

## **Underidentification of Human Trafficking Victims in the United States**

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Despite the fact that tens of thousands of people are estimated to be trafficked into the United States each year, few cases are reported annually. The present article describes the current literature on the prevalence of estimated and reported human trafficking cases in the United States and reviews three systems of tracking cases. There is a discussion of factors contributing to the underidentification of trafficking victims, including: aspects of the trafficking situation, trauma-related symptoms, lack of awareness about human trafficking, and limitations of the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act. Recommendations to increase identification of human trafficking victims are given.

Human trafficking is widely considered to be a form of modern-day slavery. The U.S. government has defined a "severe form of trafficking in persons" as:

... sex trafficking in which a commercial sexual act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. (Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act, 2000, p. 8)

The highest estimates of the Central Intelligence Agency indicate that as many as 100,000 people may be trafficked into the United States each year (Richard, 2000). Estimates of the prevalence of human trafficking vary widely both by year and by source, with no particular trend. For instance, U.S. government estimates of human trafficking were initially set at 45,000 to 50,000 victims per year (Richard, 1999). The following year, estimates increased to 50,000 to 100,000 victims annually (Richard, 2000).

The 2003 estimates have been the most conservative to date, with 18,000 to 20,000 individuals estimated to be trafficked into the United States each year. These figures were reportedly generated based on "reports of specific trafficking incidents, counts of repatriated victims, estimates for victims worldwide, and victim demographics" derived from "an analysis of press, governments, nongovernmental and international organizations, and academic reports from 2000 to the present" (Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2003). It is important to note that these most recent estimates include only data

on foreign nationals and do not include trafficking of United States citizens within the country. Therefore, this number is, by its description, an underestimate of the complete scope of human trafficking in the United States. In an article focusing on the need for better data regarding human trafficking, Laczko and Gramegna (2003) asserted that many estimates of human trafficking, "given without explanation of their underlying assumptions, are widely considered to be conservative, as they do not include trafficking within countries or trafficking of men."

Despite such variance in estimates of the extent of trafficking, it is generally accepted that human trafficking is a major problem that tends to be underidentified. Although tens of thousands of people are likely to be trafficked into the United States annually, relatively few cases are reported each year. This discrepancy suggests the need for improved identification and documentation of trafficking victims, as well as the need to increase awareness of the complex issues involved in the underreporting of trafficking cases.

### VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING AND VIOLENCE PROTECTION

The United States Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (VTVPA) of 2000 was the first comprehensive law to directly address trafficking in persons. The act defines human trafficking and takes a three-pronged approach to combating trafficking, including: prevention, prosecution, and protection.

The *prevention* prong directs efforts toward the deterrence of trafficking in at-risk populations. It also encourages public awareness through education about human trafficking. The *prosecution* prong provides the first federal law directly aimed toward human trafficking and defines more severe sanctions for trafficking than were previously possible. The law creates a new "forced labor" felony, allowing federal law enforcement the ability to prosecute both physical and nonphysical forms of coercion often used by traffickers. The law also requires traffickers to pay restitution to victims. The *protection* prong of the VTVPA provides a certification process that allows some trafficking victims to be eligible for benefits and services similar to those offered to refugees. The act includes allowance for federally funded or administered benefits such as cash assistance, medical care, food stamps, and housing (VTVPA, 2000).

### MONITORING OF TRAFFICKING VICTIMS PRIOR TO THE VTVPA

Prior to the passage of the VTVPA in 2000, there was limited awareness of the problem of human trafficking. Trafficking was not monitored at all by the U.S. government until 1994. Even then, the early focus was primarily on sex trafficking, neglecting issues of forced labor (HumanTrafficking.org, 2003).

The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women conducted a review of sex trafficking cases that were documented in local and national newspaper reports in the United States between 1990 and 2000 (Raymond, Hughes, & Gomez, 2001). As seen in Figure 1, there was a steady increase in reported cases across this time period, suggesting an increased awareness of human trafficking. However, this media review identified a total of only 38 cases of sex trafficking during the 1990s, leaving the majority of cases undiscovered.

## SYSTEMS FOR DOCUMENTING TRAFFICKING CASES

Since the passage of the VTVPA, there has been an increased awareness of the issue of human trafficking. The act also provides the basis for several mechanisms of tracking and documenting human trafficking cases.

There are three primary ways of tracking cases, including two systems based on confirmed cases and one system based on proactive victim identification that includes both documented and undocumented cases. The first tracking system involves calculating the number of cases that have been prosecuted in the United States that meet the definitions set forth in the VTVPA. The second system entails following services that have been provided to trafficked persons. The third system involves a grassroots approach to victim identification. It involves seeking out potential trafficking cases by reviewing media coverage and by networking at the local and national levels. Data from each of these systems reveal the magnitude of the under-identification of human trafficking in the United States.

### Investigations and Prosecutions of Traffickers

The first system of appraising documented trafficking cases involves following prosecutions of traffickers. The Civil Rights Division's Criminal Section is the sector of the Justice Department with the primary responsibility for prosecuting human trafficking in the United States. The number of prosecutions involving human trafficking offenses has increased sharply since the passage of the VTVPA. For instance, in 1999 and 2000, 24 defendants were charged in nine cases (U.S. Department of Justice, 2003a). This can be compared to data from 2001 and 2002, after the passage of the VTVPA, in which the Justice Department opened 127 trafficking investigations (U.S. Department of State, 2003a), with 79 defendants being charged in 20 cases (U.S. Department of Justice, 2003a).

These figures reflect the fact that the U.S. Department of Justice has doubled the number of trafficking prosecutions and tripled the number of defendants since the passage of the VTVPA. Ashcroft (2003) reported that trafficking investigations have been initiated in 46 states and all U.S. territories. There have been indictments in cases involving victims from Bangladesh, Cameroon, China, Ghana, Honduras, Indonesia, Mexico, Russia, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam.

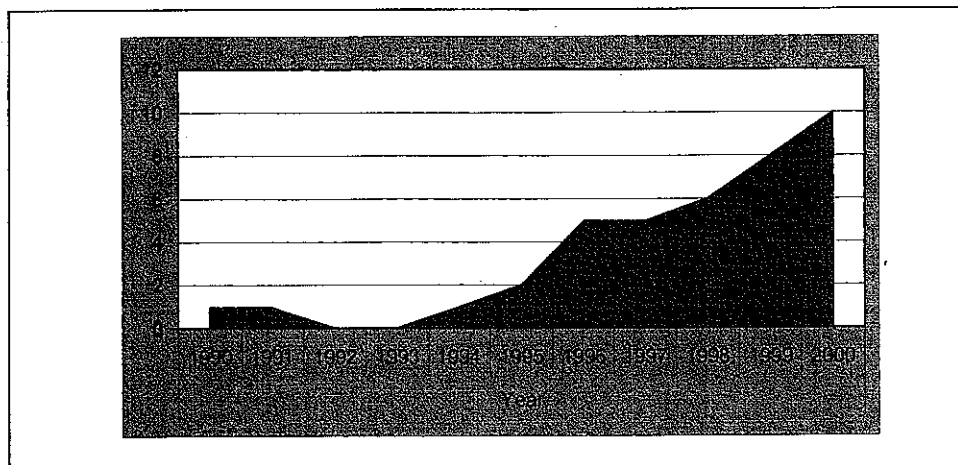


Figure 1. Increase in media-documented sex trafficking cases during the 1990s.

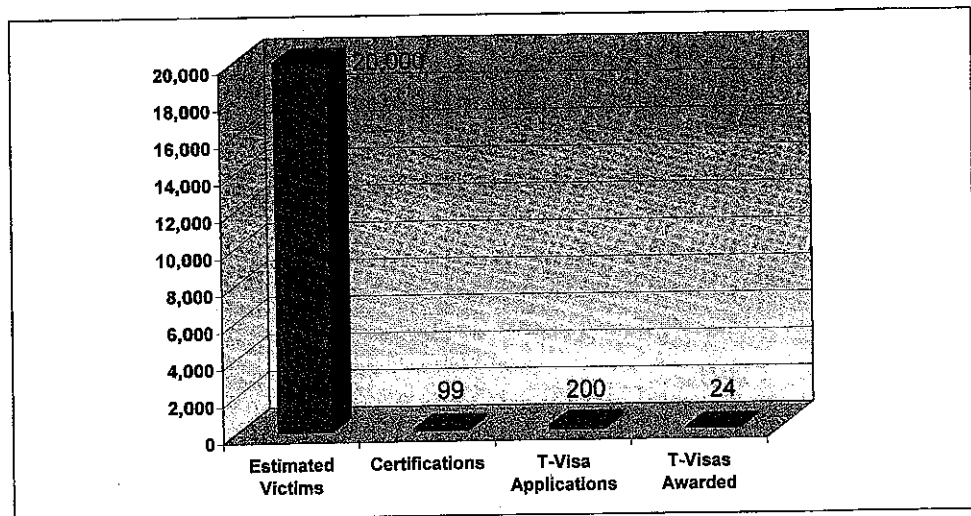
However, despite the fact that over 300 victims have been protected through indictments of their traffickers since the passage of the VTPA, there are many cases left undiscovered. The "Assessment of U.S. Activities to Combat Trafficking in Persons," an interagency report released by the Department of Justice in August 2003, noted that the VTPA has "greatly enhanced the U.S. Government's ability to uncover and prosecute sex and labor trafficking cases. Nonetheless, in relation to the estimated magnitude of the problem, the number of cases remains low" (p. 11).

### Services to Trafficking Victims

A second way of tracking identified cases involves following services provided to trafficking victims. The VTPA created a certification process in which individuals who are identified as victims of "a severe form of trafficking" and who are willing to assist in the prosecution of a trafficking case may receive benefits similar to those offered to refugees. This certification process allows a system of identifying individuals who are documented as trafficking victims. In a recent speech, Attorney General John Ashcroft (2003) announced that, since the passage of the VTPA, the Department of Health and Human Services has certified 392 trafficking victims, enabling them to receive benefits.

In January 2002, the availability of the T-visa was announced. The T-visa is a temporary visa that allows trafficking victims to remain in the United States for 3 years if it is determined that a return to their home countries could lead to "extreme hardship involving unusual and severe harm." When the T-visa expires, victims of human trafficking may apply for permanent residency. In the year after the announcement of the T-visa, approximately 150 T-visa applications were made, with 23 T-visas being granted (U.S. Department of Justice, 2003b).

While the availability of such services constitutes a significant step in comparison with the complete lack of services for trafficking victims prior to the VTPA, over 99% of estimated victims are still not receiving aid. Figure 2 shows VTPA-based services provided to human trafficking victims in 2002, including: 99 certifications provided, 200 T-visa applications accepted, and 24 T-visas awarded. This figure offers an illustrative representation



**Figure 2.** Estimated number of victims trafficked into the United States in 2002 versus the number of victims to receive services in 2000.

of the disparity between the estimated number of individuals who are trafficked into the United States in a year, versus the number of victims who are identified to receive services.

### **Proactive Victim Identification Programs**

A third way of developing statistics on potential cases of trafficking involves the development of proactive victim identification programs. For instance, a nongovernmental organization in Washington, DC, has recently developed an alert system that utilizes media and personal connections to identify potential trafficking cases. Staff members scan news reports, connect with law enforcement, and provide technical assistance in the identification of trafficking cases. This organization has recently begun to develop a database of cases that appear to meet formal definitions of trafficking. In 3 months alone, the program identified 70 cases that appeared to fall within guidelines of trafficking established by the VTVPA (personal communication, Polaris Project staff, August 15, 2003, and August 25, 2003). This proactive system of victim identification may increase the number of potential cases that are targeted for further evaluation and documentation.

## **FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE UNDERIDENTIFICATION OF TRAFFICKING CASES**

All of these systems of tracking clearly point to the problem of underidentification of human trafficking victims in the United States. There are a number of factors that may contribute to this underidentification, including: aspects of the trafficking situation, trauma-related symptoms in the victims, lack of public awareness of human trafficking, and limitations of the VTVPA.

### **Aspects of the Trafficking Situation**

Several aspects of typical trafficking cases decrease the likelihood that trafficked persons will be discovered. Smuggling and trafficking, by definition, involve a sense of secrecy due to the fact that individuals are often brought into the country illegally. Traffickers utilize this secrecy to maintain control over their victims. They may confiscate victims' passports or other papers; often victims do not have immigration documents or have fraudulent documents provided by their traffickers. Traffickers may threaten victims, telling them that they will be deported if they go to law enforcement or other officials. Trafficked persons are often hidden away from the larger society and may be held captive (Congressional Research Service, 2000; Protection Project, 2002).

Secondly, because of the fact that many trafficked people are "strangers in a strange land," there are multiple barriers between them and the rest of society. Many trafficked individuals come from other countries and are not familiar with the norms and laws of the United States. In many cases, victims are moved from city to city, maintaining their lack of familiarity with their environment. Victims often do not speak English, which increases their dependency on their captors (Protection Project, 2002).

Finally, individuals with limited resources are often more vulnerable to being trafficked. Trafficked individuals may have had limited educational opportunities and few financial resources in their country of origin. Many victims acquire large smuggling debts that traffickers utilize as a source of control (Congressional Research Service, 2000; Protection Project, 2002). Trafficking victims are often socially isolated and have no one to turn to for information or support. Many children and teenagers are also victims of trafficking

(Congressional Research Service, 2000), with the average age of trafficking victims in the United States being 20 years old (Richard, 1999). Youth may be a risk factor that increases vulnerability to being trafficked and decreases the likelihood of reporting the crime. The lack of financial and psychosocial resources compounds the obstacles faced by trafficking victims and may decrease the likelihood of self-identification.

### **Trauma-Related Symptoms**

Many trafficking victims have been exposed to chronic trauma. Traumatic experiences that victims may have endured include: victimization in their country of origin; abuses in the context of the trafficking situation including psychological abuse, lack of basic human necessities, physical violence, and sexual violence; and displacement and isolation after their escape.

Early reports have suggested that trafficking involves traumatic experiences that are repeated over a period of time. When cases are discovered, the trafficking operations have often been in existence for a number of years, with some variation depending on the type of case involved. For instance, Richard (1999) reported that trafficking operations for prostitution lasted from "a little over a year to approximately 2-and-a-half years," while labor trafficking operations "generally lasted from 4-and-a-half to 6-and-a-half years" before being exposed (p. 3). Such chronic, repeated trauma is associated with a range of psychological effects that may include depression, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and complex PTSD (van der Kolk, McFarlane, & Weisaeth, 1995). Aspects of each of these disorders may impact victims' help-seeking behavior.

Depression has cognitive components (feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt, problems with concentration or decision-making, hopelessness, suicidal thoughts), affective components (depressed mood, irritability), and physiological components (significant weight loss or gain, insomnia or hypersomnia, psychomotor agitation or retardation, fatigue or loss of energy). A trafficking victim who is experiencing symptoms such as decision-making problems, lack of energy, hopelessness, and feelings of guilt is unlikely to mobilize the resources needed to escape a trafficking situation.

Self-blame, uncontrollability, and learned helplessness are characteristics commonly associated with depression. Research on battered women has suggested that internalization of blame impacts victims' ability to leave abusive situations (Flannery & Harvey, 1991). Similarly, self-blame may decrease help-seeking in trafficked individuals. Like perpetrators of torture and domestic violence, traffickers utilize power, control, and coercion to manipulate their victims. Researchers have pointed to the impact of unpredictability and uncontrollability in the development of posttraumatic stress symptoms in victims of repeated trauma, such as torture survivors (Basoglu & Mineka, 1992). Because trafficking victims are chronically dominated through the use of coercion or force, they may develop a sense of uncontrollability. Repeated threats and violence may also produce learned helplessness in victims of chronic trauma (Walker, 1978, 1983), decreasing the likelihood that victims will attempt to get help. A severe example of such control occurred in a Mexican trafficking ring in which one victim was held in a closet for 15 days after attempting to escape (Protection Project, 2002). This type of confinement is likely to contribute to learned helplessness in victims of trafficking.

PTSD describes a constellation of three groups of symptoms (reexperiencing, avoidance, and arousal) that lead to clinically significant distress or functional impairment, following exposure to a traumatic event involving actual or threatened death or injury. The intrusive cluster of symptoms consists of responses such as intense distress upon thinking about the trauma, including triggered reactions. This cluster of symptoms contributes to the

difficulty trauma victims may have in relaying a coherent story of their victimization. The avoidance cluster includes symptoms such as emotional numbing, detachment from others, and avoidance of thoughts or feelings about the traumatic experience. Avoidance symptoms often run counter to actively dealing with the trauma; instead, victims may avoid thinking about the trauma and its impact. Hypervigilance, an arousal symptom involving heightened attention to potential danger, may contribute to mistrust of authorities such as law enforcement and social service providers. Each of these symptoms may decrease the likelihood of help-seeking in trafficked persons.

Although PTSD is descriptive of a range of symptoms commonly experienced after exposure to trauma, it does not capture the full extent of psychological sequelae often experienced by chronic trauma victims. Complex PTSD, or "Disorders of Extreme Stress—Not Otherwise Specified" (DESNOS), is a concept believed by many experts in the trauma field to better describe the profound disruptions of core psychological functioning experienced by individuals who have suffered chronic or repeated interpersonal trauma, especially beginning during early development (Herman, 1992; van der Kolk et al., 1996). Complex PTSD consists of six symptom clusters:

1. affect dysregulation;
2. alterations in attention and consciousness;
3. somatization;
4. alterations in sense of self;
5. alterations in relationships with others; and
6. alterations in systems of meaning (Pelcovitz et al., 1997).

Trafficking victims with complex PTSD may have symptoms such as difficulty modulating moods, amnesic or dissociative episodes, chronic shame, and difficulty trusting others. Such symptoms would likely interfere with self-identification and help-seeking in victims of human trafficking.

### **Lack of Awareness About Human Trafficking**

A third factor contributing to the underidentification of trafficked persons involves a lack of knowledge about trafficking within law enforcement and other agencies. Despite the fact that human trafficking is considered to be an age-old occurrence, laws specific to human trafficking were not passed until the year 2000. Therefore, sanctions for traffickers have typically been minimal. For instance, in one of the major trafficking cases prior to 2000, traffickers were charged with crimes such as: importing aliens for illegal purposes, transporting women and minors for prostitution, committing visa fraud, conspiracy, and violations of civil rights. The sentences for the majority of defendants in this case ranged from 2-and-a-half to 7-and-a-half years imprisonment (Protection Project, 2002). Richard (1999) noted that the Department of Justice sometimes mislabels trafficking cases as worker exploitation cases, suggesting "something closer to wage and hour problems versus involuntary servitude, debt bondage, and forced prostitution" (p. 31). Additionally, trafficking victims have traditionally been treated as illegal aliens who are subject to deportation. This misclassification leads to an underidentification of human trafficking cases.

Although the VTVPA has been in effect for several years, many law enforcement officials continue to lack awareness of the act and the issue of human trafficking. In keeping with tradition, many trafficking crimes continue to be prosecuted under statutes not directly related to

trafficking, such as prostitution, smuggling, or money laundering (U.S. Department of Justice, Department of Statistics staff, personal communication, August 25, 2003). Because of the lack of recognition of these situations as human trafficking cases, documented cases of human trafficking are few in number. Additionally, when cases are not prosecuted under the trafficking statutes, individuals who have been trafficked are not treated as victims, but as illegal immigrants. Instead of receiving aid, these victims may be deported soon after being discovered.

### **Limitations of the TVPA**

There are several legal issues related to the VTVPA that limit the identification of trafficked persons and impact their ability to receive services. In order to receive protection under this act, victims must assist in the prosecution of a trafficker. The Department of Health and Human Services may only certify a victim of trafficking who "is willing to assist in every reasonable way in the investigation and prosecution of severe forms of trafficking in persons; and has made a bona fide application for a visa" or "whose continued presence in the United States the Attorney General is ensuring in order to effectuate prosecution of traffickers in persons" (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2002).

The fact that certification as a trafficking victim is based on victims' willingness to assist in an investigation likely leads to an underreporting of cases. There are a number of factors that must occur in order for trafficked persons to receive protection under the act. First, law enforcement must decide to investigate the case as a potential trafficking case. If the case is investigated under a different statute, the protections of the VTVPA will not be relevant for victims.

Second, victims must be willing to come forward and discuss their case. Trafficking victims are often mistrustful of authority, particularly law enforcement, and may be reluctant to communicate with them. In a recent interview, Florida law enforcement authorities reported that, "We are aware of [human trafficking] occurring throughout the United States, even in this area, but we're not working on a specific case." They noted that this "doesn't mean it's not happening. It just means they are not bringing the cases to the police department." A shelter worker noted that victims "may or may not choose to bring the police into their personal situation, and we respect that and keep their identity confidential. . . That is our job, is to keep them safe" (Moore, 2003).

Trafficking victims must also be able to work within the legal system to assist in the prosecution of a case. Language barriers may interfere with accurate communication with law enforcement and may impair victims' ability to be "good witnesses" at trial proceedings. Trafficking victims from other countries are typically unfamiliar with the legal process in the United States and may be intimidated by legal proceedings. Cultural and developmental factors may also impact victims' ability to cooperate with the investigation and prosecution of trafficking cases.

Communication styles tend to differ across various cultures (Gudykunst, 2001). For instance, in some cultures, it is considered impolite to ask questions repeatedly. The legal process in the United States involves not only repeated questioning by law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges, but also cross-examination by an adversarial defense attorney. In this case, some trafficked individuals may change their story as a response to the repeated questioning.

A similar difficulty arises with victims who are children. Researchers have asserted that children's language is initially limited to perceptual appearances, and that the use of adult language develops in a stage-like process. Children may not understand adults' questioning, may not disclose the entire story, and may respond incorrectly even when they are certain of the right answer. Young children may change their story if asked the same questions repeatedly, because they interpret their answers as being wrong (Siegal, 1991).

The VTVPA acknowledges some of the difficulties in identifying trafficking victims based on their ability to assist in the prosecution of crimes, indicating that:

... because victims of trafficking are typically unfamiliar with the laws, cultures, and languages of the countries into which they have been trafficked, because they are often subjected to coercion and intimidation including physical detention and debt bondage, and because they often fear retribution and forcible removal to countries in which they will face retribution or other hardship, these victims often find it difficult or impossible to report the crimes committed against them or to assist in the investigation and prosecution of such crimes. (Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act, 2000, p. 6)

However, the VTVPA does not address a solution to this problem. The current act reflects a phase in the continuing shift toward the perception of trafficked persons as victims who are in need of aid. Laws are in need of further refinement to provide protection to all victims of trafficking.

## **SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION**

Part of the U.S. government's "commitment to eradicate trafficking" includes "identifying, protecting, and assisting those victims exploited by traffickers" (U.S. Department of State, 2003b). The United States is unable to protect and assist victims without accurate identification of cases.

Although there have been strong and concerted efforts from the U.S. government and from nongovernmental agencies to fight trafficking, there is a continuing struggle with the capacity to identify trafficking victims. In the 3 years since the passage of the VTVPA, less than 1% of victims have been identified. At the current rate, for every one victim who receives benefits, there are 200 or more estimated victims who remain without services. These victims are likely to be living in fear and isolation. They may still be enduring abuse at the hands of their traffickers or others. They may be unaware that help is available.

The most recent interagency governmental report on human trafficking clearly described the current problem of the underidentification of human trafficking victims in the United States. The report stated that:

... the greatest challenge for the immediate future is locating and identifying victims. In contrast to the estimate that tens of thousands of victims of trafficking end up in the United States every year, the U.S. Government has assisted on the order of 450 victims since enactment of the TVPA. Clearly we need to do more to bring forward victims. (U. S. Department of Justice, 2003a, p. 7)

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Future efforts should be directed toward improved identification of human trafficking victims in the United States and to enhanced linkages with available services. More accurate information is needed regarding the extent of trafficking in the United States and internationally, the means by which trafficking victims are typically identified, and the barriers to victim identification. Various methods of identifying trafficked individuals should be evaluated, in regard to both efficacy and outcome. Improved systems of proactive victim identification are needed to increase the number of victims who have access to services.

There is incongruence between the number of individuals estimated to be victims of trafficking and the number of individuals receiving services. Policy efforts should support

antitrafficking laws that enable a greater number of victims to receive available services. Lobbying should endorse antitrafficking laws at the local level, alleviating some of the pressure on federal law enforcement.

Concurrent with such policy efforts, service providers and advocates should focus on the establishment of networks to facilitate data-sharing and service-building. The development of such networks will allow national resources to filter down, leading to increased local impact. Several recent national and regional initiatives provide promising models of such an interface between national resources and local service providers.

First, national and regional networks may be utilized to consolidate efforts in the fight against trafficking. For example, the Freedom Network (2003) is a national network of service providers and advocates for human trafficking victims. Such a national system allows members to "bring a unified voice to decision-makers and officials and provide the best possible array of rights-protective services to trafficked persons." There are currently a number of regional antitrafficking networks being developed in the United States, including networks in Florida, Texas, and New York.

Second, continued investment in educational and training programs regarding human trafficking and the VTVPA are needed to improve awareness of human trafficking. For instance, the Coalition Against Slavery and Trafficking (2003) offers practical training to both government and nongovernment organizations that may have contact with trafficking victims. This program utilizes public speaking and media advocacy to increase awareness of the issue of human trafficking. Safe Horizon (2003) also offers national trainings and technical assistance to agencies providing services to trafficked persons.

Third, comprehensive service programs are being developed to provide a range of services to human trafficking victims, including emergency medical attention, food and shelter, vocational and English language training, case management, mental health counseling, and legal support. Examples of such programs include the Coalition Against Trafficking and Slavery (2003), Boat People S.O.S. (2003), the Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights (2003), and the International Rescue Committee (2003). These organizations are developing models of care that address the complexity of human trafficking with a coordinated response across multiple disciplines and services.

Finally, although comprehensive services are available to trafficking victims in certain urban locations, services are not always available at the local level, particularly in more rural settings. Programs that provide services in multistate areas facilitate the availability of services to victims across a wider region, including remote areas. Project REACH (Rapid Evaluation, Assessment, and Consultation services for Human trafficking victims, 2003) is a broad-based program that provides crisis intervention, rapid assessment, case coordination, and consultation services for human trafficking victims in a wide service region, including the entire Eastern seaboard and Texas. Such a program enables a greater number of local providers to have access to specialized services on a cost-efficient basis. Similarly, the Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights (2003) provides legal and social services to trafficking victims in eight Midwestern states, and the International Rescue Committee (2003) has offices in several states across the nation.

Each program promotes awareness of the issue of human trafficking and works to increase knowledge about the availability of services for trafficked persons. Grass roots education and awareness campaigns targeting specific community audiences may also help spread awareness to victims. Perhaps if there is a clearer message that trafficking is a crime and that help is available, victims will move toward self-identification.

As increasing numbers of victims are identified, efforts should be directed toward improved quality of service. Studies comparing psychosocial needs assessments and service utilization patterns in trafficked persons are needed to highlight the importance of enhanced case

coordination for this population. Research on the psychological functioning of trafficked persons will contribute to an understanding of the sequelae of human trafficking. Research is needed on the services currently available for trafficked individuals. This research should be directed toward the development of a standard of care for this population, including the development of culturally appropriate interventions for trafficked persons.

Despite the fact that vulnerable people have been trafficked for centuries, human trafficking is largely an unspoken issue; individuals who have been trafficked do not have a voice. Martin Luther King, Jr., a leader in the fight for civil rights, said that "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." Recent efforts in the fight against trafficking represent the first step toward breaking that silence.

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