

Traffic Report

Human trafficking is neck-and-neck with arms dealing as the second largest criminal industry in the world, after the drug trade, according to the Department of Health and Human Services. In June the U.S. State Department published its most extensive forced labor report yet, grading 150 countries based on their governments' efforts to stop this form of modern-day slavery.

No country is immune to the perils of human trafficking. Victims of the multibillion-dollar-a-year industry have included a Sri Lankan mother beaten into submission as a maid for a Lebanese family, Ghanaian boys sold to traffickers for the country's fishing industry and forced prostitution by children in the United States. The State Department report estimates that as many as 800,000 people crossing international borders end up as forced laborers each year, a count that excludes slaves trafficked within their own countries.

"We believe the report is a step in the right direction," said Namju Cho of the Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking (CAST), crediting the State Department with bringing global attention to the issue. But she also cautioned that low-ranked countries may have passed laws without implementing them simply to avoid the threat of U.S. economic sanctions.

Despite the international pressure, states are making little headway in improving the social and economic conditions that lead to trafficking, finding the political will to prosecute traffickers and providing adequate resources to rehabilitate victims.

Carin Zississ

A young girl victim of traffickers trying to smuggle her from Burkina Faso into Benin.



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Current trafficking facts:

Current estimated total number of trafficking victims worldwide: **2.5 million**

Approximate portion that are under the age of 18: **Half**

Number of youths—mostly from South Asian countries and many of whom are starved to keep their weight down and tied to camels during races—thought to be enslaved as camel jockeys in the United Arab Emirates: **2,000**

Age of youngest child to be rescued from jockeying in the UAE: **4 years old**

Likelihood that a trafficked person is a woman: **4 out of 5**

Amount for which a Cambodian man sold his teenage wife Neary to a brothel: **\$300**

Age at which Neary died after contracting HIV/AIDS: **23**

Estimated annual profit for traffickers per sex slave in Asian countries: **\$10,000**

Approximate total annual profits generated worldwide by trafficked forced laborers: **\$32 billion**

Estimated number of people trafficked into the United States annually: **17,500**

Number of trafficking prosecutions initiated by the Department of Justice in fiscal year 2004: **59**

Sources: International Labor Organization (2005), U.S. State Department (2005), Anti-Slavery International (2004)