

Advocating for Justice:

The role of U.S. policy & non-profit organizations in ending child sex trafficking

Jessica M. Sandlund

Z1614926

Northern Illinois University

Capstone Seminar in Community Leadership and Civic Engagement

Spring 2016

May 11, 2016

Abstract

Child sex trafficking is a form of human trafficking pervasive throughout the world. Nearly one million children are used as modern day slaves in the sex trafficking industry at any given time (International Labour Organization, 2012). Traffickers use their positions of power and control to enslave their victim in horrific situations and use them for their personal financial gain, while buyers perpetuate the industry. Federal policies and non-profit organizations in the US work together to combat child sex trafficking, but the continued presence of supply and demand along with gaps left by ineffective laws, untrained law enforcement, and low community awareness allow the industry to continue. This paper uses a literature review to examine the history of child sex trafficking and to provide information about the victims, traffickers and buyers. It details the role of U.S. policies and non-profit organizations (NPOs) in addressing the needs of victims, prosecuting traffickers, and preventing further abuse. Information is provided on the shortcomings of certain U.S. policies and on how U.S. NPOs are addressing certain community needs. The research also includes a case study based on an interview with a staff member of Saving Innocence, a non-profit organization in California. Lastly, recommendations are made to increase training of law enforcement and service providers, to increase collaboration across sectors, to amend U.S. policies to better help victims, and to create a stronger focus on the demand for commercial sex with the intent of better addressing this crisis.

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Introduction

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery, consisting of both labor trafficking and commercial sex trafficking (“National Human Trafficking,” n.d.). Currently, about 20.9 million men, women, and children are victims of human trafficking throughout the world (International Labour Organization, 2012). About 4.6 million of these victims are involved in forced sexual exploitation (International Labour Organization, 2012).

According to the U.S. Federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), “[s]ex trafficking is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purposes of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age,” (“National Human Trafficking,” n.d.).¹

Due to the hidden and illicit nature of human trafficking, it is difficult to accurately track how many victims are affected (Luscombe, 2014). For example, the International Labour Organization (2012) found that about 21 percent, or 965,000, of victims of sex trafficking are children under the age of 18. However, a U.S. non-profit organization (NPO) named Not For Sale reported nearly twice as many child victims of sex trafficking as the International Labour Organization (ILO) (Modern-Day Slavery, 2016). While the four years of time between these

¹ The legislation also defines commercial sex as, “...any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person,” (“National Human Trafficking,” n.d.).

two statistics could account for a portion of the increase, the variance still demonstrates the challenge in accurately identifying how many victims of sex trafficking exist.

Around the world, countries are investigating and addressing the reality of human trafficking, finding ways to better identify and help victims and to create a hostile environment for traffickers in order to deter their practices. Specifically, federal policies and NPOs in the US work together to combat child sex trafficking, but the continued presence of supply and demand along with gaps left by ineffective laws, untrained law enforcement, and low community awareness allow the industry to continue.

In an effort to examine the reality of child sex trafficking, this paper will detail the background of this illicit practice and provide insight into who the traffickers and buyers are and who is most vulnerable to being a victim. It will also discuss the role of U.S. policy and U.S. non-profit organizations in addressing child sex trafficking in the US and abroad. Lastly, a case study will be presented providing an example of a non-profit organization at work and showing the complexity of human trafficking. To conclude the paper, recommendations will be made that suggest ways the US could improve their efforts and policies to more successfully target and eliminate the practice of child sex trafficking.

Justification of Topic

According to Thorn (2016), 325,000 children are at risk of becoming a victim of sexual exploitation in the US alone (2016). This number reaches nearly one million when taken on a global scale (International Labour Organization, 2012). Child sex trafficking entraps victims and leaves them with life-long physical and psychological scars that are difficult to heal (Rieger, 2007). Although steps have been taken to prosecute traffickers, the industry is still flourishing

due to the constant demand from buyers (Tom Lantos Human Rights, 2016). As the National Trafficking Resource Center states, “To ultimately solve the problem of human trafficking, it is essential to address these demand-driven factors, as well as to alter the overall market incentives of high-profit and low-risk that traffickers currently exploit,” (“National Human Trafficking,” n.d.). Overall, research is critical to expose gaps in current US efforts and to determine recommendations for future progress to help address unmet needs.

Discussion of Literature

Background

In order to fully understand the background and nature of the child sex trafficking industry, it is important to examine its historical roots and its development over time. It is also important to define the terms involved in order to understand who the victims, traffickers, and buyers and how they each function as a part of the industry to facilitate its growth and perpetuation.

History. Sex trafficking is rooted in the global oppression of women. According to Rieger (2007), “Sex trafficking could not thrive if women were not systematically oppressed and marginalized,” (p. 235). This systematic oppression incorporates issues such as a lack of education and employment opportunities, unequal social status, viewing women as property or sexual objects, and the failure of some cultures and societies to value traditional women’s work (Rieger, 2007). Unfortunately, these cultural and societal norms create an environment that makes it possible to traffic women and children, especially girls.

Human trafficking gained international attention as a human rights injustice shortly after the Cold War and the fall of communism in 1989. At this time, international borders became

easier-to-cross and vulnerable poor were left anxiously awaiting a chance to improve their life. Both of these factors, especially together, made human trafficking easier for the trafficker. International travel was easier and more women were looking for an opportunity to find work, which made them prime bait in a trafficker's eyes. Not surprisingly, traffickers recognized these changes and took advantage of them, leading to an increase in the scale of human trafficking in the 1990s (Coonan & Thompson, 2005). Globally, countries responded to this increase through the work of NGOs as well as by convening politically in what became known as the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (the Convention) (Coonan & Thompson, 2005). This period of the 1990s became the birth of the anti-trafficking movement, which has continued to grow until today.

The Convention, which is basically a treaty, entered into force in 2003 and used a crime-prevention model to address human trafficking as well as other transnational organized crime. While creating the Convention, the UN recognized the need to create additional, separate protocols for the categories of human trafficking and migrant smuggling to more specifically address these similar, yet different issues. Therefore, another treaty emerged called the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (the Protocol) (Coonan & Thompson, 2005). The Protocol, which also entered into force in 2003, successfully mandated all signing parties to criminalize and prosecute trafficking and provided a standard, internationally accepted definition of human trafficking (Coonan & Thompson, 2005). This was an important, unifying step in the global fight against trafficking. Unfortunately though, neither the Convention nor the Protocol did much to address trafficking as a human rights dilemma, outside of labeling trafficked persons as "victims". Because of this, there was a deficit in aid provided to trafficked victims as the focus was on prosecuting

traffickers not on the rescue, recovery or well-being of victims (Coonan & Thompson, 2005).

Today, this trend still exists, preventing many victims of trafficking from receiving proper or full help.

The definition of trafficking. The definition of human trafficking created by the UN Protocol identifies the three elements that create the offense:

(1) the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons; (2) by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or position of vulnerability, giving or receiving payments or benefits to achieve consent of a person having control over another; (3) for the purpose of exploitation (including, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others, or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the removal of organs). (Coonan & Thompson, 2005, p. 45)

For a situation to be identified as human trafficking, these three elements must be met, unless a victim is a child, then the second component does not need to be present (Coonan & Thompson, 2005). The Polaris Project, a U.S. NPO, created the Action-Means-Purpose Model (AMP), shown in Figure 1, as a way to visually represent the definition of human trafficking.

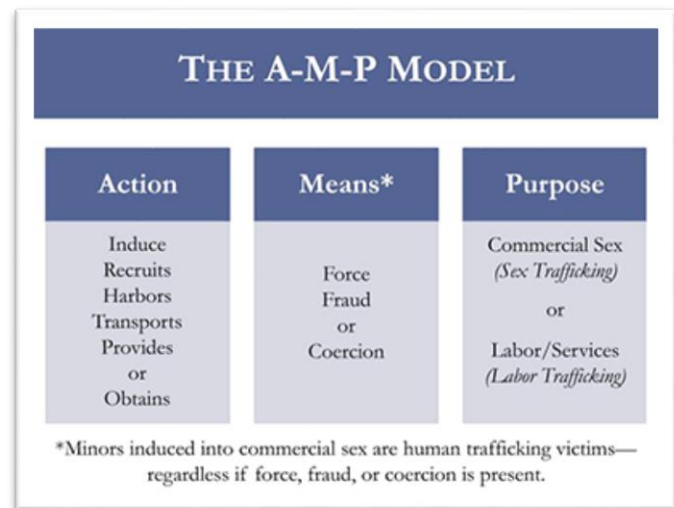


Figure 1

The victims. Human trafficking operates as any other market industry, through the interactions of supply and demand. Men, women, and children all form a part of the supply for

human trafficking, although females constitute 98% of sex trafficking victims (International Labour Organization, 2012). However, research references an under-reporting and under-identification of male victims, especially due to culturally reinforced ideas of who can be victimized, so there may be more male victims than the numbers propose (Greve, 2014). Data from Saving Innocence, a non-profit in Los Angeles, CA, is concurrent with the statistics from the ILO. Amber Davies, LCSW and Director of Clinical Programs at Saving Innocence, stated 98% of the children they rescue out of trafficking are females, while the other 2% are males or transwomen. Davies also agreed that males are under-identified and that there is not as much training in regards to male victims (personal communication, March 24, 2016).

Victims can come from any demographic or background, but runaway and homeless youth, foreign nationals in the US, and individuals with a past of violence or trauma are particularly susceptible to being trafficked (“National Human Trafficking,” n.d.). According to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center, the psychological effects of past trauma can be difficult to overcome, plus “[v]iolence and abuse may be normalized or beliefs of shame or unworthiness lead to future susceptibility to human trafficking” (The Victims, n.d.). Poverty and the desire to lead a better life also contribute to the vulnerabilities of victims being trafficked by their exploiters but is not the sole cause of trafficking (Miller, 2006).

According to Thorn (2016), the average age of entry into the sex trade in the US is twelve to fourteen years old. Overall, children have unique characteristics that may cause them to be vulnerable to trafficking. Firstly, children can be emotionally naïve and are dependent on adults for physical and emotional support (Klain & Kloer, 2009). Unfortunately, traffickers know this and exploit these vulnerabilities of a child to bring them into sex trafficking. For example, a child who does not receive physical or emotional support from their family or relatives has an unmet

need they are looking to fill. As such, they may be more vulnerable to trusting and following a trafficker who is pretending to give them the support they are looking for. For example, a trafficker will act like a loving, caring boyfriend in order to gain the trust of their victim. Then, after the initial wooing of a victim, the trafficker begins demanding he or she earn money through sex and uses methods of control, manipulation, and their position of dominance and authority over the victim to keep them trapped in sex trafficking. Additionally, a child's financial dependence on others may stop them from seeking help if they are in a trafficking situation and know no other way to meet their basic needs (Klain & Kloer, 2009). Children with physical, mental or emotional disabilities are even further at risk for being trafficked because their basic vulnerabilities as children are compounded by their disability (Klain & Kloer, 2009). Lastly, children, especially adolescent age youth, may be experiencing a lot of psychological and social developmental changes, including rebellious attitudes or defiance, which can lead them into a new environment with activities such as drugs, alcohol or sex (Klain & Kloer, 2009). According to Klain and Kloer (2009), traffickers can exploit these children by "giving them tastes of the forbidden, adult world in exchange for their exploitation," (p. 14). These victims may be less likely to seek help if they see their peers involved in trafficking or similar situations they deem acceptable (Klain & Kloer, 2009)

The trafficking situation is often very brutal, causing a lot of damage to the victims. Victims suffer through isolation and the control and threats of their trafficker along with physical and sexual abuse. Many victims are raped—sometimes by up to twenty-five or more men per day (Rieger, 2007). Because of the horror of their experiences, victims are left with psychological and emotional scars and need therapy to help them recover (Rieger, 2007). Though not always apparent, some warning signs of sex trafficking include signs of physical abuse, such as burn

marks, bruises or cuts; unexplained absences from class; behavior changes, including being overly tired, withdrawn, depressed or distracted; bragging about making or having a lot of money; having an older boyfriend; new tattoos; or signs of gang affiliation (Warning Signs of Sex Trafficking, 2014).

The traffickers. The traffickers, the second piece of the puzzle, also come from a variety of backgrounds (“National Human Trafficking,” n.d.). They can be individual pimps, family operations, or small businesses, or even agents in a criminal network international in scale (“National Human Trafficking,” n.d.). Traffickers typically exploit the vulnerabilities of their victims, such as a lack of family support or financial crisis, and use manipulation, control, threats, and often violence to keep their victims under their control (“National Human Trafficking,” n.d.). Oftentimes traffickers come from the same ethnic or national background as their victims, which helps them understand the victim and better use them (“National Human Trafficking,” n.d.). Traffickers exploit their victims in a variety of scenes, including fake massage parlors, escort services, residential brothels, on city streets and truck stops, strip clubs, hostess clubs, hotels, motels, and elsewhere (Sex Trafficking, n.d.).

Traffickers are motivated and able to continue their work in part due to the low-risk, high-profit nature of the industry. The traffickers perceive a minimal risk to their business and do not feel threatened because trafficking is not proactively investigated, untrained law enforcement and social blaming of victims (Human Trafficking, n.d.) Additionally, trafficking is extremely profitable. Traffickers profit about \$99 billion from the sex trafficking industry alone, contributing to two-thirds of the profits of the trafficking industry as a whole (Luscombe, 2014). According to Luscombe (2014), a trafficker will make an average of \$21,800 per victim of sex trafficking, which serves as evidence of the demand for commercial sex. Another source found

that a trafficker makes up to \$150,000-\$200,000 per child victim each year and exploits about four to six girls, again proving the lucrative nature of the industry (Thorn, 2016). Part of the reason traffickers are so profitable is that each victim represents a continual stream of income, an asset to a trafficker, versus a commodity such as drugs or weapons that strictly results in a one-time transaction (Miller, 2006). Although prosecutions and penalties for traffickers have increased in the US over the years, they still believe the risk is worth the reward (Human Trafficking, n.d.).

The buyers. The demand side of the equation comes from the buyers who are willing to pay for sex. The buyers not only fuel and perpetuate the industry, but are responsible for creating it (Tom Lantos Human Rights, 2016). The Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Briefing (2016) discussed how when traffickers are arrested another one immediately replaces them because the demand for commercial sex still exists. According to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center, “[m]any buyers of commercial sex are unaware, ill-informed, or in denial of the abusive realities of commercial sex” (Sex Trafficking, n.d.). However, other sources give a tougher view of the buyers’ intentions. Davies stated that buyers most likely know what they are doing, but they simply do not care. She describes it as a “failure of compassion, a failure on so many levels” (personal communication, March 24, 2016). Similarly, a panelist in the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Briefing said that the question should not be, “Did they know [that the child was a minor]?” but “Do they care?” She also stated that a buyer of sex is no different than a pedophile—their mindset is the same (Tom Lantos Human Rights, 2016). She described how buyers use their position of privilege of power and money to buy and use their victims as they want, all the while believing their actions are not their fault but rather the child’s fault.

Buyers can come from any background or walk of life. They are lawyers, doctors, teachers, police officers and more. Recently, there is a trend toward buyers using the internet to purchase sex (Tom Lantos Human Rights, 2016). Shared Hope International (2015) stated that the internet is where buyers are most comfortable buying sex. In a study done by Thorn (2016) in 2015, 75% of child sex trafficking victims were advertised or sold online. According to Shared Hope International (2015), buyers can be characterized in two ways: those who just want to buy sex and those who specifically want minors. Typically, the younger the victim, the more money the buyers are willing to pay (Shared Hope International, 2015). The willingness of the buyers to purchase sex drives the profitability of the sex trafficking industry and continues the horrendous cycle of abuse.

The Role of U.S. Policy

In 2000, the U.S. government passed the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) in an effort to help protect victims of human trafficking and prosecute traffickers. It was reauthorized in 2003, 2005, 2008, and 2013, making improvements to the law and expanding its reach (Polaris Project, 2008). The three branches of the policy address prevention, protection, and prosecution (Polaris Project, 2008). In the area of prevention, the government created an Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking within the State Department as well as a federal task force to assist in the implementation of the policy (Polaris Project, 2008). It also created public awareness and information programs and international economic development programs to support potential victims (Polaris Project, 2008). To help protect victims, the government established T-visa. The visa can be used by trafficking victims to secure temporary residency in the US and makes them eligible to become a permanent resident after three years. The TVPA also provided assistance to foreign national victims to the same extent as refugees. This meant

expanded access to education, healthcare and social service programs (Polaris Project, 2008). In the area of prosecution, the TVPA made human trafficking a federal crime with severe penalties and created specific categories of crime such as forced labor and sex trafficking of children. It also mandated that restitution be paid to victims (Polaris Project, 2008).

The TVPA has an international component as well. It provides foreign aid to countries to help build their capacity and ability to combat TIP in the areas of prevention, protection and prosecution (Siskin & Wyler, 2013). Another international element of the TVPA is a mandated country reporting on Trafficking in Persons (TIP). The Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking evaluates and ranks countries based on their level of compliance with the TVPA's minimum standards for combating severe trafficking of persons and compiles this information into an annual report (Siskin & Wyler, 2013). Countries receive either a Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 2 Watch List or the lowest, a Tier 3, ranking (Siskin & Wyler, 2013). The U.S. government then uses this information to help with their efforts to end trafficking across the globe. For example, a country who is ranked at a Tier 3 level in the annual TIP report is ineligible to receive non-humanitarian or nontrade-related aid the following fiscal year (Siskin & Wyler, 2013). Furthermore, in accordance with the reauthorization of TVPA in 2003, the U.S. government must terminate contracts with overseas contractors who engage in sex trafficking or commercial sex or who use forced labor (Polaris Project, 2008). Similarly, the reauthorization of TVPA in 2008 prevented U.S. military assistance to countries using child soldiers, which is a form of child trafficking (Polaris Project, 2008).

Unfortunately, despite the intentions of the TVPA, there are shortcomings in the policy that have been noted. First of all, a lack of enforcement has limited its effectiveness (Rieger, 2007). Secondly, in order for victims to receive the benefits of the law, they must first be located

and identified. However, this is difficult to do, plus untrained law enforcement at times immediately deems an individual an illegal immigrant or prostitute rather than properly identifying them as a victim (Rieger, 2007). Furthermore, in order for there to be identification, there must be investigation on the part of law enforcement. However, according to Rieger (2007), both law enforcement and federal officials have been accused of de-prioritizing sex trafficking in favor of more obvious crimes such as drugs or gang violence. Again, victims are not receiving the help they deserve.

Additionally, in order to receive the benefits of the TVPA, a victim must meet the standard of a “severe trafficking victim,” which can be difficult to prove (Rieger, 2007). For women, this standard creates a complex situation. While those kidnapped or taken to another country are more clearly a severe victim of trafficking, a woman who consented to sex work but who ended up entrapped in slave-like conditions to which she did not agree has a harder time pleading her case and proving herself as a severe victim (Rieger, 2007). Because of this, the latter is oftentimes not certified. This denial of certification perpetuates a societal view that those who choose sex work are “bad” and unworthy of protection, no matter what circumstances they encountered. However, according to the TVPA, a woman should be protected unless she had full knowledge and consent of her conditions and work prior to her consent (Rieger, 2007). Taking it one step further, many feminists would argue that even these women are still victims, speaking to another issue with the TVPA. They state that a woman who has other options for their life would never choose sex work, explaining that it is the oppression and marginalization of women that leads to a woman choosing prostitution in the first place (Rieger, 2007). With this view, all women who are involved in sex work under slave-like conditions, willfully or against their will, should be considered a victim and provided services accordingly.

In general, it is much more likely for a woman to be certified as a severe victim when she is rescued directly by a non-profit organization or government agency during a raid. It is harder for a victim to prove themselves as a victim of severe trafficking if they rescue themselves out of their trafficking situation and turn themselves in to law enforcement or other help (Bump, 2009). Unfortunately, this would seem to dissuade victims from seeking out help and discourage them from reaching out to law enforcement for a fear of not being eligible for services and help when they self-report. Luckily, for a child the situation is different; they are a victim of trafficking if they are under 18 years old without having to prove force, fraud or coercion in their situation.

Another shortcoming of the TVPA is the requirement that the victim (with the exception of minors) help assist law enforcement in the prosecution of the trafficker, which may deter some victims from seeking help. While minors are supposed to be exempt from this requirement, their exclusion was tested in 2005 in an unfortunate case. According to Bump (2009), the federal court used a subpoena to call two child victims of trafficking to the witness stand to help in the prosecution of their traffickers, who were the mother and relatives of one of the girls. Bump explained the problem and the harm caused to the girl because of being forced to testify and explained the importance of protecting a victim's choice and their healing and recovery process. Many victims do not want to testify for fear of retaliation on themselves or their family by the traffickers or because the experience of testifying in court feels like they are being victimized again (Rieger, 2007). Other victims may still be traumatized to the extent that they are unable to accurately recall the details of their experiences that the prosecutors demand for it to be considered full cooperation (Rieger, 2007).

In conclusion, all of these barriers make it challenging for the TVPA to protect and aid victims of trafficking as the law intends. Because the law was written from more of a law

enforcement perspective, the provisions are more focused on the prosecution of traffickers rather than protecting the rights of victims. Thankfully, this issue has been widely noted and the need for change has been recognized.

The Role of U.S. Non-Profit Organizations

Many NPOs throughout the US are working to address the issue of human trafficking. Organizations such as Polaris have established resource centers and hotlines for those seeking help (Theory of Change, 2016). Not For Sale and Hope For Justice are two other examples of U.S.-based NPOs working to end human trafficking. Organizations like these provide direct services to survivors of human trafficking, such as shelter, healthcare, counseling and legal services, education, and employment opportunities. They also help victims with crisis response, safety planning and understanding the life-and-death implications of confidentiality (Coonan & Thompson, 2005).

Many NPOs also deliver advocacy services, such as policy expertise to government officials, consultation and strategic planning for public and private sectors, and training for professionals in the fields that may encounter victims of human trafficking (United States, 2016). Non-profit organizations often work first-hand with victims and therefore are able to identify problems with policies that policymakers may not be aware of themselves. For example, NPOs may witness victims struggling to understand the T-visa application process or being denied visa approval because of the strict qualifications the TVPA requires. Staff at NPOs can take these stories to policymakers in order to advocate for changes to improve ineffective laws. Also, because of their direct contact with victims, NPOs are often the ideal entity to conduct training of law enforcement officials and other professionals who may come in contact with trafficking victims (Davies, personal communication, March 24, 2016). Child trafficking victims often come

across untrained professionals who do not know their experiences and who are unable to properly help them, which leaves them at even greater risk (Goździak, 2010).

Non-profit organizations also work in their communities and throughout the country and world in the area of prevention. They educate the community, operate strategic interventions, perform data analyses, operate anti-trafficking campaigns, and conduct necessary research to help eliminate the issue (Our Strategy, 2016). Low community awareness has been cited as a gap that allows the already illicit industry of sex trafficking to continue undetected. Community members are not aware of what their children, neighbors, or students may be experiencing, preventing victim identification. Plus, a lack of understanding in the community can lead to a social blaming of victims, preventing traffickers and buyers from being held accountable for their actions (Human Trafficking, n.d.). Non-profits such as Shared Hope International help to address this problem by educating the community and exposing buyers of commercial sex (Shared Hope International, 2015).

Specifically, NPOs help increase community awareness regarding the reality of prostitution, an issue closely related to trafficking. Organizations advocate for the decriminalization of prostitution for minors, asking that law enforcement and communities see them as victims rather than criminals, a view that is much more accurate to their situation. Case in point, a 2003 study by Dr. Melissa Farley found that 89% of women in prostitution want to escape—and the same principal applies to minors trapped in prostitution (Miller, 2006). There is a heated debate between the need to legalize prostitution, regulate it and tax it, or to decriminalize it, addressing those in prostitution as victims rather than criminals. Either way, NPOs play an important role in educating communities about the abusive nature of prostitution and some of the reasons why minors may seemingly “choose” prostitution for their lives. Factors

such as poverty, a lack of family love or support, and promises of a better life can lead a child to enter into prostitution, unknowingly to them entering into the dark abyss of sex trafficking (Miller, 2006). The Equality Model, also known as the Nordic Model, was started in Sweden and may be a solution to this debate. This model recognizes the vulnerability of prostitutes and provides them exit strategies and services for their needs. The model advocates for a changed mindset in gender equality, teaching people it is not okay to buy sex (Tom Lantos Human Rights, 2016).

Overall, NPOs provide many services that are critical to both helping victims and prosecuting traffickers and buyers of sex. Filling the gap between the public and the private sector, NPOs are working to do their part to help put an end to human trafficking.

Case Study

Saving Innocence is a U.S. non-profit organization located in Los Angeles, CA whose mission is “[t]o rescue and restore child victims of sex trafficking through strategic partnerships with local law enforcement, social service providers, and schools, while mobilizing communities to prevent abuse and increase neighborhood safety,” (About Saving Innocence, 2016). Their vision is to “end the commercial sexual exploitation of children and restore the cultural values of innocence and human worth,” (About Saving Innocence, 2016). In order to accomplish this, Saving Innocence takes a comprehensive approach, providing children with services such as emergency crisis response, long-term case management and advocacy, court advocacy, and resources for families of survivors. To help prevent further trafficking, Saving Innocence also advocates for improvements to local and national policies, leads life-enrichment workshops for high-risk youth, gives trafficking awareness presentations throughout the community, and trains front-line professionals (About Saving Innocence, 2016).

Saving Innocence is a member of the Los Angeles Metropolitan Human Trafficking Task Force and collaborates with local and federal law enforcement, probation officers, DCFS and other NPOs in their efforts to end child sex trafficking (Crisis Recovery Services, 2016).

According to Davies, partnership and collaboration is a must because of the interwoven nature of human trafficking and their organization's narrow field of work (personal communication, March 24, 2016). Saving Innocence works strictly with domestic cases of sex trafficking of minors ages 11-18 so it is imperative that they work with others, especially when addressing cases of older or foreign victims (Davies, personal communication, March 24, 2016).

When asked about recommendations to anti-trafficking efforts in the US, Davies shared that the future of the work needs to focus on prevention as well as addressing the demand side of the issue. According to Davies, 70% of the children Saving Innocence rescues have been in the foster care system. She asked, "What is about these foster care youth that makes them vulnerable?," indicating an area for future exploration that may help organizations like Saving Innocence prevent future trafficking of children (personal communication, March 24, 2016). Currently, Saving Innocence expends the majority of their energy on the recovery and reintegration process of the children, which begs the question, "Why is this continuing to happen?" (Davies, personal communication, March 24, 2016). If further research could be done that would expose more information about the culture of child sex trafficking and why it continues to happen, perhaps more could be done to stop the problem before it starts. For example, Davies mentioned that poverty—not only a lack of money but an absence of love and family—is a problem that is involved in child sex trafficking (personal communication, March 24, 2016). Davies shared the importance of paying attention to factors such as this in order to better address the reality of sex trafficking and to continue seeking understanding.

Davies also shared one of the challenges to developing “best practices” in the services Saving Innocence provides to trafficking victims, which brought to light the complexity of the trafficking system. Davies stated that it is difficult to design a best practice for how to rescue victims because everything is constantly changing. For example, Saving Innocence created a first responder protocol but then those strategies started to fall short. Davies explained that the children they are seeking to rescue are keen and adapt their behaviors to avoid detection by law enforcement or NGOs such as Saving Innocence. Girls have found ways to identify the accounts of undercover detectives and avoid them; they use tactics such as blocking people from social media so they cannot be found. Davies’s stories demonstrate the complex nature of trafficking where victims themselves at times are the roadblock to their own rescue. However, although it may seem like these victims are going along with their traffickers, Davies clearly reminded us that there is always some level of exploitation. Davies explained that a girl “has usually been subject to exploitation throughout her life so she has learned to pair her value with sex,” (personal communication, March 24, 2016).

The magnitude of the sex trafficking network was also presented by Davies. According to Davies, most victims who are “renegading,” or working independently, will be approached by a trafficker within 48 hours of their release from custody or police, and oftentimes much sooner than that. One girl even reported being approached by another trafficker within two hours of being let go by the police (personal communication, March 24, 2016).

Another challenge described by Davies is the lack of adequate training of first responders in her area. Davies underlined the necessity of training for first responders but acknowledged the difficulty of training the vast amount of service providers involved. However, training of local partners is something Saving Innocence continues to do, because a lack of training can prevent a

child from receiving the best care. Davies recognized that the needs of the children will overwhelm anyone, which is why proper training is so crucial (personal communication, March 24, 2016).

Overall, Davies believes that the elimination of trafficking will ultimately come from a cultural change. While she mentioned that some laws have been passed to help address child sex trafficking, she sees that a lot of change is going to be cultural—changing mindsets rather than policies (personal communication, March 24, 2016). Like Davies, many others are working to eliminate stereotypes of prostitution and to treat those involved as victims rather than criminals (Miller, 2006). Davies has seen the deprivation in the children her organization has rescued and finds joy in giving the children experiences they have never had before, even something as simple as a birthday party that a person raised in a healthy household takes for granted (personal communication, March 24, 2016).

Recommendations

Based on the available literature and the case study of Saving Innocence, several recommendations can be made for both U.S. policy and non-profit organizations. If implemented, these recommendations, including increasing training for key stakeholders, increasing collaboration, changing the TVPA and increasing the focus on demand, will help further the fight against child sex trafficking. There are also measures that can be taken by organizations or individuals at a grassroots level to continue the fight against child sex trafficking.

Increase Training

First of all, training of community stakeholders needs to be made a priority at the local, state and federal levels. A lack of training of key stakeholders creates a gap in the process of victim identification and in trafficker or buyer prosecution, one that needs to be addressed. Goździak (2010) shared a case study of Analis, a girl from Honduras, which demonstrated the importance of proper training. Though Analis was a victim of labor trafficking, the principals from her case apply to sex trafficking victims as well. When Analis was brought by her trafficker into the US, a lack of protocols and inadequate training of border officials prevented her from being identified as a victim of trafficking. Later once she in the US, a neighbor reported to the police that she was not attending school. However, untrained police officers failed to investigate her situation to find out why. They simply ordered her to attend school. After attending school for a few days, Analis dropped out and neither the school administration nor the teachers reported her absence to the police. If the school employees had been trained in the warning signs of trafficking victims, they may have recognized these signs in Analis's situation and done more. Analis's story continued on through the system as she came into contact with Child Protective Services (CPS), immigration officials, a detention center and finally a pro bono attorney assigned to her case. Every official failed to recognize the signs of her situation and investigate her as a potential trafficking victim until the attorney. He was the first to see that she may be a victim of trafficking and investigate her case—something that should have been done much earlier on to rescue her out of her dreadful situation sooner.

Analis's story proves that all stakeholders who may come into contact with victims or traffickers should be properly trained in warning signs, victim identification, protocols and laws so they can be as effective as possible in their work. Proper training and education also allows officials to better expose trafficking situations through investigation and to accurately identify

trafficked persons as victims rather than criminals (Rieger, 2007). Stakeholders who should receive training include school counselors and administrators, prosecutors, law enforcement, judges and service providers (Tom Lantos Human Rights, 2016). In regards to police, it is especially important to increase training at state and local levels as these police are usually the first to come into contact with the victims. As stakeholders are being trained, it is important to keep in mind is that trafficked youth often have a distrust of adults, even those who may be attempting to help them, which may cause a challenge in their efforts (Klain & Kloer, 2009)

Increase collaboration

In addition to training, community stakeholders should increase collaboration and cooperation in their fight against child sex trafficking. Coonan & Thompson (2005) complimented the efforts of communities who work together to strategize in their efforts to combat intimate partner violence. They suggest that this model could be applied to the fight against human trafficking as well. Perhaps stakeholders addressing human trafficking could even work together with those in the domestic violence field since the two issues share some of the root causes of oppression of women and since victims are in need of similar services (Coonan & Thompson, 2005). Furthermore, Coonan & Thompson (2005) also stated that governmental funding should be provided to support NPOs addressing trafficking and that the international community should help build the capacity of organizations to better understand trafficking and to connect with each other. Bump (2009) suggested that the U.S. federal government create an “interagency protocol[s] for child trafficking prosecutions and investigations to ensure that the child victims remain safe, that the number of interviews is limited, and the interviews are conducted in a child-friendly manner,” (p. 97). Additionally, Shared Hope International (2015) discussed the need to share information with other stakeholders and ask for advice for strategies

and best practices that are effective. For example, if a police department has been successful in their stings and has been able to prosecute buyers, they can give advice to other departments who do not have as much experience in operating stings.

Amend the TVPA

Another recommendation for future progress is to address the gaps in the TVPA. One of the issues of the law is the difficulty victims face in achieving certification and receiving services. This issue needs to be addressed through policy changes and by stronger enforcement of the law. Specifically, Rieger (2007) recommended that the TVPA be amended to reflect the standard for visa approval used in asylum cases: a well-founded fear of persecution if returned to their home countries. Currently, for a victim to be certified as a “severe trafficking victim” and thus receive services, they must successfully apply for and receive a T visa. However, there are several challenges to being granted a T visa, such as the requirement to demonstrate “extreme hardship involving unusual and severe harm upon removal,” (Rieger, 2007, p. 252). Rieger (2007) stated that changing the T visa requirements to that of asylum standards would help achieve the TVPA’s goal of protecting victims of trafficking. This amendment is particularly important because victims of trafficking who are forced to return to their home country often enter back into the situation that brought them into trafficking in the first place, which can cause them to become a victim again. Upon returning, they also may face revenge on the part of their trafficker and/or his or her allies (Rieger, 2007), proving the importance of protecting victims and allowing them to stay in the US.

Additionally, Bump (2009) recommended that a clause be added to the TVPA stating that child victims do not need to comply with any subpoena issued to mandate testimony. In the case Bump (2009) described, the Department of Justice and Immigration and Customs Enforcement

circumvented the TVPA, which excuses children from forced testimony, by using a subpoena to mandate their testimony. He discussed the emotional trauma and hardship caused to the children through this experience and emphasized the need to prevent this from happening again.

Address demand

Furthermore, another important recommendation is to focus on addressing the demand for commercial sex as a way to eliminate the crisis. According to Shared Hope International (2015), buyers are most worried about public exposure, so to help eliminate the demand, there needs to be exposure of the buyers. This will also help address the gap in society of a lack of public knowledge and awareness. Exposure of who buyers are will help educate society as well as bring the issue to the forefront of human rights discussions. A panelist at the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Briefing (2016) specifically addressed the issue with the buyers by criticizing the way society has created a name for them: “johns.” She stated that society created the term johns as a way to normalize and protect the buyer because it takes away their individual identities and puts them into a generic category of “johns,” a very common and generic name in the US. Perhaps this practice needs to change by using their individual identities without giving them the scapegoat of a normalized nickname.

Along with increased exposure, Shared Hope International (2015) and the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Briefing (2016) both expressed the need to increase penalties for buyers of commercial sex. The Commission Briefing (2016) stated that no matter what, buyers should spend some amount of time in jail for buying sex from a minor. The idea is that a stiffer penalty would create a stronger deterrence and perhaps stop the demand for commercial sex.

The Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Briefing (2016) also gave two policy recommendations to address demand. First, they suggested an amendment to Section 230 of the Communication Decency Act (CDA). The current writing of this section creates a conflict between the state and federal governments because it leaves the responsibility of investigating and prosecuting prosecution or sex trafficking done through an internet site in the hands of federal government; it bars state or local authorities from investigating these sites, even though the violations and offenses are under state laws. The Commission recommended a two-word change to the CDA that would give state and local authorities to also investigate these sites, which would help curb trafficking done through the internet (Tom Lantos Human Rights, 2016). Secondly, the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Briefing (2016) advocated for the passing of HR611, the Sex Trafficking Demand Reduction Act. This act acknowledges the significance of the demand factor and requires countries to “recognize demand and account for their actions to reduce demand in their efforts to fight sex trafficking” (Tom Lantos Human Rights, 2016, 4:08). The actions or lack thereof taken by countries would be considered in the annual TIP report done by the State Department and would affect their tier ranking.

Grassroots response

Lastly, there are actions that can be taken at a grassroots level to help combat child sex trafficking and the crisis of human trafficking in its entirety. Individuals can write a letter to a local media editor or a congressional representative to spread awareness, host or attend an awareness event in their community, fight for justice online using social media, or become an ambassador of hope or a defender through Shared Hope International’s initiatives (4 Ways to Take Action, 2016). Shared Hope International (2015) also encouraged individuals to be brave and speak up if they see a situation that does not appear right. In general, low community

awareness allows human trafficking to continue without hindrance, so the more society can educate itself and others, the better people can work together to end this crisis.

Conclusion

In conclusion, human trafficking, and child sex trafficking in particular, is a pervasive human rights injustice that deserves time, attention, and dedicated efforts to combat. The vast numbers of men, women, and children that fall prey to trafficking justify the importance of addressing the issue. Although U.S. federal policies and NPOs have been established to help end human trafficking, the industry is still booming, profiting \$150 billion annually (Luscombe, 2014). The low-risk perceived by traffickers and constant demand from buyers, along with gaps in legislation, law enforcement, and community awareness allow the business to continue. The public and non-profit sectors need to continue working together across the world to expose this illicit business and eradicate it everywhere it exists. Cultural change and an emphasis on human rights will help victims receive the support they need so that someday every man, woman, and child is given the opportunity to live in freedom and to become the person they are meant to be.

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