

ISSUES AND ACTIONS

November 2009



UN Millennium Goals

1. Eradicate extreme poverty & hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

The Forgotten Face of Trafficking

The struggle against human trafficking usually focuses or examines the issues surrounding women and children victims. This concentration leads us to forget

that **men, and adolescent boys are victims also.** They could be called the forgotten faces of the trafficking business, overlooked even when the obvious signs of exploitation that would sound alarms with women and children are present. “Trafficking in human beings is most commonly associated with women or children”, writes Rebecca Surtees of the NEXUS Institute, a Vienna-based organization that studies modern day slavery. “Far less common is a consideration of trafficking in males... and yet there are signals in many countries that males are being exploited and violated in ways that constitute human trafficking” Why is it that this segment of the trafficking industry has been overlooked or ignored? Maybe it is because one of the frustrating evils of human trafficking is how very little we are able to learn about it in



general, let alone specifically. It might be that all of those who have been, or are trafficked, are the invisible in plain sight. Estimates of the number of males trafficked to the labor force world wide is about **40%**, but estimates are often understated and the actual number remains a mystery. Hundreds of thousands of men are believed to have fallen victim to this evil practice and in Eastern Europe the poorest states such as Belarus and Ukraine are experiencing some of the worst of what migration watchdogs say is a “growing problem” worldwide. (www.globalissues.org/news/2009)

Economic crisis

The current economic crisis we are experiencing is of greater magnitude than previous recessions or depressions because it is a GLOBAL event. The effects radiate and ripple throughout every segment of the world's populations. In many countries this places an almost unsupportable burden on the shoulders of men, young adolescents and boys who are the major financial contributors to the family's support. As jobs and money evaporate around them, they are pressured to search for work opportunities outside their country and it is there that they find themselves not employed, but exploited. Their "employers" become virtual owners of their time, money and lives, Now, as with all poor people everywhere, they become voiceless, vulnerable, invisible and "treated as instruments of gain rather than free and responsible persons" as stated the Second Vatican Council. (Gaudium et Spes,27)



Working in construction, agriculture, fishing or other low-wage industries, these men and boys are in a no-end situation. Unlike previous migrations, the global financial crisis of today demands that many males migrate, not for better wages or better work opportunities, but for work, **ANY** work, that provides for their family's basic needs back home. This economic crisis has plunged already poor countries into even deeper poverty and increased the social vulnerability that makes persons easy prey for traffickers. "Back home" includes, to name a few countries, Russia, Romania, Brazil, Tonga and Thailand. Each of these is regarded as "country of origin, transit, and destination" for trafficking victims.



This is their story....

Two cousins tell their story of working in the fields picking tomatoes with a promise of \$150 for working 10 hours a day. The actual amount received is \$15. The remainder of the money went to their labor smugglers as payment for food, rent and repayment of their \$750 "transport"(smuggling) fee. When they or the other 22 trafficked workers were not working in the fields they were locked in a small roach infested van. The cousins finally escaped and informed the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), which contacted the U.S. Department of Justice. Threats of harm to their family members at home, beatings, withholding of money, food, water and the presence of other punishments keep the "laborers" in line.

The National Human Rights Commission reported that six fishing trawlers with 100 "crew members" sailed from The Chalom in Samut Sakhon province to fish Indonesian territorial waters. The "crew" was mostly trafficked laborers- Burmese, Mon and Karen - who did not return home for three years and when the trawlers finally returned to



Thailand, 38 of the original 100 had died on the job. The remaining men and adolescents were seriously ill - emaciated, many unable to see, hear, or walk properly, with acute vitamin deficiencies and showing signs of emotional disturbance. Experts say that, like female trafficking victims, men are also left, not only physically, but mentally harmed by their ordeal.

November dates

November 11 - **Veterans Day**



*“O, let my land be a land where Liberty
Is crowned with no false patriotic wreath
But opportunity is real, and life is free
Equality is in the air we breathe”*
Let America Be America Again.
Langston Hughes

November 26 - **Thanksgiving Day**

Invite to the table a forgotten or exploited person. How? Before the 26th share, as often as possible, with others at your table a story of someone, about whom you have read or heard, who has experienced adversity or inhuman treatment. If possible set a place for this GUEST. On Thanksgiving Day, have a photo that symbolizes the trafficked, the homeless, the abused. Through your daily sharing there will be a table full of guests who will remind us of our many blessings and motivate us to never make them faceless in our lives.



Thanksgiving Prayer

*God, when I have food, help me to remember the hungry,
When I have work, help me to remember the jobless;
When I have a home, help me to remember those who have no home at all;
When I am without pain, help me to remember those who suffer;
and remembering, help me to destroy my complacency,
bestir my compassion, and be concerned enough to help;
by word and deed, those we take for granted.*

Samuel F. Pugh



Prepared by the Peace and Justice Committee