



Resolutions To Action

Volume 12, Number 3

October 2003

Trafficking of Women and Children

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In May 2001 the members of the International Union of Superiors General declared their commitment to address the "trafficking of women which has become a lucrative multi-national business." At their joint national assembly in August 2001, LCWR and CMSM passed a resolution calling members to oppose the trafficking of women and children and educate others regarding the magnitude, causes and consequence of this abuse.

Trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of ... force ... or of the giving or receiving of payments ... to another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include ... prostitution ... other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. -- Article 3, UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime

EXPERIENCE

Excerpts from testimony provided by US House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations Hearing on the Implementation of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act -- November 28, 2001

Ms. Vi (taken from Vietnam to American Samoa – 1999) paid \$6000 to be taken to the United States for employment at \$5,000 a year. She and others were in fact taken to a company, Daewoosa, in America Samoa where their passports were confiscated.

" At Daewoosa I had to work from 7 AM often to 2 AM and sometimes to 7 AM the following day and also on Saturdays and Sundays, without pay.

We had no money to buy soap, amenities, or food. We had to pay about \$200 per month for meals, which Daewoosa should have provided according to the contract. Meals at Daewoosa consisted of a few cabbage leaves and potatoes cooked with a lot of water. Working and living conditions at Daewoosa were very suffocating.

There was no ventilation. Workers sat next to each other. It was very hot. We were not allowed to step out for fresh air. The supervisor even kept count of how many times we went to the toilet. We lived 36 people per room. Another worker and I shared one tiny bed. The president, Mr Lee, called pretty ones into his office and forced them to have sex with him. Once, several of his customers arrived in

American Samoa. Mr. Lee pressed several female workers to sleep with them. They resisted. At the workplace, he regularly groped and kissed female workers in front of every one. There were three pregnant women among us. Mr. Lee demanded that they undergo abortions.

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SOCIAL ANALYSIS

(From *Protection Project and UNICEF reports*)

The United Nations estimates that 700,000 to 4 million women and children are trafficked around the world for purposes of forced prostitution, labor and other forms of exploitation every year. Trafficking is estimated to be a \$7 billion dollar annual business.

Victims of trafficking are subject to gross human rights violations including, rape, torture, forced abortions, starvation, and threats of torturing or murdering family members.

Nearly every country is involved in the web of trafficking activities, either as a country of origin or destination. (The CIA estimates that about 750,000 women have been trafficked in the United States.)

Child trafficking violates human rights in many ways. Every year, hundreds of thousands of children are, like commodities, smuggled across borders and sold into prostitution, begging and soliciting, labor on plantations, in mines, in markets, in factories and in domestic work. They are physically abused, their working conditions are dangerous, they don't go to school, they get little rest, they don't have health care, and they don't have the care and protection of their families

Increasingly, we know where to look for the most vulnerable. Most trafficked women and children are from minorities and disadvantaged groups. This helps explain the disregard for their maltreatment, and often the discrimination and lack of opportunity that has made them vulnerable to trafficking in the first place.

REFLECTION

Trafficking in human persons violates central teachings of the Catholic Church. It shows contempt for the inherent dignity of the human person and exploits those who live in poverty. *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* condemns certain grave offenses against human life in a passage reiterated "with the same forcefulness" by John Paul II in *The Gospel of Life*:

Whatever is opposed to life itself... whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where people are treated as mere instruments of gain rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others like them are infamies indeed. They poison human society, and they do more harm to those who practice them than to those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are a supreme dishonor to the Creator (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 27).

ACTION

1. Collect stories from members ministering to these populations.

2. Study Resources

(search entry = trafficking)

<http://www.catwinternational.org>

www.unicef.org

www.protectionproject.org

www.usccb.org

www.hrw.org (*Human Rights Watch*)

Testimony Submitted to
Hearings on Trafficking,
Subcommittee on International
Operations and Human Rights,
September 14, 1999,
Dr. Janice G. Raymond
*Coalition Against Trafficking in
Women* website
www.uri.edu

*Contemporary Forms of Slavery—
Report of the Working Group on
Contemporary Forms of Slavery,
24th Session, 1999*
www.uri.edu

3. Examine portfolios for companies involved in employment practices that use exploited labor (cf. ICCR)

4. Contribute to organizations involved in education and advocacy for women and children (cf. websites sited above and their links)

5. Subscribe to *Stop Trafficking!:* *Anti-Human Trafficking Newsletter*. This newsletter is offered as a forum for exchange of information among women's religious congregations and collaborating organizations about the issue of human trafficking. It serves as a forum to share ideas on how we can bring healing and empowerment to victims of trafficking and take actions to help eliminate trafficking. To place your name on the newsletter mailing list, contact Jean Schafer, SDS at jeansds2000@yahoo.com.