

Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery

Slavery exists today

According to the Global Slavery Index 2018 over 40 million people are victims of modern slavery; 71% are female and 29% are male. Of the 40 million people, 10 million are children aged 17 years or younger. When we hear the word 'trafficking' we may think that the crime involves crossing an international border. Wrong. A person can become a victim of the crime in their own city, their own street. To quote Kevin Bales, a leading anti-slavery academic and researcher, 'Slavery is when one person controls another, uses violence to maintain that control and exploits them economically.' The violence may be physical and/or psychological, and the control may be verbal threats – but at the heart of slavery is exploitation and 'ownership' of another human being – all for profit.

Who do traffickers target?

Anybody can become a victim of trafficking, however, traffickers usually target people who are desperate and vulnerable. Poverty, unemployment, little or no education, family illness, war and natural disasters, such as earthquakes or floods, can all cause extreme vulnerability. Human traffickers also target people who are emotionally vulnerable, especially teenagers and children who feel lonely and unloved and are desperate to feel 'special'. Sadly, victims often blame themselves – but it is not their fault. Human traffickers know how to manipulate and control their victims.

Methods used to recruit victims

Traffickers use different strategies during the recruitment process, and deception is generally involved. Fake job advertisements, false promises of economic opportunity and a better life are typical lies that traffickers will use to deceive people that a bright, happy future is waiting for them. Also, the 'lover boy' method of recruitment is often used, with promises of true love and a romantic adventure. Sadly, this adventure is likely to be violent exploitation with traumatic consequences. But the traffickers will make a profit from the sale of their victims, and that is their main goal. Despite what films show, traffickers do not usually kidnap victims.

Forms of exploitation

Different forms of exploitation include forced labour, especially in the construction industry, mining, fishing and agriculture. Domestic servitude – domestic workers in private homes, commercial sexual exploitation, child soldiers, child brides and forced marriage are also forms of modern-day slavery. Of the estimated 40.3 million people in slavery, 15 million are in forced marriage.

People often think that trafficking is a crime that happens far away, in another country, but think again. The office building we work in or sports stadium we go to may have been built by forced labour. Everyday products that we use, wear or eat, such as fruit and vegetables, seafood, clothing, chocolate and the minerals in our electronic devices and mobile phones, may also include slave labour in the supply chain. Learn more so that you are part of the solution not the cause. Visit www.thenoproject.org

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