

Stop Child Slavery Now

✖ The horror of child sex trafficking has grown to be almost as big as the global drug trade. But the abusers can be stopped if enough of us act now.

I stood in a vacant lot in south Asia surrounded by rocks, fallen trees and the foundations of a new home. Earlier that evening, I'd had dinner with dozens of girls and young women who had been rescued from child sex trafficking—forced prostitution where they served 30 to 40 customers a night. Now they live in a beautiful safe house on the property. More girls were on the way, and the safe-house director was showing me the lot where she was building a home to house them.

I looked at the lot, at the new house barely started, and at this one foreign woman who had to raise her own support as well as operating costs to house, feed and heal all these girls. “How do you keep from getting overwhelmed?” I asked her.

She looked at me as if I were crazy. “If I do what I'm supposed to do, and you do what you're supposed to, the job gets done,” she said, as if running this type of ministry was the most natural thing in the world.

And she was right. Often when we hear about horrific situations such as child sex trafficking, we don't know what to do. The stories are so awful, and we feel so powerless. We want to help—but what can we possibly do?

God is using ordinary people like you and me all over the world to make a dent in this global nightmare. There are large ministries doing great things, but there are also dozens of people who have other full-time jobs or no jobs. They're not ministers or evangelists, but God moved on their hearts and gave them creative ideas—and they're making a difference.

You can, too.

Protection

In the fight against child trafficking, there are four P's: protection, prosecution, prevention and partnership. Protection involves rescuing trafficked children and helping them heal from the trauma. Some children who have been abused through sex trafficking are as young as 5 years old.

Child sex slavery happens not only in Third-World countries but also throughout the United States. Children are trafficked within the U.S., smuggled across the border from another country or brought here openly from foreign lands. Traffickers hold them captive in cities such as yours and mine. Recruiters work in U.S. high schools and even middle schools to lure young children.

Organizations such as International Justice Mission (IJM, [ijm.org](#)), International Crisis Aid (ICA, [ica.org](#)), the Dalit Freedom Network ([dalitfreedom.org](#)) and many others conduct rescues throughout the world, risking the lives of their workers to free children from filthy brothels where they are caged like animals.

In the United States, ICA, state task forces such as the Florida Coalition Against Human Trafficking (FCAHT, [fcaht.org](#)), and the Polly Klaas Foundation ([pollyklaas.org](#)) conduct search and rescues. Project Exodus ([projectexodus.org](#)) works in Los Angeles and sends teams of trained volunteers into the community to observe businesses believed to be involved in trafficking. Results are compiled into a report given to other anti-trafficking and law enforcement agencies in Los Angeles.

After children are set free physically, it can be years before their hearts and spirits are also free. It takes skilled, patient care to help them heal. Love146 ([love146.org](#)), which is opening safe houses to care for rescued children internationally, found that many caregivers have a heart for helping traumatized kids but little training to do so. Love146

organizes in-depth seminars to provide trauma training for caregivers, particularly in Asia.

Most Americans are surprised to find there's a need for safe houses for minors in the U.S., but each year more than 100,000 kids and young women are trafficked for sex within our borders. The U.S. office of Cambodia-based Chab Dai ([http://www.chabdai.org](#)) compiled an online resource showing services available to rescued victims in the U.S.

In the U.S., many faith-based organizations provide safe houses and aftercare, including ICA (Missouri), Ahava Kids (Connecticut and Georgia, [http://www.ahavakids.org](#)), Gracehaven (Ohio, [http://www.gracehaven.org](#)), Dream Center (Los Angeles, [http://www.dreamcenter.org](#)), GEMS (New York, [http://www.gemsny.org](#)), Restore (New York, [http://www.restoreny.org](#)), Redeemed Love (Georgia, [http://www.redeemedlove.org](#)), Generate Hope (San Diego, [http://www.generatehope.org](#)), Hope House Project (North Carolina, [http://www.hopehouseproject.org](#)) and Freedom Children's Home (Florida, [http://www.freedomchildrenshome.org](#)). The shelters are designed specifically for survivors of human trafficking (not victims of domestic violence or other abusive situations, who have different needs). Some take children; others are for only women or men.

You can help organizations that provide protection in many ways. You will generally not be able to meet with the children, but you can provide supplies, food, clothing, gift cards to local stores and more. You can also learn the signs of trafficking ([http://www.humantrafficking.org](#)), and when you see something suspicious, call the national hotline: 888-373-7888.

Prosecution and Prevention

The second P is for prosecution, which involves arresting traffickers and putting them behind bars. Organizations such as IJM and Abolish Slavery ([http://www.abolishslavery.org](#)) spend months putting together cases against traffickers, who know the laws and how to get around them. Project Liberty ([http://www.projectliberty.org](#)) helps families whose children have been trafficked. If you are an attorney or work in law enforcement, you can volunteer your time to help these organizations.

The third P is for prevention—cutting off the pipeline and making sure kids don't get trafficked in the first place. Most kids get lured into sex slavery because they don't know any better. Organizations such as the Born to Fly Project ([\(\)](#)) work to make kids, parents and teachers aware. Not For Sale has numerous awareness outreaches, including mobilizing young abolitionists on college campuses. This group also has curriculum and other resources ([\(\)](#)), hosts Abolitionist Investigation Academy, and publishes the world Slavery Map, found at [.](#)

Lovel46 organizes local task forces around the country, making it possible for interested people to meet together to learn what they can do to stop the traffic in their own cities as well as overseas. IJM has groups for students, youth, churches and artists. Oasis USA ([\(\)](#)) and Cooperative Baptist Fellowship ([\(\)](#)) recently partnered to produce a webinar that linked hundreds of abolitionists around the U.S.

Other excellent organizations that are not necessarily faith based, such as Polaris Project ([\(\)](#)), ECPAT International ([\(\)](#)), Coalition Against Trafficking in Women ([\(\)](#)), and many more, work in all three of these areas.

Partnership

The fourth P is for partnership. "Folks in the nongovernment sector are just as important to the fight as any dedicated cop or prosecutor," according to Ambassador Luis CdeBaca, director of the U.S. State Department Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. "One of the main things we're trying to do is have a sustained anti-trafficking movement that harnesses all the voices of folks moved to do something about modern-day slavery—and then take that to the next level.

"A lot of people sell themselves short," CdeBaca continued. "They say, 'I'm not the attorney general, so I can't put together a task force in my state.' You can do a lot more than

you think.”

Passion and Prayer

We could add two more P’s to the fight. It takes passion—even anger—to stop child trafficking. This article is not just about what others are doing to stop the traffic, but also about what you can do. You don’t have to have a degree in social work or law enforcement—only a heart to make a difference. Ask God for creative ideas of what you can do.

The final P is for prayer. As in any area where the devil has a stronghold, it will take passionate and persistent prayer to see breakthroughs. Exodus Cry, a ministry of International House of Prayer in Kansas City, Missouri, has a comprehensive Web site devoted to prayer to end human trafficking, with chapters all over the world ().

Someday we hope we won’t have to publish articles like this. In the meantime, you can hasten that day by getting involved in the fight to abolish modern-day slavery once and for all. Contact any of the organizations in this article, or Google “child trafficking” or “human trafficking” and the name of your city to find out what’s happening in your neighborhood.

“Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter. If you say, ‘But we knew nothing about this,’ does not He who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not He who guards your life know it? Will He not repay each person according to what he has done?” (Prov. 24:11-12, NIV).

Diana Scimone is director of the *Born to Fly Project* to stop child trafficking (). She sincerely hopes she’ll be out of a job very soon. Meanwhile you can follow her on Twitter @DianaScimone and on her blog at , where she writes about the effort to stop child trafficking.