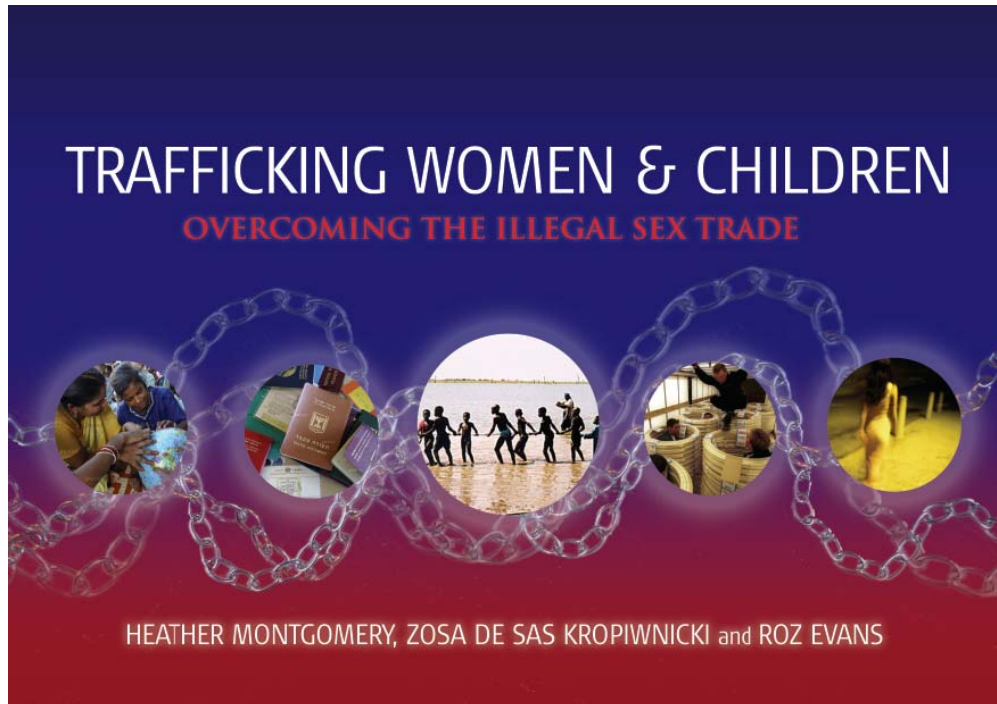


Executive summary

Trafficking Women & Children: Overcoming the Illegal Sex Trade



'It is inconceivable that as we enter the new millennium, we witness a new form of modern slavery. Human trafficking today risks reaching epidemic proportions if we do not take a stand to end this scourge. Never before has this appeal echoed so urgently in a world torn by insecurity. [...] The business community is becoming increasingly aware of this terrible plague and is seeking ways and means of supporting campaigns against human trafficking. This present roundtable is an illustration of the commitment of the business community to formulate and adopt ethical principles against human trafficking, especially of women and children. [...] I am particularly optimistic since I have seen that in other endeavours when the business community, governments, intergovernmental organizations, and civil society all rally around a common objective, there is a good chance of achieving positive results. Together we can and will make a difference.'



Suzanne Mubarak
Preface

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Trafficking in human beings is considered to be the third largest and the fastest growing criminal activity in the world, just behind arms and drugs trade. The International Labour Organization (ILO) **estimates** that more than 2 million people are trafficked across international borders every year, the majority being women and children. Forced labour, according to ILO raises profits of \$32 billion a year and \$28 billion per year are made from the sexual exploitation of women and children.

Human trafficking is **defined** in the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children supplementing the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime ('Palermo Protocol') as *'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. 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'*.

The **causes** of trafficking are numerous and complex. Concerning **traffickers**, human trafficking brings high and quick profits with few start-up costs. The risk of prosecution is often small in most countries. Global figures on prosecutions on trafficking in 2003

were recorded to be 7,992 with convictions 2,815 convictions. In 2004, prosecutions decreased with 6,885 and convictions have slightly increased but yet insufficiently with 3,025 cases. In addition, penalties for the crime of human trafficking are lower than for trafficking drugs. Concerning **victims**, interlinked causes of trafficking include poverty, gender bias, family breakdown, violence and armed conflict, displacement, various discriminatory policies in receiving countries, increased use of technology and demographic factors.

Human trafficking is a fundamental violation of human rights and a contemporary form of slavery. It has devastating **consequences** for victims who may suffer emotional, psychological, and physical abuse and mistreatment. They are particularly exposed to sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS and continually experience fear and threats to themselves, their family and relatives, or friends. Many victims of trafficking are bought and sold several times over thereby multiplying the forms of violence they suffer from one instance to another. Moreover, women's suffering continue even when they have returned home as they are often stigmatised, especially if they have been trafficked for sexual purposes. The detrimental impact of trafficking goes beyond individuals and also affects families, communities, and countries. Once trafficking takes root in a community and is seen as an acceptable way of making money, then it becomes self-perpetuating. Trafficking undermines good governance, democracy and the economy of a country. It can also have an impact on the reputation of the military and security forces, including peacekeepers, as research has shown that they have fuelled the demand for

forced prostitution in former war zones.

Women and girls are in particular risk to become victims of trafficking due to diverse factors, such as the high global prevalence of violence and discrimination against women; unequal access to education and consequent lack of good employment opportunities which may render women more susceptible to false promises of work abroad; the lack of legal channels of entry for unskilled workers and sex-selective migration policies. ILO estimates that 98% of victims of forced commercial sex are women and girls. IOM suggests that 500,000 women are trafficked into prostitution each year.

Children may sometimes be more vulnerable than adults to being trafficked. Their relative powerlessness compared to adults is one factor. Although families and communities may value and cherish their children, they can easily become commoditized in situations where families are desperate and have no other economic options. UNICEF estimates that 1.2 million children under the age of 18 may be trafficked each year as a source of cheap labour or for sexual exploitation. According to the US Department of State, 50 percent of persons trafficked across international borders are believed to be under 18.

During **armed conflicts** women and girls face particular risks of sexual violence and trafficking. Sexual attacks on women are viewed as attacks against the whole community and a way of demoralizing or intimidating the enemy. Certain tasks usually undertaken by women such as collecting firewood from forests or queuing for food may expose them to greater risks. Legislation that prevents the prosecution of crimes committed

during war or amnesty laws contribute to the impunity with which sexual crimes occur during war. Children are also trafficked into war zones to fight as combatants or to work as messengers, spies, porters, cooks, and providers of sexual services. They may be forced to offer sex for food or shelter, to obtain documents for themselves or their families, or to be given safe passage out of the war zone.

Trafficking for domestic servitude exposes women and girls to the risk of sexual harassment, abuse, exploitation, and subsequent trafficking. A significant number of women and girls are trafficked as domestic labourers, kept in extremely bad conditions, and vulnerable to sexual abuse. They may suffer multiple forms of exploitation, such as economic exploitation, lack of social or legal protection, harsh working conditions, denial of the right of freedom of association, vulnerability to physical and mental abuse, sub-standard accommodation, and the risk of sexual exploitation. The average age of trafficked girls for household services is 12-14 years according to ILO/IPEC.

HIV/AIDS represents both a cause and consequence of trafficking for sexual exploitation. Women and children may be more vulnerable to being trafficked if their family members have contracted or died from the virus. Women and children who have been trafficked for sexual exploitation are at greater risk of exposure to HIV/AIDS. Once trafficked, women and girls who have been infected with HIV/AIDS often do not have access to health care services and are deprived of any support as they are often shunned by their communities.

Concerning the **eradication of trafficking**, much has been achieved

so far but there is much more that still need to be done. As a global problem human trafficking demands global solutions and requires all sectors of society to work in conjunction with each other to support, and enhance, each others' initiatives.

Numerous **legal instruments and protocols** aiming to end slavery and human trafficking, protecting victims and promoting international cooperation have been adopted. Governments, NGOs, individuals, and the private sector are increasingly aware of the impact of trafficking and the many problems it brings. Many initiatives on multiple levels are now in place to combat trafficking. They include national legislations, bilateral and multilateral initiatives, changes in national priorities, promoting good governance, and increased prosecution of perpetrators.

Despite positive developments many **obstacles** remain today. These include the absence of monitoring and evaluation, inconsistent or inadequate legislation, weak state structures, unfavourable judicial mechanisms, lack of coordination between anti-trafficking measures and authorities, inadequate training for the security sector, narrow agendas of decision-makers, one-dimensional interventions, short-term goals and shortage of research and documentation.

The **private sector** is a crucial actor in the elimination of human trafficking. It often possesses the resources, capacity, and technical expertise required to make an enormous contribution to counter-trafficking initiatives. The private sector may get involved in the

campaign against human trafficking by creating ethical codes of conduct, training employees and collaborators, raising awareness amongst policy-makers, the public and victims, providing technical assistance, training or employing former trafficking victims or by playing a role of watchdog. The private sector's involvement can be enhanced by following certain minimum standards, identifying and reporting criminal acts, strengthening monitoring, transparency, and accountability on issues of human trafficking, providing incentives to companies that employ former trafficked persons, encouraging corporate social responsibility, and including the business community in drafting legislation and formulating policies.

Trafficking is a complex phenomenon and any solutions will require multiple methods of intervention. Restoring the dignity of trafficked victims and ensuring they receive justice should be central to any anti-trafficking programmes. Trafficking is a global problem which demands global solutions and requires all sectors of the community to work in conjunction with each other to support, and enhance, each other's initiatives. The importance of a **leadership role and firm stand from the private sector** has been acknowledged, and its involvement in partnership with others is imperative in addressing the problem of trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation. It is only when a strong bond between all sectors of society has been established that human trafficking can finally be eliminated.