



Human Trafficking Foundation Online Forum

The Nexus Between Trafficking and Technology

23rd June 2021 2pm – 3.30pm

Chaired by Tamara Barnett, Director of Operations and Phil Brewer

The recording of the meeting can be viewed [here](#)

Introduction by Tamara Barnett (Director of Operations at HTF)

HTF organised this forum to raise awareness of the existing technology initiatives developed to combat modern slavery and to encourage a joined-up response between organisations. This event was planned in light of the Online Harms Bill the Government published which claims it will make the UK the safest place in the world to go online and is the first attempt globally to address a comprehensive spectrum of online harms.

Owen Pinnell (Investigative Journalist & Filmmaker, BBC) *We Discovered an Underage Girl for Sale on an App – One of Thousands of Domestic Workers Trafficked Online.*

Owen and colleagues were working on a documentary *Silicone Valley's Online Slave Market* and while in the process of creating this they found an underage girl being sold on an app in Kuwait, one of thousands they found being trafficked online. The market was accessible via apps proved by Google, Apple, and Facebook-owned Instagram.

Throughout their investigation the BBC spoke to 57 users of a particular app in Kuwait who were selling domestic workers. They looked at indicators such as excessive overtime, confiscated documents, and abusive working conditions. Majority of users didn't allow their domestic workers outside the home.

NGOs in the Gulf admit the sale of domestic workers is thriving and no one seems to think there's anything wrong as 90% households have a domestic worker in Kuwait. The team went undercover posing as a husband and wife looking to buy a domestic worker in Kuwait through an app called 4Sale used to buy and sell DWs alongside cars and TVs. Most women had no knowledge they were being advertised online. The team spoke to a policeman who was selling his domestic worker and encouraged the husband and wife buyers to keep her passport, even though this is breaking the law. The seller said to the undercover couple it was \$3800 US for an African domestic worker, and the undercover team met the girl. She was 16 years old, illegal to have a domestic worker under 21.

The impact of the documentary: the 16-year-old was able to return home after they reported, and a fundraiser helped her go to school, but no ongoing support was received after this. Facebook said

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they removed 130,000 posts, two of the apps have since prohibited the sale of domestic workers, and the trade has been cut down online but continues through family networks instead.

There is a need to abolish Kafala system, compensate the victims, and there is a need for more literacy on domestic servitude for tech companies. All these tech companies have Modern Slavery statements but thousands of the posts appear on their apps. Tik Tok is a new concern where abuse is being live streamed.

Ana-Sofia Baillet (Policy and Research Project Manager, STOP THE TRAFFIK) *False Job Ads Campaign: Findings in Cleaning, Hospitality and Domestic Work Sectors in the UK.*

Last year STOP THE TRAFFIK identified that Latin American women in cleaning, hospitality and domestic work were at risk of exploitation and labour rights violations in the UK, particularly since Covid. They wanted to analyse the impact of Covid however Latin Americans are not a category recognised in the UK in the data, so it is hard to see how many are living in the UK and there are little details on their lives.

Carried out three campaigns, focusing on cleaners, workers' rights and false job ads and dodgy recruitment. STOP THE TRAFFIK partnered with LAWRS as the service delivery organisation to provide support. They used social media marketing to reach different communities with specific information

One group was asked to watch a one minute video including workers' rights (holiday pay, contracts, minimum wage and signposting) and then complete the survey. The control group were asked to complete the survey without watching the video. The audience were Latin American women in Portuguese and Spanish in London and Manchester and reached almost 100,000 women and 187 responses to the survey most were domestic workers or cleaners of offices. Most found job and working hours differed from what was promised, language limitations were taken advantage of by employers, both groups were then showed job adverts and had to choose which were suspicious - those who had watched the video were more likely to spot a suspicious advert compared to those who had not seen the video.

Radu Cucos (Associate Officer on Combatting Trafficking Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe OSCE) *Addressing the scale of human trafficking through policies and innovative tech tools.*

In the US in 2020 118,932 victims of trafficking were identified but the estimated number of victims is 24.9 million so therefore only 0.448% of victims identified (ILO figure). Prosecutions are really low, only 1 prosecution for over 2,000 victims. One of the biggest problems is the scale; how to find a solution. National frameworks exist for identifying and supporting a small number of people but do not address the scale of trafficking, and this is only going to grow in scale as time goes on.

A 2007 report on commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking in a range of countries, concluding technology plays a major role in exploitation of victims. This was 14 years ago. Technology amplifies the market, in the US each day 200,000 new escort ads for sexual services.

In the Europol database there are huge numbers of CSE images, and huge numbers of people searching for indecent images. Are resources to address this problem being increased? No, and nowhere near the same amount as is spent on drugs.

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With the adoption of prevention of exploitation in supply chains laws, it created a demand for tech tools. 46% of trafficking tech tools refer to labour in supply chain.

Live streaming of sexual exploitation because people are willing to pay. Can't monitor this with people, need tech tools to identify this.

OSCE identified over 300 tech tools some are simple, some advanced using AI. Tech tools are needed to amplify the response; traffickers use tech for their advantage, and we need to do the same.

Favourite tech initiative is Seattle Against Slavery which developed a freedom symbol which scrapes websites for sex ads and sends a text to all numbers offering support. This initiative generates the same amount of victim engagement as the US national hotline for modern slavery and trafficking.

Chloe Setter (Head of Policy, WePROTECT Global Alliance) *Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Online.*

We Protect Global Alliance is an independent NGO which has 98 government members, 50 NGO members, and over 50 private company members. For this reason, they have a global view of the topic shaped by their alliance members. They want to establish coordinated international responses to online abuse and have created a framework which countries are encouraged to use. Only coordinated action can ensure that children are properly protected.

Child sexual exploitation and abuse online includes grooming of children online, live streaming of abuse, production, possession, and distribution of child sexual abuse material online. It also includes children sharing sexual content that they have created themselves.

18 million referrals of child sexual abuse material CSSM by US technology companies to NCMEC (National Center for Missing and Exploited Children) in 2018. 94% of CSAM found online by internet watch foundation contains images of children aged 13 or under.

Traffickers are moving their business models online which has been exasperated by the pandemic. The Palermo Protocol was not drafted with the internet in mind; however, the law is evolving.

The use of the internet in child trafficking:

- Trafficking to create child sexual abuse material
- Recruitment and grooming via social media / gaming platforms
- Children advertised and sold online
- Images and videos sold
- Technology to facilitate abuse / control & contact victims
- Online currencies and money transfers to pay for exploitation

Technology is not always the problem and sometimes it is the solution but collaboration across NGOs is needed to respond.

Molly Hodson (UK Director of Marketing, Media and External Affairs, International Justice Mission IJM) *Detection, Collaboration and Reform: Tackling Online Sexual Exploitation of Children at Home and Abroad.*

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IJM 'ending violence by ending impunity' ensure that those are most vulnerable to abuse are protected. They do this by strengthening the justice system working with law enforcement around the world, bringing victims of violence to places of safety and making sure criminals are brought to justice. IJM have brought 66,000 victims to safety from abuse.

Online Sexual Exploitation of Children (OSEC) in the Philippines is one of IJM's focus areas, where children are exploited via live streaming to satisfy online demand of child sex offenders. The median age of victims in the Philippines was 11 and on average it took two years of exploitation to detect a victim. This abuse is not online for children, its real.

IJM have had to do a lot of work in combatting the rise of OSEC in a pandemic, but throughout the period IJM have had 177 victims rescued through 49 law enforcement operations. There is a need for the improvement of detection and reporting by both the technology and financial sector as live stream abuse isn't being detected and there needs greater global investment in this.

Online Safety Bill – Global South law enforcement needs targeted, robust reports. There is a need to see strengthened international collaboration in law enforcement and prosecution and support effective justice system responses in source and demand-side countries.

Maria Allgaier (Co-Founder of Project Freyja) *Tackling Trafficking in the Pornographic Industry.*

Maria is a co-founder of Project Freyja which is a start-up offering erotic content without abuse which provides educational resources on contraception and sexual health, toolkits for parents and helplines for trafficking. Most pornographic material includes revenge porn, trafficked material and abuse which is not moderated to high standard. Other pornographic sites also allow for automatic uploads, use algorithms that push consumers to more shocking content, performers cannot decide to take videos down and videos are automatically downloaded by users.

Project Freyja will also include advice on careers mental health, sexual health for performers. Performers will be selected, and content will be submitted by individuals instead of agencies with ID checks and consent forms which will be checked by moderation teams. There will also be a report button on the site which service users can click if they are concerned about the nature of the video. Performers will be able to take down content whenever they wish.

Project Freyja are open to suggestions from the anti-trafficking sector on how they can make their site safer and protect potential victims of sexual exploitation.