Topic 1: Human Trafficking

Background:

Human Trafficking has become a world renowned issue. People from throughout the international community are being traded for the purpose of sexual exploitation and/or forced labor. This modern form of slavery has become the second fastest growing illicit industry, second to the sale and distribution of illicit drugs. As of 2004, human trafficking has produced upwards of $7 billion and continues to grow. Human trafficking has become an extremely profitable trade as the victims are being bought and sold multiple times. There are three main types of human trafficking which include: sexual trafficking, labor trafficking and domestic servitude. All three types objectify men, women and children, stripping them of their basic human rights and exploiting them into inhumane lifestyles with harsh conditions.

The most common type of human trafficking is sexual exploitation. Approximately 80% of reported cases are in form of sexual exploitation. The majority of victims reported in sexual cases are women and young children. According to a UNODC global report, 20% of trafficking victims are indeed children under the age of 18. Since 2015 there have been around 4,000 total cases of female trafficking and 1,600 number of minor trafficking cases throughout the international community. This is an obvious growing problem for developed and underdeveloped nations. Africa is one of the worst offenders of human trafficking as they have a total of 3 million people living in bondage. Other countries where human trafficking is very severe is Nigeria, Brazil, Thailand and Albania. Not only in developing countries is this an issue but also developed nations as well. The United States is struggling greatly by human trafficking as well
as many European countries. As of 2015, the United States recorded 1,819 human trafficking cases.

The second most prevalent type of human trafficking is forced labor. Forced labor is most common in areas of agriculture, domestic work, manufacturing and construction. Usually indigenous people and migrant workers are at a high risk of becoming victims of this human trafficking. Although children are also at high risk for succumbing under forced labor in sweatshops. Specifically in the Asian-Pacific region there are 50% of the population are victims of forced labor human trafficking. These victims get paid up to $5 an hour for 15 hour workdays. Domestic servitude is another type of human trafficking that is very common throughout the global neighborhood. In areas such as Nepal, there are more than 20,000 young girls being emotionally, physically and mentally abused through domestic servitude. Other types of human trafficking include trafficking for organ trade and forced marriage. Although throughout the entire world, every continent there is an immense problem of human trafficking.

**United Nations Involvement:**

Under the United Nations there are numerous subcommittees that work directly to stop human trafficking throughout the international community. These subcommittees include the International Labor Organization (ILO), the Office of Drug and Crime (UNODC), Commissioner of Human Rights (UNHCR), UNICEF and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The United Nation’s General Assembly created the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in 2000. This convention was later ratified to cover the prevention and punishment of trafficking humans specifying the protection of women and children. The United Nations introduced a protocol fighting against Trafficking in Persons that
was signed by the UN Member States in 2003. The majority of the Member States have been implementing the protocol throughout their countries. However, some have not been taking the issue very seriously and have yet to implement the protocol. Also the ILO has being an integral part of eradicating human trafficking as they have been attempting to gather international data since 2012. The collection of this international data and information has deemed extremely successful as it have provided the United Nations areas and victim types to focus on in order to abolish human trafficking. The more information obtained the faster, the international community can help to solve this problem.

Along with the ILO, the UNODC, UNICEF and IOM launched the United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking in 2007 and the program is continuing today. This global initiative is based off this principle “human trafficking is a crime of such magnitude and atrocity that it cannot be dealt with successfully by any government alone”. This global initiative has been successful at uniting all aspects of the international community to combat against human trafficking. The program has collected the majority of the data used by the United Nations and has provide a location of expertise on the issue. More recently in 2012 the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children was implemented for the purpose of strengthening international participation and highlight social awareness of the issue. Each organization has a focal point for which it provide extensive research and data in order to combat this problem. Human trafficking is an extremely serious issue that should be taken seriously by not only the Member States but also the entire international community.
Questions to Consider:

1. Should human trafficking in developed nations be prioritized over the issue in developing nations or should human trafficking in developing nations be prioritized?

2. What steps should be taken to assimilate human trafficking victims they are rescued?

3. What type of human trafficking is most prevalent in each country?

4. What areas of the world should be focused on the most?

Works Cited:


Topic 2: LGBT Rights

Background:

Homosexuality has been documented as early as 9660 BCE; however, homosexuality is still not socially acceptable in the majority of the international community today. The first time that homosexuality was legally decriminalized was in 1811 by Netherlands and Indonesia. In 1897, George Cecil Ives created the first homosexual rights organization in England, called the Order of Chaeronea. 1924 marked the establishment of the first LGBT rights group in America. Tolerance of homosexuality had begun to emerge, but this era of acceptance was brief. The surge of media coverage and publicity immediately led to homosexuals being the targets of health examinations, as it was widely believed that homosexuality was a degenerative sickness.

As more and more pro-LGBT rights groups were formed, the amount of anti-LGBT groups increased as well. These anti-homosexuality groups aimed to slander the LGBT community by providing a medical explanation for their attraction to same-sex individuals. For example, the Family Research Institute stated that “homosexuals are predatory and diseased perverts who victimize children” and that with “the rise of the gay rights movement, homosexual rape of men appears to have increased.” The LGBT community was soon stripped of even their most basic humanitarian rights. Discriminatory laws were placed against homosexuals in many countries, and some of these countries still enforce those laws.

Today, roughly 80 countries still have anti-gay legislation in place, including Saudi Arabia, Jamaica, the majority of Africa, and Indonesia. In Saudi Arabia, there exists a plethora of oppressive laws targeting homosexuals. Claiming that gay rights “violate Islamic law,”
homosexuality is illegal under Sharia law. If one is found to be involved in a same-sex relationship, the possible punishments include chemical castration, the death penalty, and imprisonment. Similarly, homosexual acts are punishable by death in the African countries of Mauritania, Sudan, and parts of Nigeria. Homosexuality is outlawed in 34 African countries, and gender expression/identity is only legal in one out of fifty-six African countries.

While countries such as the United States and those in the European Union are beginning to adopt more progressive policies in regard to LGBT rights, others are worsening theirs. In Russia, President Vladimir Putin has passed a series of oppressive and discriminatory laws targeting the Russian LGBT community. For example, there is legislature saying that people and/or groups who distribute information that could be considered “propaganda of nontraditional sexual relations” can and will be punished by law. It is also now legal for the country to both punish and detain foreigners who are thought to be “gay or pro-gay.” In addition, African countries that already have laws against homosexual sex continue to pass more laws against LGBT people. Nigeria passed a bill outlawing same-sex marriage in 2013, despite the fact that discriminatory legislature was already present and there was no one advocating for it.

UN Involvement:

In 2008, a resolution supporting gay rights was proposed by Dutch and French delegates to the UN General Assembly. This resolution, a declaration that states it is unacceptable for any country to discriminate, harass, or encourage violence against homosexuals, was signed by 94 countries; however, these votes were not enough to put the resolution into effect. The resolution aimed to encourage nations to join the liberation movement for homosexuals. In response, the Arab League (a group consisting of North Africa, the Horn of Africa, and Southwest Asia)
issued a statement that opposed equal rights for the LGBT population. This declaration also did not pass, despite being signed by 57 countries. It’s unlikely that either of these resolutions will pass in the future because of the differing policies held by the various member states of the General Assembly, in which every country has equal representation.

On June 17, 2011, a new resolution concerning homosexuality, proposed by South Africa, was brought into the UN. This resolution requested that the member states of the United Nations observed the discrimination and oppression faced by the LGBT community throughout the world. This resolution passed, marking the first implementation of a resolution concerning LGBT rights.

In 2012, the UN’s secretary-general, Ban Ki Moon, met with a group of representatives from an organization that represents LGBT UN staff called UN-GLOBE. This marked the first time that a secretary met with LGBT staff in person to discuss institutionalized discrimination against the LGBT community.

While it’s difficult for the UN itself to take a stance regarding LGBT rights because of the various views and beliefs of its member states, progress continues to be made. On July 7, 2014, the United Nations announced that it would begin recognizing its staffers’ same-sex marriages. Secretary-general Ban Ki Moon stated that “equality begins at home” when questioned about the United Nations’ new policy. This change is extremely important because UN employees and their spouses are now able to access benefits such as health care and residency visas. UN-GLOBE president, Hyung Hak Nam, commented that “the UN is finally starting to listen, and to act, much to its credit.”
Questions to Consider:

1. How does your country treat its LGBT community?
2. What changes in policy have occurred in recent years?
3. How should sovereignty be prioritized when considering possible solutions for LGBT rights?
4. What incentives can be used in order to encourage states with discriminatory or oppressive policies to consider adopting a more progressive stance on the issue?

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