



Answering the Church's Call to End Human Trafficking



Catholics Confront Global Poverty



“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives...to let the oppressed go free...” (Lk 4:18-19)

It begins with a lure—a promise of something so much better than what a high school graduate in Moldova, a landlocked country in Eastern Europe, or a child laborer in India might find in their own desperately poor villages. Employment. Education. Opportunity. That’s the bait.

Then there’s the switch. The woman answers an ad to work overseas and arrives in a new country only to have her passport confiscated by people who force her into prostitution. The child is taken far from family and forced to work on a farm without pay, without protection, without schooling.

Human trafficking is the illegal trade of human beings for the purposes of forced labor, sexual exploitation and even the sale of organs. And it’s lucrative, annually generating \$32 billion a year worldwide. That’s why it’s one of the fastest growing criminal industries in the world, exceeded only by the illegal arms industry and second only to the drug trade.

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Goal:
Promote comprehensive immigration reform and address the root causes of migration.

Human Trafficking Preys on the Vulnerable:

- At least 12.3 million people worldwide are currently held in modern-day slavery.
- An estimated 800,000 people are trafficked annually across international boundaries.
- The majority of victims are women and children from poor villages, urban slums and refugees camps.

Viewed through the lens of **Catholic social teaching**, human trafficking is a crime against the most basic aspects of human dignity and human rights. It preys on the poor and vulnerable and exploits their labor. Under threat and often in isolated conditions, trafficked people have no community support, no recourse, no voice. Largely hidden from view, the scope of human trafficking has long gone unnoticed by the developed world, which often benefits from the cheap labor and economic, though illicit, gain. But that is changing.

The Catholic Church in the United States and around the world has **called on people of faith to respond** by creating tougher international laws that punish those who benefit economically from trafficking, protecting and providing services to those who have become its victims, and eliminating the conditions of poverty and social vulnerability that place people at-risk.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
3211 4th St., NE, Washington, DC 20017
www.usccb.org/globalpoverty
globalpoverty@usccb.org
202-541-3160

Catholic Relief Services
228 W. Lexington St., Baltimore, MD 21201
www.crs.org/globalpoverty
globalpoverty@crs.org
1-866-608-5978



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In its 2007 document “*On Human Trafficking*” the Committee on Migration of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops describes how the Church is uniquely positioned to respond:

As a global institution that is present in source nations as well as nations that serve as markets for human trafficking, the Catholic Church is well positioned to identify and rescue survivors of human trafficking. In fact, the Catholic Church provides important social services to survivors in the United States and around the world.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the international relief and development agency of the Catholic community in the United States, have identified the importance of addressing poverty reduction and creating safe, legal and orderly migration policies as necessary to combat global trafficking. Addressing the root causes of migration is a key issue with the USCCB/CRS initiative, *Catholics Confront Global Poverty*.

As CRS has studied the root causes of trafficking it has found that solutions are intricately linked to other urgent humanitarian issues including: fostering economic development, providing effective responses to emergencies, promoting greater social protections for women, children and vulnerable groups, and protecting refugees and migrants. It is clear that addressing poverty reduces vulnerability to the “bait” of trafficking.

Nadejda Bolea is only 17, but she has the responsibilities of a grown woman. With a sick mother, a father working abroad, and an 8-year-old sister, the teenager has shouldered the lion’s share of responsibilities in her home in a small village in Moldova. “My family needs me,” she says simply.



Nadejda at work in Moldova. Photo by Iraida Margineanu for CRS

Nadejda, whose name means “hope,” continues, “As long as I can remember, I have been making my own money. My father works in Moscow, but is not making enough; my mother can’t work, so I am the only one my family can count on.”

Moldova is one of Eastern Europe’s poorest countries; some Moldovan villagers are so poor they sell a kidney on the black market to make money for their families. Many others go overseas for work, and young girls like Nadejda are often targeted by sex traffickers when they do. But CRS’ job programs mean Nadejda didn’t have to immigrate to another country—and isn’t prey to traffickers.

Catholic Relief Services partners with banks, clothing manufacturers and other companies to provide not only job training, but guaranteed employment to girls like Nadejda. The young women learn to be tellers, cashiers and seamstresses, receiving paid internships and help with expenses like transportation. Best of all, the job program means most of the young women don’t have to leave their close-knit village communities.

“My sister is too young and I can’t go too far from my village. I can’t leave her: I am like a second mother to her. That’s why I am very happy about finding work so close to my village,” says Nadejda, who makes clothes for a company called Saltoianca. “I am used to difficulties, to poverty. But now every day I learn new things and I think I am succeeding.”



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One example lies in the tiny country of Moldova, sandwiched between Romania and Ukraine.

As one of the poorest countries in Europe, Moldova is home to the highest number of trafficked women on the continent. With little opportunity, young girls have one goal once they graduate from high school: to leave their home in search of better jobs and opportunity. This makes them natural prey for traffickers, who mislead them with promises of bright futures only to force them into prostitution.

For CRS staff in Moldova, addressing the root causes of women's vulnerability had to go far beyond programs to make them aware of its dangers. Young people were convinced there were no good paying jobs in the region. And while CRS discovered that employment was available, employers insisted that local youth weren't skilled enough for them. So CRS filled the gap, with training programs that would prepare the workforce and programs that would generate employment opportunities.

“We demonstrated to the communities that there were jobs or they could create them, and that they had sufficient resources to leverage the projects they needed to provide skills, training and create jobs,” said CRS Country Representative for Moldova Michael McKennitt. “And through that they could avoid or address the root causes of high migration that increase vulnerabilities to trafficking. Because traffickers are somewhat like crocodiles, they wait along the borders and thoroughfares, and when people try and cross them a certain number get eaten.”

Act now to combat global trafficking

Congress must act to reauthorize the *Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act* (TVPRA) that expired on September 30, 2011. If this legislation is not passed soon, U.S. pressure on countries across the globe to combat modern-day slavery will diminish.

Senators Patrick Leahy (VT) and Scott Brown (MA), and others have sponsored S. 1301 to reauthorize the TVPRA. USCCB and CRS strongly support passage of S. 1301 and urge the Senate to include the following provisions:

- Increased funding for trafficking victim services and strong emphasis on partnerships with organizations like Catholic Relief Services to combat trafficking.
- Authorization of funding for the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons that would assist governments in responding to urgent needs.
- Establishment of child protection compacts that would help specific countries develop and implement comprehensive anti-trafficking plans to protect children.

For more information and resources on how you and your faith community can help combat human trafficking, visit www.crs.org/globalpoverty, the *Catholics Confront Global Poverty* website, and the USCCB's response to human trafficking website: <http://www.usccb.org/about/human-trafficking/usccb-response.cfm>.