



Trafficking and Girls

Trafficking in women and girls is prevalent throughout the world. Gender discrimination places girls at greater risk of being trafficked than boys.

Girls are usually trafficked for their labor. Examples of exploitative and illegal work that trafficked girls are subjected to include: bonded sweatshop labor, forced prostitution, and domestic servitude.

Factors contributing to the trafficking in girls include: poverty, the low status of girls, lack of education, inadequate or non-existent legislation related to trafficking, as well as the lack of law enforcement. Some girls or their parents are tricked by promises of education or employment, while others are kidnapped to be bought and sold like commodities.

Girls who are trafficked are vulnerable to many kinds of abuse. Traffickers use coercive tactics in order to lure and keep girls - including deception, fraud, intimidation, isolation, threat, physical force, and debt bondage. As illegal immigrants in foreign countries, often unable to speak the language, and with no contact with their families, it is difficult for these girls to escape their situation. Those who are forced into sex work, or who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation as domestic laborers, are particularly at risk of sexually-transmitted infections, including HIV, unwanted pregnancy and unsafe abortion.

Statistics

In many cases, reliable statistics are unavailable for this largely unreported crime. However, recent studies tell us that:

- Every year, an estimated 4 million women and girls are bought and sold worldwide, either into forced prostitution, slavery or forced marriage;
- about 45,000 to 50,000 women are trafficked annually to the United States;
- an estimated 200,000 Bangladeshi women have been trafficked to Pakistan over the last 10 years, the majority are whom are young women;
- between 5,000 and 7,000 Nepali girls are trafficked every year across the border to India. Most end up as sex workers in brothels in Bombay and New Delhi. An estimated 200,000 Nepali women, most of them girls under 18, are sex workers in Indian cities;
- in Western Europe alone, about 500,000 women and girls from developing countries and countries with economies in transition are entrapped in the slave trade each year;
- in the last 30 years, trafficking in women and children in Asia for sexual exploitation alone has victimized over 30 million people;
- girls as young as 13 (mainly from Asia and Eastern Europe) are trafficked as “mail-order brides”. In most cases, these girls and women are powerless, isolated, and at great risk of violence;

What is Trafficking?

Trafficking has been defined as: the recruitment, transportation, purchase, sale, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons by threat or use of violence, abduction, fraud, deception or coercion (including the abuse of authority) or debt bondage for the purpose of placing or holding such a person, whether for pay or not, in forced labor or slavery-like practices in a community other than the one in which such person lived at the time of the original act.

—Definition presented by the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women to the UN Commission on Human Rights 2000

- large numbers of children are being trafficked in West and Central Africa, mainly for domestic work but also for sexual exploitation, to work in shops or on farms, or to be scavengers or street hawkers. Nearly 90 percent of these trafficked workers are girls; and,
- UNICEF estimates that 1,000 to 1,500 Guatemalan babies and children a year are trafficked for adoption by foreign couples in North America and Europe.

KEY ACTIONS

- Efforts against trafficking should be focused, in particular, on preventing vulnerable groups of children from becoming victims. Gender discrimination places girls at greater risk.
- It is essential to raise the awareness of the media, communities and families on the rights of child victims of any form of trafficking.
- Child victims of any form of trafficking need special protection and support, and must be treated with respect and in a manner consistent with their age and needs.
- Laws and policies designed to prevent and punish trafficking should be enacted and enforced to the fullest extent of the law. Governments should work together to ensure the safe return of victims of trafficking and to ensure that those women and girls are treated with compassion and respect.

International Commitments

International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), Cairo 1994

Paragraph 10.18 “Governments of both receiving countries and countries of origin should adopt effective sanctions against those who organize undocumented migration, exploit undocumented migrants or engage in trafficking in undocumented migrants, especially those who engage in any form of international trafficking in women, youth and children. (...)”

Convention on the Rights of the Child

Articles 9 and 10 state that a child must not be separated from his or her parents against their will, except when it is in the best interest of the child.

Article 11 commits States to combat the illicit transfer and non-return of children abroad.

Article 21 provides that international adoption must not involve “improper financial gain”.

Articles 34 and 35 forbid sexual exploitation and trafficking of children.

Article 35 requires States to adopt all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent the abduction, sale or trafficking of children for any purpose or in any form.

Articles 32, 34, 36 and 39 provide for protection of the child against economic, sexual and all other forms of exploitation and abuse, and for the child’s right to physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration.

Sources:

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Prepared by ACPD

In consultation with CEDPA, CFFC, CRLP, FCI, Ipas, IPPF, IWHC, Latin American & Caribbean Youth Network for Sexual and Reproductive Rights, NAPY, and Youth Coalition for ICPD