

# Child Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation: A Review of Promising Prevention Policies and Programs

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Child trafficking, including commercial sexual exploitation (CSE), is one of the fastest growing and most lucrative criminal activities in the world. The global enslavement of children affects countless numbers of victims who are trafficked within their home countries or transported away from their homes and treated as commodities to be bought, sold, and resold for labor or sexual exploitation. All over the world, girls are particularly likely to be trafficked into the sex trade: Girls and women constitute 98% of those who are trafficked for CSE. Health and safety standards in exploitative settings are generally extremely low, and the degree of experienced violence has been linked with adverse physical, psychological, and social-emotional development. The human-rights-based approach to child trafficking provides a comprehensive conceptual framework whereby victim-focused and law enforcement responses can be developed, implemented, and evaluated. This article highlights promising policies and programs designed to prevent child trafficking and CSE by combating demand for sex with children, reducing supply, and strengthening communities. The literature reviewed includes academic publications as well as international and governmental and nongovernmental reports. Implications for social policy and future research are presented.

**A**lthough the international community prohibited slavery with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (United Nations [UN], 1948), human trafficking has acquired grave dimension worldwide in the context of globalization. Human beings are currently being forced into conditions of servitude similar to slavery, with little or no opportunity to shake off their bondage. The enslavement of children affects countless numbers of victims who are trafficked within their home countries or transported away from their homes across borders and treated as commodities to be bought, sold, and resold for labor or sexual exploitation. All over the world, girls are particularly vulnerable to being trafficked into the sex trade.

Human trafficking is regarded as a criminal enterprise and is notably one of the fastest growing and most lucrative criminal activities (Hill & Carey, 2010). After illicit trade in drugs and arms, the human trafficking enterprise is considered to be the third most profitable criminal activity, generating profits estimated at 32 billion U.S. dollars annually (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2008). Trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) is considered to be especially lucrative and

has been described as one of the most profitable illicit activities in the world (Kara, 2010).

## An Overview of Child Trafficking

### Definition of Child Trafficking

The most widely endorsed definition of *trafficking in persons* is found in the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UN, 2000). The Palermo Protocol, also known as the Trafficking Protocol, is the first international instrument to explicitly define human trafficking. According to the Protocol, child trafficking is the act of recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation, regardless of the use of illicit means, either within or outside a country. Exploitation includes prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the removal of organs. The Protocol further distinguishes between the trafficking of adults and children and stipulates that, because children cannot consent under international law, child trafficking can occur with or without the consent of a victim. Consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the term *child* refers to those under 18 (UN, 1989).

Although the Palermo one is the one that is most widely endorsed, it has not been routinely adopted across the globe, complicating attempts to estimate the number of children being trafficked. In the United States, for example, the Trafficking

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Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000 does not require victims to be transported from one location to another for the crime to fall within the definition of trafficking (United States Department of State, 2012). Because prevention and intervention strategies required when children are moved are different from those that are needed when they are exploited at or near to home, Dottridge (2008) suggests that the term *trafficking* should be reserved for instances involving movement to distinguish it from other forms of slavery and slave-like practices.

### Child Trafficking versus Migration and Smuggling

For some children, trafficking is a process whereby the cycle begins at the recruitment (predeparture) stage and is subsequently followed by the travel and destination or exploitation stages (International Labour Organization, 2009a). They are often lured or deceived into leaving their homes with the promise of good employment opportunities and are provided with false documentation. Upon arrival at their destination, they learn that they were misinformed about what awaited them; their passports are confiscated, and they are forced to work under conditions of slavery (Organization for Security & Cooperation in Europe [OSCE], 2010). For other children, trafficking occurs within the context of migration. Migration occurs when people leave their homes willingly in the hopes of finding better opportunities for livelihood elsewhere. The movement across borders is generally voluntary in the sense that the young person (or her family) has made the decision to travel for work, even though the available alternatives may be limited (Global Movement for Children, 2010; Van de Glind, 2010).

Young people who migrate, however, and particularly those who migrate across international borders, are particularly vulnerable to exploitation by traffickers while en route to or upon arrival at the destination. This is especially true when their immigration status is unclear, they have no money, and they are cut off from their natural support systems (Boak, Karklina, & Kurova, 2003; Van de Glind, 2010). In contrast with trafficking and migration, smuggling requires the crossing of borders and the illegal entry into a different country. It does not involve an element of coercion, because the participants are willing to be smuggled and no subsequent exploitation is intended (Inter-Parliamentary Union [IPU] & United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2009). It is the element of coercion, deception, and exploitation resulting in victims being subjected to exploitation of services or slavery that characterizes trafficking, regardless of whether it occurred at the beginning of the journey, during the journey when help is offered, or at the end of the journey.

### Magnitude

Finding reliable statistics on the extent of human trafficking is virtually impossible. Thus, the exact number of people who are trafficked annually worldwide is not known (Ezeilo, 2009; Smith, 2011). Available data are elusive, confusing, and unreliable in view of (a) uncoordinated data collection and statistics riddled with methodological problems making it hard to evaluate the validity and reliability of available data; (b) the clandestine nature

of trafficking; (c) the fact that it is a criminal activity, and lawmakers and public officials find it difficult to acknowledge the magnitude of the problem; and (d) the lack of precise, consistent, unambiguous, and standard operating definitions as to what constitutes the act of trafficking, trafficker, trafficked person, and child (Andrews, 2004; Gozdzia, 2008; Gozdzia & Collett, 2005; ILO, 2009a; IPU & UNODC, 2009; OSCE, 2010).

Some definitions of child trafficking, for example, include all children and youth under the age of 18 who have been recruited to be exploited, whereas others include only those who have been moved from one place to another (Dottridge, 2008; Staiger, 2005). In the United States, for example, the TVPA and its reauthorizations specifically define anyone under the age of 18 who is "induced to perform" a commercial sexual act as a victim of human trafficking and is therefore entitled to protection (United States Department of State, 2012). In addition, the phrases *commercial sexual exploitation of children* and *child sex trafficking* are used interchangeably. Furthermore, End Child Prostitution and Trafficking International (ECPAT, 2012) notes that: "According to the TVPA, sex trafficking of children is synonymous with child prostitution, or commercial sexual exploitation of children. It applies to all persons under the age of 18. Issues of consent, physical maturity, and the child's lack of acknowledgment of her/his victimhood are irrelevant. Neither force nor movement across countries, across state lines or even across the street is required for child trafficking under the definition of the TVPA" (p. 9). Despite these caveats and inconsistencies in available data, the most widely cited statistics are those provided by the ILO (2002, 2005, 2008, 2012). For example, the ILO (2008) noted:

The ILO has developed the first-ever global estimate on the numbers of persons who are held in forced labor, with a breakdown of those who have been trafficked into labor as well as commercial sexual exploitation. Out of 12.3 million forced labor victims worldwide, around 2.4 million were trafficked. The figures present a conservative estimate of actual victims at any given point in time, estimated over a period of ten years. Earlier ILO estimates on child labor indicate that as many as 1.2 million victims of trafficking are minors (under 18). It is often assumed that people are mainly trafficked for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. ILO estimates indicate, however, that 32% of all victims were trafficked into labor exploitation, while 43% were trafficked for sexual exploitation and 25% for a mixture of both. Women and girls make up the overwhelming majority of those trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation (98%). (p. 3)

In contrast with these widely publicized estimates, the most recent report published by the ILO (2012) does not disaggregate human trafficking victims as a subset of the global forced labor estimate, reflecting their current recognition that human trafficking is defined by exploitation, not by movement. Indeed, the 2012 report indicates that there are approximately 20.9 million victims of forced labor at any time, whereby 25% of victims are below age 18 (5.5 million). They additionally report that (a) 68% (14,200,200) are victims of forced labor exploitation by individuals or enterprises in the private economy (e.g., construction, domestic work, or manufacturing), and 27% of those victims are below age 18; (b) 22% (4,500,000) are victims of forced sexual exploitation (98% are female), with children under age 18 accounting for 21% of the total; and (c) 10% (2,200,000) are victims of state-imposed forced labor (e.g., in prisons or in

work imposed by the state military or by rebel armed forces), with children under age 18 accounting for 33% of the total.

These estimates do not include those who were trafficked for non-work-related activities (e.g., for organ removal, forced marriage, or adoption). Furthermore, these estimates sharply contrast with commonly reported estimates provided by the UNODC (2009), which reported that the most prominent form of trafficking (accounting for 79% of the total) is for CSE and that the majority of trafficking victims identified by states are women and children who make up 88% of all victims (66% of victims are women, 13% girls, 9% boys, and 12% men).

## Regions

Human trafficking is a highly complex global phenomenon, with no region of the world free of the practice. It involves internal trafficking within the borders of a country as well as cross-border international trafficking. Countries may be designated as source, transit, or destination countries or any combination of these (ILO, 2009a; IPU & UNODC, 2009). Human trafficking affects the global community, as victims are being exploited in 137 countries (UNODC, 2008, 2009). Based on their most recent estimate of forced labor, the ILO (2012) reports that the largest number of forced laborers are located in Asia and in the Pacific region (which includes South Asia) with 56% of the total (11.7 million), followed by Africa, with 18% of the total (3.7 million), and Latin America, with 9% of the total (1.8 million).

## Recruitment Methods

Trafficking is an egregious instance of the oppression of children via the application of adult power (Grover, 2007). In some cases, traffickers recruit their prey either in person or through bogus or semilegitimate employment agencies, fraudulent advertisements in local newspapers, mail-order bride catalogues, and via the Internet or other new technologies, including social networking sites, chat rooms, and Voice-Over Internet Protocol. All offer a false promise of a better life elsewhere (e.g., employment, modeling, marriage). In other cases, poverty-stricken families sell their children in a desperate attempt to purchase food (Gjermeni et al., 2008; Hoot, Tadesse, & Abdella, 2006; OSCE, 2010; UNODC, 2009). Trafficking for CSE also includes the *loverboy* method, whereby girls are initially seduced and subsequently sexually exploited (Staiger, 2005). A study conducted in the Netherlands, for example, found that loverboys were found to be involved in about half the cases of girls under age 18 who were being commercially sexually exploited (Van den Borne & Kloosterboer, 2005).

## Victim Characteristics

Some children are at higher risk of being trafficked than others. In general, traffickers target those who are most vulnerable, because they are easier to control (Van de Glind, 2010). Although child trafficking involves both girls and boys from birth through age 18, individual risk factors vary according to the purpose for which they are being trafficked as well as by location. Children who are being trafficked for illicit adoptions,

for example, are more likely to be infants (although pregnant women have also been trafficked), while those who are being trafficked for forced marriage tend to be young girls. Children who are being trafficked for body parts, organized begging, or for labor can be any age or gender; however, girls are more likely than boys to be trafficked into domestic servitude, and boys are more likely than girls to be trafficked for commercial work such as fishing. All over the world, girls are particularly vulnerable to being trafficked into the sex trade; girls and women represent 98% of those who are trafficked for CSE (ILO, 2012; United States Department of State, 2012).

Notably, age is also a factor, as girls between the ages of 12 and 16 are at greatest risk (Dottridge, 2002). In Ethiopia, where 20% of the known prostitutes are girls between the ages of 12 and 18, 20% reported that they were first involved in forced prostitution before age 11 (Hoot et al., 2006). Other risk factors include ethnic minority status, living in a rural area, lack of educational attainment, having a disability, inadequate family protection, and having migrated (Barnitz, 2001; Beyrer, 2001; Flowers, 2001; Gjermeni et al., 2008; ILO, 2009a; International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2004; Ireland, 1993; OSCE, 2010; Staiger, 2005; Van de Glind, 2010). Finally, children who have run away from home, in some cases fleeing abuse or neglect by their own parents, and are either living on the streets or are in “out of home” placements—including youth shelters, group homes, and foster care facilities—are at greater risk for becoming victims of trafficking (Boak, Karklina, et al., 2003; Coy, 2009; Gjermeni et al., 2008; Ireland, 1993; Snell, 2003).

## Forms of Exploitation

Definitional issues make it problematic to ascertain the various forms of exploitation. According to the UNODC (2009), for example, sex slavery accounts for 79% of all human trafficking. In contrast, the ILO (2012) uses a broader definition of forced labor and does not disaggregate human trafficking victims as a subset of the global forced labor. They also estimate that 22% of the 20.9 million people who are victims of forced labor at any given time are engaged in forced sexual exploitation. Because heterosexual prostitution remains the largest and most profitable form of CSE, girls are primarily affected (IOM, 2009; United States Department of State, 2012). However, an increasing number of boys are at risk of exploitation by adult males as well (Federick, 2009; Lillywhite & Skidmore, 2006). In addition to CSE, children are also lured into domestic servitude, labor exploitation, military conscription, armed conflict, forced marriage, false promises of schooling, illicit and illegal adoptions, sports (e.g., camel jockeys), street begging, organ extraction, agricultural work, and petty theft (Hill & Carey, 2010; Lederer, 2001; OSCE, 2010). Additionally, children trafficked into one form of labor are often subsequently sold into another form of labor. For example, girls recruited to work in factories or as domestics are then subsequently sold into brothels (Gozdziaik & MacDonnell, 2007).

## Exploiters

A range of individuals and groups contribute to the trafficking of children, including business owners, community members,

members of organized crime networks, sex tour operators, brothel owners, and corrupt officials in law enforcement, immigration, and the judicial system who have been lax in enforcing laws because of their own profiting from the illegal sex trade (Barnitz, 2001; Beyrer, 2001; Farr, 2005; Gjermeni et al., 2008; Hoot et al., 2006; OSCE, 2010; Staiger, 2005). Some families sell their children out of desperation to pay for food or health care; others mistakenly place their trust in the smooth-talking agents who paint a rosy picture of their children's bright prospects elsewhere (Gozdziak, 2008).

Information collected about traffickers does not always conform to the stereotypical images portrayed in public materials. Some reports, for example, show a growing tendency for young women to be involved as traffickers, including former victims who have returned from overseas to act as suppliers of children to those who will exploit them. These unscrupulous traffickers, who tend to be attractive, nicely dressed, and to wear expensive jewelry, are generally hired by networks of traffickers to use their familiarity with victims to gain their trust while making false promises of decent employment, well-paying jobs, marriage, or residency documents in more prosperous areas (Gozdziak, 2008; IOM, 2009; UNODC, 2009). The profile of traffickers also varies depending on the purpose and process of the traffickers. Organized networks, for example, tend to be more skilled at dealing with the legal impediments associated with cross-border trafficking (e.g., purchase fake documents, collaborate with law enforcement officials, avoid immigration requirements; UNICEF, 2009).

Those who support the trafficking of children also include men from industrialized and developing countries who keep traffickers in business and add to the coffers of corrupt officials through their purchase, exploitation, and abuse of children (Malarek, 2009). Each year, foreign travelers from predominantly Western countries visit developing nations where they purchase sexual services. Data on 240 foreigners who sexually abused children in Asian countries indicate that 25% came from the United States, followed by Germany (16%), the United Kingdom (13%), Australia (12%), and France and Japan (7% each; Andrews, 2004). Local demand for commercial sex with children, however, accounts for the majority of demand—a fact that is often overlooked. For example, 43 of 44 adults in Cambodia who entered the sex industry when they were minors indicated that their usual clients were Cambodian men and not foreigners (Chan, 2010). Additionally, the Coalition against Trafficking in Women reports that 4.6 million Thai men, regularly, and 500,000 foreign tourists, annually, use prostituted girls and women. Moreover, 90% of Southeast Asian men have visited a prostitute at least once, and 60% are regulars (Hughes, Sporic, Mendelsohn, & Chirgwin, 1999)

Cultural norms also tend to be associated with CSE. For example, only 11% of Swedish men who were asked if they would be willing to buy sex responded in the affirmative compared with 60% of Dutch men (Hughes, 2004). Overall, 7% of men in Great Britain reported that they had purchased sex in contrast with 39% of the men in Spain and 73% of the men in Thailand. Caution is warranted because of the use of different research methodologies (Yen, 2008). A 2010 survey of 47 Cambodian men in male-frequented establishments, such as beer gardens and snooker clubs, found that many local

men (ages 19–59) reported that they prefer younger girls (Chan, 2010). Finally, a recent study conducted in the United States, which involved 218 men between the ages of 18 and 67 (mean = 33 years) who responded to an advertisement on the Internet, found that, although many of the men who exploit children were not seeking adolescent females per se, almost half were willing to pay for sex with a young female knowing that she was an adolescent girl (Schapiro Group, 2010).

A number of studies also describe the motivations, characteristics, and behaviors of the heterogeneous john population. Abusers of both girls and boys through CSE are, for the most part, heterosexual men (Montgomery-Devlin, 2008), but only a small percentage are considered to be pedophiles (Andrews, 2004; Barnitz, 2001). Studies have identified the typical customer as being male, about 30 years old, married, and employed full time with no previous criminal record, although they come from all age groups and occupational backgrounds (Andrews, 2004; Barnitz, 2001; Yen, 2008). Chan (2010) found that the major reasons cited for purchasing sex included sexual needs, cheap and easily available sexual services, a form of male bonding and male socializing, the nature of social relationships, and the role of peer pressure in pressuring men to prove their masculinity by visiting brothels.

### **Impact on Children: Costs and Consequences**

When children are trafficked away from their families, friends, communities, and support networks, their development and survival are seriously threatened, as they are forced to live in abominable conditions and stripped of their basic human rights to protection, health, and education. Young victims are dependent on their traffickers for food, shelter, and other basic necessities, and many fear retaliation against themselves or their families (Gjermeni et al., 2008; Hodge & Lietz, 2007). Children who are transported across international borders to unfamiliar locations where they do not speak the local language are even more disempowered because of their diminished capacity to seek assistance or escape. Some have been threatened about being imprisoned for immigration or other crimes, making it even more difficult for them to escape from their exploitative situation (Zimmerman et al., 2003). Others who have tried to escape have been severely beaten or killed by traffickers (Yen, 2008); many children never see their families again (ILO, 2008).

### **Physical, Psychological, and Sexual Abuse**

Although empirical research is sorely lacking regarding the impact of child trafficking on children, reports from those individuals who have worked with thousands of victims over many years suggest that the impact on children cannot be overstated. Health and safety standards in exploitative settings have been described as being extremely low, and the degree of experienced violence can range from coercive strategies, such as physical and verbal threats, to extreme physical abuse or torture-like violence (IOM, 2009). While working long hours, some children are even exposed to toxic chemicals or dangerous machinery; extreme violence; communicable diseases; and physical,

emotional, and sexual abuse. Acts of psychological torture, as defined by Amnesty International, have also been reported: induced debility, producing exhaustion, weakness, or fatigue (e.g., food or sleep deprivation); isolation; monopolization of perception (including obsessiveness and possessiveness); and threats of harm to the victim or her family and friends.

A number of other tactics have been identified to control victims, including threat or continued use of force (physical, psychological, or sexual violence); debt bondage, whereby the traffickers bear the transportation costs, and the victims incur the costs as debt threats against family members; social isolation; food deprivation; restriction of personal freedom or confinement; threat of deportation; and confiscation of identification cards and legal documents (Gjermeni et al., 2008; Hodge & Lietz, 2007; IOM, 2004; OSCE, 2010; Tsutsumi, Izutsu, Poudyal, Kato, & Marui, 2008; Zimmerman et al., 2003). A survey of 53 Cambodian sex slaves, for example, found that almost all had been abused by both customers and brothel owners (UNICEF, 2009). Silverman, Decker, McCauley, and Mack (2009) describe criminal activity in Thailand, Cambodia, and Indonesia, whereby trafficking victims, many of them aged 12 to 16, were raped; locked up; denied food, water, and medical care; or forced to take narcotics and alcohol. Statements made by children who were interviewed by Gjermeni et al. (2008) include “They would not give us food,” “We were beaten,” “Cigarettes were put out on my belly,” “I was burned with a hot iron,” “We were immersed naked into cold water,” “I was threatened to be killed if I ran away,” and “I was told my tongue would be cut off.”

In addition to the physical abuse described above, children who experience CSE also confront the dangers associated with sexual abuse and unprotected sex, placing them at higher risk for sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV, unwanted pregnancy, and reproductive illnesses (ILO, 2009a; Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2010). Compared to their peers who were also being prostituted in Thailand but had not been trafficked, girls who had been trafficked were subjected to more frequent sexual encounters in the past month (33.4 vaginal sex episodes vs. 24.6) and were also three times more likely to experience anal sex, which represents a relatively high level of HIV risk (Silverman et al., 2009).

More recently, research involving 815 women and girls in Thailand found that those who had been trafficked into CSE were more likely to report sexual violence, mistreatment, condom nonuse, and abortion compared with their peers who had not been trafficked (Decker, McCauley, Phuengsamran, Janyam, & Silverman, 2011). Zimmerman et al. (2003) interviewed 28 adolescent girls and women (ages 13–28) trafficked in Europe: All reported sexual abuse, including vaginal, oral, and anal sex, unprotected sex, and gang rape. Almost one fourth had at least one pregnancy and abortion. A later study, involving 192 adolescent girls and women (ages 15–45 years) found that the majority reported experiencing physical abuse (76%), sexual abuse (90%), physical injuries (57%), and restrictions of personal freedoms (76%) while in the trafficking situation (Zimmerman et al., 2008). Finally, 89% of females in prostitution in nine countries reported that they wanted to escape, but that they had no other option for survival (Farley et al., 2003).

## The Consequences

Despite the paucity of empirical research on the physical and emotional health of children who have been trafficked, published studies, protocols, and declarations suggest that the effects may seriously hamper children’s physical, psychological, and social-emotional development. As noted by UNICEF (2009), “When such experiences occur during a child’s formative years—when they learn to relate to other and build their identity, self-esteem and trust—the adverse effects can be devastating, long-lasting and potentially irreparable, depending on the age of the child, the child’s relationship with the exploiter, and the severity and duration of the exploitation” (p. 19). The following section provides a review of available research on physical and mental health outcomes associated with child trafficking and CSE. In addition, because related research on child maltreatment can also shed light on the plight of children who are trafficked (Rafferty, 2008), select research findings are also highlighted.

**Physical health problems.** Empirical research on child maltreatment suggests a link between child maltreatment and maladaptive physical and psychological outcomes, including emotional problems, aggressive behavior, substance abuse, and suicide (Bottoms & Quas, 2006; Noll & Shenk, 2010). In addition, the experiences of juveniles involved in prostitution have been linked with health concerns such as illness and poor nutrition (Mitchell et al., 2010). Further, the harsh conditions, persistent and extreme abuse, and trauma associated with child trafficking and CSE have been linked with a range of health-related problems. Physical abuse and deprivation, for example, can result in direct physical injury (e.g., broken bones, bruises, contusions, cuts, burns), indirect physical injury (e.g., chronic headaches, dizziness), insomnia and disrupted sleep patterns, or in extreme cases, homicide or suicide (ILO, 2009a; IOM, 2009; Zimmerman et al., 2008). In one noteworthy study involving 47 girls and women (ages 17–38) who had been trafficked for CSE in Israel, high rates of reported somatic symptoms were identified: headaches (60%), backache (40%), the shakes (30%), dizziness (55%), stomach ache (53%), nausea (40%), and throat infections (36%). Additionally, 57% reported dental problems (Cwikel, Chudakov, Paikin, Agmon, & Belmaker, 2004). Another study involving 197 survivors receiving post-trafficking services in Europe identified physical injuries, including headaches (82%), tiredness (81%), dizzy spells (70%), back pain (69%), memory difficulty (62%), stomach pain (61%), pelvic pain (59%), and gynecological infections (58%). The majority (63%) reported at least 10 coexisting physical health symptoms or problems (Zimmerman et al., 2008). Other frequently noted health issues include weight loss, eating disorders, sleep disturbances, and insomnia (IOM, 2009). Drug and alcohol abuse is also a serious problem (Mitchell et al., 2010) and can result in overdose or drug or alcohol addiction (ILO, 2009a).

Higher rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), tuberculosis, pelvic inflammatory disease, infertility, vaginal fistula, unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortions, complications from unwanted pregnancies, and poor reproductive health have also been identified among children and youth who had been trafficked for CSE (Beyrer &

Stachowiak, 2003; Flowers, 2001; Ireland, 1993; Kumar, Subedi, Gurung, & Adhikari, 2001; Miles, 2000; Mitchell et al., 2010; Silverman, Decker, Gupta, Maheshwari, & Patel, 2006; Silverman et al., 2007, 2009; Tsutsumi et al., 2008). In Indonesia, for example, HIV was prevalent in 20% of 487 girls and women (47% were under age 18) who had been sexually exploited for a year or more; 75% of those Indonesian girls and women had experienced sexual violence (Silverman et al., 2009). Further, in Cambodia, 73% of 136 girls and women who had been rescued (52% were under age 18) tested positive for STIs (Silverman et al., 2009). Additionally, in Nepal, 29.5% of 44 girls between the ages of 11 and 44 who were receiving post-trafficking services tested positive for HIV (Tsutsumi et al., 2008). A final study involving Nepalese girls under the age of 15 who had been trafficked for CSE found that 61% tested positive for HIV (Silverman et al., 2007). Lastly, Kumar et al. (2001) found that 38% of girls in Nepal who had been trafficked and prostituted had contracted HIV/AIDS.

**Mental health problems.** In addition to the visible scars described above, victims may develop a wide range of psychological and interpersonal problems (Beyrer & Stachowiak, 2003; Cwikel et al., 2004; Deb, Mukherjee, & Matthews, 2011; Hossain, Zimmerman, Abas, Light, & Watts, 2010; Kleinschmidt, 2009; Tsutsumi et al., 2008; Zimmerman et al., 2008). In extreme cases, the psychological symptoms demonstrated by children who have experienced trafficking-related abuses have been compared with the psychological symptoms identified in torture victims who report a complex set of psychological and physiological symptoms (IOM, 2009; Zimmerman et al., 2003).

In one noteworthy empirical study involving female survivors of human trafficking receiving services in Nepal (ages 11–44), those who had been trafficked for prostitution ( $n = 44$ ) had higher levels of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) than peers ( $n = 120$ ) exploited for other purposes (domestic and circus work; Tsutsumi et al., 2008). Overall, a high proportion of both groups reported anxiety symptoms (97.7% vs. 87.5%). Victims of CSE were more likely to manifest significantly higher symptoms of both depression (100% vs. 80.8%) and PTSD (29.6% vs. 7.5%). In a second noteworthy study, Cwikel et al. (2004) assessed 49 girls and women (ages 17–38) who had been trafficked for CSE in Israel and were awaiting judicial hearings for deportation. Overall, 17% scored above the diagnostic cutoff for PTSD symptoms, 47% had considered suicide, and 19% had attempted suicide at least once.

Another study, involving 197 women receiving post-trafficking services in Europe, found that exposure to multiple forms of abuse was associated with higher levels of negative mental health symptoms. Women-rated symptoms of depression, anxiety, and hostility were in the 98th, 97th, and 95th percentiles, respectively, compared with a normative sample; they were in the 51st percentile compared with psychiatric patients (for depression, anxiety, and hostility). In addition, 39% reported recent suicidal thoughts, and 57% met the criteria for PTSD (Zimmerman et al., 2008). Additionally, Hossain et al. (2010) explored the association between girls' and women's experiences and symptoms of common mental disorders among 204 victims

(ages 15–45) who were currently receiving post-trafficking services in Belgium, the Czech Republic, Italy, and the United Kingdom. Overall, 77% had possible PTSD, 55% reported higher levels of depression symptoms, and 48% reported higher levels of anxiety symptoms. More time since trafficking was associated with higher levels of depression and anxiety, but not of PTSD. Finally, Deb et al. (2011) compared the incidence and severity of aggression among 120 girls (ages 13–18) in Kolkata, India, who had been trafficked for CSE and were currently in a shelter with 120 nonsexually abused peers who were randomly selected from four schools. Overall, victims of CSE were significantly more likely to be highly aggressive than their peers in the comparison group (31% vs. 14%).

Related research on child maltreatment suggests a link between child abuse and poorer mental health outcomes. These studies have identified a range of common manifestations, including (a) psychological reactions (e.g., hopelessness, despair, suicidal ideation and attempts, anxiety disorders, low self-esteem, depression), (b) psychoactive substance abuse and dependence (e.g., addiction, overdose), (c) psychosomatic reactions (e.g., headaches, neck pain, back aches, sleeping problems), (d) social reactions (e.g., feelings of isolation, loneliness, hostility), and (e) severe post traumatic stress syndrome/disorder (Avery, Massat, & Lundy, 2000; Finkelhor, 1990; Mitchell et al., 2010; Wells & Mitchell, 2007; Zimmerman et al., 2003). Children who experience sexual abuse, for example, are more likely to experience adverse emotional outcomes, including anxiety and depression, lower self-esteem, social isolation, symptoms of PTSD, substance abuse, and suicide (Dykman et al., 1997; Kaufman, 1991; Nelson et al., 2002). Sexually abused children can suffer from severe psychological ramifications, such as PTSD and depression (Kendall-Tackett, Williams, & Finkelhor, 2001).

Finally, multiple experiences of victimization during childhood increase the risk for mental illness (Read, 1997), as well as psychiatric difficulties, in adults (Edwards, Holden, Felitti, & Anda, 2003; Horwitz, Widom, Loughlin, & White, 2001; Widom, 1999). Finally, related research on children who have been exposed to complex trauma reveals that they are at increased risk for a number of symptoms and behavioral characteristics, including attachment, biological integrity, emotional regulation, dissociative adaptations, behavior, cognitive functioning, and self-concept (Briere & Spinazolla, 2005; Cook et al., 2005).

### **Combating Child Trafficking: A Human-Rights-Based Approach**

A human-rights-based approach to combat child trafficking provides a comprehensive conceptual framework whereby victim-focused and law enforcement responses can be developed, implemented, and evaluated. Notably, it provides for the promotion and protection of fundamental human rights guaranteed under international law, recognizes the importance of a comprehensive response to violations that is based on both international law and human rights, and acknowledges the importance of both prevention and protection (Ezeilo, 2009, 2011; Robinson, 2002). This approach aims to combat trafficking by enabling children to better protect themselves by creating

a safe and protective environment through law enforcement and increased monitoring. Additionally, it is designed to ensure the protection of human rights from before a person is trafficked to after law enforcement has stepped in (i.e., from prevention through prosecution) and has been widely endorsed by the international community (including the U.N. General Assembly and the Human Rights Council).

The international human-rights-based approach is a *person-centered* framework that places children at the center of all efforts to combat trafficking: It recognizes the child's right to be both protected and assisted as well as for the child's perpetrator to be held accountable. Thus, it calls for the identification of both those at risk for trafficking as well as those who have been trafficked, an analysis of their entitlements, and work toward strengthening their capacities to secure their rights under international human rights law. It also requires ensuring that the child's best interests are given primary consideration in all actions and interventions, an assessment of strategies on the basis of their impact, and emphasizes that perpetrators of criminal trafficking violate international laws and must be subject to prosecution (Ezeilo, 2011). Finally, the approach seeks to identify and redress the discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that underlie human trafficking, maintain impunity for traffickers, and deny justice to victims (Robinson, 2002).

Given this framework, a comprehensive human-rights-based approach to child trafficking should consist of (a) adequate law enforcement as well as a law enforcement system that is free from corruption and provides the basis for the identification and punishment of those who exploit children; (b) an understanding of who is accountable to protect children in high-risk settings, including the strategies that are required to effectively protect them; (c) a monitoring system that is capable of identifying children who are at risk of trafficking as well as the tracking of those who have been victimized, so that they can be provided with timely and effective rehabilitation and enable them to recover their dignity and human rights; and (d) international cooperation and coordination and communication between stakeholders at national and subnational levels as well as among all professionals who are working with and for children.

To facilitate an appropriate human-rights-based perspective into national, regional, and international antitrafficking interventions, policies, and laws, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights adopted an international "soft law" instrument in May, 2002 (Robinson, 2002). The Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking, with 17 principles and 11 guidelines, are built around four pillars: (a) the primacy of human rights, (b) the prevention of trafficking by addressing root causes, (c) the extension of protection and assistance to all victims (instead of criminalization), and (d) the punishment of perpetrators and redress of victims (Ezeilo, 2009, 2011; Pillay, 2010; Robinson, 2002; Scarpa, 2006).

Country obligations are underpinned by seven human rights principles, which include accountability, participation, transparency, empowerment, sustainability, international cooperation, and nondiscrimination. The first of these principles states: "The human rights of the trafficked persons shall be at the center of all efforts to prevent and combat trafficking and to protect,

assist and provide redress to victims." Another key principle concerning the primacy of human rights points out that measures to prevent trafficking should not "adversely affect the human rights and dignity of persons"—either those who have been trafficked or others such as migrants. It provides practical, rights-based policy guidance on both the prevention of trafficking and the protection of victims and highlights the need for law enforcement, protection, empowerment, and participation of affected and at-risk children, their families, and communities (Scarpa, 2006). Thus, in addition to providing a strong national legal framework, an effective rights-based approach to child trafficking helps us to understand that the human rights embedded in treaties must be translated into services on the ground.

### **Ensure Child Rights Through Prevention and Protection**

The following section is guided by ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Ecological theory highlights the complexity of developmental processes and acknowledges that child development is diverse, complex, and multiply determined and that it is influenced by the transaction between characteristics of the child and the environmental context in which she or he develops. Thus, the following section begins by highlighting potential strategies designed to combat demand for cheap labor and sex with children, including (a) strengthening the legal framework through legislation and law enforcement and (b) identifying exploiters and facilitators. Next, potential strategies to reduce supply are highlighted including (a) promoting competence and resilience through education and life skills, (b) ensuring safe migration, and (c) preventing revictimization and providing rehabilitation and reintegration for victims. In a final section, potential strategies to strengthen communities are highlighted including (a) national child protection systems, (b) economic opportunities, (c) gender equality, (d) partnerships—interdisciplinary collaboration and communication, (e) adequate training of law enforcement personnel and other front line staff, and (f) children's participation.

### **Combat Demand**

The unrelenting demand for cheap labor provided by women, girls, and boys who are being prostituted has been identified as the primary "pull" factor associated with demand for cheap labor and the growth of the commercial sex industry (Hughes, 2004; Rafferty, 2007; Wennerholm, 2002; Yen, 2008). Because child trafficking and CSE would not exist without both the sex buyers and the global demand for cheap victims to exploit, every preventive intervention must address demand as a root cause. Little attention, however, has been paid to demand in general and specifically to the role of male demand for commercial sexual services in perpetuating the growth in the trafficking of children and youth.

A comprehensive tackling of demand requires action at each of the three levels of demand: (a) employer demand (e.g., employers of children who have been trafficked in business, brothel owners, pimps, managers, subcontractors), (b) consumer demand, such as clients or prostitute users (in the sex industry), corporate buyers (in manufacturing), household

members (in domestic work), and (c) third parties and other intermediaries involved in the process and who profit indirectly (unscrupulous traffickers, recruiters, agents, transporters, and corrupt officials in law enforcement, immigration, and the judicial system who participate knowingly in the movement of persons for the purposes of exploitation and have been lax in enforcing laws because of their own profiting from the illegal sex trade; IPU & UNODC, 2009).

### **Strengthen the legal framework through legislation and law enforcement**

International law, particularly human rights law, requires nations to criminalize trafficking and related offenses, and a number of resources have been developed to support more effective and rights-based criminal justice responses (Gallagher, 2010; Gallagher & Karlebach, 2011). Unfortunately, traffickers and their accomplices are seldom investigated, prosecuted, convicted, and punished (Gallagher & Karlebach, 2011).

The UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children (UN, 2000) has had the greatest impact on the development of national laws that make it an offense to traffic children. Although the Protocol calls on nations to adopt or strengthen measures that would discourage the demand that fosters exploitation, this suggestion has been deemed to be too weak and unenforceable to capture the full attention and compliance from nations (Yen, 2008). More effective strategies would focus on the need for nations to implement legislation at the national level, criminalization of the offense of trafficking, and establish adherence to human rights in all legislative responsive to trafficking (Amnesty International, 2010; Gallagher, 2010; Gallagher & Karlebach, 2011; UNODC, 2008). The following section highlights the importance for nations to ratify international instruments and adopt legislation in compliance with international obligation, enforce laws, and prosecute traffickers in a timely manner.

**Ratify international instruments and adopt legislation in compliance with international obligations.** Governments should ratify the UN Protocol (currently ratified by 153 members of the United Nations), adopt specific antitrafficking laws, and develop legislative measures to strengthen the protection of children in compliance with international obligations (Andrews, 2004; Barnitz, 2001; Dottridge, 2008; Gallagher, 2010; Gallagher & Karlebach, 2011; ILO, 2009b; IOM, 2009; IPU & UNODC, 2008, 2009; Yen, 2008). Key elements of effective national legislation should define human trafficking and criminalize all its forms, include prevention and protective measures, be victim centered, remove criminal status from the prostituted minor or the trafficked foreign victim, provide special procedures and personal security measures for the protection of children who agree to testify to help develop better prosecutions, and allow for confiscation of assets from traffickers (Ezeilo, 2011; IOM, 2009; IPU & UNODC, 2009).

**Enforce laws.** In addition to a strong legal framework around child trafficking, effectiveness will ultimately depend on how well it is enforced. Facilitators of child trafficking and exploiters of children often operate with impunity because of

weak or ineffective laws (Gallagher, 2010; Gallagher & Karlebach, 2011; ILO, 2009b; IPU & UNODC, 2009). One explanation often cited for the lack of enforcement of laws is the corruption among public officials and police, bribery, and public officials' active participation as brothel customers (Andrews, 2004; Scarpa, 2006). In Cambodia, for example, public officials profit greatly from brothel owners for their protection of the child sex trade and are also frequent patrons of brothels where children are sold (Andrews, 2004).

**Prosecute traffickers and dismantle the criminal networks that perpetuate trafficking in persons.** Bringing criminals to justice has been proposed to be a strong deterrent for traffickers and those who exploit children (Hughes, 2004; ILO, 2009b; United States Department of Justice, 2010). However, the rate of prosecutions for trafficking offenses is very low globally (Hill & Carey, 2010; UNODC, 2009). In 2011, for example, there were only 7,206 prosecutions for trafficking offenses worldwide (up from 6,017 in 2010) and 4,239 convictions (up from 3,619 in 2010; United States Department of State, 2012). International child sex tourists, for example, face little fear of repercussion for their actions because there is a relatively low risk of prosecution in the countries where they commit their crimes, despite the fact that they have laws against prostitution (Andrews, 2004). Efforts to prosecute facilitators, however, must be expanded above the level of the individual and include close monitoring of legitimately registered businesses such as strip clubs, massage parlors, and escort services, and vigorous prosecution when they are found to be facilitators of commercial sexual services involving children (IOM, 2009; Smith, 2010).

**Identify exploiters and facilitators.** Because tackling demand requires the development of strategies to identify people whose money makes trafficking possible, some efforts have aimed to identify recruiters, recruitment patterns, and traffickers as well as the implementation of law enforcement efforts to disrupt trafficking networks. As noted by Dottridge (2008), however, such efforts must be implemented at the point of recruitment (e.g., through word of mouth and person-to-person connections), during border crossings (e.g., including train and bus stations), and while children are being exploited (e.g., in agriculture, while begging, or other types of activities where they are visible to the public).

Because employment agencies may also act as recruiters and intermediaries (OSCE, 2010), some strategies have aimed to regulate the employment of young people in the informal sector and in sectors known to practice forced labor. Other efforts to influence consumers have focused on those who donate money to beggars or on the men and boys who pay for sex with children. One promising (although not evaluated) strategy that has been implemented by countries includes awareness-raising programs for groups of men, such as members of the armed forces and military recruits (UN, 2004). Another striking example is the implementation of programs for those who wish to sexually exploit children (e.g., Johns' School). More specifically, men who are arrested for buying the services of women and children are required to participate in an 8-hr seminar or face prosecution. Programs (seminars) designed to educate and rehabilitate

men who pay for sex from children and women typically consist of informational campaigns designed to promote behavior change and prevent further acts of violence (Barnitz, 2001; Yen, 2008).

In their final report on the evaluation of San Francisco's First Offender Prostitution Programs, Shively et al. (2008) concluded that program participation substantially reduced recidivism among men arrested for soliciting prostitution. A final group of strategies developed following the exposé by the media that addressed the use of children, as young as 7 or 8, to make products for global multinational firms while working for long hours and low wages (Crane & Kazmi, 2009). Noteworthy strategies have targeted businesses and employers by focusing on regulatory mechanisms such as corporate social responsibility or codes of conduct (Dottridge, 2008; United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking, 2010).

### Reduce Supply

Children and youth who are trafficked are often referred to as the *supply* side of human trafficking (ILO, 2009a). The following section highlights exemplary supply side strategies that have been pursued in areas where children are recruited, including those that aim to identify those who are most vulnerable to trafficking. The focus is on innovative policies and programs designed to empower children and youth with essential personal resources to enhance their competencies within high-risk settings (e.g., education, life skills, awareness). This section also highlights the need for rehabilitation and reintegration programs and services to prevent the revictimization of girls who had previously been trafficked for CSE.

### Promote competence and resilience through education and life skills

**Education and schooling.** Because communities that are known as *sending areas* typically suffer from inadequate educational opportunities, expanding access to education and training in high-risk communities is vital (Gjermeni et al., 2008; ILO, 2009b; UNICEF, 2009). In southern Albania, for example, one third of the children identified as being at high risk of being trafficked were 3 years behind schedule in school, and two of three were more than a year behind. In some areas, children under age 14 had dropped out of school shortly before they were trafficked (Dottridge, 2006). Reasons for dropping out of school included family poverty, inadequate income, school failure, and discrimination against ethnic minorities. These findings suggest that the lack of financial resources and political will to ensure that all children attend school, including girls, ethnic minorities, and those with disabilities, may be important risk factors for trafficking.

Investing in education and training can play a paramount role in helping to break the cycle of poverty and should be emphasized in all development plans and programs (ILO, 2009b). Realistic teaching modules in schools are vital to inform students about human rights, gender issues, and human trafficking (IPU & UNODC, 2009). In addition, governments should ensure that the necessary policies are in place to remove

all barriers to girls' participation in education and schooling, such as cultural norms and safety concerns (Dottridge, 2006; ILO, 2009a; UNICEF, 2010; World Health Organization [WHO], 2009a). Research has shown that educating girls, especially through secondary and higher levels, can serve as a protective factor for girls against gender-based violence and has been identified as an important preventive intervention for children at risk of trafficking (United Nations Development Fund for Women [UNIFEM], 2011).

**Life skills.** The acquisition of life skills has been identified as a vital tool to prevent trafficking (Dottridge, 2008; ILO, 2009b; WHO, 2009b), and research has shown it to be an efficient method for preparing children and youth for independent life after graduation and for the prevention of social risks and trafficking (Guzun, 2004). According to Dottridge (2008), the term *life skills* refer to a set of skills that are considered important for making one's way in life. They include problem solving, communicating effectively, learning to negotiate and make decisions, resolving conflicts, managing interpersonal relationships, being self-aware and empathetic toward others, and coping effectively with emotions and stress. Within the context of child trafficking, *life skills* refers to the cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, and social skills that children can learn regarding social development and independent living.

### Ensure safe migration

Because some girls who opt to leave home themselves are subsequently trafficked, migration has been identified as a risk factor for human trafficking and other forms of exploitation. It is therefore important to increase the protection of migrant children as well as to enable them to better protect themselves (Flamm, 2010; Van de Glind, 2010). Knowledge and awareness are the first steps to enabling children to defend themselves (Flamm, 2010; Van de Glind, 2010). This includes identifying the incentives and disincentives for child migration and providing alternatives that would improve the outcome for children (Huijismans, 2011; Yaqub, 2009). Thus, providing adolescents with information and resources on safe migration, how to find decent work, what dangers to be aware of, whom to contact for help, and how to ensure that job offers abroad are safe and genuine has been the focus of several initiatives (Van de Glind, 2010).

The Project for the Prevention of Adolescent Trafficking in Latvia (PPAT-Latvia), for example, targeted youth between the ages of 14 and 25 and focused on providing education about the realities of migration. The ultimate goal was to empower potential migrants to make informed decisions about "whether migrating for work is the best choice and, if so, how and when to go." PPAT-Latvia began with an extensive baseline study to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of youth trafficking in Latvia from the perspective of the youth themselves. A survey was designed to obtain critical information necessary to design the intervention, including their knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes about human trafficking and an overview of the experiences of young people who had gone abroad to work in the past (Boak, Karklina, et al., 2003).

The outreach and education component of the intervention used four interrelated strategies. First, a youth trafficking

prevention curriculum was developed and integrated into existing health curricula of youth centers across Latvia. This component included a training film entitled “Smooth Flight” as well as educational modules designed to provide young people with the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about going abroad safely to work. Second, young people planning to go abroad to work were offered a free pretravel consultation session, during which they were provided with vital information. Third, a nationwide trafficking prevention information campaign was developed and implemented, inclusive of public service announcements, during popular youth television programs, movie trailers at major cinemas, free screenings of the training film, articles in magazines for teenagers, Internet chat sites, and posters. Further, brochures, which focused on the campaign strategy, “If you want to go out into the world to earn money or find happiness, learn how to do it safely,” were also distributed. Finally, career workshops were conducted to educate youth, their families, and community members about human trafficking and safe migration for work.

In addition, PPAT included a component that focused on advocacy and collaboration to combat trafficking and forced labor: The National Anti-Trafficking Working Group was established and brought together government leaders, law enforcement agencies, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to develop a coordinated strategy at the national policy level. Lastly, the program was evaluated for effectiveness. The focus of the outcome evaluation examined the impact of the PPAT-Latvia information campaign. After the campaign was completed, data were collected from 348 youth who were planning to go abroad to work in the next 6 months in an effort to determine if those exposed to the PPAT campaign were more likely to take appropriate precautions (e.g., asking for an employment contract, verifying that the job agency or opportunity was legitimate). Findings indicated that when participants had been exposed to the media campaign, particularly when exposed to the intervention messages via three or more media sources, there was a 37% increase in precaution taking compared with those who reported not having been exposed to the campaign (Boak, Ciobanica, & Griffin, 2003).

### **Prevent revictimization: Rehabilitation and reintegration for victims**

While effective prevention of revictimization requires the removal of the underlying causes of the trafficking for CSE (e.g., poverty and economic inequality, child and family risk factors, gender inequality and discrimination, and demand factors), it also requires the development and implementation of effective strategies to rehabilitate and reintegrate child victims. As noted earlier, several academic publications and international and governmental and nongovernmental reports describe the physical and emotional trauma, humiliation, violence, and degradation associated with treatment as a commodity as well as the impact of these crimes on children’s physical and emotional development.

The successful protection of children who have been trafficked will require activities designed to identify victims, assess their needs, and provide them with the necessary supports and services. As such, mental health practitioners have a vital role

to play. For example, the initial identification and assessment of children who have been trafficked presents a major challenge for those who come in contact with them, including cultural issues, the trauma and fear of the children, and the complex relationship between abuser and child (Gozdziak & MacDonnell, 2007; IOM, 2009; Zimmerman & Borland, 2009). Raising awareness of what trafficking is and the implementation of adequate and appropriate training programs for persons who come in contact with child victims (e.g., child welfare workers, staff in law enforcement, health care providers) can help to ensure that the necessary safeguards are in place (Gozdziak, 2008; Scott & Harper, 2006; UNIAP, 2009; UNODC, 2008, 2009).

Mental health providers can also play a vital role with regard to the appropriate assessment of children’s clinical and health care needs, as well as in the implementation of effective strategies to provide trauma-informed and culturally competent physical, psychological, and social rehabilitation services. Thus, effective intervention strategies will demand intensive resources to ensure that intake procedures are based on empirical support, include a comprehensive assessment of physical, mental health, sexual, and reproductive health (IOM, 2009), and require that services are made available to address each of the immediate and long-term needs. Research on trauma-informed care, for example, has shown promising results in helping victims of violence to cope with their experiences and avoid revictimization (Fallot, 2011).

Finally, given the complexities of children’s service needs, the multidisciplinary service approach to recovery has been proposed to ensure that victims receive effective psychosocial support during the rehabilitation and reintegration process (Inter-Agency Standing Committee [IASC], 2007; IOM, 2007). Such an approach might focus on the link between social-community and cultural factors and individual emotional well-being and include interventions that target the child’s family situation and home environment, the child’s educational and vocational needs, health and mental health problems, communities, and the broader culture and society (ECPAT, 2006; Elliot & Urquiza, 2006; Zimmerman et al., 2003).

### **Strengthen Communities**

An effective, sustainable, and rights-based solution to the complex problem of child trafficking and exploitation will require governments to recognize the importance of creating a safe, supportive, and protective environment in which all children and youth are protected against all forms of abuse, exploitation, neglect, and violence, and that their best interests are considered in all actions concerning them (Dottridge, 2008; Ezeilo, 2011; Robinson, 2002). UNICEF, for example, aims to create a protective environment for children by focusing on systemic factors at all levels—from government to community to family—designed to protect children (UNICEF, 2002). However, as noted by Blanchet-Cohen (2009), child protection approaches can be ineffective, and even counterproductive, when the local context is not given sufficient attention.

### **Implement national child protection systems**

One innovative proposal for an effective human-rights-based approach to combat child trafficking and CSE resides in the

development of a national child protection system designed to address the full range of child protection issues within a broader systems-building context (UNICEF, 2009). A systems-building approach requires strengthening protection at various levels and offers a clear-cut conceptual framework that ensures better outcomes for children (UNICEF, 2009). Additionally, although the establishment of a child protection system is primarily the responsibility of governments, ensuring an effective system also requires support from NGOs and the private sector (Dottridge, 2006; UNICEF, 2009). Improving child protection systems, especially their ability to identify children's vulnerability at an early stage and to provide adequate protection measures and support services to child victims, may go a long way toward preventing child trafficking and protecting victims. However, as noted by Dottridge (2006), because national child protection agencies and systems designed to protect children from trafficking frequently perform ineffectively or fail to function altogether, national plans to improve child protection services across the board might be more effective than plans and approaches that focus narrowly on child trafficking.

The essential components of a national child protective system consist of a range of options including (a) the building or strengthening of education, health, security, the formal and informal justice systems and structures (e.g., institutions, including mechanisms, capacities, and services) as well as the social welfare system for children and families; (b) enhancing the capacity and accountability of those responsible for the child's primary care, including parents, guardians, or others who have the care of the child—to protect them from harm, to recognize abuse and exploitation, and to act when they occur; (c) protecting children from adverse attitudes, traditions, customs, behaviors, and practices; and (d) having adequate laws and policies in place as well as structures, organizations, and professionals with relevant mandates and resources to implement these measures and ensuring adequate coordination and information exchange among private and public agencies and organizations from different sectors (Dottridge, 2006; UNIAP, 2009; UNICEF, 2009).

### **Enhance economic opportunities**

Poverty and economic inequality have been identified as important risk factors associated with child trafficking and CSE (Emmers, Greener-Barcham, & Thomas, 2006; Ezeilo, 2009, 2011; Gjermeni et al., 2008; Gozdzak, 2008; IOM, 2009; Ireland, 1993; Poudel & Smyth, 2002). Indeed, most victims of human trafficking come from families in poor communities with inadequate economic and job opportunities (Farr, 2005; ILO, 2009a). In addition, the global economic and financial crisis is pushing an increasing number of families into poverty (Nigam & Mishra, 2011; UNIAP, 2009), thereby increasing their risk for human trafficking (Wennerholm, 2002). Thus, development policies that aim to reduce poverty and vulnerability of children are vital to achieving major and sustainable progress in tackling child trafficking and CSE (ILO, 2009b; Poudel & Smyth, 2002).

### **Promote gender equality**

Social norms and cultural traditions that perpetuate gender-based social inequalities, stereotypic attitudes, and discrimination

toward girls and women perpetuate women's subordinate status in society, heighten the vulnerability of girls, and pose a challenge to achieving gender equality (Rafferty, 2013a, 2013b; UNIFEM, 2011; WHO, 2009c). In addition, because the trafficking of girls for CSE is rooted in gender politics, gender-based discrimination, and patriarchal structures that do not condone the commercialization of girls and women, there must be a strong commitment to changing prevailing attitudes and social norms. Raising awareness of equality issues is vital if communities are to learn to view girls as equal human beings instead of viewing them as a burden (ILO, 2009a). A number of innovative interventions that challenge cultural and social norms have been widely used, although few have been subject to any kind of scientific evaluation (WHO, 2009a). As a result, the evidence base for their effectiveness is weak, and further rigorous evaluations of such interventions are sorely needed. However, in one noteworthy example, Ricardo, Eads, and Barker (2011) provided a systematic and global review of evaluated interventions designed to engage boys and men in the prevention of sexual violence.

### **Strengthen partnerships: Interdisciplinary collaboration and communication**

Because human cross-border trafficking and sexual exploitation of children are transnational crimes, their elimination will require transnational action, including effective coordination and communication among sectors as well as sharing of resources both locally and across borders (Emmers et al., 2006; Gjermeni et al., 2008; Hill & Carey, 2010; Smith, 2010; Staiger, 2005). In addition, law enforcement and prosecution agencies will have to work together effectively, both locally and across borders, to fight against criminal organizations (ILO, 2009b; OSCE, 2010; UNODC, 2008). Furthermore, to gather information more effectively, interagency and multidisciplinary task forces are essential (IOM, 2009). Finally, an effective multisector, multidisciplinary approach will require strategic partnerships with youth law enforcement (e.g., prosecutors, judges, police officers, and other officials), the media, the private sector, government agencies (including labor, education, finance, social affairs, women, and children), and broader civil society (including community-based organizations). For example, law enforcement and service providers will have to cooperate in order to provide victims with the necessary protection and services to assist in the pursuit of cases against their traffickers (IOM, 2009).

### **Adequate training of law enforcement personnel and other front line staff**

Effective prevention, protection, and prosecution require adequate and appropriate training of law enforcement personnel and other front line staff. Professionals working in government and nongovernment institutions and organizations are often not involved in cases of human trafficking because they do not have adequate information on the issues involved (e.g., the types and modus operandi of the trafficking networks, the stereotyping of the victims or trafficking networks, the lack of knowledge regarding support resources and government and nongovernment assistance). As a result, many government

officials are uninformed regarding the causes and consequences of trafficking, and thus the appropriate rights-based legal responses and the needed actions and interventions are overlooked (Jordan, 2002).

Several groups have been identified as needing to be equipped with the capacity to deal with trafficking in a gender-sensitive and effective manner, because they are more likely than others to come in contact with victims and perpetrators of trafficking or to receive the initial information or complaint. They include (a) government officials and frontline law enforcement officials, such as police officers, border guards, immigration officials, and judicial personnel; (b) government human service workers, such as child protection professionals; (c) NGOs, including frontline staff in youth-serving agencies, teachers, victim support agencies, and social service providers; and (d) physical and mental health professionals (Barnitz, 2001; Ezeilo, 2011; IOM, 2009; Jordan, 2002; Nieuwenhuys & Pécoud, 2007; OSCE, 2011; Smith, 2010; UNODC, 2008).

### **Promote children's participation**

Child participation is not only a key component of human rights, it is also encouraged by the CRC (UN, 1989). The contribution of children and youth shifts the position from beneficiaries to people with rights with an ability to claim these rights (Bilson, 2007). Children who have experienced child trafficking or CSE, for example, are a valuable resource for those who are implementing preventive interventions and should be a primary source of information on which to base programs and policies (e.g., factors that make children vulnerable, reasons for leaving home, special needs regarding prevention, assistance, and protection; Brown, 2006). They can also help provide first-hand insight into how children are recruited, can inform appropriate services for victims, and provide insight into the development of education, policies, and programs (Hill & Carey, 2010; Miles, 2000). Despite these advantages, children who have been trafficked are rarely provided with the opportunity to participate (Brown, 2006; Feinstein & O'Kane, 2009). Consequently, their views and the potential to ensure that policies are appropriate, child friendly, and adequate have been overlooked (Dottridge, 2008; UNICEF, 2009).

Successful efforts to prevent child trafficking have involved children in passing information and advice to other children, for example, as peer-to-peer educators, but have not otherwise developed imaginative ways of enabling children to participate. At the Third Annual Mekong Youth Forum on Human Trafficking, for example, young people presented recommendations to their governments regarding ways to combat trafficking of young people, make migration safer, and improve engagement of young people in the issues surrounding migration and counter-trafficking policy making and implementation (Government of Thailand, 2010).

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

The human rights affected by the practice of trafficking include the rights to liberty, to dignity, and to security of person; not to be held in slavery or involuntary servitude; to be free from cruel and inhumane treatment; various economic and

social rights; and specific rights of the child. International and domestic child trafficking continues to be a massive global phenomenon, a multidimensional problem, and an egregious and profound human rights violation, which affects a significant number of children (girls in particular) in complex patterns and has a profound impact on their well-being.

### **Implications for Social Policy**

To truly make a difference, governments must acknowledge that trafficking is a violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly 60 years ago and that the factors that fuel child trafficking must be alleviated. As noted above, these include pervasive poverty and economic desperation and inequality, lack of employment opportunities, gender inequality and discrimination, a general lack of education and awareness, and the unrelenting demand for cheap labor and sex with children. The effects on children's physical, sexual, and psychological health and well-being can be devastating and are often compounded by limited or a lack of access to health or mental health services. All too often, victims are punished for their immigration violations or prostitution activities—more harshly than their captors—rather than treated as victims. As noted earlier, promising prevention strategies include those that target demand (educational deterrence programs, diversion programs, prosecution), reduce supply (e.g., education and skills training to vulnerable populations, increase awareness), and strengthen communities. Effective use of the media is crucial to create awareness and to combat child trafficking and related issues associated with CSE.

As noted earlier, however, while many documents describe project activities, relatively few of the prevention strategies that have been identified have been evaluated for effectiveness. Consequently, there are gaps in information pertaining to the complex and intersecting risk and protective factors that contribute to child trafficking and CSE. Much more needs to be done to ensure that future action is guided by evidence of effective policies and programs at the level of the individual, the family, the community, and society. The implementation of successful interventions to prevent child trafficking based on what is currently known about risk factors and effective interventions is the most effective way to ensure that they have the desired impacts. Additionally, it is vital to generate evidence regarding the strategies that are successful in various settings (e.g., skills building and education, community mobilization, engaging boys and men, social marketing and communication, fostering coalitions) and for different groups of girls (e.g., those who are being commercially sexually exploited in their home community vs. those who were transported to a different country).

Effective prevention would also require a shift in focus from issue-based interventions to systems building, with an emphasis on prevention over response and include both micro- and macro-level preventive interventions. Macrolevel interventions require addressing the complete range of vulnerabilities that render children and youth susceptible to exploitation, abuse, and neglect. Microlevel preventive interventions require that all forms of protection (e.g., protection from being trafficked as well as from all forms of discrimination, neglect, abuse, violence, and exploitation) to which children are entitled be made available by

government agencies, including social services, the police, and child protection teams. Ideally, efforts will include a change in customs or practices that fail to adequately protect children, more open discussion of the issues, and strengthening the capacity of children and adolescents for their own protection. This can be accomplished through greater awareness and participation, strengthening the capacity of those closest to the child, improved services, and adequate monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

Governments must also focus on ensuring safe migration, rather than stopping it. Countries with higher rates of emigration have a responsibility to ensure that good advice and support are available for young people who are thinking of emigrating to obtain work. Some standard advice can be offered to all young people seeking work abroad, along with lists of examples of job offers that proved to be covers for attempts to force migrants into some form of exploitation. Effective strategies should include affordable, fast, and transparent job placement and migration services and the licensing, registration, and monitoring of agencies involved in the recruitment or facilitation of labor migration. Recruitment agencies should be made sensitive to issues concerning child labor.

Interventions to address child trafficking and CSE and achieve human rights must also involve strategies for legislative reform. Specific strategies might focus on the lack of specific legislation on human trafficking and the need for nations to implement legislation at the national level, criminalization of the offense of trafficking, and adherence to human rights in all legislative responses to trafficking. Additionally, law enforcement and prosecution agencies must work together effectively, both locally and across borders, to fight against criminal organizations involved in human trafficking. Efforts to prosecute all facilitators, including advertising agencies on the Internet advertising sex for sale, owners of real estate used for commercial sex venues, and mail-order bride agencies facilitating child trafficking, should also be increased, and violators of legitimately registered business such as strip clubs and massage parlors should be prosecuted vigorously when found to be facilitators of commercial sexual services. Businesses must also be involved in addressing child trafficking. Their corporate social responsibility policies should be designed to ensure that children who have been trafficked do not work for them and to ensure effective remediation in the event that child labor is detected. Companies that depend on employment agencies can elect to work only with those that have strong protections against the use of child labor in place or assist those agencies to implement such protections. In addition, they can provide training regarding child labor and child trafficking within their businesses and with business partners and support national efforts to prevent child trafficking.

### Implications for Future Research

In summary, while there is little systematic empirical research regarding the health and mental health consequences associated with CT or CSE, existing studies suggest that the physical, sexual, and psychological abuse and violence associated with child trafficking and CSE profoundly influence the physical and mental health of young victims. Additionally, victims who are

children tend to be subsumed under “women and children” with little discussion or analysis of their special needs, and research regarding boys who have been trafficked is virtually nonexistent (Lillywhite & Skidmore, 2006).

Much of the available literature includes reports written from children’s rights, world health, and legal perspectives. Although they describe the experience of horror and degradation for children and youth who become commodities for sale and abuse, they are light on scientific research. Further research is therefore needed. Although these sources may be accurate representations, they are not necessarily empirical and result in an over reliance on anecdotal material.

Despite the growing body of evidence regarding the effects of trafficking and CSE on children, there is only a limited amount of systematic, empirical, and methodologically rigorous research on human trafficking as well as a notable absence of research in academic journals. Furthermore, few programs have been evaluated for effectiveness. Consequently, the scope of the problem has not been well documented, and significant knowledge gaps exist. High-quality research is needed for a number of reasons: First, it can facilitate a better understanding of traffickers and their maneuvers, essential to counter-trafficking preventive interventions, ensure more prosecutions, and curb demand. Second, it can help to enhance preventive interventions to identify and protect those at risk for trafficking as well as to identify and assist those who have been trafficked. Finally, it empowers the research community to keep abreast of emerging issues and trends and maintain a sound and testable research base. Quality data can also facilitate more accurate monitoring of the effectiveness of activities aimed at prevention and providing assistance to exploited children.

Future research needs to include systematic and rigorous data collection and analysis on a wide range of issues inclusive of the prevalence of human trafficking, the characteristics of victims, facilitators, and traffickers, and trafficking trajectories, its impact on victims, their family and community members, the efficacy of counter-trafficking initiatives, the effectiveness of antitrafficking legislation, the services needed to protect and support victims, and the success of return and reintegration programs. Well-designed monitoring and evaluation studies are also needed and should be an integral part of every assistance program, public and private. External evaluations, for example, can identify effective policies and “best practice” approaches as well as assess the success of different programs. Finally, more research is needed regarding other forms of exploitation, including children who are trafficked for domestic work or as child brides. In addition, very little is known about trafficking in boys, either for sexual exploitation or bonded labor.

In conclusion, the slave trade was formally abolished more than 200 years ago. Nonetheless, traditional forms still exist and include the trafficking and CSE of countless numbers of children and youth. It is time for governments, civil society, businesses, and individuals to join forces to raise awareness and demand an end to all forms of exploitation and slavery. At the very least, we owe this to our children.

**Keywords:** children; child trafficking; commercial sexual exploitation; slavery; smuggling; migration; gender equality; sexually transmitted diseases; human-rights-based approach

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