

# Ways to prevent human trafficking | essay



Throughout the world today, a silent plague has been sweeping the nations. Although it may be more prevalent in third world countries, its presence also roams the streets of more progressive nations (Kelly, 2001). According to the Bureau of Public Affairs of the United States Department of State (2004), human trafficking is “ modern-day slavery, involving victims who are forced, defrauded or coerced into labor or sexual exploitation” (para. 1). Anti-trafficking initiatives are already in place and, while this may be a step in the right direction, it cannot be denied that more needs to be done. Because human trafficking is a worldwide predicament, government and non-government organizations must strengthen their initiatives and extend these efforts to create and to implement laws that would reduce trafficking, improve the lives of the victims, and make the community more aware of this inhumane act.

In relation to this, the purpose of this research paper is to provide the reader with sufficient information on the different efforts of government and non-government organizations (NGO) to abolish human trafficking. In addition, suggestions on the improvement of these existing programs are also tackled. Lastly, the goal of this paper is to raise awareness about human trafficking as an intolerable crime.

In order to reach these objectives, extensive research on the causes and effects of human trafficking was done. Aside from this, the researchers also examined various anti-trafficking efforts all over the world and the needed measures for the total abolishment of human trafficking.

## **A Heart of Steel**

Human trafficking clearly violates numerous human rights, particularly those pertaining to personal freedom. It can be considered a modern form of slavery because, aside from the fact that victims are bought and sold like commodities, they are subjected to forced labor that ranges from manual work in sweatshops to prostitution in brothels (Sharma, 2001). Women and children are mostly the victims of this horrendous crime. Across international borders, it has been estimated that 600, 000 to 800, 000 men, women, and children are trafficked, and the number is only getting higher. 70 percent of these trafficked individuals are women and 50 percent are children (Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons of the United States Department of State, 2004). On one hand, women serve as domestic workers, prostitutes, and mail-order brides to abusive employers or husbands without their full consent. Children, on the other hand, become pitiful victims of sexual exploitation and child labor.

Despite receiving promises of well-paying jobs and legitimate employment from their recruiters, the victims find themselves in a constant state of abuse and helplessness under their employers (Kelly, 2001). The control their employers have over them can be attributed to two things. The first is debt bondage, wherein victims pay off the amount their employers paid for them through forced labor. They receive no pay or little pay until the money has been reimbursed. When they are able to pay it off, they are informed that they have incurred additional debts through lodging, food, and other expenses. In some cases, the victims are told that the money is being held for them or sent to their families back home (Kelly, 2001). Because they do

not directly receive the money, they are unable to escape from their jobs.

The second factor trapping the victims is the lack of legal documents needed in order for them to flee. Most of the victims have been transported through illegal means, including falsified documents and passports (Kelly, 2001). This makes it impossible for them to contact the authorities and to ask for help, in fear of being seen as illegal immigrants and being deported to their home country shamefully. Also, upon arrival at their destination, recruiters and employers confiscate whatever documents the victims possess and forbid them from contacting anyone, including members of their own family.

Deprived of any means of escaping, they are forced to continue with their work, no matter how deplorable the conditions may be.

Because of their powerlessness, they are left vulnerable to many forms of abuse (Bureau of Public Affairs of the United States Department of State, 2004). Domestic workers are prone to physical and sexual abuse. Several of them report that they have been battered, sexually assaulted, and raped (Cheung, Karlekar, De Dios, Vichit-Vadakan, & Quisumbing, 1999).

Prostitutes recall being verbally abused, being assaulted, and being forced to have intercourse against their will. Since they have no control over the sexual acts they will perform, they are often brutalized by their customers (Kelly, 2001). They are unable to refuse because their pimps or managers beat them up or threaten to stop sending money to their families once they do so (Sharma, 2001). In children, they are beaten up, molested, and sometimes, forced into child pornography or prostitution (Katsuma, 2001).

Even after the ordeal is over, trafficked victims continue to carry scars from their horrifying experiences. Women who once worked as prostitutes end up

with unwanted pregnancies or, worse, HIV/AIDS (Sharma, 2001). Aside from this, child laborers are severely malnourished and suffer from various respiratory infections and diseases as a result of exposure to toxic fumes in factories. The children have underdeveloped intellectual and mental capacities, not only because of the lack of education, but also because of exposure to an environment not fit for their age. Trafficking victims are often psychologically damaged, left with a feeling of inferiority and a low self-esteem (NGO Group for the CRC Sub-Group on Child Labour, 2002).

## **Trafficking and the Mafia**

Aside from human rights violations, trafficking is a major global concern because of its contribution to the growth of international organized crime. According to Salt (as cited in Bruckert & Parent, 2002), because human trafficking involves source, transit, and destination countries, it requires considerable amounts of money, connections to powerful people in many countries, and good organization, in order to be carried out successfully. Aside from this, the routes used for trafficking are the same as those used for the drug trade, and it is a known fact that the drug trade is controlled by these criminal groups. All these establish and support a link between human trafficking and international organized crime. In fact, several criminal groups have been reportedly involved in human trafficking activities. Chinese “triads” traffic women from Russia and the Ukraine into brothels in Macao and Hong Kong (Ovchinsky, 2007). Also, the highly notorious Russian mob smuggle women from the former Soviet Union into Israel, sometimes using them to hide weapons that they are smuggling as well (“Israel- A Human Trafficking Haven”, 2004).

Despite these facts and reports, it remains hard for authorities to apprehend traffickers because of the clandestine nature of human trafficking itself. Even illegal recruiters who run small-scale operations in rural areas are hard to track because they can easily disguise themselves as acquaintances of the family of the victim. Also, human trafficking is made possible by political corruption. Recruiters may initiate the process, but the furtive transfer of the victims from one area to another requires some sort of conspiracy between the traffickers and certain authorities. Traffickers are known to bribe government officials in order for them to pass through the borders and for the falsified documents to be disregarded. For example, in Bosnia, local immigration officials were reported to have received free sexual services from prostitutes in brothels in exchange for deliberately ignoring the fact that these women were trafficked (Agbu, 2003).

## **Working Things Out**

Actions done by governments and non-government organizations have greatly reduced trafficking and have protected those most susceptible to it (Bureau of Public Affairs of the United States Department of State, 2004). Just by beginning with rural areas to local urban communities where human trafficking is egregiously present, different government and non-government organizations (NGOs) have shown concern regarding this issue by implementing ordinances and laws to serve as a halt to the mentioned illegal deed. Both international and national laws have likewise been passed to stop human trafficking. In view of the fact that trafficking is an international social predicament, plans made by governments for protection and prevention have been well-promulgated among societies. Nevertheless, people who are

of full-knowledge regarding the laws and its impact on culprits and still choose to infringe it may be punished depending on the gravity of lawbreaking.

Given that children and women are surveyed to have the most number of trafficking cases, most international efforts give much attention and focus to such cases. The United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children aims to establish a clearly defined international standard regarding trafficking cases (Raymond, n. d.). The United Nations (UN) provides a comprehensive account of the many challenges facing the international community and of the joint ongoing efforts to find solutions. This action by the UN (2000) towards the prevention of human trafficking upholds that “ effective action to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, especially women and children, requires a comprehensive international approach in the countries of origin, transit and destination that includes measures to prevent such trafficking, to punish the traffickers and to protect the victims of such trafficking, including by protecting their internationally recognized human rights” (p. 2). Also, governments have implemented measures to provide for the physical, psychological, and social recovery of trafficked women and children, including, in appropriate cases, the cooperation of NGOs, other relevant organizations, and other elements of civil society.

An example of the aforementioned organizations includes the International Labour Convention (ILO). The ILO recognizes the newly approved law of ‘ Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act’ or RA 9231. This law eliminates the worst forms of child

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labor such as slavery, prostitution and pornography, drug trafficking, and any work that is hazardous to the health and safety of children. By any violation to this law, a person will automatically be imprisoned, the length of time depending on how grave the trafficking act is (“ Establishments employing children warned”, 2005).

At the present time, most third-world countries implement a kind of judicial reform that would allow victims to demand strong penalties for the traffickers-enough to provide deterrence to an extremely profitable criminal activity. The Anti-Human Trafficking Law of the Philippines allows victims to take action against traffickers. Basically, this law not only provides the right for victims to decide on how grave the chastisement they want the traffickers to go through, but also the assistance, recovery, and rehabilitation of trafficked victims from their traumatic experience under these criminals. This way, the Anti-Human Trafficking Law does not only reduce the number of trafficking cases, but also alleviates the pain caused by this crime to its victims (Solidarity Philippines Australia Network, 2003).

## **A Victim’s Plea**

International and local groups have been established to specifically combat human trafficking. Different governments and NGOs have come up with departments that can help stop human trafficking. In the Philippines, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) launched a National Family Violence Prevention Program where families are informed about the rights of women and children as well as the necessary actions to protect them. To prevent trafficking in children, social workers have been posted at the airports to monitor the travel of children abroad. As to NGOs, GABRIELA, <https://assignbuster.com/ways-to-prevent-human-trafficking-essay/>



which is the national alliance of women's organizations in the Philippines, is actively involved in massive awareness campaigns to prevent the trafficking of women and girls from the country along with the National Commission on the Role of the Filipino Women (NCRFW) who has been aggressively advocating policies and programs to stop trafficking in women and children, foremost of which is the enactment of an anti-trafficking bill into law (Espada, 2003).

In addition to that, an anti-human trafficking confederacy such as the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women works with international policymakers and human rights advocates to promote women's rights and to stop human trafficking (Kelly, 2001). In this case, laws and ordinances do not only cover local communities nor nations as a whole, but also includes international or world-wide policymaking. With the help of the UN and other global federations, a basic notion of equity in terms of policies and laws can be implemented among nations. Moreover, under local cases, the Visayan Forum Foundation raises awareness about trafficking in the Philippines and provides halfway houses for trafficked victims (Odronia, 2008). Awareness about the effects of trafficking among its victims and the consequences that traffickers may go through is a vital aspect for the organization.

### **Averting an Unambiguous Malfeasance**

Because human trafficking is not yet completely abolished, there is a need to improve existing programs and to create new ones that are more efficient and comprehensive. Kelly (2001) asserts that, since human trafficking is a major global concern, there is " a need to develop a legal framework with appropriate penalties, which provides redress for all the ways in which

traffickers and exploiters violate women's human rights and is effective in prosecuting these crimes" (p. 35). Furthermore, she stresses the need to improve on current anti-human trafficking initiatives, suggesting that, "including measures directed at the young men who recruit...and daring to target demand, at home and abroad, would be a radical and welcome step" (p. 35). The government should also see to it that the criminals involved in these crimes get the right punishment. There have been incidences wherein the government has turned a blind eye to these issues, therefore making the existing laws ineffectual. Despite the existence of laws, trafficking remains widespread particularly because of the corruption and the indifference of government officials (Sharma, 2001).

A single policy will not be able to solve the problem entirely, but it will greatly contribute to the solution. In addition, combating problems such as crime, poverty, migration, labor, mental health, and law enforcement, should also be part of anti-trafficking initiatives, as these problems are related to and often lead to trafficking (Sharma, 2001). By addressing these issues and finding solutions to them, there would be a lesser need for people to resort to illegal means such as human trafficking.

### **Awareness vs. Oblivion**

Bringing awareness to the people about anti-human trafficking initiatives should also be one of the main concerns of these government and non-government organizations. As Sharma (2001) stated, "public awareness campaigns are imperative to bring issues of sexual trafficking before the public in order to stimulate community based support" (p. 49). It is important to a society to have citizen cooperation because without this, more people

become vulnerable to becoming victims of these illegal and degrading crimes.

Traffickers capitalize on their victims' ignorance and desperation to get out of poverty. As a matter of fact, poverty is the leading cause of human trafficking. Because of poverty, people are deprived of the essential education that they need to acquire jobs (Cheung, Karlekar, De Dios, Vichit-Vadkan, & Quisumbing, 1999). These people end up considering illegal options, and human trafficking is one of them. This does not just pertain to the victims, but the traffickers themselves. They take advantage of those people who are willing to work and deceive them with false promises of legitimate employment. The victims, seeing no other alternative and completely unaware of the possible consequences, succumb to the lures of migration and find themselves in forced labor or slavery-like conditions (Kelly, 2001).

Because of this, local governments, especially in rural areas, should educate the citizens on how to recognize human trafficking and what to do when faced with such an ordeal as they cannot be proactive if they are not well-informed about the situation (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, n. d.). This can be done through various forms of media such as infomercials, documentaries, print media, and the like. These forms of media can serve to inform the viewers about the telltale signs of human trafficking and to promulgate existing laws in order to deal with the increasing number of human trafficking cases. As a matter of fact, various NGOs and other groups have utilized the media in order to spread vital information about human trafficking. The Save the Children organization has worked with networks for <https://assignbuster.com/ways-to-prevent-human-trafficking-essay/>

the broadcasting of television segments containing hotline numbers of various anti-trafficking organizations (Anti-Sex Trafficking Organization, 2005). Under local cases, the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency has released an anti-trafficking infomercial airing on local TV networks (United States Department of State, 2007). Aside from this, the different anti-human trafficking campaigns should have full support and cooperation from the government in order for them to be as effective and well-spread as possible (Kelly, 2001). These campaigns are mostly needed in more rural areas of a country since most of the victims come from these areas. As stated earlier, these people are usually desperate to get out of poverty that they do not know the true nature of this horrendous felony.

### **Hand in Hand: A Conclusion**

The eradication of human trafficking cannot be done overnight. Even the toughest anti-trafficking legislation will be ineffective without the support it needs. This is why programs by both government and non-government organizations call for global cooperation and local participation in order for the complete abolishment of human trafficking to be achieved (United Nations Population Fund, n. d.).

Human trafficking is an issue that needs to be addressed because, aside from the fact that it perpetuates crime all over the world, it severely damages the lives of its innocent victims. Measures to reduce trafficking have been taken by governments and non-government organizations, and these include the creation of both international and national anti-trafficking laws and programs for the prevention of trafficking and rehabilitation of trafficking victims. However, it is evident that more needs to be done. Aside

from having more aggressive campaigns against human trafficking, raising awareness for prevention should be at the forefront of all anti-trafficking initiatives.

With an activity as clandestine and as lucrative as human trafficking, it may appear that the battle cannot be won. Initiatives taken to eradicate trafficking have only been successful in reducing it. However, in the 19th century, slavery was abolished worldwide. If it has been done once, then surely it can be done again. With the needed support from the international and national level, the dream of abolishing trafficking may soon be realized.