

Suggested Talking Points on Human Trafficking:

It is estimated that, internationally, there are tens of millions of people in slavery **today**. Assessing the full scope of human trafficking is difficult because so many cases go undetected, something the United Nations refers to as “the hidden figure of crime.”

What is Human Trafficking?

Human Trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery in which people are forced, defrauded, or coerced into labor or sexual exploitation. It deprives people of their human rights and freedoms, reducing them to a commodity that is bought and sold. Human trafficking is the second most profitable crime after drug trafficking.

Human trafficking is a global problem involving almost every country in the world as a source, transit, or destination country.

Root Causes

Some root causes of trafficking are poverty, gender-based violence, war, global warming, and political conflicts, all of which force people to flee their countries of origin. These elements provide a mass number of vulnerable populations ripe for the picking by traffickers. Migrating populations are among the most vulnerable to human trafficking. As individuals migrate from one country to another or within a country, they become a more vulnerable target for traffickers.

Demand

The majority of persons trafficked globally are women and children for sexual exploitation in the forms of prostitution and pornography. Pornography fuels child sexual abuse, compulsive sexual behavior, violence against women, commercial sexual exploitation, and more.

Human trafficking needs to be seen in a broader context than the focus that has been placed on the rescuing and restoring to health of those forced or fraudulently lured into any job. There would be no trafficking if there was not a demand for the services that they give. This also includes our comfort with an economy where we can buy cheap goods and services, whether they are produced in the US or another country.

Very little has been done to address the demand for those areas where trafficked persons are recruited and misused such as for cheap labor in the agricultural

industry, in fast food shops, in construction, and in almost any job that is on the low end of the pay scale. Many of the men or women doing the hard labor part are from another country. Many come in legally through contractors who have very little oversight. These workers are not coerced or forced to do what they do but there is very little monitoring of when this type of labor moves over the line and becomes trafficking.

The demand side of trafficking feeds into every aspect of our society from the inexpensive food we eat, the clothes we wear, the houses we live in, the songs we listen to and the demand for sexual services that our men feel that they need. If there were no demand in our society for cheap labor which helps us to maintain our economic comfort level, there would be no labor trafficking.

If there were no demand by men to use women for sexual services, there would be no trafficking for sexual exploitation of women and girls. Prostitution is flourishing everywhere in our country from brothels to conventions where **the** participants are mostly male, to casino hotels, to massage parlors, to fraternity parties, to rites of passage for boys and to street prostituted individuals controlled by pimps. A good 75% or more of trafficked persons are women and girls for commercial sexual exploitation.

Who can be trafficked?

Anyone can be trafficked regardless of class, education, gender or age when forcefully coerced or lured by false promises.

Anyone who knowingly contributes in the trafficking of people with the intent of exploiting a victim is considered a human trafficker.

Prevention

The approach to trafficking of women for commercial sexual exploitation must be included under the umbrella of the prevention of violence and exploitation of women and girls. Trafficking of women for prostitution is just the tip of the iceberg of any society's attitudes toward the value of women and girls. It begins in the early years of socialization of both boys and girls where stereotypes are applied in that women are weaker than men, are not as intelligent, should be submissive, etc.

In contrast our cultural norms socialize boys into being strong, aggressive, controlling and dominant. These cultural norms play into all aspects of our social life including entertainment, sports, dating, and marriage.

As Christians, we are called to make a difference

Pope Francis calls human trafficking “an open wound on the body of contemporary society.”

In December 1965, Pope Paul VI said, “slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children and disgraceful working conditions, where people are treated as mere instruments of gain...poison human society...and debase their perpetrators.”

So, what can we do?

1. Broaden our knowledge about trafficking and look at it from a demand perspective.
2. Explore agricultural and other industry practices that use migrants and immigrants for cheap labor.
3. Look for the fair trade logo on goods including coffee, tea, and chocolate which certifies that the item was made without forced labor.
4. Explore the justice in wages and working conditions.
5. Be willing to pay more for goods and services which will allow just wages for everyone in the supply chain.
6. Support legislation that addresses the crime of trafficking. Contact your legislators to let them know you support strong laws to prevent human trafficking.
7. Support curriculum in schools that addresses gender issues related to gender violence.
8. Encourage others to learn more through seminars, discussion groups, etc.
9. Use social media to stay informed.
10. Assist projects that are trying to meet the needs of internationally and domestically trafficked persons.
11. Keep an eye out (especially in hotels and transportation centers) and report any suspicious activity to the confidential 24/7 National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888.
12. Pray that people will be moved to respect and not exploit each other. Pray that people will take action against human trafficking. Pray for a world where no one is enslaved.

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