

Human Trafficking Spikes in Pre-Olympics Brazil

A team of journalists, photographers, videographers and Compassion International staff are heading to Brazil on Sunday with one purpose: to expose the spiking problem of human trafficking.

The U.S. State Department estimates as many as 400,000 Brazilians are victims. Compassion's Kathy Redmond says Brazil may be second only to Thailand for human trafficking.

"There is a significant market for child sex trafficking there," Redmond says. "There are organizations that are trying to battle it, the government is trying to curb it, but it's one of those issues where it's truly a battle down there."

The threat of coercion, abduction and family sales are most serious to the extreme poor. But the demand is about to rise so significantly that the number of victims is guaranteed to skyrocket.

The 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympics in Brazil could make things much worse.

"Although Brazil can look at this and say, 'It's wonderful for our country, and it's wonderful for our economy,' when the poor people and the community workers in these poor areas heard about getting the World Cup and the Olympics in Brazil, they said this was one of the worst things that could happen because they know what will happen to the communities, and the impoverished communities are the ones that suffer the most," says Redmond.

Compassion's Child Development Centers are extremely helpful in educating children, teaching them God's plans for them and keeping tabs on them with a loving church and community.

Compassion is combating the issue with 150 of these centers across the nation, and staff have stepped in to actually help pull kids from potential kidnapping situations in the past.

Kids are exponentially safer when they become a part of one of these centers, but poor, desperate parents may still consider selling their children's services in order to pay the bills, especially if more offers pour in.

When Redmond's team reaches Brazil on Sunday, they will interview girls who have been rescued from the trade to help expose the issue. They will also speak with Compassion Brazil staff and pastors, who are all trained in child protection and know what signs to look for to prevent trafficking.

Compassion hopes to get as many children sponsored as they possibly can in the years leading up to these two large sporting events, not only to rescue kids from danger, but to bring them the joy that's found in trusting Christ. You can get directly involved.

"The best things that Christians can do, No. 1, is sponsor a child through Compassion International," says Redmond. "The other thing is to be aware and to pray about it. This is an issue that is growing in leaps and bounds all over the world. The more that we try to deny that it happens, we're really kidding ourselves."