

An Introduction to Human Slavery Tearfund NZ

By Reverend Francis Ritchie, 2014

Historical Background

Slavery predates human records and was institutionalised in cultures around the world from the earliest days of humanity. Over time though, it has been recognised that slavery breaches, and is an abuse of basic human rights. Modern understandings of it stem specifically from the evolution and eventual abolition of the transatlantic slave trade.

In 1807 the British parliament abolished the slave trade throughout the British Empire. Whilst the trade was abolished, it wasn't until 1838 that slavery itself was legally abolished. It is believed that the transatlantic trading patterns that constituted the movement, buying, and selling of slaves was well established as early as the mid-17th century, though movement in the trade dates back to the 15th century, and by the 1790's it is believed that 480,000 people were enslaved in the British colonies.¹ Records show that the total number of African slaves who were taken from their homeland and moved to other nations is estimated to be 13 million during the legal trade. The numbers who survived the initial transportation and were delivered to destination ports is estimated to be 11.3 million.² It was a brutal trade and constituted a forced, mass migration of Africans into other nations.

The transportation and trading of slaves was inhumane and many victims died under poor conditions. Thankfully there were concerned citizens who recognised the inhumanity of the sanctioned trade and of slavery itself. These people constituted the abolitionist movement that worked for decades to bring the legal trading and keeping of slaves to an end. By the end of the 19th century the legal slave trade had ended around the globe. Much later, on the 10th of December 1948 with the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations General Assembly, all member nations recognised Article 4: No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Slavery and Trafficking Now

It is important to note that in present culture 'trafficking' has often become an umbrella term that includes slavery and the forced movement of people. For the purposes of this paper, we separate the two with the following definitions.

Slavery

Slavery Convention (1926) Slavery is the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised.³

The definition of slavery is also strengthened by the following understanding of 'exploitation' that contributes to the definition of 'trafficking'.

Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons (2004) Article 3 (a) Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

Trafficking

Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons (2004) Article 3 (a) "Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.⁴

(b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used; (c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered "trafficking in persons" even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article;

1 <http://www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/campaignforabolition/abolitionbackground/abolitionintro.html>

2 <http://www.slaverysite.com/Body/facts%20and%20figures.htm>

3 <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/SlaveryConvention.aspx>

4 <http://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNTOC/Publications/TOC%20Convention/TOCebook-e.pdf> p42

(d) “Child” shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.

Note: There are countries such as New Zealand that legally define trafficking as the above but only where it involves cross border activity. It is clear through the above definition that such limitation is misguided as it can also take place internally within national borders.

Whilst the legal trading of slaves ended, the trade itself did not and as a criminal enterprise it continues and has grown at an alarming rate affecting every country in the world. The figure of 13 million people taken as slaves during the historical trade across a period of almost 2 centuries is horrific but pales in comparison to the most robust estimates we have of the current situation.

Slavery and trafficking are often quoted as the third most profitable business for organized crime after drugs and the arms trade.⁵ Many believe that it is set to become one of the top two most profitable criminal activities. Anecdotal discussions point to the reason being that whereas something like drugs can be sold only once, a human can be sold over and over again.

Note: Presented in the following are a number of statistics. These are the most robust statistics available but it needs to be recognised that due to the clandestine nature of the slavery and trafficking industry, figures can vary as it is impossible to accurately report the problem.

In its Global Report on Trafficking in Persons (2012)⁶ The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) draws on the research of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to estimate the current number of people caught in slavery to be nearly 21 million.⁷ The work of Kevin Bales places the figure at 27 million and this figure is widely used by many organisations such as in the annual US Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report.⁸ Estimations of current slavery vary anywhere from 12 million to 30 million. Even taking in the wide variances, clearly the issue is worse than it ever was during the legal slave trade. It is estimated that traffickers make an estimated \$32 billion (USD) in annual revenue from the trade in human beings.⁹

Note: Tearfund uses the figure arrived at by the ILO (21 million) as we understand it to be the conclusion of a robust methodology.

The ILO breaks slavery/forced labour into three broad categories: Forced labour exploitation (68% of victims), forced sexual exploitation (22% of victims), and stated-imposed forced labour (10% of victims). 26% of those caught in slavery are below the age of 18.¹⁰

44% of victims have been moved either internally or internationally (trafficking) while the majority of victims (56%) are subjected to forced labour in their place of origin or residence. The majority of cross-border trafficking is associated with forced sexual exploitation.¹¹ Of all detected trafficking, doing so for the purposes of sexual exploitation accounts for 58%, while forced labour accounts for 36%.¹² Estimations of actual figures (detected and undetected) put sexual exploitation at 79% of human trafficking and forced labour at 18%.¹³ Women and girls account for 75% of all detected trafficking victims.¹⁴

The UNODC estimates that there are 2.4 million victims of trafficking at any one time.¹⁵ In its 2009 report it stated that in 2006 there were 21,400 victims detected.¹⁶ The U.S Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report 2013 mentioned 40,000 victims being identified in the year prior to the report’s release.¹⁷ With this information we can conclude that only 1-2% of victims are ever rescued.

Whilst traffickers tend to be male it is recognised that in the trafficking of girls, women are mostly used and tend to be used for low level trafficking that has a higher risk of detection.¹⁸

5 <http://www.unric.org/en/human-trafficking>

6 http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/Trafficking_in_Persons_2012_web.pdf

7 http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/publications/WCMS_181953/lang--en/index.htm

8 <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2013/>

9 <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2012/July/human-trafficking--organized-crime-and-the-multibillion-dollar-sale-of-people.html>

10 http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_181961/lang--it/index.htm

11 Ibid

12 http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/Trafficking_in_Persons_2012_web.pdf

13 <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/global-report-on-trafficking-in-persons.html>

14 http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/Trafficking_in_Persons_2012_web.pdf

15 <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2011/October/unodc-launches-first-global-database-of-human-trafficking-cases.html>

16 http://www.unodc.org/documents/Global_Report_on_TIP.pdf p10

17 <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/210737.pdf>

18 Ibid

Vulnerability

At the heart of the issue of slavery/exploitation and trafficking that makes many vulnerable to becoming victims and being added to the supply, is a power imbalance. These imbalances are clearly present when looking at the profile of victims, where gender, age, and economic status are common factors. Often these are combined, with young women from impoverished communities being highly susceptible to trafficking and exploitation.

In 2009, of all detected victims of trafficking, men made up 14% while women made up 59%, girls made up 17%, and boys made up 10%.¹⁹ Thus females made up 76% of detected trafficking victims in 2009. This won't correlate with all those caught in slavery but it indicates the nature of the vulnerability factors. It's important to note that the UNODC has recognised an increase in the number of detected incidents' of children being trafficked.

Alongside gender, age, and economic status, the U.S. Department of State recognises marginalized ethnic minorities, undocumented immigrants, the indigenous, and people with disabilities as being susceptible to becoming victims of trafficking and slavery.²⁰

Note: Understanding these vulnerability factors and the methods recognised for coercing people into being trafficked for exploitation brings the issue squarely into the domain of organisations like Tearfund. The communities Tearfund deals with always have a number of the vulnerability factors present.

In the area of sexual exploitation women and girls make up 98% of the victims²¹, acutely demonstrating that sexual exploitation is the exercising of the power of males against females. This is further demonstrated with most traffickers being identified as male and where females are involved as perpetrators, they are used at low level, highly detectable and therefore risky levels of the industry.²²

Demand

Note: Due to Tearfund's focus on the issue of sexual exploitation, this section will focus on the demand factors that drive that particular issue, though the connection between the global availability of cheap products, and forced private labour needs to be noted and addressed by conscious consumers.

Sexual exploitation needs an environment that accepts and demands the commercialisation of sex in order for it to survive and thrive. Thus sexual exploitation, the trafficking that shifts predominantly women and girls into it, prostitution, and pornography are intimately linked.

In relation to children there are 116,000 internet searches every day for the term 'child pornography'²³ and over 100,000 websites offer illegal child pornography.²⁴

Discussions of whether or not the commercial sex industry (including pornography) is inherently exploitive aside, it is known that traffickers use pornography as a means to desensitize their victims to commercial sex and to train them on what paying clients will want.²⁵ Pimps and brothel owners are also increasingly subjecting their victims to the filming of sex acts²⁶ (sometimes unknowingly), with the material then being provided on the internet. With the proliferation of free internet pornography there is no guarantee that the consumer is not watching material that involves trafficking victims.

Sex tourism is a significant industry²⁷, playing a major role in the economy of countries like Thailand. The global demand for prostitution is high and many people travel into places like Thailand to engage in commercial sex, often doing so with people who have been trafficked – whether the user is aware of it or not. Sadly, many also travel with the express purpose of engaging in sexual activity with minors.

19 Ibid p10

20 <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/210737.pdf> p9

21 http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_181961/lang--it/index.htm

22 http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/Trafficking_in_Persons_2012_web.pdf

23 <http://internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com/internet-pornography-statistics.html>

24 Ibid

25 <http://stoptraffickingdemand.com/training-tool/>

26 <http://www.covenanteyes.com/2011/09/07/the-connections-between-pornography-and-sex-trafficking/>

27 <http://www.asafeworldforwomen.org/component/content/article/1157-asia/asglobal/735-understanding-the-economics-of-sex-tourism.html>

Sex workers have reported being shown pornography by ‘clients’ in order to demonstrate what they wish to do.²⁸ A culture of normalised commercial sex creates the environment needed for trafficking for sexual exploitation to occur. The buyers of prostitutes and users of pornography unwittingly play a strategic role in the chain of trafficking for sexual exploitation.²⁹

To put the issue in light of what it truly is it needs to be said that by all definitions, sex, paid or not, with a trafficking victim is an act of rape and watching pornographic material that contains a trafficking victim is a serious act of exploitation and is a tacit support of rape.

Without a demand for commercial sex (prostitution or pornography) there would be no profitability in trafficking for sexual exploitation and the industry would die.³⁰

Response

The response to slavery/exploitation and trafficking needs to be ‘end-to-end’, addressing the issue right from the potential victims, to the trafficking chain, and through to the demand that makes the industry profitable in all forms from sexual exploitation to forced labour. Tearfund seeks to address the issue through an ‘end-to-end’ approach that accounts for the following:

Prevention

At the point of potential victims, vulnerability factors need to be addressed and mitigated, enabling poverty reduction, increasing awareness-raising about the dangers of trafficking (including how to spot the tactics of traffickers), addressing the status of vulnerable ethnic minorities and migrants, and shifting cultural perceptions around gender that leave women and girls susceptible to exploitation.

Rescue

For those trapped in situations of slavery and exploitation there is little recourse for freedom, and intervention is required for their rescue. This involves a lot of careful investigation, relationship building with trustworthy authorities in affected areas and the eventual bust of trafficking and slavery rings.

Rehabilitation

Victims freed from exploitation require care, having been released from highly abusive situations so careful rehabilitation is a key to their on-going health and welfare. Reintegrating them into the communities from where they came can be a particularly difficult task as they face much stigma and discrimination because of what they have had to endure.

Prosecution

Following the investigations used to rescue those trapped in slavery, prosecution of the perpetrators is important as it has an impact on the supply chain. Here, the groundwork of the initial investigations, relationships with trusted authorities in the countries where the exploitation occurs, and the robustness of local legal frameworks are all factors that contribute to successful prosecutions.

Decreasing Demand

Addressing demand reduces the profitability of trafficking and slavery. In the area of sexual exploitation this means addressing the demand for commercial sex whether it is prostitution or pornography.

28 <http://stoptraffickingdemand.com/training-tool/>

29 <http://www.catwinternational.org/Content/Images/Article/235/attachment.pdf>

30 Ibid p10

A Note on Tearfund

Tearfund is an organisation that works through partnership in some of the poorest parts of the world. Our partners are incredibly innovative and dedicated, passionate about making a difference in the communities they journey with.

In the area of human trafficking Tearfund has been specifically involved in initiatives to combat it for 15 years, though it could be argued that all of Tearfund's work since its inception has contributed to combatting trafficking and slavery since poverty reduction mitigates against the risks that make communities, families and individuals susceptible to it.

Currently Tearfund works with three partners on this issue. Together Tearfund and those partners offer an end-to-end response to the issue of human trafficking and slavery, addressing the elements of response mentioned in this paper. Tearfund's partners are Share and Care Nepal, IJM, and Nvader. For more information on Tearfund's work, visit www.projectact.org and www.tearfund.org.nz or call 0800 800 777.