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BRIEFING MEMO: SEX TRAFFICKING

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Executive Summary

Sex trafficking affects an estimated 1.4 million people worldwide, and is prevalent in almost every country.¹ It is a gross violation of human dignity and directly violates an individual's right to personal autonomy.² This international crime preys upon vulnerable populations, abusing weaknesses and exploiting individuals for economic profit. Sex trafficking is the second largest and the fastest growing transnational crime, with industry profits of \$31.6 billion a year.³ This issue also greatly impacts the safety of the public and especially youth, as the average age of entry into sexual exploitation,

¹ Besler, Patrick. "Forced labor and human trafficking: estimating the profits." International Labor Organization. 2005. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@declaration/documents/publication/wcms_081971.pdf.

² United Nations. "United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime." United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2000.

³ Global Financial Integrity. "Transnational crime in the developing world." 2011. http://www.gfintegrity.org/storage/gfip/documents/reports/transcrime/gfi_transnational_crime_web.pdf.

or child sex trafficking, is 12 to 14 years of age.⁴ Within the United States, stakeholders at all levels must continue to collaborate and work diligently together to further develop effective solutions, including holistic prevention, intervention, and restoration measures. In comparison to other nations, the Nordic Model has and continues to show promising results for Sweden as well as many other countries. Within the U.S., implementation of the Nordic Model would decriminalize sex trafficking victims, prosecute clients and traffickers strictly, and reduce the entry and re-entry into sex trafficking.

Common Interest

Sex trafficking is a heinous crime, as victims endure “severe physical injuries, including stabbings, beatings, broken bones, spinal injuries, concussions, and fractured skulls, and psychological impacts include clinical depression, self-cutting, suicide, and post-traumatic stress disorder.”⁵ Sex trafficking poses a severe threat to the public and especially children. Using mentally and physically coercive techniques, traffickers, also known as pimps, manipulate and control victims. Within the general public anyone is a target, however, youth are easy to mold and influence, especially abused, neglected, and or poor youth. Interest, gifts, and or adoration from a trafficker posing as a boyfriend, savior, or helper lures such individuals away from safety and initiates the process of sex trafficking.⁶ Additionally, women and girls, unlike drugs or weapons that only have one to two buyers, are frequent subjects in multiple transactions throughout the day and throughout their time in trafficking. Consequently, they are reusable assets and fetch larger profits for traffickers.⁷ Thus, increased safety of the public, and specifically children, must be at the forefront of the U.S.’s agenda in combatting sex trafficking, both nationally and internationally.

⁴ Polaris Project. Child trafficking and the child welfare system. 2014. www.polarisproject.org/storage/child-trafficking-child-welfare.pdf.

⁵ Mishra, V. “Combating human trafficking: gaps in policy and law.” Sage Publications, 2015.

⁶ U.S. Department of Education. “Human trafficking of children in the United States.” U.S. Department of Education. 2013. <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oese/osh/factsheet.html>.

⁷ Claude, K. “Targeting the Sex Buyer: the Swedish example, stopping prostitution and trafficking where it all begins.” *Swedish Institute*. 2010. http://exoduscry.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/swedish_model.pdf.

Sex trafficking impacts almost every nation in the world. Countries serve as a source and destination location for trafficking women, children, and occasionally men, from one country to another. Sex trafficking is the second fastest growing transnational crime and third most profitable.⁸ Victims are displaced, and many times unable to return home due to immigration issues, as documents are taken away and used to control victims.⁹ Transnational Organized Crime (TOC), in relation to sex trafficking, often “penetrates governments...exacerbating corruption and undermining rule of law, judicial systems, free press, democratic institution-building, and transparency. TOC networks insinuate themselves into the political process in a variety of ways: through direct bribery, setting up shadow economies, infiltrating financial and security sectors through coercion or corruption, and positioning themselves as alternate providers of governance, security, services, and livelihoods.”¹⁰ Thus, the decrease of TOC is crucial in the U.S.’s objective to fight sex trafficking.

Trends

The International Labor Organization estimates that between cross-border trafficking and trafficking within countries, 1.4 million people are victims of sex trafficking.¹¹ Major source countries, or origin of trafficked persons, include: Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Nigeria, Morocco, Myanmar, and Vietnam.¹² Major destination countries, where victims are brought to perform sexual services, include: United States, Canada, the European Union, Japan, Australia, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia.¹³ Sex trafficking is a transnational crime, having both source and destination countries.¹⁴ As

⁸ United Nations. “Trafficking in Persons: global patterns.” United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime. 2006. http://www.unodc.org/pdf/traffickinginpersons_report_2006ver2.pdf.

⁹ Polaris Project. The victims and traffickers. 2011. <https://polarisproject.org/victims-traffickers>.

¹⁰ National Security Council. “Transnational organized crime: a growing threat to national and international security.” The White House. 2015. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/nsc/transnational-crime/threat>.

¹¹ *Op. Cit.*, fn. 1

¹² *Op. Cit.*, fn. 8

¹³ *Op. Cit.*, fn. 8

¹⁴ United Nations. “Trafficking in Persons: global patterns.” United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime. 2006. http://www.unodc.org/pdf/traffickinginpersons_report_2006ver2.pdf.

illustrated in Figure 1, a large percentage of victims of source countries come from impoverished nations.¹⁵ Poverty significantly contributes to the vulnerability of individuals and increases the likelihood of being trafficked.¹⁶ Destination countries are primarily first-world nations, where hypersexuality is more prevalent.¹⁷ Thus showing a demand and supply effect. The sex trafficking industry profits \$31.6 billion a year and is the second most prolific organized crime industry worldwide.¹⁸

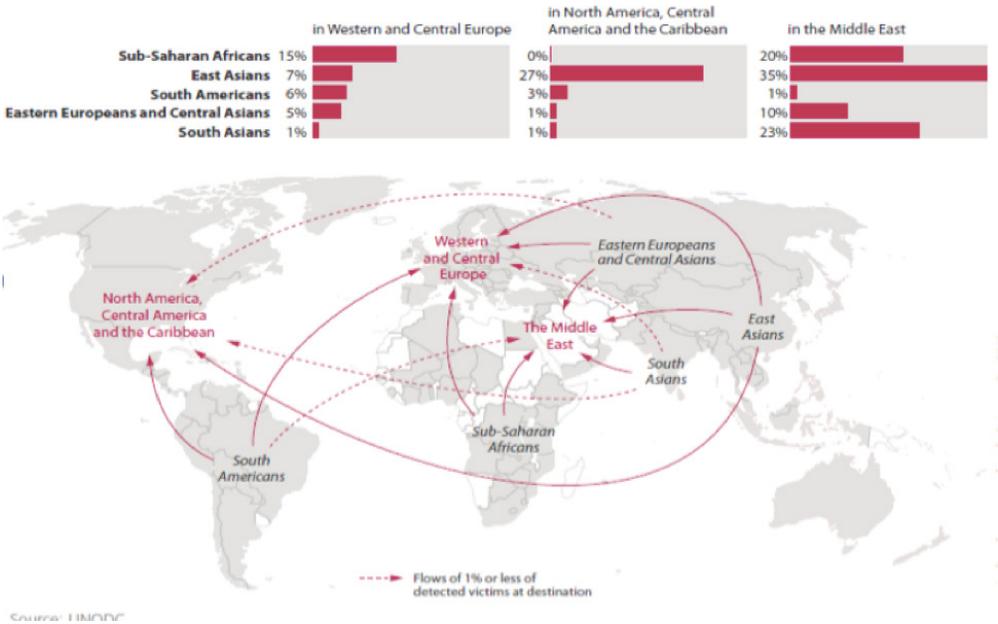


Figure 1: Transnational Flow of Destination and Source Countries

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Mickelwait, Laila. *City in Focus: Los Angeles*. 2014. <http://exoduscry.com/prayer/city-in-focus/los-angeles/>. National Security Council. "Transnational organized crime: a growing threat to national and international security."

¹⁸ Global Financial Integrity. "Transnational crime in the developing world." 2011. http://www.gfintegrity.org/storage/gfip/documents/reports/transcrime/gfi_transnational_crime_web.pdf.

In 2014, 1,350 cases of sex trafficking involved minors. The Polaris Project estimates the average age of entry into child exploitation, or child sex trafficking, is 12 to 14 years of age.¹⁹ In particular, homeless youth and runaways are especially at-risk. According to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC), 56% of prostituted women, including those that were trafficked, were initially runaway youth.²⁰ Traffickers prey upon youth using social media, after-school programs, shopping malls, bus depots, and friends or acquaintances.²¹

Conditions

The prevalence of sex trafficking is widely contributed to the demand for sexual services; without a demand, supplies are not necessary. Demand stems widely from an overly sexualized culture, where objectification of women and girls is normalized. Society is so excessively stimulated with sex that even Playboy made a decision to remove all pornographic images and videos from its production. Their reasoning, “you’re now one click away from every sex act imaginable for free. And it’s just passe at this juncture.”²² In particular, porn creates an unrealistic perception of sex. A recent study shows that men who are frequent users of porn are also frequent users of prostitutes.²³ Indeed, 80 percent of clients show pornographic images or videos to prostitutes, asking for the same service(s).²⁴ Sex trafficking is the most common form of human trafficking, accounting for 79 percent, and the victims are predominately women and girls.²⁵ Objectification of the female body, and the exponentially growing availability to act-out such objectification has increased the hypersexuality of many cultures and societies, and has undoubtedly spawned a demand for sex; traffickers have taken the fiscal opportunity to meet such demands. On the supply side, victims are often already victimized through abusive family environments or have endured prior sexual

¹⁹ *Op. Cit.*, fn. 4

²⁰ National Human Trafficking Resource Center. “The Victims.” Trafficking Resource Center. 2015. <http://www.traffickingresourcecenter.org/what-human-trafficking/human-trafficking/victims?gclid=CKbP5IH7cgCFYM6gQodEKkMZg>.

²¹ *Op. Cit.*, fn. 6

²² Somaiya, R. *Nudes are old news at Playboy*. October 12, 2015.

²³ Farley, M, and V. Vol 11 (4): 29-64. Kelly. “Prostitution: A critical review of the medical and social science literature.” *Women and Criminal Justice* 11, no. 4 (2000): 29-64.

²⁴ *Op. Cit.*, fn. 6

²⁵ *Op. Cit.*, fn. 14

abuse.²⁶ This makes such individuals significantly more vulnerable to the deceptive and coercive methods used by traffickers to control victims. As illustrated in Figure 2, traffickers use techniques within the power and control spectrum to successfully manipulate and therefore exploit individuals. Understanding, in-depth, the psychological trauma of such tactics influences stakeholders, specifically service providers, on how to meet the needs of victims. Such knowledge also serves in enlightening stakeholders to the link between sex trafficking and prostitution, as the same tactics affect victims of sex trafficking as well as prostituted individuals.²⁷



Figure 2: Power and Control Spectrum

²⁶ *Op. Cit.*, fn. 20

²⁷ Farley, M. "Prostitution and trafficking in nine countries: An update on violence and posttraumatic stress disorder." *Prostitution Research*. 2003. <http://www.prostitutionresearch.com/pdf/Prostitutionin9Countries.pdf>.

Technology, especially advancements in transportation, provides a strong bridge between supply and demand, making it easier for traffickers to meet the demands of clients. According to Exodus Cry, “with a simple click of a button or tap on a screen, today’s pornography can be accessed anytime, anywhere, and for any price, even for free.”²⁸ Traffickers can now rely on advertising the available services of victims online through specialized websites, as well as, prominent sites such as BackPage and Craigslist.²⁹ In many cases Social Media is used to reach out to youth to exploit weaknesses, such as family issues and insecurities that are often expressed on Social Media sites.³⁰ Technology has also made it possible for traffickers to identify smuggling routes, leverage communication networks, share bank accounts, and make wire transfers, all in an effort to increase business.³¹ Traffickers can now use modern transportation, airplanes, vehicles, and trains, to easily transfer victims from source nations to destination nations.³² Displacement of an individual aids in a traffickers ability to control victims. When a victim is transported to a foreign nation with foreign language, customs, and culture, it creates a forced dependence on the trafficker.³³ Additionally, traffickers easily move victims from one location to another to avoid interference with law enforcement.³⁴

Alternatives

Of the most effective approaches to dealing with the issue of sex trafficking, the Nordic, or Swedish, Model has shown substantial results in reducing prostitution of individuals, and therefore reducing trafficking. The Nordic Model, in comparison to legalizing the industry of prostitution and decriminalization of clients, shows results in decreasing the issue of sex trafficking. Countries with the legalization approach, such as the Netherlands, have

²⁸ *Op. Cit.*, fn. 17

²⁹ U.S Department of State. “Trafficking in persons report.” *U.S Department of State*. 2015. <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/>.

³⁰ *Op. Cit.*, fn. 6

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Op. Cit.*, fn. 20

higher rates of sex trafficking.³⁵ In Sweden, the Nordic Model deters traffickers, as clientele is almost non-existent. Similarly, Las Vegas, Nevada, known for its legalization of the prostitution industry, recovered 2,229 victims of sex trafficking over the last decade.³⁶ Legalizing the industry of prostitution does not prevent trafficking; it increases it, and therefore is not a viable solution.

The progressive model decriminalizes prostituted individuals, as a majority of prostituted individuals are also sex trafficking victims, enduring the same trauma, psychological manipulation, and physical abuse. In addition the model criminalizes johns and pimps, and promotes the value of women to subdue the objectification of females. Victimized individuals even receive resources and assistance from governmental and non-governmental agencies towards reducing recidivism back into the industry. Since its enactment in 1999, Sweden's number of prostitutes decreased significantly from about 3000 to an estimated 200 individuals.³⁷ Other countries such as Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Canada are experiencing similar results since the enactment of laws similar to the Swedish Model.³⁸ In Sweden, sex-buyers risk their careers and families, as prosecuted individuals incur fines, and or up to a year in prison. The Nordic Model altered behavior of male sex buyers, by decreasing purchase of sexual services from 13.6 percent to 7.9 percent.³⁹

Such a model, if implemented within the United States, would deter buyers from engaging in sexual acts and therefore decrease the demand for sexual exploitation and sex trafficking. For undeterred individuals, prosecution with fines and or a prison sentence will increasingly prevent them from obtaining sexual services and defeat any future endeavors. Low demand will also deter traffickers from exploiting vulnerable individuals, and thus increase public and child safety. Promoting a culture in which women are not objectified will result in less porn use and therefore a decrease in hypersexuality. A decrease of hypersexuality, and therefore demand, from a large source of consumed

³⁵ ReThink Life. *Prostitution in Canada*. June 4, 2014. <http://www.rethinklife.org/blog/category/prostitution>. Shryock, Kathleen. "City in Focus: Las Vegas, Nevada." *Exodus Cry*. 2014. <https://exoduscry.com/prayer/city-in-focus/las-vegas-nevada/>.

³⁶ Shryock, Kathleen. "City in Focus: Las Vegas, Nevada." *Exodus Cry*. 2014. <https://exoduscry.com/prayer/city-in-focus/las-vegas-nevada/>.

³⁷ *Op. Cit.*, fn. 7

³⁸ *Op. Cit.*, fn. 7

³⁹ *Op. Cit.*, fn. 7

sexual services, will ultimately reduce transnational crime, in relationship to sex trafficking.

In addition to the cultural and legal aspects of the Nordic Model, its priority to supply resources for victimized individuals includes an increase in the current funds provided to governmental and non-governmental organizations. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act, which already allocates funds to specific entities involved in anti-human trafficking work, in collaboration with the Nordic Model, would disperse resources to organizations implementing prevention, intervention, and restoration measures.⁴⁰ Such resources would provide crucial services to victims, helping to reduce re-entry into trafficking. Additionally, it would empower individuals to re-integrate back into society successfully and provide them the means to become contributing members of society, as well as strong advocates in the crucial fight to eradicate sex trafficking.

⁴⁰ Polaris Project. *Policy Advocacy: Current Federal Laws*. 2014. <http://www.polarisproject.org/what-we-do/policy-advocacy/national-policy/priority-legislation>.