



## Slavery In Our Midst- Responding to Human Trafficking Catholic Relief Services

### Overview:

As much as we would like to believe that slavery and human trafficking are only horrific aspects of our collective past, these tremendous abuses of human rights and human dignity have in some form continued to exist throughout the world into modern times and in fact are experiencing a dramatic resurgence in recent years. Trafficking in persons, put simply, is the coerced use of human beings as a form of commerce, a reemergence of slave labor and extreme forms of sexual exploitation<sup>1</sup>.

Human trafficking is a \$10 billion+ growth industry with conservative estimates ranging from 700,000 to 2 million people - primarily women and children - trafficked into prostitution and slavery annually. The U.S. State Department estimates that 14.5-- 18000 people are trafficked into the United States each year.

Human trafficking is the third largest criminal business worldwide, after trafficking in drugs and weapons. For traffickers it has been a high profit, low risk enterprise. Laws against trafficking in persons do not exist or are not enforced in many countries, and where the extent of the problem is not acknowledged, people can be sold again and again.

The suffering of the victims of trafficking is indisputable, but understanding the forces that create and sustain this global problem is far more complex, as will be the array of initiatives necessary to combat it. Trafficking does not exist in isolation or disconnected from economic, political and social forces that increase the vulnerability and desperation of the poor, of refugees and immigrants and of women and children. Trafficking is one of the tragic end results of economic and social disparities that have increased vulnerability for millions of people, allowing many within our societies and global community to be considered disposable commodities.

**Catholic Relief Services/USCCB** supports local, national and regional efforts to respond to human trafficking, through programs which focus on prevention, reintegration and public awareness campaigns. CRS and our international partners work together to increasingly understand and respond to the factors that sustain and exacerbate human trafficking, based in our experience in related development, conflict and human rights arenas.

Through the provision of local alternative economic options and social protections as a means of prevention and reintegration, CRS' programming in other areas including peacebuilding, agriculture, microfinance, health and migrant/refugee protection contributes to efforts to decrease individual and community vulnerability to trafficking. CRS currently supports counter-trafficking programming in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. CRS also participates in the U.S. based Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking, supporting efforts to raise awareness of the international and U.S. domestic dimensions of this tragedy and create new opportunities for engagement and solidarity for Catholic constituents within the United States.

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<sup>1</sup> *The UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crimes and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children define trafficking as: "The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring 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 includes, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs".*

Select CRS Anti-trafficking Initiatives Around the Globe

Serbia & Montenegro: Roma Risk Study and TIP Consultative Process

South East Europe: Counter Trafficking Budget Allocation Tracking (BATS)

Benin: Education First: Combating Child Trafficking through Education

Haiti: Prevention of Trafficking of Haitian Children

Pakistan: Child Labor and Education- Hazara Town, Quetta.

Nepal: Caritas Nepal-Public Education and Training Program

India: Prajwala Program for Abused Women and Children

India: Bonded Child Labors – Uttar Pradesh Boys Transit Home

India: Center for Women in Distress, Allahabad for victims of sex trade

## Examples of CRS<sup>2</sup> Counter-trafficking Programming

*CRS/Europe* has implemented a pilot counter-trafficking *Budget Allocation Tracking* initiative in Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Serbia. With this program CRS works with civil society groups to measure government action and funding allocations in response to trafficking.

*CRS/Serbia* conducted a study on trafficking of the Roma ethnic minority entitled “*Risk and Resiliency Factors for Trafficking in Roma Communities*”.

*Projects in CRS/Bosnia-Herzegovina* are designed to enhance the capacities of Bosnian faith-based NGOs and the development of more effective civil society efforts to address trafficking issues.

*CRS/Europe* multiplies its counter-trafficking efforts through its funding support and membership in COATNET, an initiative of Christian social agencies throughout Europe endorsed by Caritas Europa.

*CRS/India* supports a comprehensive *Trafficking Prevention Program* of a partner based in Andhra Pradesh. This program includes a transit home for trafficking survivors, an employment center for women, residential care for rescued children, education-based interventions for ‘at-risk’ children of prostitutes, and advocacy with government and civil society to ensure that high-risk areas are addressed and government policies effectively respond to trafficking.

*CRS/Nepal* supports efforts of the national Catholic social agency, Caritas/Nepal to generate awareness among women and children on issues related to trafficking in border districts. Caritas Nepal also sponsors a national radio program warning of the dangers posed by traffickers. Role-plays and interviews with police, NGO representatives and survivors bring the issue of trafficking into the homes of people around the country.

*CRS/Dominican Republic* works with five national organizations to address the basic rights and expand the services available to children and adolescents who

live and/or work on the streets and who are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation in Santo Domingo, Santiago and the tourist center of Boca Chica, D.R..

*CRS/Brazil’s Project to Combat Trafficking in Forced Labor* seeks to reduce the number of forced laborers in agricultural, livestock, and timber sectors in two municipalities in Northeastern Brazil. The project accomplished this through increasing awareness of the dangers of being trafficked for forced labor; access to economic opportunities for potential victims of trafficking and improving social and legal support services.

*CRS/Benin and CRS/Ecuador* both support programming to *combat trafficking for child labor* through improvements in educational access and quality, formal and informal education, and policy dialogue.

For additional information on Catholic Relief Services : [www.crs.org](http://www.crs.org)

<sup>2</sup> **Catholic Relief Services (CRS):** is the official international Catholic Relief and Development agency of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops supporting programming in over 90 countries. CRS works with local partners throughout the world to alleviate human suffering, contribute to the development of communities and foster greater international justice and solidarity.