

**Written Statement of**

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**Before the**

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Subcommittee on Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations*

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**Preventing Exploitation: Recommendations to the U.S. Government  
on Combatting Human Trafficking Abroad**

Some of the information and facts contained herein are derived from training and research, but all information and observations are supported by personal and professional experiences as a practitioner in the field.

**Problem**

Human Trafficking is a crime that cuts across all races, ethnicities, genders, and socio-economic classes. Traffickers prey on the vulnerabilities of their intended victims, depriving them of their human dignity and worth for the purposes of profit, regardless of the victim's country of birth, background, or age<sup>1</sup>. Human trafficking can happen to anyone, anywhere. According to the Palermo Protocol, the United Nations (UN) Office on Drugs and Crime, Human Trafficking is,

“... the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> United States Department of State, Trafficking in Persons Report (2013), <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt>

<sup>2</sup> UN General Assembly, *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*, 15 November 2000, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4720706c0.html> [accessed 2 May 2023]

More simply put, human trafficking is the exploitation of another person using force, fraud, and coercion for financial or personal gain. While anyone of any gender, ethnicity, economic status, or age can be victims of trafficking, disturbingly, the world's most vulnerable people are victimized the most. The National Center of Safe and Supportive Learning Environments argues that traffickers target people with pre-existing health risk, such as physical, mental, substance abuse, or developmental vulnerabilities or someone with a history of abuse and maltreatment, financial difficulties like low income or homelessness, migrants, a dysfunctional home life, or someone with no support system.<sup>3</sup>

In September of 2022, alongside Walk Free and the International Organization for Migration, the International Labour Organization (ILO) released the latest *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery* report, suggesting that as of 2021, fifty million people around the globe were actively experiencing and living in modern slavery and that trafficking in a \$150 billion-a-year worldwide industry, making this hidden crime one of the biggest crimes against humanity in the global market.<sup>4</sup> This is not a new issue, but it is a growing one. The ILO recognized that there has been a stark increase in trafficking in persons from 2017 to the 2022 report<sup>5</sup> and if the global community continues to neglect this problem at the level it is now, the amount of people living in modern slavery will only surge in years to come.

It is of utmost importance and urgency that the United States, together with the rest of the global community, works together to develop and achieve strategic solutions partnered with the critical financial investment to address this problem that is affecting men, women, and children. This is not a crime only happening in far away, foreign locations, it is in all our neighborhoods, threatening the potential of a sustainable future for all.

## **Global Efforts**

In 2006, while visiting Sierra Leone, I purchased a pair of shoes for a young girl. I was disconcerted to learn the child concluded that this action was one intended in exchange for sex. From the weight of this encounter, One By One was established.

One By One is an international charitable organization with its U.S. headquarters based in Nashville, Tennessee. Since being founded in 2011, One By One has provided necessary restorative care, educational support, and empowerment towards sustainable living to prevent exploitation of vulnerable communities across the developing world.

One By One's 80 staff members, made up of social workers, teachers, outreach teams, house parents, cooks, cleaners and administrative support, are proudly located across the globe, in

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<sup>3</sup> National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments. (n.d.). *Vulnerable populations*. Vulnerable Populations | National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE). Retrieved May 2, 2023, from <https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/human-trafficking-americas-schools/vulnerable-populations>

<sup>4</sup> Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage. International Labour Organization (ILO), Walk Free, and International Organization for Migration (IOM). Geneva. 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage. International Labour Organization (ILO), Walk Free, and International Organization for Migration (IOM). Geneva. 2022.

places like Kenya, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Brazil, India, Uganda, Zambia, and Pakistan, while always working to expand the reach of their mission.

One By One's programs supply aid and assistance to tens of thousands of children each week. With all funds governed by the organization's executive team and restricted for use in ongoing projects, One By One has seen immense success in its programs, for example;

- One By One Kenya, caring for almost 200 boys and girls, aims to rehouse and give hope to children that otherwise would be living in abject poverty;
- A widows' program in Sri Lanka, creating safe spaces and working with women whose husbands were killed in the civil war;
- One By One's Pakistan Safe House, providing a refuge for children who have spent most of their lives working in brutal conditions amongst brick factories; and
- The Dignity Project, reaching over 30,000 girls, provides teenagers with re-usable sanitary items and education.

Alongside members of various governments around the world and community leaders, One By One has had the opportunity and privilege to improve upon prevention overseas. Prevention initiatives, programs, and training is critical for stakeholders and amongst people who may be vulnerable to it because most people are either unaware of the realities of human trafficking, do not know the prevalence of trafficking in their own community, or assume it is happening elsewhere in the world.

Period poverty is a worldwide problem that affects millions of women and girls every day. It refers to the lack of access to menstrual products, proper sanitation facilities, and education about menstrual health. It is a complex issue that is deeply rooted in social, economic, and cultural factors. While overseas, One By One's CEO, Becky Murray, discovered that many girls were missing a week of school each month due to period poverty.

Women and girls who cannot afford menstrual products are often forced to use unsafe materials such as rags, leaves, or newspapers, which can lead to serious health complications. Due to the embarrassment and health consequences of period poverty, women and girls are missing school and the critical lessons taught during their absence. Women and girls who miss school or work due to their periods are unable to reach their full potential and can become far more vulnerable to the tactics of traffickers as a result.

As One By One ascertained that period poverty was a vulnerability factor leading girls into human trafficking situations, the Dignity Project was launched. This initiative provides reusable sanitary products and delivers critical training to girls at high-risk of experiencing period poverty. One By One's team of experts deliver essential training covers many topics, including but not limited to human trafficking prevention training, which also addresses the tactics commonly used by traffickers in the different localities.

### **Social Determinants of the Victims**

Traffickers look for three (3) things when selecting a potential victim: accessibility, suggestibility, and vulnerability. Accessibility refers to the traffickers' ability to gain and maintain access to an intended victim during the course of recruiting and manipulating them into

an exploitive scenario. As previously mentioned, this is typically accomplished through social media and other electronic communications platforms. Traffickers have continuous, and often times unsupervised, access to their intended victims. Suggestibility refers to the societal influences of the intended victim that can be used to “normalize” the exploitive behavior. In sex trafficking this is often accomplished through the false glamorization of the commercial sex industry which is often not accompanied by education regarding the very physical, emotional, and psychological impact sex work can have on a person. With regards to exploitive labor, or labor trafficking, this can be accomplished by *suggesting* that this is the only option available to a person in a vulnerable state. Vulnerability is the factor in a victim’s life that the trafficker uses to leverage that person – vulnerability and suggestibility are often interconnected. These vulnerabilities often become the social determinants which lead to victimization and should be the focus of prevention efforts. The traffickers often focus their recruitment efforts on children because of particular vulnerabilities that impressionable young people possess. These vulnerabilities, or social determinants, fall into four main categories: economic vulnerabilities, victims of prior abuse (sexual or physical), situational vulnerabilities, and “other at-risk”.

## **Prevention**

Prevention, while one of the “3 P’s” has often been overshadowed by protection and prosecution. Unfortunately focusing solely on protection and prosecution assumes that someone – a person – has already been victimized. While the focus on victim services is essential and should not be minimized, equal attention should be placed on prevention. The effects of human trafficking are life-altering and victims carry the physical, emotional, and psychological impact for the rest of their lives. Often times, the needs of a human trafficking survivor can overwhelm systems put in place to support them.

If the effects are so grave and we know many of the societal determinants that lead to people being trafficked the most important question before the government should be: how do we prevent human trafficking from happening in the first place?

The 2019 Trafficking in Persons Report, published by the State Department’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, carefully examines the efforts that have been made by countries to fight trafficking and evaluates where improvement is still needed. Among the many recommendations for the United States is a call to “Increase prevention efforts... through outreach to and intervention services for marginalized communities.” (State Dept 2019).

The US Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families Office on Trafficking in Persons recommends examining prevention efforts through two models – the Three Levels of Prevention Model, which looks at efforts that can be made during different stages of the trafficking process, and the Socio-Ecological Model, which outlines the different factors that may contribute a victim being trafficked. Understanding both models can improve our nation’s efforts to prevent human trafficking by drawing attention to the various needs of a victim or potential victim in a trafficking scenario.

## **Role of USAID and U.S. State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons**

Shedding light on the pivotal role played by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (JTIP) in combatting the heinous crime of human trafficking overseas, these dedicated agencies, through their unwavering commitment and strategic initiatives, have been instrumental in strengthening our global response to this modern-day form of slavery.

USAID, with its extensive reach and influence, has been a crucial partner in addressing the root causes of human trafficking across the globe. By implementing development programs that target poverty, lack of education, and social vulnerabilities, USAID directly contributes to the prevention of trafficking. These programs include initiatives aimed at improving economic opportunities, fostering gender equality, and promoting social inclusion. As a result, vulnerable populations are better equipped to resist the tactics employed by traffickers.

The Department of State's JTIP Office, serving as the backbone of the U.S. government's efforts to combat human trafficking. The annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, published by JTIP, is a testament to their commitment to transparency and accountability in this fight. This report not only assesses the efforts of individual nations but also offers valuable recommendations for improvement, facilitating the global exchange of best practices and lessons learned.

Both USAID and JTIP are actively involved in capacity-building initiatives that enhance the ability of foreign governments, law enforcement agencies, and civil society organizations to effectively combat human trafficking. Through training, technical assistance, and the provision of essential resources, these agencies enable our partners to improve their response to human trafficking and better protect victims. The collaboration between USAID and JTIP also extends to the promotion of legislative and policy reforms, ensuring that anti-trafficking laws and measures are in line with international standards.

Furthermore, these agencies play a critical role in advancing international cooperation and fostering partnerships that are essential to dismantling transnational trafficking networks. By encouraging information-sharing, operational coordination, and joint investigations, USAID and JTIP strengthen our collective ability to apprehend traffickers and dismantle their criminal enterprises.

Finally, both agencies prioritize the provision of comprehensive support to survivors of human trafficking. Through funding and partnerships with non-governmental organizations, USAID and JTIP ensure that survivors receive the necessary assistance to heal, rebuild their lives, and reintegrate into society. This approach is vital to breaking the cycle of exploitation and ensuring that survivors are not re-victimized.

USAID and the Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons play a critical and complementary role in the global effort to eradicate human trafficking. Their combined efforts in prevention, capacity-building, international cooperation, and victim support have made a significant impact in the lives of countless individuals around the world. It is our duty as a nation to continue supporting and reinforcing these efforts, as we strive towards a world free from the scourge of human trafficking.

## **Current U.S. Efforts in East Africa**

While visiting Kampala, Uganda and Nairobi, Kenya in March of this year, One By One had the opportunity to connect with several elected officials, government and regulatory agencies, and local communities. One By One executives also met with representatives of the U.S. Embassy as well as personnel from the USAID Missions.

Despite the clear reach and influence U.S. agencies have across the global community, what One By One witnessed and found while overseas and through engagement with the officials and agencies, was that United States' designated agencies to fund the fight against human trafficking globally, are not spending an adequate amount of the budget to properly combat this hidden crime. Despite the President's Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Budget Request for the State Department and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) being \$63.1 billion for foreign assistance and diplomatic engagement, which includes \$32 billion in foreign assistance for USAID fully- and partially-managed accounts, \$3 billion (10 percent) above the FY 2023 Adjusted Enacted level, only \$370 million has been used in assistance to 88 countries and regions to fight human trafficking since 2001.<sup>6</sup> Trafficking in persons is a threat to economies, global health and health security, gender equality, gender equity, and empowerment. All three of these categories are key highlights in the FY 2024 Budget Request, but trafficking is not represented in the budget justification.<sup>7</sup> It is One By One's observation that much of the budget is invested in combatting HIV/Aids, particularly in East Africa by the assistance of WHO. It is critical that the United States government invest time and budget into the fight against human trafficking because, as witnessed by One By One, international investment entities are not investing.

USAID has undoubtedly played a significant role in the global fight against human trafficking, it is crucial to acknowledge that the current level of financial investment is insufficient to effectively address the complex and pervasive nature of this crime. With an estimated 50 million victims of modern-day slavery worldwide, a more substantial financial commitment is required to adequately combat this heinous violation of human rights. The FY 2024 Budget Request for the State Department, which encompasses funding for USAID, falls short in allocating the necessary resources to meaningfully tackle human trafficking on a global scale. This shortfall in funding affects critical areas such as prevention, victim assistance, capacity building for law enforcement, and the development of anti-trafficking policies in vulnerable countries. By investing more in these areas, the United States would be better positioned to prevent exploitation, dismantle trafficking networks, and support survivors in their journey towards recovery and reintegration. It is therefore essential for the U.S. Congress to recognize the urgency of this matter and increase the financial commitment in the FY 2024 Budget Request for the State Department.

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<sup>6</sup> United States Agency for International Development. Countering Trafficking in  
<https://www.usaid.gov/trafficking>.

Persons.

<sup>7</sup> United States Agency for International Development. Budget Justification. <https://www.usaid.gov/cj>.

## **U.S. as a Global Leader in Combatting Trafficking in Persons**

The global community looks to the United States for guidance in the fight against trafficking in persons. The United States has consistently demonstrated its commitment to combatting human trafficking on both national and international fronts, thereby solidifying its position as a global leader in this ongoing battle. This leadership is exemplified by the robust legal framework, including the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) and its subsequent reauthorizations, which has paved the way for stronger anti-trafficking measures worldwide, like the Palermo Protocol. Additionally, the annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report serves as a crucial tool in assessing the progress of countries in their effort to eradicate human trafficking, offering guidance and support for improvement. Furthermore, the U.S. government works tirelessly to foster cross-border collaboration, sharing intelligence and resources with international law enforcement agencies and non-governmental organizations. By relentlessly pursuing traffickers and advocating for the rights of victims, the United States has established itself as a formidable force in the global fight against modern-day slavery.

It is of paramount importance that the United States continues to invest in the global fight against human trafficking, a crime that affects millions of people worldwide and poses a significant threat to human rights, public health, and national security. This nation's commitment to eradicating this modern-day form of slavery not only reflects its unwavering dedication to the principles of freedom, justice, and human dignity but also serves as a strategic investment that fosters stability, prosperity, and the rule of law in countries around the world. By funding and supporting anti-trafficking efforts, the United States contributes to the dismantling of criminal networks that profit from the exploitation of vulnerable individuals, many of whom fall prey to traffickers due to poverty, lack of education, and social marginalization. These criminal enterprises undermine the global economy, corrode the integrity of U.S. institutions, and jeopardize the collective security. Investing in the global fight against human trafficking empowers partner nations to enhance their capacity to prevent, detect, and prosecute these crimes, fostering a more coordinated and effective international response. This not only helps disrupt trafficking networks but also promotes cooperation in the areas of intelligence-sharing, law enforcement training, and the implementation of victim-centered policies. The United States, by funding the fight against human trafficking, plays a critical role in providing survivors with the necessary resources for rehabilitation, recovery, and reintegration, which are essential for breaking the cycle of exploitation and ensuring the restoration of their fundamental rights. It has never been more imperative that the United States remains steadfast in its commitment to fund the global fight against human trafficking, as U.S. leadership and financial support are vital in building a safer, more just world for all.

## **Recommendations**

One By One suggests the increase of the financial commitment in the FY 2024 Budget Request for the State Department, specifically earmarking additional funds for the global fight against human trafficking. This increased investment will not only demonstrate the nation's unwavering commitment to eradicating modern-day slavery but will also enable USAID and other U.S. government agencies to make a more profound and sustainable impact in this critical endeavor.

Additionally, it is of utmost importance that this esteemed legislative body passes the Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Protection and Prevention Reauthorization Act, serving as a vital instrument in the ongoing battle against trafficking in persons and exploitation on a global scale. By reauthorizing this critical legislation, this committee reaffirms the commitment to the eradication of trafficking and sends a message to the global community that the U.S. is dedicated to leading the way, specifically to:

- Expand U.S. efforts relating to combating human trafficking, including forced labor, as well as new requirements for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to integrate prevention efforts into the agency's global programming, especially incorporating survivor-informed approaches and feedback from beneficiaries;
- Amend the International Megan's Law to address any loopholes to keep children safe from traveling convicted pedophiles; and
- Enhance child trafficking prevention education to address child sexual abuse and exploitation, as well as child trafficking online.

Not only does the bill fortify existing legal framework, but also introduces innovative strategies and provisions that will enhance the ability to prevent, protect, and prosecute. By passing this legislation, Congress ensures that the United States continues to develop and implement comprehensive policies and programs that address root causes of trafficking and exploitation, while strengthening partnerships with foreign governments, law enforcement agencies, and civil society organizations. This reauthorization act bolsters the United States' capacity to provide crucial support to survivors, empowering them to rebuild their lives. This investment in the recovery and well-being of victims, aids in upholding the U.S. core values of freedom, justice, and human dignity and further contributes to breaking the cycle of exploitation.