

Trafficking in Women Fact Sheet

BACKGROUND

Trafficking in persons affects nearly every country in the world, including the United States. It is defined as the illegal recruitment, transport or sale of human beings for the purpose of exploiting their labor. Each year, millions of women and children are exploited for sexual purposes, such as prostitution or pornography, or for labor without compensation in homes, farms, factories or other businesses. Estimates vary widely on the number of people affected by trafficking around the world, but the International Labor Organization (ILO) of the United Nations estimates that there are 12.3 million people in forced labor, bonded labor, forced child labor and sexual servitude at any given time.¹ The vast majority of those trafficked across international borders every year are women and girls, and up to half are minors.

Trafficking is a complex issue with indescribable consequences for victims. Victims are often poor and vulnerable, and are lured by false promises of employment, marriage or a better life. Victims may also be abducted, forced or sold by their parents. In addition, traffickers use coercive methods such as deception, fraud, intimidation and debt bondage, forcing someone into a situation as a way of paying off a real or perceived debt, to recruit and control their victims. Once in a new country, victims who rarely speak the language are isolated and vulnerable to traffickers' demands. Victims rarely seek help from local law enforcement for a variety of reasons including: they do not know where to turn for help, cannot communicate with law enforcement officers, fear being deported for their illegal status, fear being prosecuted as criminals for forced labor into which they were trafficked and fear retribution from their captor. Trafficking victims also face psychological and physical trauma daily, including disease, forced substance abuse, violence, and food deprivation. Finally, those who are sexually exploited may also become infected with HIV or other sexually transmitted infections.

LEGISLATION

In the 109th Congress, members have been actively working to combat trafficking. The **Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA)** was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Clinton on October 28, 2000 (PL 106-386). Co-sponsored by Senator Paul Wellston (D-MN) and Senator Robert Torricelli (D-NJ), TVPA was the first comprehensive federal law to protect victims of trafficking or to prosecute their traffickers. The goals of the TVPA were to protect victims and help them rebuild their lives with Federal and State support, and to provide increased federal penalties for traffickers. It also attempted to encourage efforts to prevent trafficking overseas by creating annual country reports on trafficking and by tying financial non-humanitarian assistance to foreign countries to those countries' efforts to address human trafficking. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act was reauthorized in 2003 (PL 108-193), and again in 2005 (PL 109-164).

The **End Demand for Sex Trafficking Act of 2005 (S.937)** was introduced in the Senate by Senators Cornyn (R-TX) and Specter (R-PA). Rep. Deborah Pryce (R-OH) introduced the companion bill in the House of Representatives (H.R. 2012). The End Demand for Sex Trafficking Act of 2005 provides grants to states, counties and cities to establish law enforcement programs that target enforcement measures at traffickers and those who solicit an unlawful commercial sex act, including new resources for tax prosecutions and sting operations. It also establishes state and organizational grants to assist victims of sex trafficking.

YWCA POSITION

The YWCA supports public policies that protect victims, hold perpetrators accountable, and work to eliminate the demand for commercial sex acts. Specifically, we support the continuance and full funding for the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA). The YWCA also supports legislation that ensures economic stability and physical security for victims of trafficking.

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FACTS

- **Approximately 80 percent of trafficking victims are women**, 70 percent of who are trafficked for the commercial sex industry. ⁱⁱ 60-75 percent of trafficked women in prostitution have been raped; 70 to 95 percent have been physically assaulted. ⁱⁱⁱ
- **Trafficking affects virtually every country in the world.** The largest number of victims come from Asia, with over 225,000 victims each year from Southeast Asia and over 150,000 from South Asia. The former Soviet Union is now believed to be the largest new source of trafficking for prostitution and the sex industry, with over 100,000 trafficked each year from that region. An additional 75,000 or more are trafficked from Central and Eastern Europe. Over 100,000 come from Latin America and the Caribbean, and over 50,000 victims are from Africa. Most of the victims are sent to Asia, the Middle East, Western Europe and North America. ^{iv}
- **U.S. Department of State figures suggest that 800,000 to 900,000 people are trafficked across borders annually; approximately 18,000 to 20,000 of victims are trafficked into the U.S. itself.** An additional and significant number of individuals are trafficked within countries. ^v
- **U.S. citizens account for an estimated 25% of child sex tourists worldwide.** Some Americans take advantage of prostituted children while traveling to impoverished countries for business, tourism and other legitimate reasons. Others travel abroad specifically to engage in sexual acts with women and children from other countries, these trips are known as sex tours.

TALKING POINTS

- **The Trafficking Victims Protection Act authorizes the provision of social services to victims of human trafficking.** However, federal authorities are not referring victims for services because of their lack of knowledge about available services or because they seek to detain victims for their assistance in prosecuting traffickers.
- **Trafficking in persons fuels organized crime.** It is estimated that human trafficking generates \$9.5 billion in annual revenue and is the second largest and fastest growing criminal industry in the world. It is closely connected with money laundering, drug trafficking, document forgery and human smuggling. ^{vi}
- **Women in developing countries face the highest risk of becoming victims of trafficking.** Poverty, lack of equal opportunity and cultural practices create conditions of vulnerability, which traffickers can easily exploit.
- **Trafficking victims are not all immigrants.** Trafficking victims may be United States citizens who prevented from leaving an enterprise through force or coercion. In one Department of Justice case, 15 pimps were successfully prosecuted for trafficking women and girls, all U.S. citizens. ^{vii}

RESOURCES

U.S. Department of Justice Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons: <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/>

United States Senate: <http://www.senate.gov/>

United States House of Representatives: <http://www.house.gov/>

Legislative Information on the Internet: <http://thomas.loc.gov/>

ⁱ U.S. State Department, (June 2006) *Trafficking in Persons Report*

ⁱⁱ Department of Justice, (June 2004) *Assessment of U.S. Government Activities to Combat Trafficking in Persons*.
<http://www.ncjrs.gov/spotlight/trafficking/facts.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. State Department, (June 2005) *Trafficking in Persons Report*

^{iv} Congressional Research Service (March 2002) *Trafficking in Women and Children: The U.S. and International Response*.
<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/9107.pdf>

^v *Trafficking in Persons: USAID's Response* (March 2004). http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/wid/pubs/trafficking_in_person_usaids_response_march2004.pdf

^{vi} Department of Health and Human Services, *Human Trafficking Fact Sheet*. http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking/about/fact_human2004.pdf

^{vii} *United States v. Pipkins*, 378 F. 3d 1281 (11th Cir. 2004).