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HUMAN TRAFFICKING AROUND THE WORLD

Introduction

We have all seen films that portray the dark and lurid world of human trafficking, depictions that seem sensationalized and exaggerated for cinematic effect. The victims are usually young women forced into an underground sex-trafficking ring, kept on a permanent drug high, and forced to prostitute. Although the plot is horrifying, it is just a story to us—or perhaps it is something that happens in some other part of the world but surely would never occur where we live. Yet the reality is that wherever we may live, regardless of city or nation, some form of human trafficking exists. As of 2005 this global phenomenon reaped an annual worldwide profit of \$44.3 billion and affected more than 12.3 million persons. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that 43 percent of victims were trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation, 32 percent were trafficked for forced labor, and the remaining 25 percent were trafficked for a mixture of both or for undetermined reasons (Belser, 2005, p. 4; ILO, 2006). We believed the percentage of forced labor to be higher, and recent ILO global estimates concur. The International Labour Organization now estimates that 20.9 million are victims of forced labor. Within that number it is estimated that 14.2 million people (68 percent) are victims of forced labor exploitation and 4.5 million (22 percent) are victims of forced sexual exploitation. The remainder of victims—2.2 million (10 percent)—are in state-imposed forms of forced labor such as that imposed by rebel armed forces, state militaries, and prisons with conditions that conflict with ILO standards (ILO, 2012, p. 13).