



6. Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking. Highlights, July 10, 2021

Modern slavery and human trafficking have prompted many religious leaders and communities to advocate for action and to pursue programs aimed at preventing and halting exploitative practices and supporting their survivors. The G20 Interfaith Forum has over several years urged G20 leaders to act more forcefully and directly to combat this evil. With many trends exacerbated by the COVID-19 emergencies, the needs for focus and action are greater still.

Human trafficking is a low-risk, high-profit crime for perpetrators and an international focus for more than 20 years. The 2000 United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol), the USA Trafficked Victims Protection Act Public Law (No: 115-393), and commitments that are part of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reflect approaches and efforts. However, too little progress has been made to reduce and eradicate it. Root causes include poverty which forces or propels many into exploitative situations and the insecurity that drives movement across continents and borders by individuals and family groups, putting people in acutely vulnerable situations that trap them in debt bondage and human trafficking. People smuggling and human trafficking – at time coincident but distinct -- both prey on the vulnerability of human beings. The COVID-19 emergencies with their profound economic hardship have exposed the most vulnerable to greater risks. A disproportionate share of exploitation for women and girls is a particular concern; an estimated 72% of all victims of human trafficking detected worldwide are female, with sexual exploitation a predominant form of trafficking.

With long traditions of providing education, healthcare, and social services, particularly to migrants, women, and other vulnerable populations, religious institutions help strengthen community structures that should serve as bulwarks **against** modern slavery. Faith leaders are often a trusted resource for victims of trafficking, who commonly confide in them as a first step in seeking help. Places of worship have been used for sanctuary and safety; religious leaders play significant roles in ensuring the spiritual health and well-being of their congregations and communities.

Recommendations:

In this time of crisis, radical new approaches to fight these evils are needed, and possible, at local, national, and international levels. High-level strategic buy-in with political will is needed, based on effective monitoring with meaningful metrics (of incidence, patterns, and efficacy of tested policy interventions). Six focal areas could spur progress:

(1) Interventions with likeminded governments and multilateral bodies can remove slavery from supply chains and business models. With government procurement and business transactions subject to a legally binding ‘no human trafficking transparency framework,’ G20

governments can honour their commitments to international agreements and domestic legislation.

(2) Establish a notion of ‘tainted money’ with financial benefit/profit from modern slavery or human trafficking surrendered or seized for reparation or to assist in the fight against modern slavery and human trafficking, and support survivor recovery.

(3) Make the internet a modern slavery and trafficking ‘free zone’ by legal instrument.

(4) Translate international instruments into policy and action for the modern day, for example for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

(5) Engage multilateral bodies more actively, notably assets for action other than UN bodies.

(6) Work to reset a global ‘moral compass’: people before profit or self-gratification. The overriding principle should focus on the causes and drivers, with an aim to revert criminal money to finances for good, redirecting the US\$150 billion with urgency and increasing responsibility and accountability.