



## **Haiti and Human Trafficking: Preventing Exploitation After the Earthquake**

### **ALERT for Relief and Development Workers and Volunteers**

#### **The Problem:**

The earthquake in Haiti has created a state of emergency. The crisis is of epic proportions, and disaster relief teams are struggling to rescue Haitians and provide food, clothing, shelter, medical assistance, and other emergency relief. Over the next several months this work will continue, but a secondary phenomenon is already developing: hundreds of thousands of Haitians have been displaced from their homes. Many are wandering in the streets, afraid to go inside for fear of aftershocks. Thousands are migrating in search of food, clothing, shelter and medical services. From previous experience, we know that natural disasters present dangerous secondary circumstances which may, if not addressed on the front end, result in human trafficking. Accordingly, this alert is intended to give general guidance for help in advertent human trafficking. Please note that many typical indicators of trafficking may be mirrored or masked by the traumas of the disaster itself further complicating efforts to prevent human trafficking.

Victims of human trafficking may be trafficked within Haiti or abroad. Victims may be trafficked for purposes of forced and/or bonded labor, child labor, and commercial sexual exploitation (prostitution, pornography, stripping). Also, please be aware that according to international standards, persons under 18-years-old cannot give consent to participation in the commercial sexual industry.

#### **Please be alert to scams and fraud such as:**

- People offering Haitians job opportunities in foreign countries.
- People claiming to be the relatives of unaccompanied or orphaned children.
- People luring children with promises of food or other items.
- Military, relief workers, or others, demanding money or sexual favors in exchange for aid.

#### **Possible signs of human trafficking include:**

1. Evidence of being controlled (rarely alone, seems to be under constant surveillance, isolated or cut off from family and friends, fearful of speaking for oneself).
2. Evidence of inability to move or leave a job.
3. Forced to work.
4. Active in commercial sex industry.
5. Signs of physical or sexual abuse (e.g. sexual knowledge that is not age appropriate; a child experiencing pain in their genital area).

### Recommended precautions:

1. **Warn** potential victims of human trafficking schemes.
2. **Tell beneficiaries humanitarian aid is free.**
3. Those providing shelter and care are encouraged to **register** and protect those people in their facilities, especially children including preteens and adolescents. Women and children should not be placed in isolated areas of shelters/camps. **Routinely check isolated places in the shelter/camp.** Also consider sleeping arrangements appropriate for families and individuals.
4. Those hiring new or temporary employees for relief work are encouraged to educate new hires about human trafficking and outline **a zero-tolerance policy** for employees involved in human trafficking and/or sexual abuse.
5. **Respond quickly** if a child or parent asks for help or appears threatened.

### Remember:

- **“Consent” is irrelevant.** True or “informed” consent requires an understanding of and ability to exercise the right to say “no.” Beneficiaries may not know that they have the right to say no or that they will be able to obtain humanitarian assistance if they do.
- Humanitarian personnel are often in a position of power over the local population. Because of this power dynamic, **sexual relationships between humanitarian personnel – both international and national – and the local population can constitute sexual exploitation.**
- **There are no exceptions to the prohibition on sexual activity with children.** Sexual activity with persons under the age of 18, regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally, is prohibited. Mistaken belief in the age of the child does not constitute a defense.
- **All allegations should be taken seriously and investigated by trained personnel.** Anonymous complaints as well as complaints where the institutional affiliation of the alleged perpetrator is unidentified or unknown should be treated just as seriously as complaints where the identity is known.

This message is sponsored by: The Salvation Army World Service Office in partnership with Global Centurion, Renewal Forum, Fondation Espoir, World Hope International, Olive Branch International, Doctors at War on Trafficking, The Home Foundation, Equitas, Call and Respond, Christian Medical Association, Beyond Borders, and Fondation la Limye Lavi.

Portions of this guide are from the UN's Protection of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse guide entitled, *Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by Agency Personnel during the Haiti Emergency.*