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Introduction

Kevin Bales and Ron Soodalter in their book *the slave next door: human trafficking and slavery in America today* confirm that human trafficking is still taking place today around the world. Many people think that enslavement was a thing of the past but the truth is that it is happening from city to city and from country to country everyday for thousands of people. Human trafficking exists in many forms, and according to the cases reported victims fall in the categories of sexual exploitation, such as prostitution and labor, such as in the farm, homes, and workplace. Recent research also shows that terrorism has been a major cause of human trafficking. The administration of Barack Obama is making new efforts to fight against human trafficking in the United States and in other countries across the world. This includes the

introduction of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) that will play the role of prohibiting all forms of modern slavery and compensating the victims (Bales & Soodalter 5). This study will focus on criminal groups that are exploiting women and girls in China for money.

Sex Trafficking in China

According to Kasten and Sage (17), China has one of the highest levels of sex trafficking for women and girls in the world. Most these women and girls come from rural provinces and poor backgrounds. This condition makes easy for them to be a target by criminal gangs as they are promised to be given the chance to earn high incomes. Women and children represent 90% of all victims of human trafficking in the country. These victims are trafficked to urban areas and coastal provinces where they are sold to men. This has made it the most profitable criminal activity in the country because it has the potential of generating billions of dollars annually (Emerton, Joe Laidler, & Petersen 35).

How the Victims are Recruited and Controlled

Chin and Finckenauer (2) identified that the culture of the country discriminates against female workers forcing them to find alternative employment opportunities, such as domestic help and farm work. These jobs are low paying. These workers decide to migrate to other countries in search of employment. Most of them use unregulated channels. Sex traffickers take advantage of low wage, unregulated channels of moving out of the country, and unemployment to appeal women to moving away from their homes. They are often promised to be given high paying jobs which are legitimate in

areas away from their homes. The criminal gangs charge them high amounts of money to help them move out of the country. The victims find themselves enclosed in rooms and strictly monitored to prevent their escape. They are denied any money and cannot in any way find themselves back to their homes. The women are also forced into prostitution to pay for the debt bondage which amounts to more than \$70000 in most cases. Some of the criminal gangs claim that they would offer adoption for girls and others kidnap them where they lock them up in rooms and sell them to their customers (Territo & Kirkham 196).

Consequences of Sex Trafficking

Emerton, Joe Laidler, and Petersen (42) identified that sex trafficking victims are forced to indulge into prostitution and other forms of sexual slavery. Sex trafficking in China exposes the victims to sexually transmitted diseases, such as HIV and AIDS and other criminal activities, such as crime and drug use and trafficking. The victims undergo devastating torture, such as rape, beating, being locked in dark and filthy rooms, and are denied food and water. The physical and emotional mistreatment and torture they go through is extremely devastating. They become stigmatized even after returning to their homes. Sex trafficking in China has consequences on families, friends, and communities affected.

Reasons for Persistence of Sex Trafficking in China

The criminal activity is not declining in China for many reasons. The People's Republic of China has failed to curb factors that facilitate sex trafficking in the country. The government is facing difficulties of intense corruption that

prevents the achievement of justice for the victims. Women and girls are still transported across the country and its borders without much interference from the government because of corruption. Some of the government officials are even involved in sex trafficking because of its high profits contributing to an increased and efficient criminal activity of sex trafficking. The human rights that protects women from sex trafficking has been violated. This exposes women to victimization of gender inequality creating a culture of fear (Choi 33).

According to Chin and Finckenauer (4) the culture of the Chinese people promotes preference for boys enhancing gender inequality. The introduction of the one child policy in 2004 stimulated the rise in sex trafficking for girls. The government forces women to have one child. When a family acquires a girl child and needs a boy child, the family gives the girl child away to criminal gangs with or without noticing. This makes women and girls in the country vulnerable to criminal activities. There is high demand for sex workers in China and across the world. The sex trafficking activities target both regional and international markets. The criminal gangs transport the victims to other countries in the region that include Japan, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Thailand. Internationally the victims can be found in as far as North America, Africa, Latin America, Middle East, and Europe. Many urban areas have high populations of employees and tourists seeking for sexual services. The demand has been stimulated by globalization and technological advances. Sex traffickers can communicate with their customers across the world from China (Liu 46).

Unemployed men have even found high income generation opportunities

from sex trafficking. China has been experiencing rapid increase in costs of living because of economic liberalization. Many people are migrating from rural to urban areas in search of employment. Most factories hire unskilled workers to offer low wages. China has large population that remains unemployed and unemployment continues to increase with high worker layoff continuing in the country. This facilitates attraction of many people in the country, especially men to the business of sex trafficking (Choi 39).

Criminal Groups of Sex Trafficking in China

Government officials in China have been identified as one of the most influential group in the criminal activity. They have the power to control the criminal activities without being noticed and provide criminal gangs with information on how to transport victims without being detected. These government officials benefit extensively from this illicit activity as they accumulate immense wealth from it. They engage in corruption and ensure that laws enforced against sex trafficking are weak and not fully implemented. Government officials in China also promoted policies that encourage sex trafficking, such as legalizing prostitution and the sex work industry. Some of them go to the extent of hiring sexual services. Chinese snakeheads and Fuk Ching carries out sex trafficking from China into the United States. They are the largest organized groups for sex trafficking in China. The illicit groups are commonly known as Chinese mafias.

Actions to Combat Sex Trafficking

The government of China has increased funding on anti-sex trafficking initiatives and established hotlines for reporting sex trafficking cases.

Penalties for sex traffickers have been increased to discourage the practice. China is working with foreign governments and international non governmental organizations to enforce laws against sex trafficking. The country is in the process of introducing reforms that promote anti trafficking in and out of the country. There are efforts to investigate the cases of sex trafficking and prosecuting the sex traffickers (Choi 47).

China has introduced new policies and procedures for identifying victims of sex trafficking in cooperation with other governments and non governmental organizations. There are police raids and hotlines that help find the victims. The non governmental organizations are working together with the government ministries to provide temporary relief, rehabilitation, and return of the victims to their homes. The care for sex trafficking victims has helped increase awareness on the dangers of illegal migration and the existence of sex traffickers across China. Media has been active in informing Chinese citizens to protect women and girls from ex traffickers. The PRC is promoting care for women and gender equality for women in the workplace to curb sex trafficking (Liu 74)

Conclusion

Human trafficking or modern slavery is a global crisis that requires immediate attention not only from in China but also by all countries across the world. It has even become one of the fastest growing organized criminal activities currently. Law enforcement plays a critical role in minimizing human trafficking. TVPA has set the standard for dealing with the problem and should be taken seriously across the world. The government of a country is also responsible for protecting and compensating the victims and ensuring

their well being. Modern slavery or trafficking needs to stop as it exposes many people into inhuman conditions.

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