

Refugees & Human Trafficking:

A practical guide to preventing exploitation, spotting and responding to actual trafficking cases, and to influencing change

CHAPTER 1

How do we prevent trafficking?

Desperation makes refugees vulnerable, and many people try to cash in on their misery. Criminals know that migrants can easily be deceived, and may be desperate enough to accept a questionable offer of work, legal status, hope or even friendship. Traffickers lure their victims into a world of exploitation, control, coercion and abuse, preventing people from escaping through fear, threats and even actual imprisonment. Once someone is trafficked, it is incredibly hard (and expensive) to find them, catch and prosecute the criminals and help the victim recover from their ordeal and rebuild their lives.

It is vital that we do all we can to 1) prevent trafficking in the first place, 2) spot signs that trafficking is happening and 3) stop our society from thinking it is normal for vulnerable people to be working in terrible conditions and for very little money.

How do we prevent trafficking?

Safe spaces: In some refugee centres, traffickers are openly mingling with people, offering jobs and other "assistance". Help make centres safe! NGOs and staff need training to identify and stop criminal activity. Offer refugees prevention tools so that everyone knows how to spot dangerous situations and what to do if they realise they have been trafficked. If your country is under resourced and struggling to cope with large numbers of refugees, be careful not to criticise too much. Instead, advocate so that the international community can provide assistance through finance, personnel and expertise.

Responding positively to a negative result: When someone is refused refugee status and knows that they are going to be deported, the temptation is immense to disappear in the hope of being able to stay illegally. Traffickers wait for this moment of crisis to offer their "help". It is vital that we educate people about the dangers they face, but we should also demand that our nations do not deport someone without guarantees of safety and support. Every rejected asylum seeker must be returned to a safe country where they have the chance of building a life. They also need advice and maybe even some money and accommodation for the immediate arrival period. Throughout the centuries, churches have offered sanctuary to vulnerable people and some do so today for refugees facing deportation. In some nations, this is illegal. In others it is an act of civil disobedience that the authorities understand.

Fair claims processes: It is crucial that our governments assess people's asylum claims fairly. If the system cannot be trusted, desperate claimants will look to traffickers to provide options. Find out what independent NGOs or the media say about the fairness of procedures in your nation. Are international standards followed on assessment, the criteria used to make decisions, gathering of evidence and appeals procedures? If not, add your voice to demand that the authorities do a better job. You may also feel it is right to speak up so that there are other safer ways to allow people to migrate, without the need to claim asylum.

Economic means to meet immediate needs: In many nations, asylum seekers waiting to be given residency rights do not have adequate means of supporting themselves financially. Where this is the case, migrants are more likely to accept the offer of an illegal job which could lure them into the hands of traffickers. Speak up if claimant's benefits are inadequate. Could people in process be given the legal right to do certain jobs in return for payment?

CHAPTER 2

How do we spot trafficking? What would we do next?

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While cultural contexts vary greatly in Europe and around the world, some principles are universal. These are taken from the US State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Everyone has the potential to discover a human trafficking situation. While the victims may sometimes be kept behind locked doors, they are often hidden right in front of us at, for example, construction sites, restaurants, elder care centers, nail salons, agricultural fields, and hotels. Traffickers' use of coercion – such as threats of deportation and harm to the victim or their family members – is so powerful that even if you reach out to victims, they may be too fearful to accept your help. Knowing indicators of human trafficking and some follow up questions will help you act on your gut feeling that something is wrong and report it.

Human Trafficking Indicators

While not an exhaustive list, these are some key red flags that could alert you to a potential trafficking situation that should be reported:

- Living with employer
- Poor living conditions
- Multiple people in cramped space
- Inability to speak to individual alone
- Answers appear to be scripted and rehearsed
- Employer is holding identity documents
- Signs of physical abuse
- Submissive or fearful
- Unpaid or paid very little
- Under 18 and in prostitution

Questions to Ask

Assuming you have the opportunity to speak with a potential victim privately and without jeopardizing the victim's safety because the trafficker is watching, here are some sample questions to ask to follow up on the red flags you became alert to:

- Can you leave your job if you want to?
- Can you come and go as you please?
- Have you been hurt or threatened if you tried to leave?
- Has your family been threatened?
- Do you live with your employer?
- Where do you sleep and eat?
- Are you in debt to your employer?
- Do you have your passport/identification? Who has it?

If you believe you have identified someone still in a trafficking situation, guidelines from Truckers Against Trafficking (TAT) may be helpful. We share their advice here.*

Please do not approach traffickers. Call the (relevant) hotline, and if instructed, the local police. Allow law enforcement to deal with traffickers and recover victims. Approaching traffickers is not only dangerous for you and their victims, but could lead to problems in the eventual prosecution of traffickers.

For law enforcement to open an investigation on your tip, they need 'actionable information'. Specific tips helpful when reporting to the hotline would include:

- Description of cars (make, model, color, license plate number, etc.) and people (height, weight, hair color, eye color, age, etc.). Take a picture if you can.
- Specific times and dates (When did you see the event in question take place? What day was it?)
- Addresses and locations where suspicious activity took place

*For more information about TAT, go online at <http://www.truckersagainsttrafficking.org/>

CHAPTER 3

How do you speak up?

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To prevent trafficking or to resolve a mess that trafficking has caused, we may need to influence the authorities or society in general. You may have little time or experience in advocacy. But you can still speak up.

Start with prayer. Prepare yourself and your heart. It is important that you engage in a way that honours Christ (See the European Evangelical Alliance's socio-political approach and code at <http://www.europeanea.org/index.php/resources/>) as well as contributing accurately and helpfully into the debate. Pray for protection and open doors. Keep praying throughout. Intercession may be the specific contribution that you need to commit to!

Check your facts. You may think you know the situation... but double check. Stories are sometimes shared which may not be totally true, especially on social media. Seek confirmation of information. If you know of a specific situation, write your evidence accurately on one page, with details like location, names and dates. In most instances, you should seek permission from the people involved before you pass on this evidence. Think very carefully to ensure that your involvement could not make the situation worse for people who are already vulnerable.

Be clear on what you want to happen or to stop happening. Reflect on why the situation is as it is. Consider the people who have the power to change things. What pressures are they under or what motivates them? Does this help you work out what will persuade them to listen to you? If they will not / cannot solve the situation completely, what would be a good step in that direction?

Talk to an appropriate NGO or perhaps your Evangelical Alliance or denomination who has experience of influencing politics. Ask them what they are doing, and if you can help! Your evidence of what is happening locally may be vital.

Get behind an existing campaign which shares your aims and is campaigning in a style that seems reasonable. Ask friends to join you.

Thoughts to consider:

- Can you talk directly to the people with influence? Or can you brief someone else who could do the talking and is more likely to get a meeting and be listened to? Write your request for an appointment and basic facts on one page. If you get a meeting, you need to present the facts and what you want in perhaps just 3 minutes. Your requests need to be realistic.
 - Create a campaign on social media, start a petition, write letters to the local press, engage in debate on local radio, or organise (with appropriate permission) a public event. Is there a special date to connect an event to, eg EU Anti-Trafficking Day 18 October or World Refugee Day 20 June? Encourage journalists to investigate the situation, or cover your campaign.
 - Consider how you can help give migrants a voice in your community - a way to express their needs and contribute to solutions.
 - Or maybe your contribution is engaging graciously and persuasively with your friends, colleagues, social media contacts etc.
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