



Stop Human Trafficking¹: Stop the Demand

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In Luke 18, Jesus tells the story of a judge in a certain city who respected neither God nor man. However, a widow in that city kept coming to him saying, "Give me my rights against my opponent." For a long time the judge refused to listen to the woman, let alone hear her case. After much persistence the judge states, "I care little for God or man, but this widow is wearing me out. I am going to settle in her favor or she will end by doing me violence."² Jesus directs: "Listen to what the corrupt judge says." Then he explains what has happened... "Will not God then secure the rights of the chosen ones who call out to God day and night? Will God be slow to answer them? I tell you, God will see to it that justice is done for them speedily."

Catholic women religious of UNANIMA International draw on this parable to sustain their work against human trafficking - a modern form of human slavery. In the story, the judge is characterized as immoral, apathetic, and disrespectful of the rights of the woman. He fails to see the dignity and worth of this one woman who seeks justice and the right to be treated with integrity. She, on the other hand, is portrayed as making her demands with tenacity and courage, pressing her case for justice regardless of the power of the judge. She must have her rights recognized.

Similar to the woman in the story, UNANIMA International has launched an international campaign³ to *stop the demand against trafficking in women and children*. The campaign seeks justice on behalf of women and children caught in the web of this modern slavery. With the efforts of other organizations, UNANIMA's long range campaign aims to stop one of the underlying causes which promote the commercial trafficking in human persons.

UNANIMA International draws on the example of the widow in the Scriptures as motivation to undertake the campaign. For UNANIMA members the widow's tenacity and courage are the virtues needed to bring about the structural changes to end human trafficking.

¹ One definition of human trafficking is found in *The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children*, supplementing the *Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*, which was adopted by the United Nations in Palermo, Italy, in 2000.

² Translation - New American Bible

³ Campaign materials can be viewed at www.unanima-international.org and ordered online at the same web site.

Human Trafficking: the Global Context

The widespread buying and selling of human beings which constitutes human trafficking is one of the most alarming issues facing contemporary humanity. One of the reasons human trafficking is so prevalent is because of the demand, the desire to take advantage of a supply of vulnerable men, women and children whose life situations of poverty and vulnerability expose them to the wiles of traffickers and pimps.

The global and social context that allows demand to thrive and fuels human trafficking is complex. This context allows traffickers, pimps and johns (primarily men) to use, abuse, buy and sell women, men and children. The demand for the illegal labor, prostitution, sexual exploitation, and pornographic use of human beings is big business with enormous profits for traffickers.⁴

How big is this business? According to a research paper prepared by Florence Deacon⁵ for UNANIMA International in 2006:

Individuals interested in the crime of human trafficking are familiar with the basic statistics: Up to 800,000 people are trafficked internationally each year for sexual exploitation and forced labor, 80% of them women or girls. While the most common United States government estimates cited are from 14,500 to 17,500, an NGO resource guide prepared by the US Department of Justice put the figure as high as 50,000 people trafficked into the US each year.⁶ The International Labor Organization has estimated that yearly profits from sexual trafficking are \$27.8 billion, averaging \$23,000 for each victim of sexual exploitation.⁷

Many organizations and individuals, including the United Nations, have responded to this crime by of modern slavery to provide direct service to trafficked women and children. Many types of programs are available relating to trafficked persons: awareness-raising to prevent the victims being ensnared by traffickers, protection in shelters and rehabilitation projects, legal services to assist trafficked migrants and to prosecute traffickers.

UNANIMA Board members affirmed that all of this work is important and necessary, but they recognized that it is insufficient to halt human trafficking. They determined to address a root cause which was largely being ignored: the demand for using human persons as commodities for sale.

⁴ "Human Trafficking is Big Business." M.B. Dion, www.sf.broowaha.com, June 18, 2007.

⁵ "Stopping the Trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation: How do we eliminate the demand?" by Florence Deacon, OSF, can be found at www.unanima-international.org/Stop%20the%20demand%20web%20English/resources.htm

⁶ Senator Dale Volker, Public Hearing on the Issue of Human Trafficking, New York Senate Codes Committee, February 2, 2006; *Trafficking in Persons: A Guide for Non-Governmental Organizations*, US Department of Justice, www.usdoj.gov/crt/crim/wetf/trafficbrochure.html, accessed on 2/04/06.

⁷ *A Global Alliance Against Forced Labor*, cited by Steven Greenhouse in "Forced Labor Said to Bind 12 Million," *New York Times*, May 12, 2005.

In the words of Sister Rosalyn, a Sister of Charity, who works in the red-light district in a large Indian city:

In my experience with women and children who have been trafficked and exploited sexually, they have been so badly traumatized and violated that, even if they are rescued, they are never able to live normal lives. The only way to eliminate this harm is to ensure that they are never trafficked.

The most direct way to ensure they are not trafficked is to stop the demand for the sale of women, children and men.

Demand and Trafficking

The logic for a “Stop the Demand” campaign is simple: if no one is willing to buy human beings, there would be no market for traffickers looking to sell them. Without easy money, the traffickers would seek other ways to get money. No demand, no money, no recruitment to fill the demand. No trafficking.

Janice Raymond makes a similar argument in regards to prostitution.

....[M]any scholars and activists would see the male demand for the sex of prostitution as the most immediate and proximate cause of the expansion of the sex industry, without which it would be highly unprofitable for pimps, recruiters, and traffickers to seek out a supply of women. This may be labeled simplistic, un-nuanced, or conceptually impaired; however, a prostitution market without male consumers would go broke.⁸

At first read this goal of stopping the demand for human slavery may seem impossible to achieve. When the UNANIMA Board members consulted others regarding the campaign, people told them that prostitution and other forms of the degradation of human beings for profit were as old as the history of humankind. The UNANIMA board was certainly conscious of the long-range effort needed to carry out such a campaign. Yet it is impossible to ignore the staggering facts. Human trafficking is the third most profitable form of illicit trafficking after drugs and arms. It is much less risky than either of these and trafficked human persons can be sold over and over again unlike either drugs or arms. Current estimates suggest that the sex industry generates more than US\$9.5 billion, a number that is continually increasing.

In their preparation of the campaign, the UNANIMA board and its member institutes faced many obstacles, similar to the widow in the Gospel parable. Some tried to discourage the approach, reasoning that a goal of stopping the demand could never be achieved. Sexual exploitation of women was too ingrained into cultures to ever bring an end to gender discrimination. The prevailing attitude of viewing woman and children as sexual objects and sources of cheap labor was too dominant in too many societies throughout the world. Despite these reactions, the UNANIMA board continued to research and develop its campaign action plan. Working together with graphic artists, translators, and focus groups, a set of materials to educate and raise awareness regarding demand and human trafficking

⁸ Janice G. Raymond, “Prostitution on Demand: Legalizing the Buyers as Sexual Consumers,” *Violence Against Women* 10(2004): 1156-1186.

was published in four languages: English, French, Portuguese and Spanish. The first campaign packet became the educational material for the members of UNANIMA, members of other religious institutes, their partners in ministry and their colleagues. It grounded the first phase of the campaign – providing information about the role of demand in human trafficking and suggesting actions which could be taken to bring an end to this demand. Materials for the next phase of the campaign aimed at the demanders and potential demanders are yet to be developed.

What is demand?

Demand is the act of seeking to purchase a human person for forced labor or, more frequently, for sexual exploitation.⁹ Demand is more complex than this, however. As Sigma Huda, the first UN special rapporteur on Human Trafficking explains:

Demand is what fosters or promotes exploitation. It need not directly lead to trafficking or directly seek the exploitation. It is enough that the exploitation fostered by the demand leads to trafficking.

As an example, she considers the case of digitally created pornography in which no actual person is used to make the images. It is demand because it fosters sexual exploitation. Huda's 2006 report to the United Nations Human Rights Commission strongly argues that "the demand for sexual exploitation promotes trafficking." Because of this clear cause and effect linkage between demand and exploiters, Huda calls for sanctions against the demanders.

Who are the demanders?

According to researchers¹⁰, nearly 90% are men. They fit no single profile. Men from all walks of life are demanders seeking sexual experiences: travelers, "good" family men, professionals, priests, ministers, young men and old men, men from any class, sex addicts.... They are seldom lonely, usually more likely to have sexual partners than not and seldom have sexually unsatisfying relationships. When asked why they purchased sex and what they sought by purchasing sex, there were a variety of responses. Some wanted sex acts their wives would not do. Others liked the excitement of hunting for a woman they could buy for a short time with no relational responsibilities. Still others wanted sex in contexts where they were not required to be polite or nice, where they could degrade, humiliate and dominate women and children.

Why does this demand exist?

⁹ While statistics vary considerably because of the hidden nature of the crime and the lack of a clear, universally accepted definition of trafficking, UN statistics indicate that 1.2 million persons are trafficked annually, inside their own country or internationally. 2.45 million of these victims are found in exploitative conditions. Of these 80% are women and girls. Of those trafficked over 50% are children, i.e. under the age of 18. 87% of those trafficked are trafficked for sexual exploitation, 28% for forced labor. Of these some experience both sexual exploitation and forced labor.

¹⁰ See research studies of Donna Hughes, Melissa Farley, the full 2006 report of Sigma Huda to the United Nations, Rose Dufour, Richard Poulin, and Robert Jensen and the forthcoming (March 2009) work of Victor Malarek entitled *The Johns: The Men Who Buy and Sell Women*.

Research shows that there is a causal link between demand and human trafficking and that this causal link occurs for economic reasons, for political reasons and for socio-cultural reasons.

Demand exists for many reasons. One primary explanation is given to the socialization to masculinity which occurs worldwide and across many cultures. A significant component of this socialization aims to draw distinctions between boys (and men) and girls (and women) that favor men. Strongly emphasized in this socialization are elements of inequality and subordination of women to men. Some examples of global statistics which demonstrate this preference include: sons are preferred over daughters; girls are likely to receive less education than boys; women's labor is less well paid than men's; and more women are likely to experience violence during their lives than men.

Other examples of the economic, political and socio-cultural dimensions which increase the vulnerability of women and children to trafficking include:

- The desire of employers for unskilled and cheap labor markets in order to maximize their profit;
- The prevalence of development policies and practices which depend on temporary migrant workers restricted in their ability to cross borders legally;
- The preference for women's labor primarily in the domestic and entertainment spheres;
- The enormous prostitution infrastructure built around military bases;
- The socialization of men to be aggressive and competitive. Some cultures claim that men have a right to sex that has to be satisfied even at the cost of the buying and selling of women and children.

Further research indicates that pornography and prostitution are sometimes seen as integral to the maturation process of boys in many cultures. A boy's education about sex occurs through exposure to pornography and his first sexual experience may take place when a father, an older brother or an uncle takes him to a brothel to learn "how to be a man." At the same time within the household, boys are taught to see women as providing care and service for men and their desires and interests.

Critics of this analysis argue that, while this may be true in some cases, it is certainly not commonly and presents a biased perspective on masculinity and male socialization. However, humor in our culture reveals much about the truth of the cultural position of women. Jokes told about women either cast them as sexual objects or as inferior to men. Women are persons to be mocked because their ways of acting and talking are less intelligent or more foolish. This is particularly true of jokes that are told in male-only settings. While it may seem like the crime of human trafficking, has no close link with these attitudes and practices of our societies, recent international experience has shown these links to be deep.

Making the connections: Human trafficking, prostitution and pornography

Prostitution and trafficking are often discussed as if they are two separate and unconnected realities. They are, in reality, intrinsically connected, as Gunilla Ekberg, the former special adviser to the Swedish government on human trafficking and prostitution, argues. Males who exploit women and girls in prostitution, and according to statistics the buyers are

predominantly male (90%), do not make any distinction between women and children who are trafficked into prostitution and those who are not. Hence, making that distinction is not an effective strategy for those in the struggle to end human trafficking either. These men do not ask women and girls how they came to be in prostitution – whether they were trafficked or not. They do not care if a female is over or under 18, but look for the most vulnerable female.¹¹

The experience of anti-trafficking activists amplifies the linkages. The male demand for prostitution has been found actually to expand human trafficking, argues Janice Raymond, co-founder of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women. She writes, “Many scholars and activists would see the male demand... as the most immediate and proximate cause of the expansion of the sex industry, without which it would be unprofitable for pimps, recruiters and traffickers to seek out a supply of women.”¹²

These linkages are further emphasized in the 2006 report of Sigma Huda¹³, the former special rapporteur on human trafficking to the UN Human Rights Commission. She states that prostitution and trafficking are in most cases identical: “For the most part, prostitution as actually practiced in the world does satisfy the elements of trafficking. It is characterized by threats, use of force and other forms of coercion, deception, the giving and receiving of payments or benefits to get the person being exploited to consent. In prostitution one person has control over the other.”

Pornography, while not identical to trafficking or prostitution, serves as one of the major drivers for the sex industry. With the advent of the internet, it has become both more accessible and more hard-core. Professors Gail Dines and Robert Jensen have worked extensively researching pornography and trace its increasing harm to both men and women in our societies. The production of pornographic material is linked with the trafficking of women and children because most often real women and children are needed for the filming of sexual encounters (abuse).

Pornography also increases the demand for trafficking by creating a market for the consumption of sexual exploitation. It is simply another form of buying sex. Jensen relates that men he has interviewed who exploit women and children sexually have told their victims: “I’ve seen all this in the movies. I know you love it.”¹⁴ Not surprisingly, Jensen has also found evidence that viewing pornography actually increases the demand for prostitution. Perhaps more surprising, though, he has also discovered that those who view pornography of young children tend to seek to exploit younger and younger victims in prostitution.

In short, at the core of prostitution, pornography and human trafficking is sexual exploitation based on the differential between the power of the buyer and the vulnerability

¹¹ Ekberg, Gunilla S. “The International Debate about Prostitution and Trafficking in Women : Refuting the Arguments,” a paper presented at a Seminar on the effects of Legalization of Prostitution Activities, organized by the Swedish Government, Sweden, 5-6 November 2002.

¹² Raymond, “Prostitution on Demand.”

¹³ Huda, Sigma. *Integration of the Human Rights of Women and a Gender Perspective*. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights aspects of the victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, E/CN.4/2006/62, 20 February 2006.

¹⁴ Jensen, Robert. *Getting off: Pornography and the End of Masculinity*, South End Press, 2007.

of the trafficked person. Because the linkages among them are so intrinsic, UNANIMA International argues that it is impossible to eliminate the demand for human trafficking without also ending the demand for prostitution and pornography. In this way, its campaign to stop the demand does strategize to eliminate all forms of demand for sexual exploitation.

Teaching of the Catholic Church on Justice and Human Trafficking

The Catholic Church has a rich tradition of social justice teaching. This teaching provides a framework to evaluate relationships. It provides a set of principles for reflection, criteria for judgment and directions for action. The central elements of the Church's teaching are:

- the world is God's creation;
- women and men are made in God's image (*imago Dei*);
- human beings are called to be in right relationship with all people and the environment;
- the life of each individual has inherent dignity and sacredness.

Human dignity is not an earned privilege, but rather the basic right from which all other human rights flow.¹⁵

During contemporary times the hierarchical church has issued papal statement and documents that have condemned the trafficking in human persons. The Church is against all forms of demand for sexual exploitation as well as against the sexual exploitation itself. The Second Vatican Council states directly: "Slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children, and the disgraceful working conditions where people are treated as instruments of gain rather than free and responsible persons.... are infamies that poison human society, debase their perpetrators.... and constitute... a supreme dishonor to the Creator."
[\(Gaudium et Spes, 27\)](#)

Pope John Paul II affirmed that "The trade in human persons constitutes a shocking offence against human dignity and a grave violation of fundamental human rights..." and encouraged "attention ... to ... the deeper causes of the increased 'demand' which fuels the market for human slavery and tolerates the human cost which results."¹⁶

These statements and others like them that can be found in statements by the Union of Superiors General, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and various institutes of women and men religious are the basis for a profound challenge to all faithful people to act decisively to end this crime of modern day slavery. The UNANIMA International *Stop the Demand for Trafficking in Women and Children* provides concrete suggestions for actions which can be effective in making this social change.

How can we stop the demand?

¹⁵ [Pacem in Terris](#) by John XXIII explains the relationship of the *Imago Dei* to the human rights teaching of the Church.

¹⁶ Letter of John Paul II to Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran at the International Conference on the Twenty-first Century Slavery: "The Human Rights Dimension to Trafficking in Human Beings," www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/2002/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_20020515_tauran_en.html

Like the widow who continues to make her case with the judge, the campaign also proposes actions that can work to stop the demand. These include prayer, self-education, coalition work with other organizations, postcard campaigns to promote legislation aimed to punish those who form part of the chain of human trafficking by buying sex, giving public testimony about the link between the demand and human trafficking.

A special role for Catholic men religious

Catholic men in religious life who live the charisms of their founders in the globalized world of the 21st century have a special role to play in the *Stop the Demand* campaign. Below are some examples of actions that can be carried out by individual persons, by religious communities, and by men religious in their ministries. There is a great need to provide significant male leadership to end this scourge.

Some examples of individual participation:

- Continue to educate yourself and raise awareness about human trafficking, what demand is, the ways it is expressed in your cultures and how these expressions can be counteracted;
- Recognize and protest against the sexualization and commodification of women, children and men in the media;
- Use accurate language in talking about the issues: e.g. “perpetrators” or “exploiters” for those who buy sex acts rather than “clients” or “buyers”; “women exploited in prostitution” rather than “sex workers”;
- Be respectful of women in humor and choice of language.

Some examples of community participation:

- Initiate and encourage workshops or community discussions linking a positive male identity, gender equality and actions that counter the demand for human trafficking;
- Learn about and participate in efforts to stop the demand through legislation by following the model of the Swedish¹⁷ laws that punish the traffickers and those who buy sex and also work to promote gender equality;
- Identify someone involved in congregational justice and peace ministry to be the point person for actions to stop the demand;
- Ask CMSM to have a session on demand and human trafficking at its annual meeting;
- Encourage USCCB, USG and other organizations of bishops, priests and brothers to include the element of working against demand in their statements on human trafficking.

Some examples of participation in ministry:

- In homilies, link gospel values with the work to end human trafficking through stopping the demand;
- In the intercessory petitions to be used for the prayers of the faithful create petitions that include the struggle to end the demand for human trafficking. Send the petitions to UNANIMA International to be posted as a prayer resource on its website;

¹⁷ To learn more about the Swedish law, consult <http://action.web.ca/home/catw/readingroom.shtml?x=71054> or <http://www.unanima-international.org/Stop%20the%20demand%20web%20English/swedish.htm>

- In high schools, colleges and seminaries, educate¹⁸ young men in a positive male identity. Include in the formation information about the harm that is done to both men and women through harmful cultural practices of prostitution, and pornography that fuel the demand for trafficking.

Conclusion

Ending trafficking in human persons, particularly for sexual exploitation, is a long-term effort. To be successful, like the widow in Luke's gospel, we will need the tenacity, perseverance and courage to challenge the socio-cultural, political, economic and religious structures that underlie the acts of human trafficking. God's justice can be done through our efforts.

History has shown that long-range efforts to work at systemic change can be effective. Some examples of successful social change include: the elimination of apartheid in South Africa, the decrease in the social acceptance of smoking, the public condemnation of domestic violence and child abuse. In each of these cases, the behavior mentioned was treated with either silence or social acceptance for decades. Strong and courageous advocates over the long-term did force changes.

Like the widow who seeks justice, we can stop the demand for trafficking in women and children.¹⁹

¹⁸ Positive examples of programs using peer education exist in Mexico and the Philippines. To learn more visit www.catwinternational.org

¹⁹ Special thanks to Susan Maloney, SNJM, Ph.D., for her help in editing this paper and her many valuable suggestions regarding the content of the article.