



# SEXUAL TRAFFICKING

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## Sexual Trafficking – Fact Sheet

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### ***Definition:***

Sexual trafficking is a form of slavery. It happens when human beings are bought and sold for the purpose of sexual exploitation. It includes people (mostly women and girls) being recruited, transported, transferred, harboured, or received. These actions are accomplished by means of force, the threat of force, or other forms of coercion. Trafficking can happen across international borders or within them. It is always involuntary because even when consent is achieved, it is through some form of fraud, deception, abduction/kidnapping, or abuse of power/vulnerability.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Who is being trafficked:***

- 90% of people sexually trafficked are women and girls.
- People are trafficked within their own countries but also internationally.
- Poor women (from the Southern and Eastern hemispheres) are shipped to rich countries to satisfy the sexual desires of (mostly) men. In this industry there are huge power differentials, and many of these are based on race/class/economic lines.
- Members of society who are most at risk of sexual trafficking are women, the poor, youth, widows/abandoned wives, orphans/abandoned children, and those with histories of (sexual) abuse.

### ***Why it happens:***

- “Pull factor”: Demand for sex. There is a global marketplace made up of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of brothels, bars, strip clubs, massage parlours, escort services, and street corners where (mostly) men purchase people for sexual acts. Women and children are made subject to sexual objectification through pornography and popular media.
- “Push factors”: Poverty, high unemployment rates, domestic violence/childhood abuse, discrimination against women, the desire for a better life, and the need to help one’s family are factors that make women and girls more vulnerable to entry into the global sex trade.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the *United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons*, 2000. Although there are several forms of human trafficking, The Salvation Army uses the term human sexual (or sex) trafficking to focus on trafficking of people for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

### ***Link with gender and poverty:***

- International human sexual trafficking is inextricably linked to the feminization of poverty.
- Estimates are that 70% of the world's poor are women.<sup>2</sup> Most of these women live in developing countries and tolerate terrible conditions because, economically or culturally, there do not seem to be any other options available to them.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Link with pornography and other media:***

- Pornography is an element that adds to sexual trafficking. Many traffickers are found with filming equipment used to create and sell pornography.
- Increasingly, pornographers are seeking younger and younger girls and boys for their films and pictures; to find victims they travel to locations where children are unprotected and vulnerable to capture.
- Increasingly the mainstream media objectifies women and girls in television programs, advertisements, and on the internet. Insidiously, this serves to legitimate pornography and a "market" for sex.

### ***Distinction – Sexual Trafficking vs. Prostitution:***

- Sometimes the terms prostitution and sexual trafficking are used interchangeably, but they are different.
- In addition to exploitation, trafficking requires an element of force, coercion, or deception. This is not always the case for prostitution, although the majority of women and girls in the sex trade work under significant duress.
- People are trafficked sexually for many different aspects of commercial sexual exploitation, not just prostitution.
- That said, the sex trade and sexual trafficking are inextricably linked. For example, in 1994 prostitution was legalized in Victoria, Australia. This led to a massive increase in the sex industry and also in the levels of sex trafficking into the country.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> UN Women, "Women, Poverty and Economics." Available online: [http://www.unifem.org/gender\\_issues/women\\_poverty\\_economics](http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/women_poverty_economics).

<sup>3</sup> This is also, obviously, related to larger trends of globalization, with capital moving towards regions where labour is cheap, part-time/unemployment is rising, and international organizations are becoming larger players than many nation states.

<sup>4</sup> M. Sullivan and S. Jeffreys, *Legalising Prostitution is Not the Answer: The Example of Victoria, Australia* (2001), p. 10. Available online: <http://action.web.ca/home/catw/attach/AUSTRALIAlegislation20001.pdf>.

## ***The Salvation Army and Trafficking***

- The Salvation Army is deeply committed to fighting human trafficking however it may be manifested. We seek to exercise care in restoring the freedom and dignity of those affected.
- The Salvation Army recognizes the inherent human dignity in each person, and has a long history of efforts to protect that human dignity, with a special emphasis on the most vulnerable members of our societies.
- The Salvation Army is committed to ending sexual trafficking and ensuring that the human rights of trafficked persons are respected.
- The Salvation Army's International Positional Statement on Human Trafficking can be accessed at <http://salvationist.ca/wp-content/uploads/2009/02/isjc-positional-statement.pdf>.