



**STOP**

**SEX TRAFFICKING  
OF CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE**



# SEX TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN IN THE USA

## What is child trafficking?

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation.

UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime

A child is anyone under the age of 18 years.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

## What's the problem?

### GLOBAL SEX TRAFFICKING

Human trafficking is a complex phenomenon fueled by the tremendous growth in the global sex market. Exploitation is driven by poverty, uneven development, official corruption, gender discrimination, harmful traditional and cultural practices, civil unrest, natural disasters and lack of political will to end it.

The number of child victims trafficked worldwide for sexual exploitation or cheap labour on an annual basis is 1.2 million.<sup>1</sup> Human trafficking, the third largest international crime, following illegal drugs and arms trafficking, is believed to be worth billions of dollars each year. Driving the trade is the demand for commercial sexual exploitation. Seventy-nine percent of all global trafficking is for sexual exploitation.<sup>2</sup>



### CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING IN USA

The US Government estimates 14,500 to 17,500 people are trafficked to the US each year. About 50% of people trafficked across US borders each year are under 18 years old.<sup>3</sup> As of late 2007, only 148 children have been identified and assisted as trafficking victims in the US.

## Who gets trafficked?

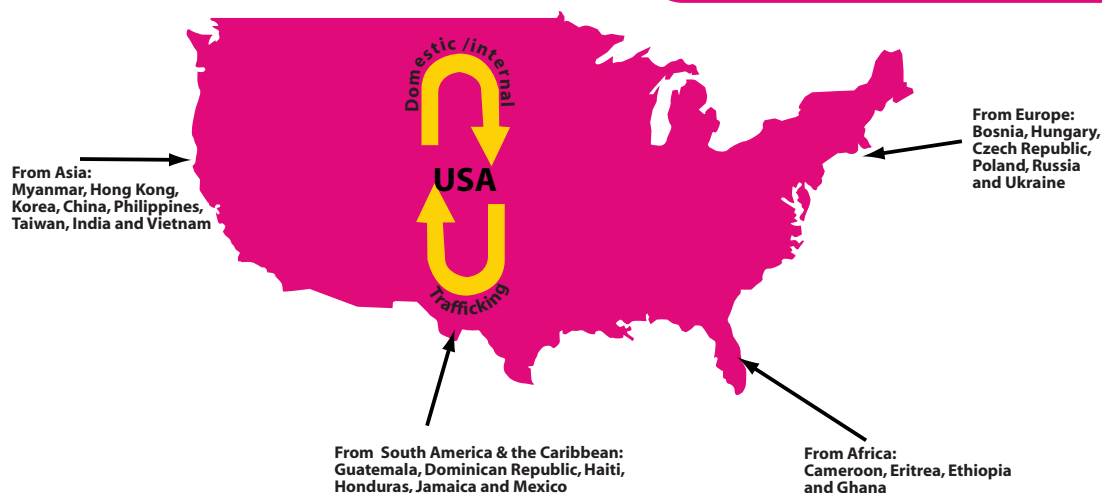
Each year, thousands of children, both boys and girls, are trafficked to the US from all over the world for commercial sexual exploitation. Children trafficked to the US have been reported as originating from Myanmar, Hong Kong, India, Korea, China, Philippines, Taiwan, Vietnam, Cameroon, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Canada, Mexico, Bosnia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Russia and Ukraine. Children are mainly trafficked to the US for sexual exploitation. However, some are also trafficked for other purposes, such as domestic servitude, and to work in sweatshops. As children are naturally vulnerable, all children trafficked are susceptible to being sexually exploited and abused.

Children are especially vulnerable to being trafficking because they are often less educated, easy to overpower and easy to convince that they must do what an adult tells them to do. They are also in a position where they believe they must help support the family and may even be sold or sent abroad by family members to do so. Street children, children in refugee camps, children whose family and community life has been disrupted and do not have someone to look out for them are all especially vulnerable to human trafficking.

Up to 300,000 American children are also at risk for sexual exploitation and trafficking within the country. There are close links between child trafficking and the prostitution of American children domestically. American children who are commercially sexually exploited are most often children who were abused and neglected by their families.

For child trafficking, **USA** is primarily considered as a:

- ✓ origin country
- ✓ transit country
- ✓ destination country
- ✓ internal/domestic country



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## Who creates demand?

Traffickers prey on children and young people to meet the sexual demands of paedophiles and people who pay for sex. Any person who patronises the commercial sex market may end up sexually exploiting a child. There is actually no common profile of perpetrators who sexually exploit children – they may be young, old, married, single; they come from all kinds of socio-economic backgrounds and work in all kinds of professions. According to reports by ECPAT USA, approximately 25% of the men who sexually exploit children abroad are from the US and Canada.

## Who are the traffickers?

Traffickers can be a stranger or someone the child knows, such as a relative or a friend. Traffickers are often part of an organised criminal network that ‘recruits’ children and supplies them with fake identification. They may also pose as boyfriends or girlfriends in order to convince children to leave for a new life.

### CASE STUDIES

#### Child trafficking and the prostitution of children

A recent FBI operation arrested 131 people for child prostitution at major sporting events in several cities in California. Reports claim that the people involved travelled to California to watch sports and to have sex with children. The youngest child victim rescued was 11 years old. The FBI believe that the children involved in the case were victims of trafficking brought through Oakland, a major trafficking hub, to other destinations where the demand for sex with children was known to be high.<sup>4</sup>

In June 2008, hundreds of people were arrested and 21 children were rescued in a five-day FBI operation focused on finding pimps who sexually exploited children. The arrests took place in 16 cities across the US: Atlanta, Boston, Dallas, Detroit, Houston, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Miami, Montgomery County (MD), Oakland (CA), Phoenix, Reno, Sacramento, Tampa, Toledo and Washington.<sup>5</sup>

## How can we stop the trafficking of children?

### LAW AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

- The United States should ratify the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* as one of the main instruments for creating a protective environment for all children. The United States is one of only two countries that have not ratified the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, the other country being Somalia. In addition, it must withdraw its reservations to the *Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography*.
- State laws should be harmonised with federal laws on trafficking to ensure protection of all children up to the age of 18, regardless of the age of consent.
- The prosecution of child sex offenders must reflect the gravity of the crime. Instead, cases involving sex exploiters and pimps are frequently dismissed and sexually exploited children are arrested in the US.

- Law enforcement is inconsistent, especially for American child victims of domestic trafficking, who tend to be seen as delinquents and criminalised.
- All US States must enact anti-trafficking laws – currently only 33 states have done so.

International Convention/Law	Date of Ratification by the US
<i>Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)</i>	Not ratified
<i>Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography</i>	2002 with reservations
<i>The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress &amp; Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women &amp; Children</i>	2005
<i>ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour</i>	1999

## PROTECTION AND PREVENTION OF TRAFFICKING VICTIMS

- Support services, especially residential services, for the care and protection of all child victims of commercial sexual exploitation must be expanded. Moreover, support services for American victims of trafficking must be made available.
- Training is urgently needed for law enforcement officers, Juvenile Court staff, and social service providers to help build skills and knowledge for assisting sexually exploited children adequately, thus avoiding their re-victimization. Assistance to families of affected children is also required for them to participate actively in their children's recovery.
- Awareness raising measures targeted at vulnerable children are needed.

## TO REPORT A SUSPECTED INCIDENT OF CHILD TRAFFICKING, CONTACT:

**The national 24/7 Toll Free Human Trafficking Hotline:** 1-888-373-7888

**National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (for US citizens):** 1-800-THE-LOST or [www.cybertipline.org](http://www.cybertipline.org)

**ECPAT USA:** 1-718-935-9192

## MORE INFORMATION

- ECPAT USA: [www.ecpatusa.org](http://www.ecpatusa.org)
- ECPAT International: [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)
- The Body Shop and ECPAT Stop Trafficking of Children and Young People Campaign : [www.thebodyshop.com/stop](http://www.thebodyshop.com/stop)
- US Department of Health and Human Services: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking/>

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> UNICEF. *UNICEF calls for increased efforts to prevent trafficking of children*. 16 June 2007. [http://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_40002.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_40002.html)
- <sup>2</sup> UNODC. *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*. 2009. <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/global-report-on-trafficking-in-persons.html>
- <sup>3</sup> US Department of Justice. *Human Trafficking*. 2004. Viewed at: [www.co.linn.or.us/victims/Resources/HumanTrafficking.pdf](http://www.co.linn.or.us/victims/Resources/HumanTrafficking.pdf)
- <sup>4</sup> Woodall, Angela. "131 Arrested in Child Prostitution Ring." Accessed on July 17, 2007 at: [http://www.mercurynews.com/portlet/article/html/fragments/print\\_article.jsp?articleId=6394466&siteId=568](http://www.mercurynews.com/portlet/article/html/fragments/print_article.jsp?articleId=6394466&siteId=568)
- <sup>5</sup> "345 Arrested In Child Prostitution Raids". *CBS/AP Press*. 25 June 2008. Accessed on 1 February 2009 from: [www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/06/25/national/main4209831.shtml?source=RSSattr=HOME\\_4209831](http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/06/25/national/main4209831.shtml?source=RSSattr=HOME_4209831)

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## NOTES



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