



It Takes a Village. The Importance of Cross-Sector Collaboration and Grassroots Advocacy in Today's Fight against Human Trafficking and Child Sexual Exploitation

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Young People Against Prostitution and Human Trafficking:

The Greatest Violence Against Human Beings

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My name is Vaughan Bagley and I represent a non-governmental organization called the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children. The Centre works to empower and equip the global community to address child sexual exploitation, abuse and abduction. ICMEC looks to highlight the shared experiences between missing children and those who have been sexually exploited. While many of you probably understand these overlaps and see them in your daily work, I would like to explore some of these links with you today and highlight exactly how the International Centre is working to protect the world's children.

Child victimization has many forms. Although the numbers are unreliable and estimating the true size of this problem is empirically impossible, the International Centre estimates that 8 million children go missing each year around the world and 2 million will be sexually exploited, either as victims of child pornography, human trafficking, or both. Of the endangered runaways reported in 2013 to our sister organization, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, one out of seven children were likely child sex trafficking victims.

Because of the heightened vulnerability of missing children, the ICMEC programs that focus directly on protecting those who have been abducted or reported missing are also vital to preventing the growth of human trafficking. Three of these programs include strengthening laws and policies that relate to this population, creating rapid emergency alert systems such as the AMBER Alert in every country to involve the public in the search for a missing child, and training law enforcement on how to handle such reports.

Additionally, the online and offline worlds of child sexual exploitation are increasingly intertwined. For example, when a child is forced to engage in a sex act with a paying customer and that interaction is filmed or photographed for sale as pornography, then that child is a victim of both sex trafficking and child pornography and that footage is documentation of a crime scene. Unfortunately, an estimated 200 new child abuse images are posted online on a daily basis and the trends indicate that the victims are getting younger and younger and the abuse is becoming more and more horrific.

At the International Centre, we believe in attacking this problem from many angles but always with an eye on staying ahead of the cutting-edge nature of these crimes. While ICMEC has a number of focus areas, there are two key areas of work that are particularly relevant to the fight against child sexual exploitation and human trafficking. The first focuses on targeting the economics of the child sexual exploitation industry and aims to stop predators in their tracks before either the child or his or her images have been sold. The second examines the health repercussions of child sexual exploitation on individual victims and indeed, on society as a whole. Through both the economic and the health lenses, the International Centre and its partners have recognized the need to follow the industry and create sustainable solutions that can adapt to the changing landscape.

For example, when the International Centre was founded in 1998, the appearance of child sex trafficking was considerably different. Back then, a police officer could go down to the red light district at two o'clock in the morning and find a number of young, underage girls selling their bodies for sex. Now, in the age of the Internet, the problem has moved off the streets and into the perpetrators' bedrooms and motel rooms, becoming increasingly more difficult for investigators to find and consequently, much less risky for pimps and traffickers to execute.

Similarly, a pedophile can go online and meet others with comparable interests to his own, allowing him to form a community of people who reinforce his own inclinations and attractions to children. A person who previously might have suppressed his feelings and desires may now embrace them as completely normal. In this way,

the Internet has not only helped to push this crime further underground, but has also facilitated a network of perpetrators that did not exist before, significantly exacerbating the problem.

In order to diminish the ease and speed with which child abuse images can change hands within these newfound networks, in 2006, the International Centre partnered with the U.S. based National Center and a number of major banks, credit card companies, and electronic payment networks to create the Financial Coalition Against Child Pornography. The Coalition, whose members make up 90% of the United States' payments industry, aims to eliminate the ability of traders and buyers to purchase child pornography, thereby heavily decreasing the spread of this illegal content. In turn, disruption of the economics of the business makes such websites less profitable to their operators, indirectly shutting down a significant number of the production and distribution outlets.

Today, the coalition has expanded to Europe and Asia where our Asia Pacific Financial Coalition just this year led two country specific roundtables in New Zealand and Australia with the goal of bringing leaders together to craft solutions that are harmonious with local laws and customs. In Europe, there have already been a number of success stories. For example, in 2012, the police in a small town outside of London acted on a tip and raided the home of a local resident, finding hundreds of images and videos of prepubescent boys on his personal laptop. With the help of Western Union's analysis of the man's payment data, the bank and the local police were able to work together to track the money, and just this past summer, 29 traffickers and pedophiles worldwide were arrested in connection with this case, and 15 victims were rescued.

However, the success of these efforts may be fleeting. While credit card payments for child pornography on the public Internet have plummeted since the Financial Coalition began its work, many distributors have moved their businesses underground and begun using digital currencies such as bitcoin and anonymous wire transfers. As material moves to more clandestine areas of the web, child pornography and human trafficking become even more difficult for law enforcement to track and subsequently, much less risky for traffickers and johns alike.

For this reason, the International Centre has followed the problem again and begun addressing the challenges associated with the digital economy. In order to engage a worldwide policy debate about the advantages and threats associated with this newfound economy, the International Centre partnered with Thomson Reuters to create the Digital Economy Task Force. The Task Force's first report was published in 2014 to encourage policy makers and key players to work together to develop new methods for addressing the consequences of the deep web.

The last collaborative initiative that I would like to highlight is the International Centre's Global Health Coalition. A 2010 Mayo Clinic study found that a history of sexual abuse in childhood can be associated with suicide attempts, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorders, depression, eating and sleep disorders. It has also been proven that sexual violence and exploitation at a young age changes the physical makeup of a child's brain. These physical and mental repercussions of abuse and exploitation can persist for years, sometimes lifetimes.

For these reasons, in 2011 at the Roman Senate, the Centre brought together health care institutions and industry experts from around the world, including representatives from the Vatican and the Vatican Children's Hospital Bambino Gesù. With the creation of the Declaration of Rome, we started to look at the issue as not merely a human rights violation, but as a growing public health crisis, and a year later, the International Centre created the Global Health Coalition in the hopes that we could reframe the way society conceptualizes this problem and change the way the world responds to this issue.

The International Centre has been able to conduct research on the different health impacts of child sexual abuse and exploitation and the various types of treatment programs that can be provided to pedophiles to deter them from offending, as well as study possible low-cost treatment practices for victims.

All three of these targeted programs, the Financial Coalition, the Digital Economy Task Force, and the Global Health Coalition, represent crucial public-private partnerships that are changing the ways in which we tackle this global issue. While it is obvious that we each work best within our own core competencies, it is vital that we create multi-disciplinary, multi-jurisdictional approaches to these problems. By uniting members of every relevant sector from government and nonprofits to private corporations, we will be able to maximize our resources and bring diverse perspectives to the table.

That is where we, as global citizens, come in. Those who perpetrate human trafficking do so with no regard for barriers, borders or boundaries, and we must be equally committed to doing the same.

So my first recommendation for you is that you **mobilize your communities**. First and foremost, we must educate and inspire our neighbors. Victims of trafficking come into contact with ordinary citizens every day, and yet we are not educated enough to recognize them and help them escape their captors. For this reason,

in every program that the International Centre facilitates, we begin with an education piece. It is important not merely for raising awareness, but for ensuring that all participants understand the role and the value their partners have in this fight.

So while the International Centre brings various organizations and industries together to join this conversation, it is our responsibility as individuals to start with our friends and our family members and to invite them to the table as well. We need to teach them about the existence of human trafficking in their communities because it is understanding that will breed empathy. Give them tangible ways they can help spread the word. Offer a list of local organizations they can donate money to or volunteer with. Get a group together and start a crowdfunding campaign for your local anti-trafficking non-profit. Reach out to people and sectors that are unfamiliar to you to better understand their roles in this fight. Or, perhaps you can engage your colleagues and have an effect on your particular industry.

Second, **start the conversation and listen to the survivors.** While human trafficking has many forms, the roots of this problem begin long before the figurative chains are put on. Because predators seek out the most vulnerable members of our communities, orphans, foster children, and runaways, many human trafficking victims begin as impoverished, forgotten children with nowhere to turn. It is this vulnerability that makes them easy prey and it is this vulnerability that makes it often impossible for them to escape.

Prior to my involvement with the International Centre, I served as a paralegal in the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office Human Trafficking Bureau. There, I saw firsthand the enslavement of girls in my own country, often times in plain sight. However, many of them, even after they were rescued, went straight back to their perpetrators. While this can be a symptom of psychological trauma, or more specifically, Stockholm Syndrome, it is also often a result of an overall lack of options. Many businesses will not employ these survivors due to their criminal records. Many schools will not accept them. Domestic violence shelters may refuse to take them due to the stigma associated with their "profession," and they are left right back where they started.

And so that is where we come in. We must eliminate the stigma associated with sex trafficking one community at a time, but the only way to do that is to speak openly about this issue. We must remember that victims deserve to be a part of this ongoing conversation. By hearing directly from survivors, we will better understand the pain and suffering these girls and boys endured and will not so easily judge them, but rather, will welcome them with open arms and support them as they begin to assimilate back into society. There are simple ways to help rescued victims become survivors but we cannot do it alone. We must work together and communicate with our local businesses, encouraging them to hire these young people, and eventually, commit as a community to give them a chance to thrive.

Lastly, my third recommendation is to **petition your legislators.** We must ask our political candidates what they plan to do about human trafficking in their jurisdictions. By demanding awareness and policy change of our political leaders from the start, we can convince them that not only is the exploitation of our world's most innocent members more than worthy of our global embrace but also, that turning a blind eye on this issue undermines our shared security and our shared prosperity.

And so I leave you with an important challenge. In 2 days, many of you will return back to the communities you serve. You and the individuals sitting around you are in unique positions. You have the ability to bring people, families and communities into this effort and to educate them about the human rights offenses going on in their own backyards. Human trafficking and child sexual exploitation know no boundaries and it is only when people recognize that they are a part of this global effort and demand accountability from their governments that political leaders will feel the pressure to hold true to their commitments.

So go out into the world and tell anyone who will listen. The International Centre has consistently recognized the immense need for cutting-edge solutions to these burgeoning problems— so join us and help us think progressively about the next frontier for combatting child sexual exploitation. This fight should not only involve people who have devoted their lives to protecting children, but also those ordinary citizens who feel removed from this issue. Show them that they are not removed at all. Find ways to illuminate that this is a crime that touches every city and locality across the globe. Child sexual exploitation is not a partisan issue, it is a human issue. So go forth and turn education into empathy and empathy into action.

Thank you!