban centers where they don’t have jobs or employment prospects; and government corruption that turns a blind eye to trafficking. Gender discrimination and the feminization of poverty also contribute to the vulnerability of women and children who often cannot find jobs to support their families. Extreme poverty produces the supply of victims. The demand for commercial sex and cheap goods and labor create the market for victims worldwide.

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**Number of People Trafficked to the U.S. Annually
(By Region of Origin)**



Source: 2005 U.S. Department of State: U.S. Cooperates with Europe to Combat Sex Trafficking
<http://usinfo.state.gov/gil/Archive/2005/Jan/06-705748.html>.

Globalization and the promise of good jobs and economic opportunity serve to lure women and men to what they believe will bring them a better life. While many trafficking victims are abducted or are tricked into a trafficking situation, some trafficking victims begin by migrating voluntarily. They choose to leave their community or country of origin for economic, personal or political reasons, and only after they arrive at their destination does the trafficker use force or coercion to keep them under his or her control. Although often confused with smuggling, human trafficking is a distinct issue. In the case of smuggling, migrants pay an ‘agent’ to help them illegally cross a national border. After arriving in the desired destination, the relationship between migrant and ‘agent’ ends. Migrants are free to move wherever they choose and pursue or not pursue employment opportunities at will. In the case of trafficking, on the other hand, upon arrival at the destination, the agent either sells the migrants to a slaveholder or becomes the slaveholder him or herself. Determining whether a person has been trafficked or smuggled is often a complicated process that is based on the determination of three factors: the use or threat of force, fraud or coercion.

People are recruited in several different ways such as through fake employment agencies, acquaintances, newspaper ads, front businesses, word of mouth or abduction. Traffickers may be neighbors, friends, returnees, agricultural operators, owners of small businesses, diplomats and even families. Increasingly, however, the traffickers are organized crime syndicates, often in collaboration with corrupt law enforcement entities, government officials or employers, who may use several intermediaries from the first point of contact to the final

destination of the victim. If the victim is transported, they use both legal and illegal means of transport and various techniques to keep their victim enslaved. They may keep them under lock and key or in isolation from the public and from their family members or support networks, confiscate their passports or identification documents, use the threat of violence against the enslaved person or their families, threaten them with shame, fear of imprisonment or deportation, and control their money.

Human trafficking has grown in part as a result of the advances in internet and communication technology, which make information fast, anonymous, and easily accessible to predators and traffickers worldwide. According to Moisés Naím, author of *Illicit: How Smugglers, Traffickers and Copycats are Hijacking the Global Economy* “...the modern-day slave auction is electronic, wherein local pimps can examine and purchase via e-mail women and girls from wholesalers in other countries and where retail customers can order up the prostitute of their choice.” Sex tourism, one of the world’s largest industries, also feeds off of electronic communications and human trafficking. It has become integrated into the economy of many countries such as the Philippines and Thailand. These examples underscore that trafficking and slavery truly represent the commodification of human beings, or the use of human beings as goods to be bought, sold, used, shipped, and traded for money.

Trafficking into the United States

While it may be difficult to believe that modern-day slavery and human trafficking exist in the United States in the 21st century, the fact is that it is present in every state, in both our urban and rural areas. Traffickers exploit the migration

process, using legal or forged documents, often making use of visas like the temporary guest worker visas, fiancés visas, domestic workers or others to bring in women and children for prostitution, and women and men for forced labor. Some enter with no documentation at all.

Most of the trafficking victims discovered in the U.S. have immigrated to the US, either by choice or by force, but there are even some trafficking victims who were born in the United States.

There are an estimated 12,500 trafficking victims who came to the U.S. from East and South Asia in 2005. Approximately 5,500 more came from Latin America, and another 5,000 from the countries of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the latter is considered a new source of women and children for prostitution and the sex industry.¹ (See chart)

Issues for Social Workers

Human trafficking is a devastating human rights violation and a human tragedy, but social workers can help in at least three ways:

1. identify victims of slavery and trafficking and assist them to get help,
2. serve in the organizations that specialize in assisting trafficking victims and improving upon the current 'promising practices' of rehabilitation and reintegration, and
3. educate vulnerable populations about the dangers of human trafficking as a form of prevention.

All of these roles need to be filled in every community where human trafficking exists in order to locate victims, help them rebuild their lives, prevent others from being trafficked and enslaved, and end this horrific crime once and for all.

CLUES TO LOOK FOR:

- Multiple people in cramped space
- People living with employer
- Inability to speak to individual alone
- Employer holding identity documents
- Evidence of being controlled
- Inability to move or leave job
- Bruises or other signs of battering
- Submissive, fearful or depressed demeanor
- Little or no pay
- Recent arrival from Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe, Canada, Africa or India

QUESTIONS TO ASK A POTENTIAL VICTIM:

- How much does your employer pay you regularly?
- Is this the kind of work you expected to do?
- What do you do on your day off?
- Have you stayed in contact with your family?
- Does your family know how to contact you?
- Have you been to a doctor or dentist recently?
- Do you have your passport/ID?
- If not, who has it?

1. Identifying Victims

Despite legislation outlawing trafficking, finding and helping victims to escape is a complex process. Most trafficking victims don't understand their rights, are fearful of people in law enforcement, fear repercussions to themselves and their families if they incur the wrath of their trafficker and are not aware of agency or community resources that may advocate for them. Furthermore, they may be deported as 'illegal aliens' if they refuse to testify against their trafficker.

Social workers serve as a key access point to services in the social and health care systems; they also have an important role to play in helping to identify individuals who may be trafficking victims and assisting them to obtain needed services. Learning to ask the right questions and looking for small clues that may suggest a person is coerced into a life of sexual exploitation or forced labor forms the basis for identifying a victim. The victim or trafficking survivor typically experiences psychological trauma that can upset the individual's physical and mental ability to respond to stress and danger. This in turn can lead to the survival reactions of "fight, flight, or freeze," often making it difficult to diagnose an individual's needs.

After identifying a trafficking victim, social workers need to make appropriate referrals to social service provision and advocacy groups specializing in assisting trafficking survivors. Survivors each have some critical decisions to make, including whether they wish to collaborate with law enforcement officials (see Anti-Trafficking Legislation below). Such decisions affect whether survivors are eligible for support services and for a visa to stay in the US, but also may affect their own safety or the safety of their loved ones in their countries of origin. These high stakes require that social workers and relevant agencies have accurate and up-to-date information to share with survivors so they can make informed decisions.

Victims, especially victims of sex trafficking, are sometimes reluctant to discuss the circumstances of their trafficking. This may be due to the stigma attached to commercial sex or simple shame at the nature of the degradation. The reluctance of victims to share their stories can make it more difficult to gather the information necessary to provide them with an appropriate referral.

2. Organizations That Specialize in Assisting Trafficking Victims

Essential services for a survivor include:

- immediate assistance such as housing, food, medical care, safety and security;
- mental health counseling;
- reconnecting with supportive family members;
- cash assistance; and
- legal status assistance with visa certification and immigration.

Issues of culture, power, privilege, and oppression all play a role in the relationships that social workers develop with survivors. Understanding the journey and the experiences they have endured, including the historical, cultural, social and economic context of the survivor's life are essential to working effectively with a survivor of trafficking. Social workers need to be flexible in how they work with a survivor, many of whom come from cultures that do not use Western models of counseling and therapy. Taking into account issues of language, religious practices, race/ethnicity, class, customs, and values are all important variables that will impact the effectiveness of a social worker providing services to a trafficking survivor.

Social service providers working directly with trafficking survivors should also know the details of the anti-trafficking law in the United States and the survivor's country of origin in order to help survivors make informed decisions and navigate the bureaucracy when needed. In the US, the Trafficking Victims and Violence Protection Act (TVPA) became law at the national level in October 2000. It focused specifically on concerns relating to human trafficking and created the tools to enable the U.S.

government to address the prosecution of traffickers, protections for victims of human trafficking, and prevention of human trafficking. The law was amended in 2003 to eliminate, among other provisions, the requirement that a victim between the ages of 15-18 must cooperate with the prosecution of his or her trafficker in order to be eligible for a T-visa.

Trafficking victims are often uncovered through investigations into housing code enforcement, worker safety, and commercial sexual activity. Recognizing that these investigations are usually conducted by state and local authorities, many states have enacted or are considering enacting anti-trafficking legislation.

The 'best practices' in helping trafficking survivors rebuild their lives are still being researched, tested and written. Therefore, social workers have a role in identifying 'promising practices,' improving upon them, and reporting lessons learned with other practitioners.

3. Educating Vulnerable Populations About the Dangers of Human Trafficking

Even social workers who do not work directly with an anti-trafficking organization have an important prevention role to play. Many social workers come into regular contact with populations that are most vulnerable to slavery and can raise their awareness of the dangers of being trafficked or exploited after their arrival in the U.S. and of the resources available to help them.

Social workers bring special expertise in understanding the systemic issues that are implicit in assisting victims of trafficking and can become strong advocates for this diverse and underserved population.

Elizabeth Pathy Salett, LICSW, is a member of the NASW International Committee and President, of the National MultiCultural Institute of Washington, DC (NMCI), an agency she founded to work with individuals, organizations and communities in efforts to increase communication, understanding and respect among diverse groups and to address critical issues of multiculturalism facing our society. NMCI's web portal on human trafficking is: www.humantraffickingsearch.net.

With special thanks to Jolene Smith, Executive Director, Free the Slaves, Washington, DC

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U.S. Department of Justice National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) Trafficking in Persons – Facts and Figures (2006) <http://www.ncjrs.gov/App/Topics/Topic.aspx?Topicid=82>

Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, P.L. 107–288, 116 stat. 1409.

U.S. GOVERNMENT RESOURCES

Rescue and Restore Victims of Human Trafficking
www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking

A U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration Children and Families Campaign intended to increase the number of identified trafficking victims and to help those victims receive the benefits and services needed to live safely in the U.S. This website provides information and resources for health care providers, social service providers and law enforcement officers which includes fact sheets, training and resource tools, educational brochures and posters, assessment cards for healthcare providers and law enforcement officers and Trafficking Information and Referral Hotline information.

U.S. Department of Justice
www.usdoj.gov

Provides information about trafficking in persons and links to reports including Assessment of U.S. Government Activities to Combat Trafficking in Persons 2005 and the Report to Congress from Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales on U.S. Government Efforts to Combat Trafficking. This website also provides information about how to report trafficking crimes, prosecution, protections for victims, information about the Trafficking in Persons and Worker Exploitation Task Force, Prevention Through Outreach and Research as well as U.S. government-related trafficking web links.

U.S. Department of State
www.usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/human_trafficking.html

Provides national and global information about human trafficking, links to the *Trafficking in Persons Report 2006*, e-journals, publications, resources, fact sheets and online readings about human trafficking.

SELECTED ADDITIONAL WEB SITES

American Anti-Slavery Group

www.iabolish.com

Amnesty USA

www.amnestyusa.org/stopviolence/trafficking/

Anti-Slavery International

www.antislavery.org

Break the Chain Campaign, Institute of Policy Studies

www.ips-dc.org/campaign/

Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST)

www.castla.org

ECPAT International

www.ecpat.net/eng/index.asp

Free the Slaves

www.freetheslaves.net

Freedom Network USA

www.freedomnetworkusa.org

Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW)

www.gaatw.org

Humantrafficking.org

www.humantrafficking.org

International Labour Organization

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/bangkok/child/trafficking/>

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

www.iom.int/

International Rescue Committee

www.theirc.org/trafficking

National MultiCultural Institute (NMI)

Human Trafficking Web Portal

www.HumanTraffickingSearch.net

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

www.osce.org/odihr/13475.html

Project Hope International

www.phi-ngo.org

Protection Project

www.protectionproject.org/

Stop Human Traffic

www.stophumantraffic.org

United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

www.unodc.org/unodc/trafficking_human_beings

Vital Voices

www.vitalvoices.org

DEFINITIONS

Trafficking: “recruiting, abducting, facilitating, transferring, harboring, or transporting a person, by threat or use of force, coercion, fraud or deception or by the purchase, sale, trade, transfer or receipt of a person, for the purpose of subjecting that person to involuntary servitude, peonage, slavery, slave-like practices, commercial sexual acts, or forced or bonded labor services. (*Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act of 2000*).

Coercion: Threats of serious harm or physical restraint against any person; any scheme, plan or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that failure to perform an act would result in serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; or threatened abuse of the legal process. (*Midwest Immigrant and Human Rights Center 2003*)

Commercial Sex Act: Any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person. (*Midwest Immigrant and Human Rights Center 2003*)

Debt Bondage: The status or condition of a debtor arising from a pledge by the debtor of his or her personal services or of those of a person under his or her control as a security for debt, if the value of those services as reasonably assessed is not applied toward the liquidation of the debt or the length and nature of those services are not respectively limited and defined. (*Midwest Immigrant and Human Rights Center 2003*)

Human Smuggling: Helping someone to illegally cross country borders, often without identification or papers, for financial or material benefit. Smuggling ends with the arrival of the migrants at their destination, whereas trafficking involves the ongoing exploitation of the victims in some manner to generate illicit profits for the traffickers. (*New Jersey Anti-Trafficking Initiative at the International Institute of New Jersey 2006*)

Involuntary Servitude: Includes a condition of servitude induced by means of (a) any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that, if the person did not enter into or continue in such condition that person or another person would suffer serious harm or physical restraint; or (b) the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process. (*Midwest Immigrant and Human Rights Center 2003*)

Sex Trafficking: The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act. (*Midwest Immigrant and Human Rights Center 2003*)

¹ The statistics on human trafficking and modern-day slavery are elusive, in part because of the below-the-surface nature of trafficking which functions outside the reach of the legal system. The estimates are often based on differing definitions and unreliable national statistics.