

**Statement by Kent R. Hill, Assistant Administrator
Bureau for Europe and Eurasia
United States Agency for International Development**

**United States House of Representatives
Committee on Government Reform
Subcommittee on Wellness and Human Rights**

October 29, 2003

Introduction

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee. I am very pleased to have the opportunity to be here today to participate in your consideration of the nature and scope of human trafficking. This is a serious and heart-rending abuse of human rights, and it is a 21st-century form of slavery which diminishes us all, not just its victims.

As Assistant Administrator for the Bureau for Europe and Eurasia at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), I have seen the impact of the trade in human beings firsthand in many countries in that region. And as the USAID representative to the United States Government Senior Policy Operating Group which deals with trafficking, I have become even more aware of the global nature of this terrible scourge and of the collective United States Government (USG) efforts to address this problem.

Trafficking in human beings has different faces in different parts of the world, but it has in common its total disregard for human freedom and dignity and the shameful immorality of those who live off the slavery of others. I am happy to have this chance to share with you how USAID has joined this fight against trafficking in persons, what we are doing now, and what we intend to do to meet this great challenge in the future.

What the trafficking problem is world wide

International slavery and human trafficking are not new. Slavery and slavery-like practices are documented in some of the earliest historical records. Tragically, the sale and exploitation of human beings is a global phenomenon. The U.S. State Department's 2003 [Trafficking in Persons Report](#) estimates that at least 800,000 to 900,000 are trafficked annually. This is in addition to large numbers of people who are trafficked within their own countries.

Not only are women, men, and children trafficked for forced labor, but a substantial part of this trade involves the trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation. In any circumstance, trafficking feeds on the poverty and powerlessness of its victims and the greed and immorality of its perpetrators. It also inflicts human suffering on individual victims whose rights and freedoms are violated by traffickers. The sale and exploitation of human beings is often dominated by criminal networks that work both locally and across international borders in source, transit, and destination countries. Human trafficking is highly profitable and relatively

low risk for the perpetrators. Like other criminal activities, it thrives within and contributes to conditions of official corruption and weak law enforcement.

The increasing globalization of the world's economies has given rise to complex migration patterns, as workers have lost traditional sources of income or have been drawn to new job markets. As people move both internally and across borders in search of economic opportunity and what they perceive as a better life, what starts as voluntary migration, either legal or illegal, often leads to victimization by traffickers.

Conflict, like social and economic upheaval, also gives rise to conditions leading to trafficking. As populations are displaced and community and legal structures break down in the turmoil, women and children become more vulnerable. The presence of displaced male civilian populations among this chaos and violence, as well as combatants and sadly even international peacekeepers, increases and concentrates demand for women in prostitution. Women and children – both girls and boys – are swept up by fighting forces as they are abducted or coerced to serve either as direct combatants, “child soldiers”, “war wives” or porters, and cooks.

Trafficking is both a supply- and a demand-driven industry. People from impoverished countries most often are trafficked to areas that are relatively more wealthy or developed and the supply of trafficked victims is fueled by political, economic, social, ethnic and/or religious upheaval. Violence against women and children, and women's weaker economic position relative to men further contribute to their vulnerability to the deceptions and power of traffickers. The persistent demand for cheap labor and the increasingly created demand for services of prostitutes and child pornography through the internet feed the trafficking industry. At USAID we believe that both the conditions that lead to a supply of individuals who are vulnerable to traffickers and the attitudes of those waiting to exploit these victims sexually or economically must be addressed. We see prostitution as inherently degrading to those who are sexually exploited and as a factor in fueling the trade in humans, and thus we completely oppose the legalization or normalization of prostitution as a legitimate activity. To take any other position provides traffickers an open door to trade and exploit the most vulnerable of the human family.

USAID's Anti-Trafficking Activities

USAID began to mount anti-trafficking efforts in a few countries in the late 1990s. The Agency now has a worldwide effort with activities in around 40 countries. Field missions, regional bureaus, and central offices are all involved. USAID's Office of Women in Development coordinates the Agency's efforts and chairs USAID's Anti-trafficking Working Group, an internal group with representatives from all USAID bureaus. USAID has made steady progress in increasing the volume and geographic coverage of its anti-trafficking assistance. USAID obligations which specifically target anti-trafficking activities reached \$6.7 million in fiscal year 2001; in fiscal year 2002 the Agency increased its anti-trafficking assistance to \$10.7 million; and in FY 2003 USAID obligated just over \$15 million. Geographic diversity has also increased in USAID's anti-trafficking programs. The Europe and Eurasia region has the largest level of funding in the world for anti-trafficking activities. This is in part because this region of the world has more victims as a percentage of the population than any other region in the world. USAID has significant activities in South and Southeast Asia and some robust programs in

Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. Of the 15 countries on Tier 3 of the Trafficking in Persons List published in June 2003, USAID has development activities in nine and direct anti-trafficking projects in eight of these nine. These are: Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Kazakhstan, Liberia, Sudan, and Uzbekistan. And we have now begun work in Georgia as well – the ninth country we provide assistance to which was on Tier 3 in June. By September, ten countries had demonstrated sufficient progress in the opinion of the State Department that they were moved from Tier 3 to Tier 2. The five which remained on Tier 3 were: Burma, Cuba, Liberia, North Korea, and Sudan. According to a White House Press Release of September 10, “While Liberia and Sudan have also failed to meet the standards of the Act, and are thus subject to sanctions, the President has determined that certain multilateral assistance for these two countries would promote the purposes of the Act or is otherwise in the national interest of the United States. For Sudan, the assistance will be limited to that which may be necessary to implement a peace accord.”

The evidence is very encouraging. The strong pressure, particularly since 2000, exerted by the U.S. Congress and the Administration is having a positive impact around the world to heighten international efforts to counter trafficking in persons.

Trafficking in persons is a very complex issue which manifests itself in a variety of ways in different regions and countries. USAID’s responses reflect this complexity through a wide range of country-specific as well as regional programs. Targeted anti-trafficking programs take advantage of USAID’s field presence and expertise, addressing the underlying causes of trafficking through prevention efforts, working to provide care and assistance to victims through protection and strengthening aspects of national legislation and international prosecution. The broad range of USAID development assistance programs reinforces the Agency’s direct anti-trafficking efforts by helping to reduce vulnerability to trafficking through activities that reduce poverty, strengthening governance and rule of law, decreasing conflict, increasing economic opportunities for women and men, and increasing girls’ access to quality education. USAID’s anti-trafficking efforts are conducted in partnership with international, regional, and local organizations, including NGOs, private voluntary organizations (both faith-based and secular), and multilateral institutions.

USAID’s Anti-Trafficking Policies

In February 2003, USAID released its anti-trafficking program statement, “Trafficking in Persons: The USAID Strategy for Response.” The strategy reflects and complements the U.S. Government’s integrated approach to combating trafficking in persons, both internationally and domestically. Principles underlying the strategy include:

- Emphasis on a targeted set of countries and/or regions
- Anti-trafficking activities focused on prevention of trafficking, protection of victims, reform, and implementation of anti-trafficking legislation
- Development efforts that support and reinforce direct anti-trafficking activities, e.g., girls’ education, reduction of violence against women and promotion of their rights, poverty reduction, administration of justice, and refugee assistance

- Partnerships with organizations such as NGOs and faith-based institutions that are fighting trafficking and assisting victims of prostitution, child labor, and other forms of slavery
- Coordination with other parts of the U.S. Government and with local, regional, and international institutions

The Strategy specifies how USAID will implement its activities through partnerships. In keeping with the Administration’s position that prostitution is degrading to women, the USAID strategy states:

“Organizations advocating prostitution as an employment choice or which advocate or support the legalization of prostitution are not appropriate partners for USAID anti-trafficking grants or contracts. Missions will avoid contracting or assistance agreements with such organizations as primary or sub-grantees, or contractors.”

Recognizing that USAID staff or contractors may come in contact with individuals who have been trafficked whom they cannot and should not ignore, the strategy states:

“In the course of their development work, especially in STD and HIV/AIDS programs, USAID staff and primary grantees, subgrantees, contractors, and subcontractors may become aware of individuals who may have been trafficked for sexual exploitation. When this occurs, USAID staff or grantees and contractors should report this information to the U.S. Embassy officer who handles trafficking.”

Selected examples of USAID anti-trafficking activities

In Ukraine, USAID’s “Trafficking Prevention Project” addresses two key factors that contribute to the vulnerability of Ukrainian women to trafficking: lack of economic opportunity and violence against women. This project began in 1998 and will continue through April 2004. In it, USAID and its partner, Winrock International, pioneered the strategy of increasing women’s income-earning options as a way to prevent trafficking. Project activities are grounded on the assumption that in order to improve trafficking prevention efforts in Ukraine: 1) women in the at-risk group need to be trained in recognizing and creating viable economic opportunities for themselves; and 2) improved crisis prevention services for at-risk women and returned trafficking victims need to be enhanced. Through nine trafficking prevention centers run by Ukrainian non-governmental organizations, this activity offers both job skills training and resources for women including support groups, free legal consultations, and referrals to physicians and psychologists.

Children from marginalized populations in Albania, particularly ethnic minorities, are unusually vulnerable to being sold by their relatives, manipulated by traffickers, and ignored by law enforcement. Albania’s proximity to developed countries in the European Union (notably Greece and Italy), combined with porous borders, has made it a prime illegal market for trade in human beings, especially children. A new USAID-sponsored activity, “Transnational Action

Against Child Trafficking,” links Albanian non-governmental organizations and public officials with their counterparts in Greece and Italy to identify trafficking routes, cooperate on voluntary and legal repatriation of trafficked children, and to improve care for trafficking victims both before and after repatriation. The activity includes prevention efforts such as information dissemination and assistance for at-risk children and their families. Terre des Hommes, an international non-governmental organization, is leading implementation of this activity, and other contributors joining USAID in supporting it include the Swedish International Development Agency, UNICEF, the Oak Foundation, and the National Albanian American Council.

Just this past week we received some very welcome and very tangible evidence regarding the effectiveness of our USAID anti-trafficking efforts in South Central Europe. On October 25, the USAID-funded International Organization for Migration (IOM) public information campaign against trafficking was selected by a jury of 11 experts as “the best comprehensive campaign in 2003” in Croatia.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, rebel forces and militias continue to abduct and forcibly recruit Congolese men, women, and children to serve as forced laborers, porters, combatants, and sex slaves in areas of the country under their control. USAID/DRC is providing survivors with legal advice and medical assistance and is building the capacity of local groups which provide counseling. USAID is using media to develop messages to inform the population about trafficking, connect victims with assistance, and encourage reintegration of survivors.

The Sudan Program in the Regional Economic Development Support Office (REDSO) is working to prevent and reduce abductions through the documentation, collection, and compilation of information on trafficking routes and abductions and is conducting awareness-raising campaigns on the negative impact of raiding and abduction practices on relations and exchanges with neighboring communities. USAID is also supporting the provision of appropriate interim care and longer-term planning for identified victims through transit centers and reintegration support as well as reuniting of families, where possible.

One of the largest source countries for trafficking victims in the Western Hemisphere is the Dominican Republic. It is a source, transit, and destination country for trafficking for sexual exploitation and forced labor. The Government there is taking steps to combat trafficking. In May 2003, the Attorney General of the Dominican Republic announced the creation of a new unit to fight the exploitation and trafficking of children, and in July 2003 the nation’s Congress passed anti-trafficking legislation. The USAID Mission in the Dominican Republic is supporting implementation of the new legislation by training judicial personnel and other government officials as well as victim protection agencies.

In Brazil, women and children are trafficked into prostitution and there is a significant problem with internal trafficking of men and children into forced labor in agriculture, mines, and charcoal production. USAID signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Brazilian Ministry of Social Assistance and the National Secretariat of Human Rights to improve social and psychological services to trafficking victims, assist the government of Brazil to develop national laws to prevent domestic trafficking in persons, and support a national trafficking

awareness campaign targeting tourists and truck drivers. USAID is training government workers in the trafficking victim assistance network in a child/youth victim assistance methodology. Diagnostic studies carried out by USAID show that capacity building for NGOs providing shelter and psychosocial assistance to trafficking victims requires significant training in a number of areas including strategic planning, fund raising, activity design, and monitoring and evaluation. The USAID Mission in Brazil is designing and delivering a comprehensive training program for NGOs in several municipalities.

Haitian children are sometimes trafficked internally by poor parents who place their children as servants in households of better-off families. Not all of these children are victimized or kept in slave-like conditions, but significant numbers are sexually exploited and otherwise abused. In order to change attitudes in Haiti toward child domesticity and help prevent its recurrence, a network of community radio stations will disseminate information about trafficking patterns, living and working conditions of child domestics, Haitian legislation and international agreements condemning the practice, respect for the basic rights of children, and affects of trafficking on society.

USAID has established the South Asia “Regional Initiative on Women's and Children's Equity” to support South Asian efforts to protect rights and enhance opportunities for women and children in the region. This initiative includes programs for Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka that cover child labor and violence against women as well as trafficking. The initiative promotes political and community support to combat trafficking, use of reliable research findings and data to support advocacy, and effective protection and prevention programs. This regional initiative is helping increase the capacities of and cooperation among Asian regional and national organizations to initiate and sustain more effective programs.

The anti-trafficking approach of the USAID Mission in Bangladesh includes targeted research, strengthening Bangladesh's anti-trafficking networks, supporting NGO capacity building, prosecution of traffickers, protection of victims, and targeted prevention efforts. The Mission provides support and funding to the “Action Against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children” (ATSEC), a regional anti-trafficking network of NGOs. ATSEC builds anti-trafficking alliances, disseminates information, and promotes awareness-raising activities, particularly among vulnerable populations such as rural populations and border region communities. USAID also supports the “Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association” (BNWLA) in its efforts to combat trafficking. BNWLA focuses on the protection of trafficking victims and the prosecution of trafficking perpetrators. The BNWLA provides legal aid, rehabilitation, and repatriation support services to trafficking survivors, and manages Proshanti, a shelter home for trafficking victims and abused women and children. BNWLA has provided shelter and services to nearly 1,000 women and children over several years. It also works in cooperation with the Government of Bangladesh to promote the prosecution of traffickers.

At USAID, we are supporting mapping of trafficking routes and examining closely the geographic relationship between conflict; social, political, and economic disruption; and increases in human trafficking in those areas. We will link our anti-trafficking efforts with our involvement in post-conflict situations. We are committed to preventing the trafficking of more young women and children by providing economic opportunity, education, and effective public

information. We are equally committed to protecting and helping those who have been trafficked to return to their own communities to find hope and a better life. Shelters run by NGOs are an important part of this effort. This year we are supporting the International Justice Mission's work in Cambodia to rescue trafficking victims from sexual exploitation and to prosecute the traffickers. We are designing a program for victims of trafficking in Liberia, where young women and girls were pressed into the conflicts as sex slaves or even fighters, and boys were forced to serve as child soldiers.

Because we recognize that there are two sides to the equation, supply and demand, we are working with cross-border programs involving both source and destination in countries such as Albania, Greece, Italy, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic. Finally, we will use the media, courts, and civil society to combat the demand for cheap sex and labor that drives the criminals who make profit from this demand at the expense of our fellow human beings.

Conclusion

The development assistance that USAID provides around the world is directly linked to the causes and effects of human trafficking. Our commitment to fight all forms of trafficking in persons is deep and long term. The challenges ahead are great. Traffickers are criminals who change their patterns of operation as they are discovered. We must be just as agile in shifting strategies to continually cut the ground out from under the criminals who feed over human misery.

As President George W. Bush put it on September 23, 2003, before the United Nations General Assembly, "the trade in human beings for any purpose must not be allowed to thrive in our time." USAID is committed to playing its part in effectively combating the evil of trafficking in persons. Our success will be measured by the assistance and healing we provide to trafficking victims, and ultimately by the hundreds of thousands we hope to prevent from ever suffering the horrible degradation that accompanies the modern-day slavery which is trafficking.