

Soroptimist International
of the Americas
1709 Spruce Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103-6103



215 893 9000 PHONE
215 893 5200 FAX
siahq@soroptimist.org E-MAIL
www.soroptimist.org URL

WHITE PAPER: The New Face of Slavery

Natalya lives in a small village in Moldova, one of the poorest countries in Eastern Europe. A single mother of two young girls, she must also take care of her sick brother, and struggles to find work in her economically depressed town. Natalya's neighbor Katerina tells her of an employment opportunity in Odessa, Ukraine, with a local bar owner. Katerina says she can get Natalya work as a waitress in a bar and offers, for a fee, to help arrange Natalya's travel to the northern port city.

Within a few weeks, Natalya is on a plane to Odessa, eager to make money and support her brother and daughters. However, once she arrives, Natalya realizes that she has been horribly deceived—that there never was a bar, or waitress job, and that Katerina—her neighbor and friend, has helped to sell her into sexual slavery. The bar owner turns out to be a small-time criminal and pimp, and the bar is his brothel. Before she has time to process what's happened, her passport is confiscated and she is driven from the airport to a cramped apartment where she—along with a dozen other young women— will stay for the duration of her servitude.

First, she is raped by the pimp who claims he must “try out the goods” and Natalya has her first taste of the violence and degradation that is to follow. Before long, she is forced to service more than a dozen clients a day—business men, locals, and tourists—interested in quick sex for cash. After several months of sexual abuse and physical violence, Natalya is mentally and emotionally destroyed and is resigned to her position. Eventually a friendly client “buys” Natalya from her pimp, and sends her home. But once back in Moldova, it is apparent that there is no work in her small village. The only answer, thinks Natalya, is to prostitute herself in the Moldovan capital of Chisinau. “I am already broken, after all....”

Defining Trafficking

Sex trafficking is the exploitation of women and children, within national or across international borders, for the purposes of forced sex work.¹ It includes the recruitment, transportation, harboring, transfer or sale of women and children for these purposes.

¹This white paper will primarily discuss human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. However, human trafficking for the purpose of labor is also a pervasive international problem. Trafficking, according to the United Nations Crime and Justice Information Network is 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.” The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that approximately 12.3 million people are enslaved in forced or bonded labor, child labor, sexual servitude, and involuntary servitude at any given time. “Trafficking in Persons Report.” 2007, page 8.

<http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2007/>

Each year, an estimated 800,000 women and children are trafficked across national borders.² According to the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, human trafficking is estimated to annually generate 9.5 billion dollars of revenue.³ Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services concluded that human trafficking is now tied with the illegal arms industry as the second largest criminal industry in the world today.⁴

According to the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the United Nations Inter-agency Project on Human Trafficking in the Mekong Sub-region, sex trafficking appears to be growing in scope and magnitude, with increasing numbers of countries involved due in large part to globalization and the relative ease with which traffickers are able to transport victims between countries.⁵

Sex trafficking is a widespread problem, implicating nearly every country in the world:

- Around 75 percent of all human trafficking victims are trafficked for sexual exploitation.⁶
- About two million women and children are held in sexual servitude around the world, but many experts believe the actual number of trafficked peoples is upwards of 10 times as much.⁷ Because of its clandestine nature, it is difficult to determine the magnitude of human trafficking. According to the Dutch National Rapporteur Against Trafficking in Human Beings, only around 5 percent of trafficking cases are ever reported.⁸
- An estimated 120,000 women and girls are trafficked into Western Europe each year.⁹
- There have been reports of sexual trafficking in at least 20 U.S. states, with most cases occurring in New York, California and Florida.¹⁰ Once issues of domestic trafficking are included, all 50 states would be implicated.

²“Trafficking in Persons Report.” 2007, page 8. <<http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2007/>>. Trafficking is not limited to those that are moved across international boundaries. Trafficking can happen within nation states and does not have to include movement in order to be considered trafficking. Domestic and international trafficking have many of the same components and issues. Whenever force or coercion is used in order to profit from the labor of another person, it is a case of human trafficking. This white paper is primarily focusing on the issue of international sex trafficking.

³“Trafficking in Persons Report.” 2006, page 13. U.S. State Department. <<http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2006/>>

⁴“Fact Sheet: Human Trafficking.” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2004, page 1. <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking/about/fact_human.html>

⁵“Trafficking in Persons: A Gender Rights Perspective Briefing Kit.” 2002. United Nations Development Fund for Women and the United Nations Inter-agency Project on Human Trafficking in the Mekong Sub-region. <<http://www.unifem-eseasia.org/resources/others/traffic.htm>>

⁶“UN Commission on the Status of Women Adopts U.S. Human Trafficking Resolution.” March 18, 2005, page 1. U.S. Department of State. <<http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/fs/2005/43630.htm>>

⁷“The Cause of Sex Trafficking is the Demand for It.” 2006. Captive Daughters. <<http://www.captivedaughters.org/demand.htm>>

⁸“Trafficking in Persons Global Patterns.” 2006, page 4. United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) <http://www.unodc.org/pdf/traffickinginpersons_report_2006ver2.pdf>

⁹O’Connor, Monica, and Grainne Healy. “The Links Between Prostitution and Sex Trafficking: A Briefing Handbook.” 2006, page 3. Coalition Against Trafficking in Women and the European Women’s Lobby. <<http://action.web.ca/home/catw/attach/handbook.pdf>>

¹⁰Richard, Amy O’Neill. *International Trafficking in Women to the United States: A Contemporary Manifestation of Slavery and Organized Crime*. 1999, page 3. DCI Exceptional Intelligence Analyst

- An estimated 14,500 to 17,500 women and children are trafficked into the U.S. each year.¹¹ And at any given time, there are 30,000 – 50,000 sex slaves in the United States.¹²
- Sex trafficking fuels the commercial sex industry, which includes both legal and illegal prostitution.

Sex trafficking happens in both public and private locales. In some cases, trafficking victims are highly visible and engage in street-level prostitution, but in most cases, sex trafficking takes place in underground venues, such as private homes or brothels. Often, public and legal locations such as massage parlors, spas and strip clubs will be a front for illegal prostitution and trafficking.¹³

Human trafficking is sometimes called the “new slavery,” because it retains many of the same characteristics of a slave (trafficking victim)/master (trafficker) relationship. In the new slavery, women and girls are purchased cheaply and sold to customers at a high profit margin. Rather than serve one master or in one locale, victims are passed around among a variety of “owners.” And because of the seemingly endless supply of women and girls, slaves are ultimately disposable.¹⁴

Many countries lack tough anti-trafficking legislation and even when legislation is in place, laws are often not enforced. Relatively few trafficking cases are prosecuted, and of those, very few result in convictions. Fear and shame keep many women and girls from seeking help, and widespread police corruption, exemplified by Thailand and Russia, makes it unsafe for trafficking victims to approach local and national authorities.¹⁵

Occasionally, women and girls are rescued from traffickers and receive support, care and compassion. More often, though, trafficking victims are treated like criminals by the police. Women and girls arrested in trafficking circles are often processed as illegal immigrants rather than trafficking victims, and are immediately deported to their home countries where, because few economic alternatives exist, they begin the cycle of trafficking and exploitation all over again.

The Supply: Who is Trafficked

Program, Center for the Study of Intelligence. <<https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/books-and-monographs/trafficking.pdf>>

¹¹“Stop Violence Against Women: Trafficked Women and Girls Questions and Answers.” 2005, page 2. <http://www.amnestyusa.org/women/trafficking/question_answer.html>. Because of the difficulty in gathering true data, these statistics are often changing.

¹²Landesman, Peter. “The Girls Next Door (How Sex Trafficking Works).” January 25, 2004, page 2. *The New York Times*.

<<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B04EEDA1439F936A15752C0A9629C8B63&sec=&sp on=&pagewanted>>. This quote is attributed to Kevin Bales, president of Free the Slaves. Because of the secrecy around and general lack of knowledge about this issue, it is difficult to find reliable statistics.

¹³“Fact Sheet: Sex Trafficking.” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking/about/fact_sex.html>

¹⁴Bales, Kevin. *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy*. University of California Press: Berkeley, 2004.

¹⁵Richard, Amy O’Neill. *International Trafficking in Women to the United States: A Contemporary Manifestation of Slavery and Organized Crime*. 1999, page 8. DCI Exceptional Intelligence Analyst Program, Center for the Study of Intelligence. <<https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/books-and-monographs/trafficking.pdf>>

Trafficking involves coercion and fraud, and should not be confused with the practice of moving within and across borders by choice. Once in the cycle of migration, many are coerced into trafficking and prostitution. Not surprisingly, many of the poorest and most unstable countries have the highest instances of trafficking.

Extreme poverty is a common bond among nearly all trafficking victims. While adult women constitute eighty percent of all transnational victims, fifty percent of those are minors.¹⁶ Children as young as 1 and 2 years old have been found in brothels; children are typically forcibly taken or sold into sexual trafficking by their parents, many of whom believe that their children are being sold to adoption agencies. In some cases, poverty, along with the relatively low value placed on girl children, drives parents to knowingly broker their daughters into sexual slavery.

The former Soviet Republics and other Eastern Bloc countries, which struggle with rampant poverty and political and social corruption, are fertile breeding grounds for the trafficking industry, as are many Asian countries, including Thailand and China, which play major roles in the trafficking industry.

According to the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, “the rise in competition in the labor market, unemployment and the loss of job security have undermined women’s incomes and economic position. A widening gender wage gap, an increase in women’s part-time and informal sector work, as well as atypical work arrangements have pushed women into poorly paid jobs and long-term and hidden unemployment,” leaving women vulnerable to traffickers.¹⁷

The Suppliers: Who Traffics

Organized crime is largely responsible for the proliferation of human trafficking¹⁸. Crime groups involved in the sexual trafficking of women and girls are often also involved in the transnational trafficking of drugs and firearms, and frequently use violence as a means of carrying out their activities.¹⁹

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the greatest numbers of transnational traffickers are from Asia, followed by Central and Southeastern Europe, and Western Europe.²⁰ Traffickers tend to have strong national connections to the destination countries that their victims are being trafficked to, allowing them to cultivate strong client bases and develop channels of cooperation with local protective authorities.²¹

Unfortunately, due to the clandestine nature of the behavior, the vulnerability of victims, and widespread corruption among local and national protective authorities, traffickers are rarely apprehended or prosecuted. Additionally, most trafficking cases are dependent on victims’

¹⁶“Trafficking in Persons Report.” 2007, page 8. <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2007/>

¹⁷O’Connor, Monica, and Grainne Healy. “The Links Between Prostitution and Sex Trafficking: A Briefing Handbook.” 2006, page 6. Coalition Against Trafficking in Women and the European Women’s Lobby. <<http://action.web.ca/home/catw/attach/handbook.pdf>>

¹⁸ Organized crime tends to be less of an issue in domestic trafficking. However, in countries such as Japan, organized crime is a central factor in domestic and international trafficking.

¹⁹Ibid, page 24.

²⁰“Trafficking in Persons Global Patterns.” 2006, page 80. United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) <http://www.unodc.org/pdf/traffickinginpersons_report_2006ver2.pdf>

²¹Ibid.

complaints, and trafficking victims rarely speak out.²² If prosecuted, human traffickers typically receive light sentences when compared to drug or weapon traffickers.²³

How Women and Girls are Trafficked

Some women are lured into trafficking with the offers of legitimate and legal work as shop assistants or waitresses, for example. Others are lured with promises of marriage, educational opportunities and a better life. Some are sold into trafficking by boyfriends, friends, neighbors or even parents.

Women and girls are abducted or recruited in a country of origin, transported through transit countries and then forced into exploitative labor or sex work in destination countries. Trafficking victims often pass among multiple traffickers, moving further and further from their countries of origin.²⁴ In many cases, traffickers and victims share the same nationality. A trafficker in the Ukraine, for example, may traffic her neighbor to Turkey. Once there, she may sell her victim to a Turkish trafficker, who will take the woman to Thailand, her final destination.

While transnational human trafficking has received more attention than intra-state trafficking, the reality is “that much of the worldwide trafficking and exploitation of persons occurs within communities and countries, if even only initially.”²⁵ There is minimally reported evidence in the area of intra-state trafficking leaving institutions like the UNODC, who recognize the graveness of the problem, without the tools to eradicate it.

Both men and women participate in the trafficking of women and girls into sexual slavery. Men generally control a trafficking ring, but women are instrumental in effectively managing the trafficking victims. Female traffickers gain the trust of their victims in order to better psychologically manipulate them.

Typically, once in the custody of traffickers, a victim’s passport and official papers are confiscated and held. Victims are told that they are in the destination country illegally, which

²²“Protocol for Identification and Assistance to Trafficked Persons and Training Kit.” 2005. Anti-Slavery International.

<<http://www.antislavery.org/homepage/resources/PDF/Protocoltraffickedpersonskit2005.pdf>>

²³“The Race Dimensions to Trafficking in Persons—Especially Women and Children.” 2001. United Nations World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. <http://www.un.org/WCAR/e-kit/trafficking_e.pdf>

²⁴In 2006, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) examined the flow of trafficking victims around the world. Countries were ranked according their involvement in the trafficking industry and their role in the cycle of trafficking. Origin countries are countries from which trafficked women and girls originate. Typically, origin countries are developing countries with high levels of economic strife and social unrest. Major origin countries include Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, China, Lithuania, Nigeria, Romania, the Russian Federation, Thailand and the Ukraine. The UNODC found 127 countries of origin. Transit Countries are countries through which trafficked women travel. Transit countries may also function as destination and origin countries for various populations of trafficked women. Major transit countries include Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Poland and Thailand. Though there is less data available on transit countries, the UNODC identified 98 transit countries. Destination Countries are countries to which trafficked women are sent to work in the sex industry and the point of exploitation. Major destination countries include Belgium, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Thailand, Turkey and the United States. In all, the UNODC, found 137 destination countries.

“Trafficking in Persons Global Patterns.” 2006, pages 17-20. United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) <http://www.unodc.org/pdf/traffickinginpersons_report_2006ver2.pdf>

²⁵Ibid, page 120.

increases victims' dependence on their traffickers, and are often kept in captivity. Victims are also trapped into debt bondage, whereby they are obliged to pay back large recruitment and transportation fees before being released from their traffickers. Many victims report being charged additional fines or fees while under bondage, requiring them to work longer to pay off their debts.²⁶

Trafficking victims experience various stages of degradation and physical and psychological torture. Victims are often deprived of food and sleep, are unable to move about freely and are physically tortured. In order to keep women captive, victims are told their families and their children will be harmed or murdered if they (the women) try to escape or tell anyone about their situation.²⁷ Because victims rarely understand the culture and language of the country into which they have been trafficked, they experience another layer of psychological stress and frustration.

Often, before servicing clients, women are forcibly raped by the traffickers themselves, in order to initiate the cycle of abuse and degradation. Some women are drugged in order to prevent them from escaping. Once "broken in," victims of sex trafficking can service up to 30 men a day, and are vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases, HIV infection and unwanted pregnancy.

The Demand: Who Purchases Trafficked Women and Girls

Though sex trafficking takes place around the world—on city streets, in suburban neighborhoods and in rural villages—little emphasis has been placed on the demand-side of the trafficking equation. There is a misconception that sex trafficking only occurs in and affects developing nations. However, many of the biggest destination countries are developed nations, and men from all sectors of society support the trafficking industry. Furthermore, domestic trafficking is also a widespread problem in developed countries.

In many parts of the world, there is little to no perceived stigma to purchasing sexual favors for money; prostitution is viewed as a victimless crime. In Japan, for example, many men consider visiting prostitutes a sensible solution to the difficulties of juggling work and relationships. Patriarchal and misogynistic beliefs about the status and value of women underscore many men's attitudes toward sexual trafficking and prostitution. There are instances of parents in Thailand financing a new television set with the sale of a daughter. "A recent survey in the northern provinces found that of the families who sold their daughters, two-thirds could afford not to do so but instead preferred to buy color televisions and video equipment."²⁸

One major component of the proliferation of trafficking is sex tourism. Sex tourism is the practice of traveling or vacationing for the purpose of having sex, and is estimated to be a billion dollar annual industry worldwide.²⁹ According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), sex tourism makes up between 2 and 14 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand. Many sex tours explicitly feature prepubescent girls, marketing almost exclusively to pedophiles who prey on young children, and men who believe that having sex with virgins, or young girls, will cure sexually transmitted diseases. Often, these

²⁶"The Race Dimensions to Trafficking in Persons—Especially Women and Children." 2001. United Nations World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. <http://www.un.org/WCAR/e-kit/trafficking_e.pdf>

²⁷"Trafficking in Persons: Amnesty International Fact Sheet." <http://www.amnestyusa.org/women/trafficking/pdf/trafficking_of_persons.pdf>

²⁸Bales, Kevin. *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy*. University of California Press: Berkeley, 2004, 40.

²⁹"United States: The Role of Military Forces in the Growth of the Commercial Sex Industry." 2003. Equality Now. <http://www.equalitynow.org/english/actions/action_2301_en.html>

men spread HIV and other STDs to their young trafficking victims, creating localized disease epidemics.

A recent study from the UN Commission on Human Rights found that “the influx of international aid workers, military personnel, peacekeepers and employees of international organizations in situations of armed conflict or political instability often brings about a demand for services deriving from sexual exploitation.”³⁰ In an effort to combat this, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has enacted a zero tolerance policy regarding trafficking by NATO forces and staff.³¹ The Palermo Protocol also holds countries accountable to end trafficking as it calls upon governments to take social and legislative measures to discourage demand. As of October 2007, 115 countries have ratified and thus committed to this effort.³²

A widespread belief exists that men who support the trafficking industry are “from somewhere else” and that trafficking does not happen within local communities. In fact, men who support the trafficking industry come from all walks of life, and many are highly respected members of their communities. A 2004 *New York Times* article on trafficking explored the sexual trafficking of young Mexican girls whose main customers were American businessmen. Said one young trafficking victim, “I was told my purpose was to keep these men from abusing their own kids.”³³ A 2005 episode of *The Oprah Winfrey Show* detailed the story of Kim Meston, a Tibetan trafficking victim that was held hostage in the United States by a well respected Christian minister and routinely sexually abused.³⁴

In order to deter trafficking, men must be educated about the harmful effects of trafficking and the commercial prostitution industry. Additionally, negative and sexist attitudes about women and girls must be addressed.

The High Cost of Human Sex Trafficking

Sex trafficking of women and girls has astronomical costs, both to the women and girls who are its primary victims, and to society as a whole. Trafficking is an abuse of physical and mental integrity, security of the person, freedom of movement, and privacy. Trafficking “violates the universal human right to life, liberty and freedom from slavery.”³⁵

Sex trafficking also has widespread negative consequences for individuals and societies:

³⁰Commission on Trafficking. “Integration of the Human Rights of Women and a Gender Perspective.” 2006, page 18.

<<http://action.web.ca/home/catw/attach/Special%20Rapporteur%20trafficking%202006%20report%20dem and.doc>>

³¹NATO Policy On Combating Trafficking In Human Beings <<http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/2004/06-istanbul/docu-traffic.htm>>

³²UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons

<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/crime_cicp_signatures_trafficking.html#declaration>

³³Landesman, Peter. “The Girls Next Door (How Sex Trafficking Works).” *The New York Times*. January 25, 2004, page 8.

<<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B04EEDA1439F936A15752C0A9629C8B63&sec=&sp on=&pagewanted >>

³⁴Victim Rights Conference <<http://www.mass.gov/mova/page155.shtml>>

³⁵“Trafficking in Persons Report.” 2005, page 13. U.S. State Department.

<<http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2005/>>

- Sex trafficking helps to promote societal breakdown by removing women and girls from their families and communities. If and when victims are able to return to their communities, they often find themselves doubly victimized by social stigmatization, discrimination and rejection.
- Sex trafficking fuels organized crime groups that usually participate in many other illegal activities, including drug and weapons trafficking and money laundering.
- Sex trafficking negatively impacts local and national labor markets, due to the loss of human resources. The effects of trafficking on economies include “depressed wages, fewer individuals left to care for elderly persons, and an undereducated generation. These effects leads to the loss of future productivity and earning power,” especially in child trafficking victims.³⁶
- Sex trafficking burdens public health systems. Trafficking victims often suffer from myriad physical and psychological traumas, including sexually transmitted diseases, anxiety, depression and post traumatic stress disorder. Victims also often suffer physical complications from unsanitary living situations and poor nutrition.
- Sex trafficking erodes government authority, encourages widespread corruption, and threatens the security of vulnerable populations.³⁷

Combating Trafficking

In order to end the sexual trafficking of women and girls, efforts must be made on both the supply side (the traffickers and victims) and demand side (trafficking clients and sex buyers) of the problem.³⁸

It is critical that economic opportunities and alternatives are developed for potential trafficking victims. Examples of such initiatives include micro-lending programs, job training and counseling, educational programs, and grants to non-governmental organizations to accelerate and advance the political, economic, social and educational roles of women in their home countries.³⁹

In order to better serve trafficking victims and to prevent sexual trafficking of women and girls, countries and regions are encouraged to increase public awareness about trafficking and develop educational materials for the public about trafficking. Lawmakers and law enforcement officials are urged to produce and enforce legislation that punishes traffickers and those that purchase sex.

³⁶Ibid, page 14.

³⁷“Trafficking in Persons Report.” 2006. U.S. State Department. <<http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2006>>

³⁸Each year, the United States Department of State assesses countries based on their compliance with minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. Assessments are made based on six criteria: prosecution of traffickers, protection of victims and prevention of trafficking, as well as rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration of victims. Countries that are adequately countering trafficking are given Tier 1 and 2 designations, while those with unacceptable trafficking records are either placed on the Tier 2 “watch” list or given Tier 3 status. Receiving a Tier 3 designation could trigger the withholding of non-humanitarian, non-trade-related assistance from the United States. Tier 3-designated countries include Algeria, Bahrain, Burma, Cuba, Equatorial Guinea, Iran, Kuwait, Malaysia, North Korea, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Uzbekistan and Venezuela. In recent years, the report has been criticized by various international leaders for its lack of transparency and bias in rankings. “Trafficking in Persons Report.” 2007, page 42. <<http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2007/>>

³⁹“Needs Assessment for Service Providers and Trafficking Victims.” 2003, page 4. National Institute of Justice. <<http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/202469.pdf>>

Domestic violence shelters and social support services are encouraged to develop programs to handle the needs of trafficked women and girls. And rehabilitative transitional living programs should be implemented to serve trafficked women and girls who are attempting to return to mainstream society.

In 2000, the United Nations passed the Palermo Protocol “to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children.” The Protocol calls for countries to “adopt or strengthen legislative or other measures, such as educational, social or cultural measures, including through bilateral and multilateral cooperation, to discourage the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation of persons, especially women and children, that leads to trafficking.”⁴⁰

Because trafficking is a transnational problem, it requires the cooperation and coordination of multiple national and international agencies. Thus far, efforts to counter trafficking have been largely inefficient and ineffective. When considering how to best combat trafficking demand, it is imperative that law enforcement and government officials “vigorously prosecute traffickers; fight public corruption which facilitates and profits from the trade; identify and interdict trafficking routes through better intelligence gathering and coordination; clarify legal definitions of trafficking; and train personnel to identify and direct trafficking victims to appropriate care.”⁴¹

In many countries, trafficking victims do not receive adequate assistance. A recent report from Anti-Slavery International found that authorities tend to give trafficking victims irregular migrant status, rather than consider them as victims of trafficking, which makes it difficult to track and manage cases of trafficking. The report also found that trafficking victims lack access to shelters and legal services, as well as inadequate security and few alternatives to returning to their home countries. Most countries lacked special services for trafficking victims under 18.⁴²

Also critical is that work be done to reduce the demand for trafficking. This involves not only stricter punishment for men found financially supporting the trafficking industry, but also an increase in efforts to educate men about the struggles of women and the negative impact of misogyny, sexism, abuse and violence.

How Soroptimist Works to End Trafficking of Women and Girls.

Soroptimist is an international volunteer service organization for business and professional women who work to improve the lives of women and girls, in local communities and throughout the world. Soroptimist clubs undertake a number of different projects to confront local realities facing women and girls. Many projects directly and indirectly help trafficking victims and women vulnerable to trafficking by providing direct aid to women and girls, and giving women economic tools and skills to achieve financial empowerment and independence. As an organization, Soroptimist supports the following programs:

Soroptimists STOP Trafficking—Soroptimists launched a public awareness campaign to address the sexual trafficking of women and girls in 2007. Soroptimist clubs around the world

⁴⁰“Protocol to Prevent Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime.” 2000, page 6. United Nations.

⁴¹“Trafficking in Persons Report.” 2006, page 21. U.S. State Department.
<<http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2006/>>

⁴²“Protocol for Identification and Assistance to Trafficked Persons and Training Kit.” 2005, page 10. Anti-Slavery International.
<<http://www.antislavery.org/homepage/resources/PDF/Protocoltraffickedpersonskit2005.pdf>>

will use printed materials and media outreach to raise awareness about this devastating issue. The project launched with a special event on Sunday December 2, 2007, the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery. In the United States, it will launch on Friday, January 11, 2008, the first National Day of Human Trafficking Awareness. Soroptimist clubs participate by distributing flyers on that day that focus on the message: Someone in this transportation center may be here against her will.

Women's Opportunity Awards—The Women's Opportunity Awards program is Soroptimist's major program. The awards improve the lives of women by giving them the resources they need to improve their education, skills, and employment prospects. By helping women receive skill and resource training, Soroptimist provides women with economic alternatives to sex trafficking and prostitution.

Many Women's Opportunity Award recipients have overcome enormous obstacles in their quest for a better life, including poverty, domestic violence, substance abuse, and in some cases, trafficking. Each year, more than \$1 million is disbursed through the awards at various levels of the organization to help women achieve their dreams of a better life for themselves and their families. Since the Women's Opportunity Awards program began in 1972, it is estimated that \$20 million has been disbursed and more than 22,500 women have been assisted. In 2007, the Women's Opportunity Awards received the Summit Award from the ASAE & The Center, its highest honor, bestowed on associations that implement innovative community-based programs.

Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls— Often the abilities and ambitions of Soroptimist clubs exceed their financial resources. Soroptimist introduced the Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls in 1997 to assist with community projects that improve the lives of women and girls. Each year, grants are given to clubs working on projects that help foster economic independence, provide job skills training and education, and provide women with the resources necessary to move themselves and their families out of poverty. Projects of this type give women economic alternatives to migratory work and keep them out of the hands of traffickers. For the 2006-2007 club year, Soroptimist is funding more than \$175,000 in club grants. Since the program's inception, nearly \$1.6 million has been awarded and clubs have assisted more than 100,000 women and their families.

Clubs have used Soroptimist Club Grants to support projects that raise awareness about trafficking. In 2005, for example, two clubs in Japan shared a \$9,000 club grant for their Prevention of Trafficking Project. The clubs printed and distributed 6,000 brochures and 1,000 posters in eight languages, containing information on trafficking and how to obtain help for victims. They also held an international symposium to raise awareness about trafficking and offered support to a shelter for trafficking victims.

Several other clubs have developed projects and initiatives that benefit trafficking victims, among them:

- A club in the Philippines supports a shelter for abused women and girls escaping from sexual trafficking. Members provide shelter residents with much-needed items, including toiletries and food, and health care services.
- A club in California held a conference in support of the Western Regional Task Force on Human Trafficking. More than 200 people attended the meeting and 35 club members participated in organizing the event.

- For the past eight years, a club in Chicago has made trafficking a major project focus. Club members have coordinated several projects, assisted groups in helping teens and women involved in the sex trade, and partnered with organizations to advocate for legislation and funding for victims.

Making a Difference for Women—The Soroptimist Making a Difference for Women Award honors women who, through their personal or professional activities, worked to improve the lives of other women and girls. Each year, Soroptimist chooses one finalist, who is honored and receives a \$5,000 donation to her favorite charitable organization.

Kathryn Xian, Soroptimist’s 2006 Making a Difference for Women recipient, has devoted her life to improving the lives of women and girls through her non-profit organization, The Safe Zone Foundation. In 2004, Kathryn and the Safe Zone Foundation led a grassroots campaign to raise awareness about sex trafficking and tourism, and organized protests against a local tour company offering Asian sex tours. She also testified at a State House of Representatives hearing on trafficking. The hearings resulted in the passage of Act 82, which makes “promoting travel for prostitution” a Class C felony violation. Act 82 now serves as model legislation for other states.

Soroptimist’s Disaster Relief Fund—The Soroptimist Disaster Relief Fund provides financial assistance to regions affected by natural disasters or acts of war. Women and girls are hardest hit by acts of war and natural disasters, and poor women and single mothers—the poorest of the poor—who lack access to support services and aid following disasters are especially vulnerable to traffickers. Following the 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia, for example, there were many documented cases of rape, sexual abuse and trafficking.⁴³ Many poor women lack the necessary resources to escape acts of war and natural disaster, and because of pre-existing poverty and gender inequality, are less able to recover from their losses and rebuild their lives after disaster has struck. Many of these women and girls are left vulnerable to traffickers and the trafficking industry.

Because relief efforts targeted to women are often overlooked during a crisis, and because women and girls have special needs in times of crisis and disaster, Soroptimist’s Disaster Relief Fund supports projects that specifically assist women and girls. Clubs can apply for disaster relief grants for local areas hit by natural disasters or warfare, and the fund also supports international disaster relief projects. In the wake of the 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia, Soroptimist donated more than \$100,000 to three reconstruction projects that benefit women and girls. More than \$50,000 was donated to the Institute for Women’s Policy Research to analyze the impact of Hurricane Katrina on women and girls, and \$10,000 was donated to the Louisiana Coalition of Domestic Violence.

Soroptimist International of the Americas is a 501(c)(3) organization. In December 2004, Soroptimist received the Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations (PANO) Seal of Excellence for its successful compliance with the Standards for Excellence program. Soroptimist was re-certified in 2007.

⁴³“Trafficking in Persons Report.” 2005, page 17. U.S. State Department.
<<http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2005/>>