



Testimony of

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Before

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

On

Effective Accountability: Tier Rankings in the Fight Against Human Trafficking

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I am Nathalie Lummert, Director of Special Programs in the Department of Migration and Refugee Services at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

I am pleased to be here today before the Subcommittee to testify about the effectiveness and accountability of the U.S. State Department's Trafficking in Person (TIP) Report in the fight against human trafficking.

I would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for inviting us to testify today. I also want to thank you, Representative Bass, and other members of the Committee for your leadership over the years on this important and vital humanitarian issue.

Migration and Refugee Services (MRS) of the USCCB has a long history of serving newcomers to the United States and those on the move. We are the largest private resettlement agency in the United States, having resettled 1 million refugees since 1975. We also oversee the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, which serves as many as 600,000 immigrants per year. My office helps unaccompanied children and trafficking victims, among other vulnerable populations.

Our purpose in testifying today is to provide the perspective of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) on the U.S. government response to human trafficking through its principal diplomatic tool to engage foreign governments on human trafficking, the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report. I will also speak about the work that the Catholic Church is doing to combat human trafficking on global and domestic levels, through the leadership of Pope Francis and the Global Freedom Network and also through the work of the Bishops here in the United States.

In my testimony, I note the progress and advances that have been made in combatting anti-trafficking as a result of the issuance of the TIP Report. I also will highlight some of the programs and initiatives that the Catholic Church is engaged in to end this crime against humanity. At this point in my testimony, I will briefly summarize our points regarding the effective accountability of the TIP Report as well as the work that the Church is doing to combat trafficking. I explore each of them more fully later in my testimony.

- 1. Primary consideration should be given to the most vulnerable victims: stateless persons, refugee populations, and individuals at sea;**
- 2. Special attention should be given to child trafficking victims; and**
- 3. The Fourth "P" Partnership must be robustly implemented to continue to expand faith-based stakeholders, as they are natural and traditional first responders in ensuring Survivor/Victim Centered Approaches.**

The Church's Interest in Human Trafficking

Recently, His Holiness, Pope Francis has elevated the issue of human trafficking as a priority for the global Church. In November, following a wish expressed by Pope Francis, the Pontifical Academies of Sciences and of the Social Sciences, together with FIAMC (World Federation of the Catholic Medical Associations), organized a preparatory workshop in early November 2013 to examine human trafficking and how it could be ended.

In that productive November meeting, the working group identified 42 proposals for global urgent action. This month, the Bishop's Conference of England and Wales convened the second International Conference, 'Combating Human Trafficking: Church and Law Enforcement in Partnership,' also at the Vatican. This global conference gathered senior law enforcement and Church leaders from around the world to coordinate efforts toward combatting human trafficking. It is an example of the coordination that needs to continue globally in order to effectively combat trafficking. I was privileged to attend both of these momentous occasions, representing USCCB, and personally witnessing the Holy Father state the following: "Human trafficking is an open wound on the body of contemporary society, a scourge upon the body of Christ...It is a crime against humanity."

The Vatican also recently announced the debut of the Global Freedom Network, the new international multi-faith coalition to eliminate modern slavery and human trafficking. The Global Freedom Network, which was announced on March 17, 2014 at the Vatican, is a ground-breaking agreement by representatives of major faith leaders.¹ The stated objective of the Global Freedom Network is eradicating modern slavery and human trafficking across the world by 2020.

The origination of the Global Freedom Network comes from Holy Father's own clear commitment to the issue of human trafficking. Pope Francis has long been deeply concerned about the persistence and spread of modern slavery and human trafficking, and has desired wider Church involvement in overcoming what he rightly describes as a crime against humanity.

To this end, in *Evangelii Gaudium* he stated the following: "I have always been distressed at the lot of those who are victims of various kinds of human trafficking. How I wish that all of us would hear God's cry" "Where is your brother? . . . Let us not look the other way. There is greater complicity than we think. The issue involves everyone!"²

¹ The Memorandum of Agreement and Joint Statement establishing the Global Freedom Network had the following signatories: On behalf of the Holy Father, Pope Francis, Bishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, Chancellor of the Pontifical Academies of Sciences and Social Sciences; On behalf of the Grand Imam of Al Azhar, Egypt, Dr Mahmoud Azab; On behalf of the Archbishop of Canterbury, The Most Reverend Justin Welby, The Most Reverend Sir David John Moxon, his representative to the Holy See

² Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, November 2013.

The Global Freedom Network is an open association and other faith leaders will be invited to join and support this initiative. It will build on longstanding and widespread work in many countries in many groups. The Global Freedom Network will also carry out a program of coordinated action and activity with international organizations, governments and national authorities, civil society organizations and NGOs, as well as people of good will around the world, to eradicate modern slavery and human trafficking by 2020. The initiative will focus upon 1) raising education and awareness about human trafficking globally; 2) assisting countries with developing a strategic plan to eradicate slavery and cleanse supply chains; 3) facilitating support for the victims; 4) and push for enactment and reform of laws in countries which would help end human trafficking and provide support for its victims. We at USCCB are excited about the Pope's new initiative and are honored to assist facilitating and implementing Holy Father's anti-trafficking goals within the United States.

In addition to supporting the work of Pope Francis and the Global Freedom Network, the Catholic bishops of the United States and the church community throughout the world have placed combating human trafficking as a top priority in their public advocacy, educational outreach, and in providing services to trafficking survivors. The Catholic bishops of the United States and Mexico have also spoken out on the issue, calling upon the governments of the United States and Mexico to work together to apprehend traffickers and destroy trafficking networks: "Both governments must vigilantly seek to end trafficking in human persons. Together, both governments should more effectively share information on trafficking operations and should engage in joint action to apprehend and prosecute traffickers."³

The Scourge of Human Trafficking

The United Nations Protocol on Human Trafficking defines Human Trafficking as "the recruitment, transportation, harboring or receipt of persons by means of force, fraud or coercion."⁴ It is a horrific crime against the fundamental rights and dignity of the human person and takes a variety of forms in every region of the world. Some people are trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation, while others are trafficked for forced to labor in agriculture, sweat shops, and as domestic servants. Some are trafficked for both. Through sexual slavery, the body becomes little more than an object to be exploited. For victims of forced labor, the body is considered a disposable machine, made to work long hours for little or no pay and for the profit of others. In both cases the person who is enslaved is treated as an object for another's benefit. The person's God-given human dignity is either ignored or forgotten.

According to the U.S. State Department, every country in the world is affected by trafficking; it estimates that 600,000 to 800,000 men, women, and children are trafficked across

³ U.S. and Mexican Catholic Bishops, *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*, January, 2003, n. 191.

⁴ 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, §3a 15 November 2000, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4720706c0.html>

international borders each year. Of these, approximately 80% are female, and up to 50% are minors. *The United Nation's International Labor Organization's 2012 Estimate on Forced Labor* shocks the conscience⁵:

- Of the 20.9 million victims of trafficking and human slavery worldwide, 9.1 million victims (44 percent) have been trafficked after moving internally or internationally, while the remaining 11.8 million are subjected to forms of modern slavery in their place of origin or residence within their own national borders.
- Nearly 1.5 million victims are currently laboring in conditions of forced labor, sexual exploitation and servitude in the United States, Canada and developed countries of the EU.
- Fifty-five percent of forced labor victims are women and girls, as are 98 percent of sex trafficking victims.
- Children aged 17 years and below are 26 percent of total victims, representing a total of 5.5 million child victims worldwide.

While many Americans imagine human trafficking to be a problem that only happens in foreign lands, it is, sadly, an American problem as well. The United States serves as a source, transit and destination country for men, women and children - both U.S. citizens and foreign nationals. The U.S. Justice Department estimates that as many as 17,500 people are trafficked into the United States each year for the purpose of forced labor or sexual servitude.

The Church Response to Human Trafficking

As I mentioned, Mr. Chairman, the Catholic Church has placed the elimination of trafficking as an important priority in the areas of (1) awareness raising and outreach, (2) protection and provision of services to trafficking survivors, and (3) public advocacy to end human trafficking. To this end, the institutional Catholic Church in the United States has played a critical role in combatting human trafficking. By virtue of our organizational structure and geographical reach, the U.S. Catholic Church early on has assumed a strong leadership role in the American anti-trafficking movement. For over a decade, USCCB has been a leader in the U.S. and global response to human trafficking, and has operated an Anti-Trafficking Program within the Migration and Refugee Services Department to coordinate the response of the U.S. Church.

- **Awareness Raising and Outreach**

In the area of outreach and education, the USCCB has created a cutting-edge program to educate immigrant leaders in the fight against human trafficking within communities that are frequently vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation. Through its years of expertise, USCCB noticed a gap in the types of education initiatives that were being created to combat trafficking. Namely, we noticed that there were many initiatives to educate law

⁵ International Labor Organization, *2012 Global Estimate of Forced Labor* (Geneva, Switzerland: International Labor Organization), http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_182004.pdf

enforcement, social service providers, and other first responders in identifying victims of human trafficking but not as many programs to engage recent immigrant communities who are very vulnerable to trafficking, exploitation and slavery in the United States.

In engaging these communities, USCCB has found that immigrants are more vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking within agricultural, domestic, hospitality, and service work. To empower immigrant leaders to prevent and identify trafficking in their own communities, USCCB has launched the Amistad Program, which provides training to individuals in immigrant communities for the purpose of prevention and education.

In its administration of the Amistad program, the Anti-Trafficking Program staff trains leaders in immigrant communities to conduct outreach and educate their peers on human trafficking and connect immigrant communities to local coalitions and other resources. Thus far, West African, Haitian, and Central American communities have been engaged. Recently, USCCB Anti-Trafficking program staff also worked with agricultural workers from a number of parishes in Central California. The Amistad curriculum instructs participants on different trafficking schemes, labor rights, how to work with local trafficking coalitions and, most importantly, how to conduct outreach so that individuals can educate their fellow community members. Prevention through empowerment is the main pillar of the campaign.

In addition to vulnerable immigrant communities, the USCCB is continually working to raise awareness within the Catholic community about human trafficking and modern day slavery. For example, USCCB recently developed the SHEPHERD⁶ toolkit for parishes who want to learn more about human trafficking and educate others, but may not be members of the communities that the Amistad Movement targets.

Lastly, the USCCB has worked to promote anti-trafficking awareness to all Catholics through the designation of a national day of prayer for victims and survivors of human trafficking. Here in the United States, the Bishops Committee on Migration has designated the Feast Day of St. Josephine Bakhita, February 8th as a national day of prayer for victims and survivors of human trafficking. St. Josephine was a survivor of human trafficking who spent much of her life under horrible circumstances, until she asserted her humanity and dignity, demanded her freedom and entered the religious life with the Canossian sisters. St. Josephine was brought from Sudan to Italy and died free in 1947. The U.S. bishops encourage parishes to host or attend prayer services and discussion groups on this day, and to reflect on the experiences of those who have suffered through human trafficking and exploitation and take action.

⁶ SHEPHERD is an acronym for “Stop human trafficking and Exploitation. Protect, Help, Empower, and Restore Dignity”. SHEPHERD is available through visiting the USCCB website and making a request. The toolkit is designed for Catholics interested in learning more about human trafficking by hosting an educational event. Participants learn about the Church’s teaching on human trafficking, different forms of human trafficking and exploitation based on real cases, trends in human trafficking cases, how to identify and where to refer victims and those at risk, and how to combat human trafficking in their communities.

Mr. Chairman, I would also like to mention the Apostleship of the Sea—the Church’s maritime ministry present in over 200 ports globally—a network that, through its pastoral presence, has identified labor violations occurring at sea in the fishing industry. I will reference this problem later in my testimony.

- **Protection of Individuals from Trafficking**

The Church and its service organizations, particularly Catholic Charities, have provided support services to both adult and child victims of trafficking, including health and mental health services, employment assistance, English-language training, counseling, housing and other material assistance needs. Through our networks, we have provided case management services, social service assistance, and legal assistance, where appropriate. For six years, USCCB and our partners have provided intensive case management services to victims of human trafficking, assisting more than 2,232 survivors of trafficking and over 500 of their family members. USCCB continues to work with a national network of refugee foster care programs to provide a new life for child survivors of human trafficking and is frequently called upon by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to provide consultation regarding potential child trafficking.

Recently, in collaboration with the HHS Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, USCCB launched the Dignity of Work program to provide employment services to a group of individuals who were not eligible for benefits previously. This program serves individuals who are pre-certified or received certification when they were not ready for employment services, and missed out on vital assistance to help them re-enter the legitimate workforce. The USCCB Anti-Trafficking unit works with our network to provide employment services to individuals in these cities, as well as individuals identified around the country.

On the international level, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has also been a leader in international protection against human trafficking. Between 2001 and 2011, CRS implemented 140 anti-trafficking projects in more than 35 countries. Many of these programs aimed to prevent trafficking in high-risk communities or after natural disasters. Others attempted to impact the root causes of human trafficking. For example, CRS partners in Brazil have developed legislation and programs to help companies ensure they do not use slave labor.

USCCB also works with others in the Catholic Church globally, including Caritas Internationalis. With its 160 national members, Caritas also serves in a leadership role in COATNET (Christian Organizations against Human Trafficking), a coalition across borders to educate on human trafficking, assist victims and advocate for changes in laws.

- **Public Advocacy to End Human Trafficking**

USCCB has worked on public advocacy initiatives related to ending human trafficking and modern slavery. Part of this effort is driven by the Catholic Coalition Against Human

Trafficking (CCOAHT), which consists of about twenty Catholic organizations which convene quarterly and work together on advocacy and public outreach.

USCCB currently is engaged in supporting a variety of legislative anti-trafficking proposals before the House of Representatives. We recommend that the U.S. House of Representatives to adopt the following bills:

- **HR 3344 FORTE Act** (Fraudulent Overseas Recruitment and Trafficking Elimination), sponsored by Representative Edward R. Royce (R-CA) and Representative Karen Bass (D-CA), is designed to prohibit foreign labor recruiters from charging overseas workers large recruitment or job fees to apply for legal jobs within the United States. Frequently, these workers are exploited and misled by unscrupulous recruiters who promise them much higher wages and better living conditions than they actually receive, sometimes leaving these individuals in situations of debt bondage.
- Another piece of legislation that USCCB is hoping to support is forthcoming Business Supply Chain Transparency on Trafficking and Slavery legislation. It would require certain identified companies to submit regular disclosures about what the company is doing to identify and address conditions of forced labor, slavery, human trafficking, and worst forms of child labor within the company's supply chain. Informing consumers about a company's supply chain is an important practice that helps eliminate exploitative commercial enterprises throughout the world. The focus on slavery-free supply chains and ethical consumerism is of major importance to the Catholic community and was named the priority issue for the CCOAHT this year.
- Mr. Chairman, we also urge the subcommittee to require the Administration to implement Section 104 of the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008. Section 104 amends Sec. 107(a) of the TVPA to require the Secretary of State to perform best interest determinations for unaccompanied and separated children in order to identify child trafficking victims and to assist their safe integration, reintegration, and resettlement. This section has not been utilized as Congress intended, and its effective use could help save vulnerable children around the globe from this horrible crime.

USCCB has also been active in working with the Obama Administration on anti-trafficking education. In order to help them comply with the requirements of the 2008 Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) to screen all children crossing the border as potential trafficking victims, over the past three years the USCCB has taught informational sessions on the identification and screening of trafficking victims to Border Patrol and Customs and Border Patrol officers. The trafficking information sessions have helped increase the knowledge and awareness about trafficking among our law enforcement personnel and are a stellar example of government and Church collaboration. USCCB is very interested in continuing this partnership, and, as evidenced by the positive officer feedback and survey results, these USCCB sessions

have been beneficial to and well-received by officers. USCCB has given these sessions along the U.S.-Mexico Border and at Dulles Airport and going forward hopes to broaden the reach of these sessions to marine ports of entry and more airports and border locations.

U.S. Government Response to the Plague of Human Trafficking and the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report

Mr. Chairman, the United States federal government has been a leader in addressing human trafficking at the national level. As you know, and through your leadership, in 2000 the U.S. Congress passed landmark legislation entitled the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA), which provided the U.S. government the framework to respond to the plague of human trafficking in the United States. Through the TVPA, and subsequent reauthorizations of the law in 2003, 2005, 2008 and 2013, the United States has developed a legal mechanism for implementing trafficking prevention mechanisms, law enforcement and legal protections, and victim support services.

Due to the efforts of the U.S. government and civil society stakeholders general awareness about the reality of human trafficking has increased, more victims have been identified and referred for services and more traffickers have been brought to justice. Your committee's leadership, Mr. Chairman, and that of Congress will help improve these efforts even further in the years ahead.

In addition to the above-mentioned anti-trafficking initiatives, the TVPA has also had a large international impact on global anti-trafficking initiatives as it authorized the U.S. State Department to draft reports about whether nations were complying with "minimal standards"⁷ to eliminate trafficking, in the form of the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report.⁸ The TVPA established the Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking,⁹ which was tasked with monitoring countries' compliance with the requirements of the TVPA protocol.¹⁰ The Task Force, along with the State Department, each year releases the TIP Report, which assigns a tiered ranking to countries that is determined by each country's progress towards meeting the "minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking" set forth in TVPA §108.¹¹

While the State Department uses it as a guide on countries' anti-trafficking initiatives, the annual TIP Report is also used as a diplomatic tool to pressure foreign governments into action and is also considered an international trafficking indicator.¹² The TIP Report has

⁷ TVPA §§ 104, 108(a), 108(b) (2000).

⁸ TVPA § 104.

⁹ 22 U.S.C. § 7103(a).

¹⁰ See U.S. Dep't of State, Victims of Trafficking and Protection Act of 2000: Trafficking in Persons Report (2001).

¹¹ The TPVA's minimum standards guidelines are in 22 U.S.C. §7106(a).

¹² U.S. Sec'y of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, Remarks on the Release of the 10th Annual Trafficking in Persons Report (June 14, 2010)

four categories of Tier Rankings.¹³

The TIP Report's contribution to the evolution of a global consensus on the nature of the problem of trafficking is indisputable: the 'open threat' of a negative grade on the TIP Report has provided nations with impetus for national reforms, including the criminalization of trafficking and the opening of shelters and other victim assistance centers.¹⁴ Mr. Chairman, the USCCB offers the following principles to guide the continued advancement of the report:

1. Primary attention should be given to vulnerable populations: stateless persons, refugee populations, and persons at sea

Persons who are in particularly vulnerable situations are prone to human traffickers. Persons who are stateless, are situated in refugee situations, and are at sea are among those particularly susceptible to becoming victims.

As an example, the USCCB is particularly concerned about reports of the Thai government's involvement in placing Burmese refugees, namely Muslim Rohingya, into deep sea labor trafficking rings and in trafficking camps off the coast of the Thai/Burmese border.¹⁵ Once the Rohingya arrive in Thailand, the Thai government has placed them into immigrant detention centers. These detention centers are fetid, terribly crowded and cage-like, causing muscle atrophy in some of the detained men. The detained Rohingya were then transported across southern Thailand to Ranong, a sparsely populated Thai province which shares a long under-policed land and sea border with Burma. From there these refugees were packed into boats by the Thai government and taken out to sea.

¹³ TIER 1- which is given to countries whose governments fully comply with the Trafficking Victims Protection Act's (TVPA) minimum standards.

TIER 2- which is given to countries whose governments do not fully comply with the TVPA's minimum standards, but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards.

TIER 2 WATCH LIST- which is given to countries whose governments do not fully comply with the TVPA's minimum standards, but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards AND:

- a) The absolute number of victims of severe forms of trafficking is very significant or is significantly increasing;
- b) There is a failure to provide evidence of increasing efforts to combat severe forms of trafficking in persons from the previous year; or
- c) The determination that a country is making significant efforts to bring itself into compliance with minimum standards was based on commitments by the country to take additional future steps over the next year.

TIER 3- which is given to countries whose governments do not fully comply with the minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so.

¹⁴ Anne T. Gallagher, *The International Law of Human Trafficking*, 485 (2010).

¹⁵ See Jason Szep and Andrew R.C. Marshall, *Special Report-Thailand Secretly Dumps Myanmar Refugees into Trafficking Rings*, ReutersUK, December 5, 2013 available at <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/12/05/uk-thailand-rohingya-special-report-idUKBRE9B400920131205>.

Mr. Szep and Mr. Marshall won a Pulitzer Prize for their reporting on this issue.

Once off the coast, refugees tell stories of being informed that they had been sold to traffickers. They were loaded onto traffickers' boats and then held hostage in a series of camps hidden near the border with Malaysia until relatives paid thousands of dollars to release them. Others were sold to deep sea fishing trawlers, thrust into situations of labor trafficking and severe exploitation and abuse. Being at sea, persons are subject to the whim and direction of the captain of the ship, who could threaten them with death if they do not cooperate with human traffickers. The USCCB would like to see an end to these practices.

In this regard, we request the U.S. government to work with Thailand and Malaysia to aggressively address these problems. USCCB notes that there have been recent efforts by the Thai government to improve its anti-trafficking efforts, such as the allocation of greater resources to this issue and welcome those efforts. USCCB is aware that last year the Thai government announced a national action plan to prevent human trafficking and support its victims and that it cooperated with national fishing associations, civil action groups and the International Labor Organization (ILO) with its 2013 report on trafficked workers in the fishing sector.

However the USCCB also notes that the Thai government's submission of recent reports in March states that no Rohingya were included in the official tally of trafficked persons. Instead the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs states that "in essence, the Rohingya question is an issue of human smuggling."¹⁶ It also should be noted that there is a large under-regulated phenomena of forced labor, severe exploitation and even sexual exploitation occurring at sea, particularly on fishing vessels that exist largely unnoticed by the rest of the world¹⁷ that cannot be simply described as a migrant smuggling situation. The USCCB is concerned that vulnerable refugees are being trafficked and held in conditions of modern day slavery.

In the case of Burma, as well, we feel that the treatment of the Rohingya by the Burmese government must be a factor in the calculus. Muslim Rohingya who arrive in Thailand from Burma are fleeing persecution and are especially vulnerable. Rohingya are Muslims from Burma and Bangladesh who are frequently stateless and abused.¹⁸ Thousands of Rohingya flee Burma to escape religious and other forms of persecution and also find themselves in refugee camps within Burma or in situations of forced migration, statelessness or internal displacement.

¹⁶ Andrew R.C. Marshall and Amy Sawitta Lefevre, Special Report: Flaws found in Thailand's Human-Trafficking Crackdown, Reuters UK, April 10, 2014 available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/04/10/us-thailand-rohingya-special-report-idUSBREA3922P20140410>

¹⁷ See Ambassador Mark Lagon, Statement of Illicit Fishing and Human Trafficking: Harming Business, Natural Resources, and Vulnerable People, before Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs, Committee on Natural Resources, US House of Representatives, 2nd Session, 113th Congress, April 3, 2014.

¹⁸ For greater resources about the Rohingya and the persecution they face, please see <http://www.rcusa.org/index.php?page=rohingya-refugees>

Given our years of experience working with refugee populations, we are intimately aware of the increased vulnerability that statelessness, forced migration and internal displacement creates and makes these already persecuted individuals more susceptible to situations of trafficking. While it is the responsibility of the U.S. government and other global actors to stand up against human trafficking and modern slavery, it is also the responsibility of the Burmese government to address the situations of exploitation, persecution and modern day slavery that are occurring to the Rohingya.

2. Special attention should be given to child trafficking victims

Mr. Chairman, USCCB has a special interest in the situation of children who are trafficking victims. As you know, children are particularly vulnerable to traffickers and are susceptible to their abuses. We must pay particular attention to child trafficking victims and ensure that they are protected and provided special care. In recent years, through its program services, USCCB has encountered particular vulnerability of child trafficking victims from the countries of Haiti, Honduras, and Eritrea and the Horn of Africa.

As you know, Honduras is a source and transit country for child trafficking victims. Recently the USCCB took a delegation trip to Honduras in 2013 and found that there were a large number of Honduran children who had international protection claims, some of whom were victims of sex and labor trafficking. USCCB program staff met with Honduran child welfare officials and determined that the mechanisms for effectively identifying and protecting child trafficking victims, particularly labor trafficking victims, were inadequate and over-reliant on civil society- primarily on faith-based organizations. The USCCB recognizes that the 2013 TIP Report Honduras profile contained recommendations that the Honduran government needed to create better mechanisms to identify and care for vulnerable working children. We ask that serious attention be paid to the need for better government system creation and implementation in Honduras with relation to child trafficking victims.

In Haiti, the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake has left orphans and other separated children as potential victims of human trafficking. Children remain at risk in Haiti, as it continues to recover from this natural disaster. Many are susceptible to trafficking throughout the Dominican Republic. We urge you to continue to work with the Haitian government to protect children from human traffickers.

Tragically, Mr. Chairman, we have also seen Eritrean children who flee forced conscription in their home countries become victims of human trafficking. Many Eritrean youth flee to Egypt through Sudan but Sudanese authorities have reportedly turned them over to the Rashaida tribal clan, who in turn sell them to the Bedouin tribe in the Sinai. Reports have indicated that these youth are tortured and used to gain ransom from their families. During the USCCB assessment trip to Ethiopia and Kenya in 2012, the U.S. bishops learned first-hand of these horrific practices. Unaccompanied children in the refugee camps of Ethiopia are vulnerable and even disappearing as they await durable

solutions to their plight. We encourage the subcommittee to look into this reality and encourage that steps be taken to end these practices.

3. The Fourth “P” Partnership must be robustly implemented to continue to expand the inclusion of faith-based stakeholders, as they are natural and traditional first responders in ensuring Survivor/Victim Centered Approaches

Mr. Chairman, as you know, the TIP Report includes a “4P” approach in its anti-trafficking work. The 4 Ps stand for “Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and Partnership.”

It is the fourth “P”--Partnership--that is the focus of my last point. The TIP Report admirably attempts to include its partners in all aspects of fighting human trafficking, from information sharing to engaging in victim--centered approaches. The USCCB is thankful for this and ask for the continued expansion of faith-based groups as multilevel stakeholders in the global fight against human trafficking. The Church, through its work in the US and internationally, is a natural and traditional first responder in this fight against the scourge of trafficking. The Church is in many ways the first place that victims turn to and sometimes, it is the only place that traffickers allow their victims to access.

Mr. Chairman, in this sense, faith-based organizations are uniquely positioned to identify and provide assistance to victims of human trafficking. First, faith-based organizations act from a theological and philosophical perspective. For example, the themes of Catholic social teaching—the protection of human dignity and human rights; the option for the poor; the call to family and community; the rights of workers; solidarity and care for creation—all address evils inherent in human trafficking. These principles of justice are not unique to Catholicism but are manifest in most religions. Commitment to these principles gives the issue of human trafficking a sense of urgency to many faiths and religious communities.

Second, most faith-based organizations have national and international networks that enhance their capacity to give voice and volume to the cry for justice. They have access to a cross-section of agencies, both domestic and international, which offer expertise and geography that expand the possibilities for outreach and service, an asset not to be underestimated. For example, the Catholic Church is present overseas, in the form of Catholic Relief Services and the universal Church, as well as domestically, in the form of Catholic Charities, local dioceses, and parishes. The Church also includes religious congregations around the world.

Finally, faith-based organizations have resources, in the form of human resources, in-kind donations, and other assets, which provide an important infrastructure which can assist in the fight against human trafficking. While we see the effort as a partnership with the U.S. government and other governments around the world, we would be performing this work regardless, particularly because of the moral gravity of the issue and the ongoing suffering of its victims. In this vein, the U.S. bishops have spoken about the need for stakeholder collaboration in fighting human trafficking in the US context, stating:

“Human trafficking is a horrific crime against the basic dignity and rights of the human person . . . In the end, we must work together- Church, state, and community- to eliminate the root causes and markets that permit traffickers to flourish and to make whole the survivors of this crime. . .”¹⁹

I will close my remarks about the importance of faith-based partnership by drawing upon an example from Holy Father in the April meeting of the Pontifical Academy. In that meeting the need for stakeholder inclusiveness was highlighted in its most pure form. Pope Francis exhorted law enforcement officials to make personal commitments to “eradicate the scourge [of trafficking], and to develop partnerships with the Church and civil society to bring to justice those who are responsible for these horrendous crimes and to alleviate the suffering of victims.”²⁰ In addition to reaching out to law enforcement, Holy Father focused his attention on the victims. Just before his address to conference participants, the Pope held a private meeting with four survivors of human trafficking, now rescued, who came from Chile, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Argentina. These survivors also participated in the conference itself and spoke to law enforcement and Church leaders.

For Pope Francis, the Church is a key partner along with law enforcement, government, civil society and survivors-especially survivors. It is in this same vein, that USCCB works to address human trafficking domestically. In our mission to eradicate modern day slavery and minister to the survivors, the Bishops have consistently served survivors and helped them to rehabilitate, grounding our service to this vulnerable population in our article of faith, which holds that all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God and therefore are imbued with fundamental dignity.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, the issue of modern slavery is perhaps one of the most important human rights issue facing the global community today. The United States has taken significant steps to address this horrific problem, one of which includes the creation of the TIP Report.

USCCB believes that the TIP Report reflects the U.S. Government’s commitment to global leadership on this key human rights issue, in part because the Report represents an updated, global look at the nature and scope of trafficking in persons and the broad range of government actions to confront and eliminate it.

We ask that you encourage the Administration to continue to consider/review all information when considering the country tier placements and listen to the voice of faith based organizations at all levels. The USCCB stands behind the efficacy of the TIP Report as a means to engage foreign governments in dialogues to advance anti-trafficking reforms and to combat trafficking and to target resources on prevention, protection and prosecution programs.

¹⁹ US Conference of Catholic Bishops, *On Human Trafficking*, 2007

²⁰ Rome Human Trafficking and Slavery Conference 2014: Declaration of Commitment.

The USCCB asks that the expertise and vast experience of the Catholic Church in fighting the scourge of human trafficking be more effectively engaged in the “4 Ps” approach illustrated in the TIP Report. Namely- USCCB and the global Catholic Church want to be a “P”artner with the US government in combatting human trafficking in the truest sense. As outlined by my testimony today, the Catholic Church is on the global frontlines in combatting modern slavery and its denial of Human rights.

The USCCB takes to heart Pope Francis’s commitment and looks forward to working with this subcommittee and Congress in the days ahead. I thank you for considering our views today. We welcome the opportunity to engage more with you and other lawmakers to end this scourge once and for all.