

### **What is human trafficking?**

Human Trafficking occurs when someone tries to recruit, harbor or move you from one place to another with the promise of giving you a job or offer of marriage by using coercion, fraud, deception or force. It is modern-day slavery and traffickers will not hesitate to harm you and your family to keep you under their control.

### **Who are the victims of human trafficking?**

Human trafficking is a worldwide problem.

You may think, "*This cannot happen to me*" but it happens to people just like you all over the world every day. We do not want to scare you, but we want you to be safe. Women, men and children may be trafficked worldwide, into neighboring countries, or within their home countries.

### **Have you had an interesting offer to work abroad or in your own country?**

Every situation is different. You may or may not know that you are being trafficked and you may be unsure of what type of work awaits you once you reach your destination.

Often people will answer newspaper advertisements for jobs without knowing that criminals are posing as legitimate business such as:

- Model agencies
- Travel agencies
- Employment companies
- "Au Pair" babysitting services
- International matchmaking services (mail order bride services)
- Massage parlors

These are only a few examples of the types of false businesses used by criminals.

However, **traffickers are not always strangers**, oftentimes people are trafficked by someone they know:

- A relative
- A neighbor
- An acquaintance/friend

Traffickers, who may be either criminal groups or individuals, will promise a job, education or marriage and will offer to handle and pay for the costs of a passport, work permit, and transportation for these women and children. **If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.**

### **What happens next?**

Victims of trafficking are often placed in unsafe or illegal living or working conditions. Far from home, traffickers or employers force women and children into prostitution, sweatshop labor, or other illegal activities by:

- **Taking away documents:** Passports, birth certificates, identification cards, address books.
- **Debt bondage:** Once a person has signed a contract and reached their destination, the employer or individual will keep the person's salary to pay for the costs of travel, such as transportation, passport and visa fees. These costs are highly inflated and are designed to keep a person in debt to the trafficker.
- **Physical abuse:** Punching, slapping, choking, pulling hair, kicking, forcing sex, and using a dangerous weapon such as a gun or knife
- **Emotional and psychological abuse:** Threatening to hurt the family or take children away, threatening to turn the person over to police or immigration officers, destroying the person's property, humiliating and demeaning the person, forcing the person to commit illegal acts.
- **Isolation:** Being kept in a room or house with no contact with friends or social or religious groups

**While some people know before they go that they will be exotic dancers, domestic workers, farm workers or used in prostitution, they may find when they arrive they also suffer isolation and abuse, and are forced to hand over most, if not all, of their earnings to their employers or sponsors.**

### **How can I protect myself?**

If an individual or company is making plans for you to travel and work away from home:

**Know the address and telephone numbers of your country's embassy or consulate close to where you will be staying.**

Learn the name, address and telephone number of where you are going. If possible, first call or write to that employer to verify that you will be working there, and ask about your work, pay, and living conditions.

Check with a non-governmental organization in your country to help you determine if the person or company is legitimate or trustworthy or, if you are traveling to the U.S.A, contact the consular office at the United States Embassy.

**Most legitimate employers will provide a contract.** Do not sign any contracts right away. Read through the document. If there is something you do not understand, take the contract to an attorney, non-governmental organization, or someone you trust. **Watch out** for language that says the employer will:

- **"Hold all money in trust until your contract is completed;"**
- **"Subtract your cash allowance from the sum held in trust;"** or
- **"Retain a percentage of your money."**

Tell your family and friends when you are leaving and give them the address and phone number where you will be staying.

### **When you arrive at your destination:**

#### **Do not give your passport to anyone to keep for you!**

Regardless of your legal status, your employer does not need your passport and has no right to hold it.

#### **Keep a copy of your passport information in a safe place where only you can find it.**

- Learn basic survival phrases in the local language
- If you are in a foreign country, register with the embassy or consulate of your home country
- Contact a family member or friend at home once you have reached your destination. Keep in contact with that person!

### **What Should I know About the United States of America (U.S.A.)?**

#### **If I need help?**

#### **No one can force you to work in the United States!**

Persons in the U.S. are protected by and subject to U.S. laws. Call the police if you are in danger or are being hurt. You have the right to be protected.

**You have the right to a lawyer if you are arrested.** If you do not have enough money for a lawyer, contact the local legal aid agency. **You also have the right to speak to your embassy or consulate.** If you are a victim of domestic violence, you can also get a protection order from the U.S. court that prohibits the abuser from attacking you or contacting you and your family.

A victim of crime in the U.S. has rights! Victim assistance programs provide many services such as counseling, emergency shelter, legal aid, and emergency transportation.

**Call the trafficking hotline: 1-888-373-7888.** Translation is available for most non-English speakers.

- The hotline receives calls about foreign workers who have been recruited or trafficked into the U.S. and are then forced to work under terrible conditions.
- The hotline provides a referral service for exploited workers or victims of trafficking in need of medical and other basic services. This hotline assists the U.S. government to prevent, investigate, and prosecute traffickers and persons who abuse workers in the United States.

**If you are in danger, dial 911,** an emergency number that will get immediate help for you everywhere in the U.S.

If you are afraid to go to the police, there are other places where you can get help:

- Hospitals
- Fire Departments
- Religious Organizations
- Shelters for women and children
- Legal aid agencies
- Immigrant service groups

**Call your country's embassy or consulate in Washington, D.C. or a major U.S. city.**

**What are the U.S. laws?**

**Traffickers face up to twenty years in prison** or, under certain circumstances up to life in prison for each act of trafficking. Traffickers will also be forced to repay what they stole from the victim.

**For traffickers:** It is a crime to bring, or attempt to bring, someone into the U.S. at a place other than the port of entry, and to encourage or induce someone to come to, enter, or remain in the U.S. in violation of the law. It is a crime to harbor, conceal, or shield illegal foreigners from detection. Involuntary servitude and slavery are extremely serious crimes under U.S. law.

**For illegal entry:** It is a crime to enter the U.S. without being inspected by a U.S. immigration officer. The penalty is up to two years in prison and deportation. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) can deport any person if they are in the U.S. illegally or are involved in illegal activities and deny them re-entry into the U.S.

**For illegal work:** It is illegal to work in the U.S. unless you have a visa which allows you to work, or the ICE has formally authorized the work. To get work visas, you are required to appear personally for an interview before a U.S. Consular Officer (Or an ICE official if you are visiting the U.S. but want to work). Employment visas are reserved mostly for skilled laborers rather than jobs for waitressing, child care, or dancing in nightclubs. If you have questions about the requirements for a work visa, contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

**For prostitution:** Prostitution is illegal in 99% of cities and towns in the U.S. In addition, it is a crime to transport a person or promote his or her use as a prostitute. Transporting a person into the U.S., or across state borders within the U.S., with the purpose of having that person perform as a prostitute or for other illegal purposes is also a crime.