STOP
SEX TRAFFICKING
OF CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE
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.1 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.2

CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING IN CANADA

In Canada, there are few official statistics on the trafficking of persons. According to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, approximately 600 to 800 women and children are trafficked into Canada each year. Furthermore, up to 1500 to 2000 people are trafficked from Canada into the United States.3 A recent study over the two year period from 2006 to 2008 found 31 documented cases of international human trafficking in Canada, four of which involved children. There was not a single
conviction in connection with these cases. Canada’s first human trafficking conviction took place in May 2008 - the offender received a mere five year sentence for his crimes involving the sexual exploitation of children. The crime of child sex trafficking both domestically and internationally, manifests itself in other sexual crimes against children including child sex tourism, child abuse imagery (child pornography), internet luring and sexual exploitation in prostitution. Emerging technologies have fueled the demand for children for sexual gratification and have made many children vulnerable to traffickers and predators.

Who gets trafficked?

According to Statistics Canada, between 10 and 15 percent of people involved in street prostitution are under 18 years old. However, this figure is viewed by most child advocates as a gross underestimate of the problem. Girls as young as 12 years old are being subjected to sexual exploitation by traffickers in Canada.

Although the exact scale of child sex trafficking is unknown, a recent United States report states that women and children are trafficked into Canada primarily from Asia (Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, Vietnam and South Korea) and Eastern Europe (Russia and Ukraine) for sexual exploitation. In addition, there have been cases that involve victims from Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Another source reports that China has been identified as one of the top four source countries for human trafficking into Canada. In Canada’s first national statistics on human trafficking, Romania, the Philippines and Moldova were named as three prominent source countries for foreign victims of this trade.

The Criminal Intelligence Service of Canada (CISC) also reported that child trafficking is a pressing national problem - across the country, organised crime networks are actively trafficking Canadian-born women and under-age girls inter and intra-provincially, and in some instances to the United States (US), destined for the sex trade. In Canada, aboriginal youth are disproportionately victimised. Aboriginal women and girls affected by poverty and conditions of abuse are at risk of being trafficked. They are then sold throughout Canada, starting in Vancouver, then Winnipeg, Toronto, and to other destinations within the country. Children who experience sexual abuse in their homes or who are taken into custody by the State and living in care, are also at high risk of being trafficked into prostitution.

Former Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints members have also alleged that girls as young as 13 are trafficked across the British Columbia – Idaho border to become brides for much older men.

Children may be at greater risk of trafficking from places where they are less protected. This may be because the law is weak or not properly enforced or because children are less aware of the risks of trafficking and are more easily deceived. Countries are considered:

- ‘sending’ or ‘origin’ – from where children are sent
- ‘transit’ - where the children might be moved through and temporarily kept on the way to their final destination
- ‘receiving’ or ‘destination’ - where the children finally end up

Depending on the reason for trafficking, some countries might be only sending, while others might be both sending and transit. Some countries can be all three. Canada is all three, plus, Canadian children are trafficked within Canada.
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.

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.

The involvement of organised gangs of criminals in child trafficking has increased. Well organised networks operating as semi-independent entities have moved away from the street to less visible environments such as massage parlours, strip bars, hotels, and private homes. The Criminal Intelligence Service of Canada (CISC) notes that some gangs are known to target children as they are perceived as being easier to recruit.
CASE STUDIES

Canada’s first child trafficking conviction
At 17, Eve escaped her trafficker after two and a half years of sexual slavery, but instead of hiding she went to the police. She led them to where her trafficker kept another 14-year-old girl in a motel room. As a result, the police arrested Imani Nakpangi of Niagara Falls. Eve’s courage led to Canada’s first ever human trafficking conviction in May 2008. However, Nakpangi only received a sentence of five years in prison. Nakpangi earned a total of over $360,000 over the two and a half year period in which he exploited Eve. His illicit profits were used to purchase himself a BMW and a large home in Niagara Falls. Nakpangi brutally controlled Eve by assaulting her and threatening to kidnap her brother if she ever “got out of line”.

Canadian serves brief sentence for child trafficking and prostitution charges
In Montreal, Michael Lennox Mark pleaded guilty to trafficking a 17-year-old girl and procuring three others – one under 18 – to become prostitutes. He was sentenced to two years for the trafficking charge and two years for the procuring charge, the sentences for each crime to be served concurrently. However, as Mark was detained for a year in pre-trial custody – which counted as double time served – following his sentence, Mark spent only one week in jail for the crimes against his four victims.

How can we stop the trafficking of children?

LAW AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

- Law enforcement requires better tools to stop traffickers, including an upgrade of the National Sex Offender Registry and new laws that effectively address the use of new technologies in the trafficking of children. Local law enforcement, who are the lead policing agency for child trafficking cases in Canada, need more resources for officers specialising in commercial sexual exploitation cases involving children.
- While Canada has ratified the main international conventions related to the trafficking of children, it does not have a national plan of action that specifically targets the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). Canada, having ratified the conventions, must properly report on and comply with the recommendations of the governing bodies as it agreed to do as a signatory to the relevant conventions.
- While much progress has been made in regard to child pornography and online safety in Canada, most initiatives across the country to combat the trafficking and prostitution of children are implemented on a local level. There must be more coordination and cooperation between provinces and with the National Government.
- Canadian authorities must improve their investigations, prosecutions and convictions for child trafficking, including strengthening their ability to identify victims through training. There must be an increase in the effectiveness of law enforcement, not only in relation to capturing traffickers but also in undermining the economic viability of the crime.
- Sentences for child traffickers must reflect the gravity of the crime. There is currently no minimum sentence for human trafficking convictions in Canada. Recent court sentences on human trafficking cases are lenient despite the maximum penalty being life imprisonment or a fine of $1,000,000 or both. For instance, in the case study above, Nakpangi was sentenced to 5 years imprisonment but due to the credit of 404 days served during trial, he is likely to only serve 3 years in custody. In other jurisdictions the minimum penalties are more severe and may serve as a more effective deterrent. For example, in the United States the minimum sentence for a similar offence is 10 years.
PREVENTION OF CHILD TRAFFICKING AND VICTIM PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE

- The Federal Government must support work on evidence-based research and data collection specific to aboriginal women and trafficking in persons, both on and off reserves.21
- Greater protection and services must be made available to child victims of trafficking, including ensuring child-friendly legal procedures, the appointment of a legal guardian, provision of basic necessities and specialised care for rehabilitation.
- Culturally appropriate materials and programs to raise awareness of the risk of trafficking both on and off reserves to prevent the trafficking of aboriginal women and girls are needed.22
- More prevention programs for Canadian children are needed to identify exploitative sexual relationships and the common tactics employed by pimps and traffickers to manipulate and control their victims.23
- Clear protocols between the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), Citizenship and Immigration (CIC) and provincial governments are required to ensure that the needs of foreign trafficked children are met, if and when they are discovered. In particular, the need for secure and appropriate shelter is required to ensure that foreign children who may be trafficked are not subject to segregated immigration detention.24
TO REPORT A SUSPECTED INCIDENT OF CHILD TRAFFICKING, CONTACT:

Canadian Center for Child Protection –
Toll-free: 1-800-387-7962
Online Reporting: www.cybertip.ca

MORE INFORMATION

- Beyond Borders (ECPAT Group in Canada) www.beyondborders.org
- ECPAT International: www.ecpat.net
- The Body Shop and ECPAT Stop Trafficking of Children and Young People Campaign: www.thebodyshop.com/stop
- Canada Department of Justice: http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/index.html
Endnotes


4 Benjamin Perrin, University of British Columbia; The Future Group. Accessible at: http://tfgwebmaster.web.aplus.net/wwwthefuturegrouporg/


8 Benjamin Perrin, University of British Columbia; The Future Group. Accessible at: http://tfgwebmaster.web.aplus.net/wwwthefuturegrouporg/

9 Ibid.


19 *Under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA),* section 118.


22 Ibid

23 Ibid

24 Ibid
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