



CHILD TRAFFICKING

Child trafficking is one of the gravest forms of child abuse in the world today. It involves an estimated 1.2 million children every year and happens mainly to children from poor countries.

Trafficking is the recruitment, transport and transfer of children, through abduction, deception or force, in order to exploit them in some way. Most children who are trafficked end up being sexually exploited, used as child labourers or forced into armed conflict – for example, as child soldiers.

Sometimes children, or their parents, are desperate to earn money and think traffickers offer a real chance at employment. Often children are unaware of their rights, and they can be easily tricked or coerced into going with traffickers.

Why and where does it happen?

The underlying cause of most child trafficking is poverty. Children are often trafficked because they or their families desperately need money, and because poverty makes them vulnerable. Factors like war or natural disasters, family dislocation, lack of laws against trafficking or domestic violence make children more at risk of trafficking. Girls are especially at risk, because in many cultures they often have a lower status than boys.

Children are trafficked because there is a demand for their labour or their bodies. Many are forced to work in the sex industry, for example in pornography, prostitution or sex tourism. Others end up as labourers in factories or agriculture, as domestic servants or in industries like mining. Others are used in armed conflict as child soldiers, porters, landmine clearers or sex slaves for rebel soldiers.

Children are vulnerable to trafficking because they are easily exploited and more easily tricked than adults. They are also less able to demand their rights. In many countries, children's rights are not adequately protected.

Child trafficking happens in every region of the world, but Asian countries including Cambodia and Thailand are recognised as hubs for trafficking, particularly for sex tourism.

Wealthy countries are often a part of the problem, as their citizens provide demand for trafficked children. For example, Australians have been identified as sex tourists in 25 countries.



World Vision helps former children sex workers in Cambodia recover and work towards a better life through skills training, counselling and healthcare.



How does trafficking hurt children?

Trafficking damages children in many ways. The work that they do is often dangerous or physically damaging. For example, they may be kept in a confined space, forced to sit in one position all day working in poor light, or breathe in damaging dust and fibres. Children in the sex industry have a high risk of catching HIV and AIDS.

Psychologically, the effects of child trafficking can be devastating. Children can suffer acutely from being separated from their families and taken from their homes, as well as the traumatic conditions and abuse they have suffered. Sometimes they even die from their injuries or illness.

Ending the abuse

A global effort is needed to fight child trafficking. Changes have to happen at a grassroots local level as well as at an international level.

Reducing poverty levels in poor countries would dramatically decrease child trafficking, by making children less vulnerable. Sending children to school is a vital part of this, because it protects them, educates them about their rights and gives them practical skills for work.

Local awareness campaigns are also vital to empower communities, families and children themselves to prevent trafficking. Legal systems need to recognise trafficking as a specific offence, and police must act to punish traffickers and protect victims.

International agreements have been developed to help stop child trafficking. Some national governments, including Australia, have started to incorporate these agreements into national law, making trafficking a specific crime.

In October 2003, the Australian government introduced a \$20 million package to prevent human trafficking into Australia. It has also announced a 3-year project to combat child trafficking in certain Asian countries. The measures include an Australian Federal police strike team to investigate trafficking and monitor Australians suspected of engaging in child sex tourism overseas.

For you to do

1. Identify 5 factors that increase the risk of child trafficking.

(i) _____

(ii) _____

(iii) _____

(iv) _____

(v) _____

2. Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper to help educate others about this issue.

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