



TOPIC: HUMAN TRAFFICKING

INTRODUCTION

It is one of the great tragedies of the modern age that slavery still persists. Despite all of the advances made by the international community in terms of halting this practice, there is still much progress yet to be made across the globe. Tens of millions of people have their liberty ripped away from them, and live as the property of oppressors and abusers, far from their families and homes. These people come in all forms: men and women, adults and children, educated and uneducated. They are mentally and physically abused, and are victims of circumstances over which they have no control. Human trafficking occurs in all regions of the world, both developed and developing, so all countries have a vested interest in its eradication. Victims of 134 different nationalities have been identified in 118 countries, making this a truly global issue.¹ Whether these nations are the places of origin, transit locations, or the destinations for exploitation, each country has a specific perspective on the issue.

The United Nations has dedicated a great deal of effort to the prevention of human trafficking. However, the issue is far from resolved, and persists in the international community. It has become a fixture on the agenda of the Third Committee, which points to the need to identify new strategies for action. With the passage of the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime in 2000, and its protocol specifically dealing with human trafficking, the efforts of the international community have become more organized and efficient. However, passing a convention and eradicating a problem are two entirely different things. Even with this comprehensive document, human trafficking remains a pressing issue in the world today, and its suppression should be prioritized by all countries.

HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE ISSUE

Background

Human trafficking has been a part of society since the time of the earliest civilizations. By the 1400s, the European slave trade in Africa was formalized. It expanded rapidly over the course of the next few centuries, facilitated by the development of plantation colonies throughout the New World by various European powers.² Abolition movements gained momentum shortly thereafter, first with Spain in 1592, but took centuries to spread across the globe—Mauritania became the last country to formally outlaw slavery in 1981.³ Despite the official measures, however, slavery has persisted to the

¹UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, 2012*, http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/Trafficking_in_Persons_2012_web.pdf (May 2013), 1.

² Rutgers University Campus Coalition Against Trafficking, *Timeline of Human Trafficking*, <http://www.eden.rutgers.edu/~yongpatr/425/final/timeline.htm>, (May 2013).

³ John D. Sutter, "Slavery's last stronghold," *CNN*, <http://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2012/03/world/mauritania.slaverys.last.stronghold/index.html> (May 2013).



present day. Just beneath the surface, human trafficking has maintained its stronghold, and affects the lives of countless individuals on a daily basis.

According to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols Thereto “‘Trafficking in persons’ shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.”⁴ More simply put, human trafficking can be broken down into three main components: the act, the means and the purpose. The act is the actual process of an individual coming under the control of another and losing their freedom in the process. There are many components involved in the in act of human trafficking, from the recruitment or abduction of the trafficked persons, to their transport, to their receipt at the destination of the trafficking.

The means of trafficking is the way in which the process is carried out, whether using force, coercion, exploitation of vulnerabilities, or some combination of the three.⁵ Human trafficking can come in many different forms, combining any or all of these elements. It is important to understand the variety of elements that constitute human trafficking, however, so that comprehensive responses can be developed.

The final component in understanding human trafficking is its purpose, or the reason that the action is carried out. Trafficking is often, though not always, economically motivated. The greatest proportion of trafficking victims end up involved in the sex trade, engaged in prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation that earn a profit for the person responsible. This is most common in Europe, Central Asia, and the Americas.⁶ Forced labor is the next most common purpose of trafficking, and can include any work an individual engages in without his/her consent. This may or may not constitute slavery, depending on the terms of ownership of the individual and her labor. Trafficking for the purpose of forced labor is more common than other purposes of trafficking in Africa, the Middle East, South and East Asia, and the Pacific.⁷ Lastly, many individuals are trafficked to gain access to their bodily organs, which are themselves sold on the black market after removal from the victim.

In addition to the different parts of the process of human trafficking, states play various roles in their involvement with the act. This too can be broken into three categories: source, transit, and destination countries. However, most countries fall into at least two of these categories, as both sources and destinations of victims. This is because of the unique nature of trafficking in humans compared to trafficking in goods. In other trafficking networks, such as those involving arms or drugs, the product must be obtained or produced in a specific way that cannot be replicated in every

⁴ UNODC, “United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols Thereto,” General Assembly resolution 55/25, 15 November 2000,

<http://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNTOC/Publications/TOC%20Convention/TOCebook-e.pdf> (May 2013), 42.

⁵ UNODC, *Human Trafficking*, <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/what-is-human-trafficking.html> (May 2013).

⁶ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, 2012, 35.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 35



country. In human trafficking, on the other hand, victims can be obtained wherever there are people, which significantly increases the number of potential source countries.

In general, human trafficking tends to flow from poor regions or countries to rich ones. Often routes are regional with, for example, victims from poor countries in Europe ending up in wealthier countries on the same continent. This regional trafficking is the case for about half of the trafficking victims across the globe.⁸ Trafficking can also take place within one country, without crossing any international borders, which occurs for about twenty seven percent of victims.⁹ This leaves about a quarter who are transported from their origin countries across regional lines to be exploited. While local citizens are generally less vulnerable to trafficking than are migrants, there are significant risks associated with long distance transportation of individuals. Long distance trafficking networks are difficult to establish in that traffickers must deal with the physical process of moving people, as well as the legal aspects involved in crossing borders and forging the necessary documents for residence. Thus, regional trafficking is the most practical form, and for this reason is the most common type.

Vulnerable Groups

Certain situations tend to make individuals more vulnerable to human trafficking than others. Such vulnerability is largely influenced by socioeconomic status. Individuals or families in economically depressed communities are more likely to fall prey to the schemes of traffickers, which often involve financial incentives or promises of employment opportunities in other countries. Often people are recruited by relatives or acquaintances of relatives, who appear trustworthy to those in unstable conditions. Asylum seekers, with a complete lack of stability in their lives, are particularly vulnerable to these tactics, and respond more than other groups to demonstrations of trustworthiness.

In some cases, families think they are doing all that they can to survive, but only end up playing into the hands of traffickers. In one case, a seven-year-old Romanian girl was sent to the United Kingdom to be a domestic servant, which her family believed would give her an opportunity to escape the poverty in which they found themselves. However, she fell under the control of an abusive Romanian couple, who had simultaneously enslaved and abused an adult man. The man escaped and reported the abuse of the young girl to the police. They found her in dirty clothes, with scabs on her head and her teeth rotten. She had been deprived of any schooling, so that she was unable even to count to ten.¹⁰ This example is not a unique or isolated incident. Promises of financial support and assistance can entice families to trust people they ordinarily might not if they believe a specific offer is the only opportunity available.

In addition to poverty stricken communities, porous borders, such as the border between India and Nepal, also tend to have elevated levels of trafficking.¹¹ In such situations, border control and monitoring is inconsistent, if present at all. This allows traffickers to transport victims with little scrutiny, and without the hassle of procedures that demand forgeries, bribery, or other extra-legal

⁸ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, 2012*, 41.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ United States Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report, June 2012*, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/192587.pdf> (May 2013), 17.

¹¹ UNODC, *Prevention*, <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/prevention.html?ref=menu> (May 2013).



measures. Similarly, conflict and post-conflict zones present unstable situations conducive to trafficking and make up a significant portion of trafficking cases, both as the source and destination of victims.

When foreign employers evacuate a country quickly, as often happens during wartime, they leave the former employers economically vulnerable. This presents a prime opportunity for recruiters to present stable alternatives to conventional employment.¹² This is not to say that human trafficking is only an issue in the developing world. Developed countries, such as the United States and European nations, also have a stake in the issue. These countries are often, though not exclusively, the destinations of persons trafficked from other countries. Although developed countries tend to have comprehensive legislation directed at the prevention of human trafficking, and the prosecution of offenders, there tends to be a disconnect between laws and practice. Despite these legislative protections, trafficking continues in developed countries.

Human trafficking is strongly correlated with gender. According to the UNODC, adult women are the single most frequently trafficked group. This is likely related to cultural norms that tend to make women more vulnerable than men to such exploitation. They may feel powerless against abusive or compelling traffickers, or may be convinced that cooperating with traffickers will help them provide for their families. Women are most often targeted to work in the sex trade, where they are in significantly higher demand than are men. Between 2007 and 2010, sixty percent of trafficking victims fell into the category of adult females.¹³ When girls are included, the figure rises to around three quarters of all victims. Though the percentage of women trafficked appears to be decreasing, it is compensated for by an increase in the percentage of trafficked girls.

In one example that typifies the situation of trafficking victims, a Bangladeshi woman went to Lebanon chasing the prospect of becoming a maid. However, she ended up under the control of an exploitative employer, where she was “tortured, molested, and confined to the house for three months.”¹⁴ She eventually escaped and made her way back to Bangladesh. However, she sustained serious injuries inflicted by her employer, for which she cannot receive compensation, due to restrictions imposed by the agency that originally placed her in Lebanon. Lack of economic support and assistance reintegrating into their communities for victims of trafficking is a serious concern worldwide.

The high percentage of female trafficking victims is also influenced by the fact that females make up a higher percentage of trafficking perpetrators than as perpetrators of most other types of crime. The pattern is supported by the fact that the countries with the highest proportion of girls as victims also have the highest rates of conviction for female traffickers.¹⁵ This is likely due to the fact that adult women can assert dominance and control over girls in a way that they cannot over other categories of victims, and tend to be more trustworthy and therefore more effective recruiters than men. Female traffickers are frequently involved in trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation,

¹² Ibid.

¹³ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, 2012*, 25.

¹⁴ United States Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report, June 2012*, 11.

¹⁵ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, 2012*, 29.



and often take on jobs such as guarding victims and handling monetary transactions for their exploitation.

More than one quarter of all victims of human trafficking are children, two thirds of which are girls.¹⁶ Over the past decade, the proportion of child victims has only risen. While the numbers vary by region, this increase is greatest in many countries in Europe and Central Asia, as well as a significant number in Central America, though this may be due in part to variation in detection capabilities. Still, child trafficking is most prevalent in Africa and the Middle East. Children are particularly vulnerable to human trafficking, as they tend to have fewer resources, be trusting of persuasive individuals, and can be manipulated more easily than adults can. Particularly when their families are facing economic hardship, children can be easily convinced to trust adults who promise to provide better lives for them. This is especially true for girls, with whom female traffickers can often form bonds. Trafficked children typically end up as victims of child sex trafficking, child labor, or both. These are specific areas with their own intricacies that merit attention in any international efforts on the topic.

In one example of child trafficking, a thirteen-year-old girl in Mexico was promised a decent wage waiting tables in the United States by a family acquaintance. She and a few other girls crossed the border and travelled through the desert, eventually ending up in Florida where the girls lived in a trailer and were forced to engage in prostitution. They were watched constantly, and raped when they disobeyed instructions. The girls eventually managed to escape, at which point they were arrested with their captors.¹⁷

Adult men are the least commonly trafficked group, though this is not to say that such trafficking does not occur. Men are particularly vulnerable in situations of low socioeconomic status or when language barriers exist with mainstream society. Men made up about fifteen percent of all victims from 2007 to 2010, and this level appears to be relatively stable.¹⁸

Current and Future Actions

In the context of the UN, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is responsible for much of the effort concerning human trafficking and carries out many of the recommendations of SOCHUM on the subject. The UNODC focuses on topics involving international organized crime, and incorporates human trafficking into these discussions. In 2000, the General Assembly adopted the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which entered into force in 2003.¹⁹ This is the main international document targeted at combating organized crime. The convention also has three additional protocols, one of which is the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, which also took force in 2003. It is the first legally binding

¹⁶ Ibid., 26

¹⁷ United States Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report, June 2012*, 8.

¹⁸ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, 2012*, 27.

¹⁹ UNODC, *UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME AND THE PROTOCOLS THERETO*,

<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CTOC/index.html> (May 2013).



international document on the topic, and provides a definition, mentioned earlier, intended to increase dialogue and cooperation in fighting human trafficking. Furthermore, it aims to set up provisions for the victims of human trafficking, and ensure the protection of their human rights.

In addition to outlining international procedures for addressing human trafficking, the convention requires signatories to adopt equivalent measures in their domestic laws. This includes the criminalization of trafficking, attempted trafficking, and any sort of participation in an act of trafficking, whether in the organization or execution of the offense. It also encourages the adoption of a broad definition of human trafficking in order to capture all possible offenses, including those occurring across borders, for various purposes, against any type of victim, and with or without the involvement of organized crime.²⁰

In order for the convention to reach its full potential in terms of reducing the occurrence of human trafficking, one major step to be taken is to achieve universal ratification for the convention and its protocols. As of 2012, 154 countries have ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons.²¹ The issue is truly an international one, given the border crossings and regional transfers inherent in the process of trafficking. Thus, international coordination is necessary in order to properly proceed, and universal ratification is the first step in this process. Once this happens, focus can be shifted to enforcing the mechanisms of the convention. On both the domestic and international levels, it is important that the provisions laid out in the convention are executed and upheld to the fullest extent. This includes setting up the proper mechanisms for the identification and prosecution of offenders.

Another aspect of protection for victims of human trafficking is providing for their psychological wellbeing. Victims experience a great deal of psychological trauma, both in the form of intentional abuse, as well as simply by living in a subservient position, as property rather than as human beings. If this trauma goes untreated, it undermines the ability of the individual to fully recover to the point of engaging in normal social interactions. Additionally, failure to properly heal from psychological abuse can leave an individual more vulnerable to being victimized once again. Several important steps can be taken to address this trauma. First, victims need to have access to dependable safety networks, a vital component of which is maintaining their confidentiality. Secondly, psychological and medical experts must be engaged to ensure the proper diagnoses and courses of action. Lastly, steps must be taken to reintegrate victims into society, which requires developing skills, as well as a strong sense of identity.²²

CURRENT STATUS

The basic issues involved in human trafficking have remained unchanged for centuries. Victims face the loss of liberty and agency, and are subjugated by abusers who treat them as property. However, the modern age has presented a host of new advances that allow traffickers to become more sophisticated and effective in their crimes. Technological advances allow sophisticated and rapid

²⁰ UNODC, *Human Trafficking*.

²¹ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, 2012*, 1.

²² United States Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report, June 2012*, 12.



forgery of documents necessary to transport individuals across borders, and advances in transportation have allowed trafficking routes to expand well beyond the intraregional. Still, with advances in the techniques of traffickers have come advances in combating their antics. International coordination is possible on previously unprecedented levels, and many different actors are becoming involved in the issue.

Governments and organizations across the globe are taking concrete steps on a daily basis to ensure that, at the very least, the situation of human trafficking and its victims does not deteriorate any further. In the United States, for example, New York state legislators recently introduced the Trafficking Victims Justice Protection Act, a bill aimed at strengthening the prosecutorial measures available to be levied against perpetrators, as well as increasing services and protection for victims.²³ Organizations are beginning to understand the true importance of collaboration in addressing the issue. Groups such as the Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking, a group of twelve United States based groups spanning multiple sectors, is only one example of such collaboration.²⁴ And prestigious law firms are taking on the case of the trafficking into forced labor of five hundred Indians following Hurricane Katrina.²⁵

In Thailand, the Social Development and Human Security Ministry has recently pledged to combat sex trafficking of immigrants.²⁶ In the United Kingdom, in the face of cuts to legal aid, Catholic officials have confronted the government about the devastating effects the new policy will have on the ability of human trafficking victims to seek legal recourse against their abusers.²⁷ In Oman, the efficacy of border control efforts was recently affirmed when police stopped the trafficking of five people into the United Arab Emirates.²⁸ And in the United Arab Emirates, shelters for women and children who are victims of human trafficking are reevaluating policies to develop procedures for accepting adult male victims.²⁹

These instances represent progress in all corners of the globe towards the eventual eradication of human trafficking. While some actions seem to be confined to raising awareness, initiating isolated and disjoint legal proceedings, and carrying out small-scale law enforcement, each one of these is

²³ Judy L. Randall, "Human sex trafficking bill introduced in Albany by Staten Island's Lanza," *Staten Island Advance*, 21 May, 2013, http://www.silive.com/news/index.ssf/2013/05/human_sex_trafficking_bill_int.html (May 2013).

²⁴ Cameron Conaway and Annie Kelly, "Anti-slavery: collaboration begins to come of age," *The Guardian*, 21 May, 2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development-professionals-network/2013/may/21/collaboration-sector-modern-day-slavery-human-trafficking> (May 2013).

²⁵ Noa Yachot, "Prestigious Law Firms Join Fight for Guestworkers' Rights in Major Human Trafficking Case," *ACLU Blog of Rights*, 21 May, 2013, <http://www.aclu.org/blog/human-rights/prestigious-law-firms-join-fight-guestworkers-rights-major-human-trafficking-case> (May 2013).

²⁶ "Ministry to take action against sex-trafficking in Chachoengsao," *Nation*, 22 May, 2013, <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/national/Ministry-to-take-action-against-sex-trafficking-in-30206685.html> (May 2013).

²⁷ Owen Bowcott, "Catholic church says legal aid cuts will harm human trafficking victims," *The Guardian*, 22 May, 2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/law/2013/may/22/catholic-church-legal-aid-trafficking> (May 2013).

²⁸ Sunil K. Vaidya, "Oman police foil human trafficking attempt," *gulfnews.com*, 22 May, 2013, <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/oman/oman-police-foil-human-trafficking-attempt-1.1187153> (May 2013).

²⁹ Vivian Nereim, "UAE shelter mulls support for male victims of human trafficking," *The National*, 22 May, 2013, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/uae-news/uae-shelter-mulls-support-for-male-victims-of-human-trafficking> (May 2013).



vital and valuable. Single acts contribute to raising the global profile of the issue, which can eventually build to larger scale efforts. It is important to lay the groundwork of international collaboration on the issue of human trafficking, so that major efforts such as the universal ratification of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime have the momentum necessary to succeed.

BLOC ANALYSIS

The issue of human trafficking can be viewed in general along regional lines. Each region has its own individual trends and patterns. Trafficking occurs largely within each region, though trans-regional trafficking does occur.

Europe and Central Asia

From 2007 to 2010, eighty percent of the victims of trafficking in Eastern Europe and Central Asia were women. This figure was 60% for Western and Central Europe. Three quarters of the child victims in Western and Central Europe were girls. However, this region has the lowest percentage of children among trafficking victims of all regions, at between ten and twenty percent though this percentage has been steadily rising within the region.³⁰ Europe and Central Asia also have a higher than average percentage of adult men among trafficking victims.

The traffickers in this region are more often female than in other regions. The rate is particularly exaggerated in the Southern Caucasus. This likely contributes to the fact that the most common form of trafficking in the region is for the sexual exploitation of adult women. Western Europe tends to be the destination subregion for this part of the world. It is a destination for individuals from a wide variety of countries, though most victims from the region remain here. A large number of foreign nationals are convicted of human trafficking in this region.

The Americas

The majority of trafficking victims in the Americas are female, though the percentage of women versus girls varies by country. In general, adults are more commonly trafficked in the south, while children are more common in the northern part of South America and Central America. The number of male victims is low compared to other regions. Though the conviction rate of women is lower than in other regions, it is higher than the rate of conviction of women for other crimes. The one exception is Canada, where the rate of women convicted is lower than for other crimes. On the other hand, in Central America and the Andean countries, more women than men are convicted of trafficking-related offenses.³¹

Though sexual exploitation is the most common purpose of trafficking in this region, the proportion trafficked for forced labor is higher than in Europe and Central Asia. Most of the trafficking in the Americas is intraregional, and even more specifically, routes tend to remain within either South America or North and Central America. In these sub regions, the flow of victims mirrors the global trend, with poorer countries sending victims to wealthier destination countries. Still, more than one fifth of the victims in this region are from East Asia.

³⁰ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, 2012*, 54.

³¹ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, 2012*, 63.



South Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific

Women make up the vast majority of victims in this region, with few if any men and boys trafficked in most countries. The diversity of countries in this region makes generalizations difficult, though Southeast Asia does tend to have higher rates of children among its victims than do other parts of the region. The levels of women convicted for trafficking are similar to those in Europe and Central Asia, and higher than those in Africa and the Americas. The purpose of trafficking also varies by country. In some areas, sexual exploitation and forced labor receive roughly equal levels of victims, while in others, such as much of Southeast Asia, sexual exploitation is by far the most common purpose.³² This region is the “most conspicuous globally”³³ of all destination regions for the victims of trafficking.

Africa and the Middle East

In general, the proportion of children trafficked in this region is significantly higher than in other regions, making up more than two thirds of the victims in this region.³⁴ However, a significant number of women are trafficked for sexual exploitation, particularly in Southern Africa. This region has the lowest proportion among all regions of women convicted for human trafficking. This is consistent with the low levels of participation of women in all types of crime in the region. Forced labor is the most common purpose of trafficking in this region, and the proportion of victims trafficked for this purpose is higher than in any other region. Victims from this region tend to remain within the region, however the most common destination for victims outside of Africa is Western and Central Europe.

COMMITTEE MISSION

The proliferation of human trafficking is one of the most pervasive abuses of human rights in the international community. It is the responsibility of all nations to take action to remedy this situation. Every nation in every region has a stake in the resolution of human trafficking. As described above, regions and nations are intertwined in a complicated web of relationships regarding human trafficking. This is a domestic, regional, and international issue, and thus warrants coordination on all of these fronts.

One of the most important steps towards the resolution of the issue of human trafficking is the universal ratification of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons. This document should form the basis of action on the issue. However, for all its merits as a starting point, the convention lacks specificity and key components such as enforcement mechanisms. States should work to tailor efforts to fit their specific situations, and integrate these plans into the broader perspective. It is imperative that progress moves past its current levels, to tackle aspects of the issue that the international community has previously been unable to resolve.

³² UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, 2012*, 73.

³³ *Ibid.*, 1.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 75.