

Anti-Human Trafficking Ministries Invade London Olympics

The 30th Olympiad is hosting 9 million visitors to London. But beyond all the victories and celebrations, there is a darker side to the Olympics: **human trafficking**.

Greece sent warnings of spikes in human trafficking as a result of its experience hosting the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens. The warnings were so vivid that authorities and advocates began working together to sound the alarm nearly a decade ago.

Indeed, leading up to and during the 2012 London Olympics, anti-human trafficking ministries have been working over time to raise awareness of this crime.

Five years ago, Stop the Traffik partnered with Compassion United Kingdom in a **human trafficking** awareness campaign. Though time has passed, the message has only grown louder and clearer. Still, even as the athletes arrived in London in pursuit of their dream of winning, men, women, and children seeking a better future found only the trafficker winning.

*Bex Keer, U.K. coordinator of Stop The Traffik, says one way to cut down on incidents is to help people know what to look for so that victims can be rescued.

With that in mind, the group set up five street art-sized gift boxes around the London. One was located in Westminster, central London. It was there that Keer explained why a gift box is a symbol: "It's here to replicate the real experience of trafficking: you have the promise and you have the deception. But the reality is one that is so different."

Partnered with the group , Stop the Traffik is spreading the message of responsibility. Organizers hope they can inspire visitors to take action even as millions of visitors to London creates a demand for more trafficked people.

“There’s a demand for paying for sex—for forced labor—whether that’s preparing the merchandise ahead of the Olympics or working in restaurants and where the tourists would be visiting, or whether that’s in the streets,” Keer says.

According to Keer, it’s not just the number of sex workers that they’ve seen increase: “One situation that we’re seeing increase in the U.K. is the trafficking of children for street crime—the opportunity to have organized crime gangs of children who operate in areas pickpocketing or nicking mobile phones and bags.”

So far, 2,500 passersby have stopped to investigate the brightly colored life-sized gift boxes. Inside, they find the stories of victims. Two hundred volunteers have been engaging with members of the public from all over the world in a bid to inspire anti-trafficking action.

As a result, 1,750 people have signed up to support and Stop the Traffik. Keer says, “I think when you see something, you might be the only person who sees it. So actually, sometimes you have to follow that gut instinct and respond to it. It’s about passing that information on to the appropriate person.”

Believers connected to the bigger fight against human trafficking say the most imperative movement to prevent trafficking at the Olympic Games is **prayer**.