



Women as victims of human trafficking

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Abstract

Human trafficking is a global and domestic human rights issue that is characterized by economic exploitation through force, fraud and coercion.

Human trafficking is a modern-day form of slavery that involves the illegal trade of human beings for the purpose of some form of forced exploitation. The United Nations Office On Drugs and Crime (UNODC) defines human trafficking as any form of recruiting, transporting, transferring, harboring, or receiving a person by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, or deception. There are approximately 800,000 people trafficked across international borders annually and, of these, 80% are women or girls and 50% are minors. Although the degree of trafficking among countries and continents is variable, it is clear that global trafficking has become a growing problem.

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Introduction

Human trafficking is the process of trapping people through the use of violence, deception or coercion and exploiting them for financial or personal gain.

What trafficking really means is girls groomed and forced into sexual exploitation; men tricked into accepting risky job offers and trapped in forced labour in building sites, farms or factories; and women recruited to work in private homes only to be trapped, exploited and abused behind closed doors with no way out.

People don't have to be transported across borders for trafficking to take place. In fact, transporting or moving the victim doesn't define trafficking – it can take place within a single country, or even within a single community.

People can be trafficked and exploited in many forms, including being forced into sexual exploitation, labour, begging, crime (such as growing cannabis or dealing drugs), domestic servitude, marriage or organ removal.

Although boys and men are victims as well, the majority of individuals identified as trafficked for both labor and commercial sex are women and girls (U.S. Department of State, 2006). Traffickers lure, manipulate and control vulnerable individuals using a variety of coercive means

Risk Factors for Vulnerability to Trafficking

- Factors that undermine the ability to protect oneself or that disrupt connections to social and family support increase susceptibility to coercion.
- Variables that contribute to a person's vulnerability to being trafficked include: membership in a marginalized group; prior victimization and trauma; disabilities; immigrant or refugee status; and family disruption. These may be magnified by globalization, poverty, political instability and war.
- Trafficking Leaves Both Visible and Invisible Scars
- Trafficked women and girls encounter high rates of physical and sexual violence, including homicide and torture, psychological abuse, horrific work and living

conditions, and extreme deprivation while in transit.

- Serious mental health problems result from trafficking, including anxiety, depression, self-injurious behavior, suicidal ideation and suicide, drug and alcohol addiction, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), dissociative disorders and complex PTSD.
- Physical symptoms among trafficking victims include neurological issues, gastrointestinal disturbances, respiratory distress, chronic pain, sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV), uro- genital problems, dental problems, fractures and traumatic brain injuries.
- In order to effectively combat trafficking, psychologists and policy makers must collaborate to better understand the deleterious risks of trafficking and exploitation, and prevention and intervention strategies for vulnerable populations.

The two most common purposes for human trafficking are sexual exploitation and forced labor. Victims of sex trafficking are forced into one or more forms of sexual exploitation. It is important to note that sex trafficking and prostitution are not synonymous and that prostitution is simply one type of work performed by victims of sex trafficking. *Sex trafficking* is an umbrella term that may include commercial sex work such as prostitution, but also pornography, exotic dancing, stripping, live sex shows, mail-order brides, military prostitution, and sexual tourism. Although victims of sex trafficking can be of any age and of either sex, the majority are women and adolescent girls. Although many nations have outlawed the trafficking of females, it is still widely prevalent on a global scale.

Prevalence of global human trafficking.

There are several recurrent tactics of manipulation used to coerce victims into situations of sex trafficking. Most commonly, victims are promised a good job, education, or citizenship in a foreign country or offered a false marriage proposal that is turned into bondage. Many victims are sold

into the sex trade by parents, husbands, and significant others, whereas others are unwillingly and forcibly kidnapped by traffickers. The most common tactic of coercion used among victims is *debt bondage*, an illegal practice where the victim has to pledge personal services in order to repay some form of debt, such as transportation into a foreign country or living expenses.³ Sex traffickers may often approach families living in poverty and seek to purchase girls or young women with the promise of a better life in a richer nation or may approach women who are already engaged in prostitution to be transported overseas. Another tactic used is *traumatic bonding*, where the victim is instilled with deeprooted fear coupled with gratitude for being allowed to live.

How do people get entangled in trafficking?

People trapped by traffickers are mostly trying to escape poverty or discrimination, improve their lives and support their families.

Vulnerable people are often forced to take unimaginable risks to try and escape poverty or persecution, accepting precarious job offers and making hazardous migration decisions, often borrowing money from their traffickers in advance.

When they arrive they find that the work does not exist, or conditions are completely different. They become trapped, reliant on their traffickers and extremely vulnerable. Their documents are often taken away and they are forced to work until their debt is paid off.

According to a new report from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the vast majority of all human trafficking victims – some 71 per cent – are women and girls and one third are children.

“Trafficking for sexual exploitation and for forced labour remain the most prominently detected forms, but victims are also being trafficked to be used as beggars, for forced or sham marriages, benefit fraud, or production of pornography,” said UNODC Executive Director Yury Fedotov.

The 2016 UNODC Global Report disaggregates data on the basis of gender and found that women and girls are usually trafficked for marriage and sexual slavery. Men and boys, however, are trafficked into exploitative labour, including work in the mining sector, as porters, soldiers, and slaves.

Worldwide, 28 per cent of trafficking victims are children, but children account for 62 per cent in Sub-Saharan Africa and 64 per cent in Central America and the Caribbean. Sixty nine countries detected trafficking victims from Sub-Saharan Africa between 2012 and 2014.

Mr. Fedotov emphasized the link between armed groups and human trafficking, noting how armed groups often engage in trafficking in their territories of operation, coercing women and girls into marriages or sexual slavery, and pressing men and boys to act as forced labour or combatants.

“People escaping from war and persecution are particularly vulnerable to becoming victims of trafficking,” he said. “The urgency of their situation might lead them to make dangerous migration decisions.”

Earlier this year, UNODC appointed Nobel Peace Prize nominee Nadia Murad Basee Taha as its Goodwill Ambassador for the Dignity of Survivors of Human Trafficking. Ms. Murad is a 23 year old Yazidi woman who survived capture and abuse by the Islamic State of Iraq and

the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh). UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has praised her courage and work as a “voice for the voiceless.”

The report documents patterns among trafficking and regular migration flows that share the same destination country. It also identifies trends within countries, between neighbouring States, and across continents. Factors that tend to aggravate rates of trafficking include transnational organized crime in the country of origin and a victim’s socio-economic profile.

While 158 countries have criminalized human trafficking – a huge improvement over the past 13 years – Mr. Fedotov nonetheless warned that “the rate of convictions remains far too low, and victims are not always receiving the protection and services countries are obliged to provide.”

He called for more resources to identify and assist trafficking victims and to improve the criminal justice responses to detect, investigate, and successfully prosecute cases.

The UNODC releases a report on trafficking every two years. This September, during the UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants in New York, it emphasized that as more people become migrants and refugees, there is a greater risk for trafficking, and that states must respond accordingly.

Conclusion

According to modern Feminists, women and girls are more prone to trafficking also because of social norms that marginalize their value and status in society. By this perspective females face considerable gender discrimination both at home and in school. Stereotypes that women belong at home in the private sphere and that women are less valuable because they do not and are not allowed to contribute to formal employment and monetary gains the same way men do further marginalize women’s status relative to men. Some religious beliefs also lead people to believe that the birth of girls are a result of bad karma, further cementing the belief that girls are not as valuable as boys. It is generally regarded by feminists that various social norms contribute to women’s inferior position and lack of agency and knowledge, thus making them vulnerable to exploitation such as sex trafficking

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