

## How to Dismantle the Business of Human Trafficking

150 years following the ratification of the 13th Amendment officially abolishing slavery, the blight of human bondage remains a pervasive threat to liberty and dignity. **Globally, estimates indicate that there are roughly 21 million victims of human trafficking annually at a profit of nearly \$150 billion dollars for the criminals committing this heinous violation of human rights.** By contrast, the State Department reported fewer than 4,500 convictions worldwide last year. Exploiters largely operate with impunity, facing a fraction of the accountability that those engaged in the trafficking of weapons and drugs face.

Human trafficking is a global affliction, one that America is not immune to. To combat this, the U.S. government has taken important steps to create a permanent anti-human trafficking infrastructure at home. These efforts manifested in the passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) in 2000 and have drawn worldwide attention to the scourge of human trafficking through the annual publication of the State Department's Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP Report).

As commendable as these efforts have been, human trafficking remains a prevalent crime that entraps a diverse group of people and threatens security both in the U.S. and across the globe. Further resources need to be directed towards a multi-sector approach to dismantling the criminal networks that profit from modern day slavery.

*The following is a three-pronged approach that the U.S. government can take to dismantle every link of the human trafficking supply chain and put traffickers out of business:*

### Increase Risks for Perpetrators

**The U.S. government should step up prosecutions of all involved in the crime.** Human trafficking is a complex criminal enterprise that requires a range of different actors in order to function. In order to fully leverage deterrence through law enforcement, every actor in this exploitation network must be vulnerable to prosecution. This should be done through a victim-centered approach in the investigation and prosecution phases to include expanded training of law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges, improved sources of evidence, and better coordination among victim advocates and officials at all levels of government: federal, state, local, and tribal. **The U.S. government should also take steps to more broadly use financial investigations,** a proven tool in successful prosecutions. At the same time, it should expand the role of the private sector. This requires improving formal and informal working relationships between the U.S. government and partners in the private sector who can help disrupt human trafficking networks. **Businesses, in coordination with law enforcement, should adopt a proactive approach.** They should implement training and awareness programs to teach employees to identify and report potential incidents of human trafficking.

### Decrease Profits that Drive Perpetrators

The United States should approach human trafficking as the business that it is with a robust plan to choke off all profits made from modern day slavery. **To dismantle it, the U.S. government should focus on protecting workers by improving government procurement policies and building partnerships with companies that can replicate those policies where practical.** Because human trafficking is a profit-driven crime, the United States should eliminate economic incentives by

denying perpetrators access to U.S. markets for both goods and labor. **As the largest buyer of goods and services worldwide, the U.S. government should work to eliminate human trafficking from its procurement.**

The U.S. government should adopt and enforce strong policies to protect workers providing services and goods under government contracts. **Additionally, the United States should work with businesses to root out human trafficking.** Congress should pass legislation to encourage businesses to adopt compliance plans to identify and mitigate the risk of trafficking in their supply chains for goods and labor, and that ensures responsible companies are operating on a level playing field. And government officials should work with companies to revise and implement guiding principles to ensure they are not unintentionally contributing to the human trafficking problem globally. Corporate leaders should also encourage self-regulation to eradicate exploitation from their supply chains. **Finally, the United States should ensure that its foreign trade is free of trafficking.** The U.S. government should leverage potential trade relations to require standards on anti-human trafficking policies with all of its trade partners. Negotiations for trade agreements should be recognized as an opportunity to compel our partners to combat human trafficking.

## Provide Adequate Resources

Slavery is legal nowhere, yet happens everywhere. Eradicating it will require significant additional resources and better collaboration among government, private sector, and nonprofit actors. The financial resources currently deployed to fight slavery are alarmingly low. Worldwide, governments and NGOs combined spend an average of \$124 million annually, while traffickers are earning profits estimated at \$150 billion per year. Even though it is the world's leader in funding international anti-trafficking programs, the U.S. government spent more money in a single month fighting the war on drugs than it spent fighting trafficking—domestically and internationally—over the past 15 years. While sufficient funds alone won't guarantee success, insufficient funds guarantee failure. Congress should appropriate a level of funding commensurate with this problem.

**Congress and the Obama Administration have made**

**substantial public commitments to combat human trafficking. But until the funding to implement and support effective anti-trafficking initiatives matches this rhetoric, such pledges will have limited impact.**

In particular, the Congress should pass S.553, *the End Modern Slavery Initiative Act*, to establish a 501(c)3 organization dedicated to pooling public and private funds to identify successful anti-trafficking strategies that can be scaled up and replicated worldwide.

Additionally, Congress should increase funding for the Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit within the Department of Justice. This specialized federal unit centralizes top prosecutors with human trafficking expertise, and also coordinates inter-agency coordination teams, which have led to a 119% increase in investigations. Human trafficking cases are complex to investigate and prosecute; additional resources are needed to increase the number and type of human trafficking cases that this office can process.

Corporate Resources should be directed at comprehensive, sustainable projects. Funds from asset seizures are one potential source of additional resources.

---

If we are to finally eradicate slavery once and for all the U.S. government, private sector, and civil society must work together to put an end to this growing criminal enterprise. It is essential we continue to invest in and expand victim services, as well as pursue efforts to make survivors financially whole, but we must also significantly increase the attention on ensuring that each victim rescued is not merely replaced with another by putting the exploiters out of business and bringing them to justice. Failing to reverse the risk-reward equation for all enablers within the network of human trafficking will leave us struggling to keep pace with this growing illicit industry.

The full Human Rights First blueprint is available at: <http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/sites/default/files/HRF-Dismantle-Trafficking-Blueprint.11.24.15.pdf>.

---