

HUMAN TRAFFICKING: EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS

PART I: BASIC FACTS ABOUT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

1. What is human trafficking?

Human trafficking is defined in international law as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability [...] for the purpose of exploitation¹.

Exploitation includes sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery-like practices, servitude or the removal of organs. Forced or compulsory labour is all work or service, which is exacted from any person under the menace of a penalty and for which the person has not offered himself or herself voluntarily. It is irrelevant whether the person was paid for the work or service.

The definition of trafficking consists of three core elements, the *action* of trafficking, the *means* and the *purpose*. If all the elements of human trafficking are present, the fact that an adult initially consented is irrelevant. It is also considered trafficking if the victim had no real or acceptable alternative but to submit to the abuse. If the victim is a child, it is considered trafficking even if there is no threat or use of force. Trafficking need not be across borders; it can occur within the borders of a single country.

2. How does human trafficking relate to the UN Global Compact?

Human trafficking is an abuse of human rights (Global Compact principles 1 and 2). If child labour or forced labour is involved, Global Compact principles 4 and 5 are also implicated. Finally, if corruption is involved, Global Compact principle 10 is implicated. As a result, human trafficking is an issue that Global Compact participants and other companies will want to be aware of, including how to avoid contributing to the problem and how they might be able to take steps to help combat it.

3. How significant is the problem?

- ✚ 161 countries are reported to be affected by human trafficking by being a source, transit and/or destination country. Human trafficking affects every continent and every type of economy²
- ✚ The majority of trafficking victims are between 18 and 24 years of age³
- ✚ An estimated 1.2 million children are trafficked each year⁴
- ✚ 95% of victims experience physical or sexual violence during trafficking⁵
- ✚ 2.45 million people are estimated to be in conditions of forced labour as a result of trafficking⁶
- ✚ 43% of victims are used for forced commercial sexual exploitation, of whom 98% are women and girls⁷
- ✚ 32% of victims are used for forced economic exploitation, of whom 56% are women and girls⁸
- ✚ Many trafficked persons (18%) have at least middle-level education⁹

1 United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2237, No. 39574.

2 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Trafficking in Persons: Global Patterns* (Vienna, 2006)

3 International Organization for Migration, Counter-Trafficking Database, 78 Countries, 1999-2006 (1999)

4 UNICEF, *UK Child Trafficking Information Sheet* (January 2003)

5 Based on data from selected European countries. The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, *Stolen smiles: a summary report on the physical and psychological health consequences of women and adolescents trafficked in Europe* (London, 2006), (based on data from selected European countries)

6 International Labour Organization, *Forced Labour Statistics Factsheet* (2007)

7 International Labour Organization, *Forced Labour Statistics Factsheet* (2007)

8 Ibid.

4. How might human trafficking become an issue for your business?

Companies may risk being associated with human trafficking in a range of ways:

- ✚ Complex supply chains sometimes reduce knowledge about the working conditions involved in the production of goods and delivery of services. Multiple layers of subcontractors, recruitment agencies and labour brokers in a production chain may increase the risk of human trafficking and present major challenges for accountability.
- ✚ Traffickers may use a company's products, premises and/or services in connection with their trafficking activities.

5. Why should businesses have a proactive role?

✚ ***Because human trafficking is morally unacceptable***

✚ ***To comply with international standards and national law***

Human trafficking is contrary to international law and constitutes a violation of national law in most countries around the world. Proactive action to avoid complicity in human trafficking will help ensure that the company is in compliance with the law.

✚ ***To manage risk and reputation***

To be successful, companies must manage risk in an environment where risk is not static and can emerge through the actions of the company itself, its suppliers and other actors. Allegations of trafficking present legal risks as well as serious threats to brand and company reputation.

✚ ***To promote codes of conduct and CSR***

Preventive action and the elimination of human trafficking is becoming a key element of CSR policies. Businesses – particularly those that supply consumer markets and have significant brand value – face new and growing expectations that production will comply with social and human rights criteria.

✚ ***To enhance stakeholder relationships***

Anti-human trafficking policies and practices help enhance relationships with local communities, government, non-governmental organizations, consumers and other stakeholders. A proactive stance by business demonstrates to the local and wider community the company's ethical commitment.

✚ ***To protect global supply chains***

Globalisation and the growing links across countries and firms have raised human trafficking as a significant issue within global supply chains.

6. How can business avoid the risk of human trafficking and help prevent and eliminate it?

Companies can avoid the risk of human trafficking by taking steps to make it harder for traffickers to traffic people using their products, premises or services and by helping raise awareness of the problem. Some other steps include adopting and implementing corporate policies with commitments to respect human rights, labour standards and anti-corruption.

Companies with operations in sectors and regions of higher risk may find it helpful to conduct a risk assessment to become aware of, manage and eliminate this risk. They may also wish to undertake training and internal and external communications to raise awareness of the problem and identify how staff, business partners and customers may come into contact with it. A number of businesses in the travel, tourism and technology sectors have introduced diverse measures to combat the problem.

Tools and guidance materials to help companies can be found on the UN Global Compact (www.unglobalcompact.org/issues), UN.GIFT (www.ungift.org) and ILO (www.ilo.org/forcedlabour) websites.