

Working With Victims: A Personal Response to Human Trafficking

Harmonie M. Vallerand

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Abstract

Human trafficking is a prominent social justice issue around the world. Organizations and individuals have chosen to become advocates to eradicate human trafficking and to help the victims who have suffered. Christians have a responsibility to respond, but need proper awareness and preparation to ensure the appropriate and effective response. Preparation includes education on the issue as a whole, cross-cultural awareness, and thorough training prior to direct work with victims of human trafficking. Overall, those working to eliminate human trafficking must understand that each victim who has suffered is made in the image of God and needs His love and healing.

Introduction

Human trafficking spans the globe. Men, women, and children are trafficked to and from countries across the world and forced into prostitution and bonded labor. Governments, law enforcement, non-profits, and individuals are responding to the crisis in an effort to prevent its growth, to rescue the enslaved, and to restore the survivors. Rescuing victims, specifically from sex trafficking, is the first step to their recovery. But what follows is critical to ensure their ability to experience freedom and healing. This paper is written to educate the reader about the overall issue of human trafficking and specifically focus on how the reader can prepare to work with victims of sex trafficking. I will use my own observation and experience working with the Home Foundation and their partners, as well as my short-term service experience to guide my recommendations.

I have been involved with the Home Foundation's internship program for the past three years and through my experience, I have recognized that training is vital for every individual with the desire to work with and properly care for victims of sex trafficking. Those involved in the rescue and care of the victims must have an understanding of the broader issue of trafficking, an awareness of the trauma victims have endured, and a cultural sensitivity, as many victims are rescued and treated outside of their home countries. It is my hope that this paper will be an effective tool to train future Home Foundation interns, as well as other individuals who have a desire to work with victims who have survived the atrocities of sex trafficking. Most importantly, this paper is written with the understanding that trafficking victims must be seen as image bearers of God in need of His love and healing.

Human Trafficking

Overview

Individuals cannot address and respond to human trafficking without first having an overall understanding of the issue. Knowledge and understanding of human trafficking are necessary for individuals to successfully contribute to the holistic care of survivors. Human trafficking is not confined to one corner of the world, but has made its mark globally. Globalization has connected the world like never before, and is a catalyst for the spread of human trafficking as perpetrators traffic their victims all over the world (Jones, Engstrom, Hilliard, & Diaz, 2007). While globalization enables human trafficking, it will also be the key to a response. As the world continues to become aware of the growing problem, people and organizations have taken responsibility to act in hopes of ending the modern day slave trade.

Modern Day Slavery: Definition and Statistics

Slavery has been banned worldwide in the 150 years since the Slavery Abolition Act was passed through the efforts of William Wilberforce and the British Parliament in 1833 (Fisanick, 2010). However, slavery still exists in the world today. According to the Polaris Project, one of the largest anti-trafficking organizations in the United States and Japan, “Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery.... human trafficking is considered to be one of the fastest growing criminal industries in the world” (2010). Overall, the slave trade is the third largest criminal activity in the world, behind drug trafficking and illegal arms trade; with an estimated annual revenue as high as \$32 billion (Batstone, 2007).

Today slavery takes various forms and enslaves men, women, and children. In her remarks at the release of the Ninth Annual Trafficking in Persons Report, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated:

Around the world, millions of people are living in bondage. They labor in fields and factories under brutal employers who threaten them with violence if they try to escape. They work in homes for families that keep them virtually imprisoned. They are forced to work as prostitutes or to beg in the streets, fearful of the consequences if they fail to earn their daily quota. They are women, men, and children of all ages, and they are often held far from home with no money, no connections, and no way to ask for help. (2009)

There are 12.3 million adults and children in forced labor and sexual slavery around the world; 1.8 people per 1,000 inhabitants globally (U.S. Department of State, 2010). These statistics confirm that we are living during the modern day slave trade. Slavery may have been banned, but it has not gone away, and as the world has become more connected, human trafficking has spread throughout the globe.

Globalization Enables Human Trafficking

Slaves have existed since the beginning of time and have been traded through country borders and across oceans. In the Old Testament, Joseph was sold by his brothers to the Ishmaelites who took him to Egypt where he became the slave of Potiphar (Genesis 37 & 39). In the 17th and 18th centuries, thousands of African slaves were brought to the Caribbean to work in sugar plantations (Klein, 1986). Although slavery is illegal, millions of people are still in slavery and globalization allows people greater access to the world. “Globalization has resulted in an unprecedented flow of capital, goods and services, and labor into every continent and nearly every country in the world” (Jones et al., 2007, pp. 107-108). A more accessible world gives perpetrators of human trafficking the ability to network worldwide and enables the growth and expansion of this crime.

The slave trade today – human trafficking – is not just an outcome of globalization, but is part of the globalization process (Brewer, 2009). “Human trafficking represents perhaps the worst form of labor exploitation and can be regarded as one of the dark sides of globalization” (Jones et al., 2007, p. 108). A significant aspect of human trafficking is sex trafficking, which is “the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act” (*Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000*, 2000, p. 7). Batstone (2007) explained:

Sex trafficking simultaneously exploits both the best and the worst aspects of globalization. The champions of globalization tout the growing ease of conducting business across national borders. Sophisticated communication tools and relaxed banking laws make it possible to exchange assets internationally with ease. Virtual enterprises can operate everywhere and nowhere, making themselves known only when and where they choose. (p. 171)

We may not directly see activities within this thriving industry, but victims exist in our cities and neighborhoods.

Multiple factors impact human trafficking in the world today. “Impoverishment in the supply countries is a push factor that forces people to seek ways to improve their economic situation” (Richter & Richter, 2003, p. 2). As a result, people may fall prey to offers of employment that lead to their enslavement. “The spread of ‘global culture’ serves as a pull factor, raising expectations of a better life elsewhere” (Richter & Richter, 2003, p. 2). This pull factor can make those impoverished the perfect targets for perpetrators who bring the promise of the life people are dreaming about.

The Call to Respond

Globalization has allowed human trafficking to grow and spread throughout the world, but it is also through globalization that we have the ability to raise awareness and put an end to slavery. Human trafficking is a global problem requiring a global response. In order to be effective in stopping a rapidly growing crime, countries and governments must work together to find better ways to protect people and punish perpetrators (Jones et al., 2007).

An important step in fighting the slave trade is first to recognize the rights of every human being. In 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.... No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms” (1948, Article 1, 4). We have a responsibility to fight on the behalf of slaves and reestablish the rights they are living without.

Ending the modern day slave trade will not happen overnight. Fighting it will require determination and perseverance similar to what was demonstrated for abolishing the historic transcontinental slave trade. William Wilberforce was a British Member of Parliament who demonstrated leadership and courage by spending two decades fighting to abolish the slave trade in Britain. In 1787, Wilberforce began his attempt to pass a bill that would abolish the slave trade, and it was not until 1807 that the bill was enacted into law (Metaxas, 2007).

Today’s world is more connected and advanced than during the days of Wilberforce. We are able to work together and address global problems by raising awareness and by calling people to action. We must be determined, as a global community, to do what it takes to fight slavery and bring justice to the enslaved and punishment to the perpetrators. We must learn from the example of Wilberforce and continue the fight to end modern day slavery.

Human trafficking is a growing problem in our world today and has been enabled by the process of globalization. As the world gets more connected, traffickers have greater access to people and resources in all corners of the world. We may not visibly see slavery in our cities and neighborhoods, but people are enslaved in our own backyards. Once we are aware, we have a responsibility to act. Batstone (2007) argued:

There are times to read history, and there are times to make history. We live right now at one of those epic moments in the fight for human freedom. We no longer have to wonder how we might respond to our moment of truth. It is we who are on the stage, and we can change the winds of history with our actions. Future generations will look back and judge our choices and be inspired or disappointed. (p. 18)

We must fight to protect and restore the rights of those enslaved. We must bring to justice those that rob people of their rights and freedom. We must be determined to end the modern day slave trade.

The Faces of Sex Trafficking

All aspects of human trafficking are important to address, but we will specifically focus on global sex trafficking. Women and children are the main targets of sex trafficking. They are kidnapped, sold, or deceived into moving to other countries for jobs that do not exist (The A21 Campaign, 2010). They are raped, abused, and used to fulfill the sexual desires of men around the world. Malarek (2003) described:

They line the streets of the red-light districts in Austria, Italy, Belgium and Holland. They stock the brothels in South Korea, Bosnia and Japan. They work nude in massage parlors in Canada and England. They are locked up as sex slaves in apartments in the United Arab Emirates, Germany, Israel and Greece. They star in peep shows and seedy strip

clubs in the United States. To the casual observer, they blend in seamlessly with the women who have *chosen* to exchange money for sex. In their cheap makeup, sleazy outfits and stiletto heels, they walk the same walk and talk the same talk. They smile, they wink, they pose and they strut, but they do it because they know what will happen if they don't. (pp. 3-4)

Every girl forced into the sex trade is someone's daughter, sister, friend, or neighbor; they may be from Moldova, Nigeria, or the United States. They are not seen or treated as human beings, but as commodities to be bought and sold. It is an appalling truth, but unfortunately a reality in our world.

Personal Interest to Respond

Three years ago I heard about human trafficking, specifically sex trafficking for the first time. My brother had returned from a trip to India and was sharing about his experience. What impacted him the most was his exposure to the red light district in Mumbai. He saw the faces of girls and women enslaved, who were forced into prostitution. He also visited a center, outside the city, for girls and women who had been rescued. He saw joy on their faces and restored hope. He left India with a growing desire to join the fight against sex trafficking. As I heard him recount his experience, I was appalled. I knew prostitution existed, but I did not know children and women all over the world were being forced to sell their bodies for sex. I had no idea that I was living in a world where slavery still existed. In that moment, I knew I had to do something and felt God leading me to respond. I did not know specifics of that response, but I wanted to start by going to India to see what my brother had seen.

In the weeks that followed, I researched different opportunities to go to India, but nothing seemed like the right fit. I work at Northwest University and attend chapel services there. A

couple weeks after hearing my brother's story, Christian singer Natalie Grant was a guest in one of these services. She shared about her research into human trafficking and her discovery that slavery still existed. She then went to India and saw the same ugly truth my brother had seen. As Grant shared her experience, she also confirmed that sex trafficking was not confined to India, but was affecting every corner of the world. Grant knew she had to respond and use her platform as a Christian artist to spread awareness and convince others to join her in the fight against sex trafficking. Hearing Grant speak solidified my desire to act and presented me with an opportunity to do so.

Case Study: The Home Foundation

History and Mission

The Home Foundation is a non-profit charitable foundation, founded by Natalie Grant in 2005, following a trip to the red-light district in Mumbai, India. Grant was inspired to action and started the Home Foundation to raise awareness and join others in the fight against human trafficking. Her specific goal was "to help those who may not otherwise be helped" (The Home Foundation, 2009). The Home Foundation has joined with other organizations, including World Vision, Bombay Teen Challenge, International Justice Mission, A21 Campaign, Not for Sale Campaign, and Jubilee Campaign "to educate communities, build shelters and orphanages, and provide medical equipment to those ministering to the victims of trafficking" (The Home Foundation, 2009).

The Home Foundation is committed to education and action to fight against human trafficking. The Home Foundation's mission is "the eradication of human trafficking both domestically and abroad. Through advocacy, education and relief efforts, the Home Foundation is committed to end the suffering of women and children sold into sexual slavery" (The Home

Foundation, 2009). The Home Foundation continues to expand their work through education, partnership, and opportunities for service.

Internship Program

Purpose.

One aspect of the Home Foundation is the internship program. “The Home Foundation Internship Program is designed to help students and young adults become life long abolitionists. Through this program students experience the beauty of redemption through our international restoration homes” (The Home Foundation, 2009). The day Grant spoke in chapel at Northwest University, she introduced the first two Home Foundation interns, who were students at Northwest University. They would go to India to work with girls and women who had been rescued from sex trafficking and children who had been affected by this tragedy. I saw this as an opportunity to go to India. After several conversations, I was put in charge of the trip and would accompany the interns to India for the start of the program. This began my involvement with the Home Foundation and specifically the internship program.

Training.

I have been involved with training the Home Foundation interns since the beginning of the internship program. The current training program occurs over the course of one weekend, with various sessions to help the interns prepare for the culture they will be in and for the specific work they will be doing. The training provides useful information, but does not fully equip individuals for their internship. The Home Foundation recognizes the need for more thorough training, including an actual training manual that provides materials and tools for each intern.

Internship Partners

The Home Foundation currently partners with three international organizations for the internship program: Beginning of Life, Bombay Teen Challenge, and the A21 Campaign. Home Foundation interns are sent to each organization for four weeks to six months to work with girls and women who have been rescued or have escaped from sex trafficking. The following describes each partner organization, the country where they are located, and the intern job description.

Beginning of Life – Chisinau, Moldova.

Beginning of Life (BOL) was started informally in 1998 in Chisinau, Moldova by Vladimir and Yulia Ubeivolc. Gaining status as a foundation in 2000, they began their anti-trafficking work in 2006, and in 2008 received recognition as a socially useful organization from the Ministry of Justice in Moldova (BOL, 2010). The mission of BOL is “to restore God’s original intent for His creation, simultaneously transforming people physically and spiritually, and integrating them into society” (BOL, 2010). BOL has several different focuses, but the Home Foundation interns specifically work with the anti-trafficking program.

The country of Moldova is one of the poorest countries in all of Europe (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011). “More than 100,000 people are victims of human trafficking” and “More than 30,000 girls and women have disappeared without a trace” (BOL, 2010). The poverty of the country forces people to look for work elsewhere and as a result, girls and women become easy targets for traffickers. They get lured into jobs that lead them to enslavement. The 2010 TIP Report stated:

Moldova is a source and, to a lesser extent, a transit and destination country for women and girls subjected to trafficking in persons, specifically forced prostitution... Moldovan

women are subjected to forced prostitution in Turkey, Russia, Cyprus, Bulgaria, the UAE, Kosovo, Israel, Lebanon, Italy, Greece, Ukraine, and Romania. (U.S. Department of State, 2010, p. 236)

The Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report is an annual assessment of human trafficking in the countries of the world. Each country is ranked in one of three tiers: Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 2 Watch List, and Tier 3. “This placement is based more on the extent of government action to combat trafficking than on the size of the problem, although the latter is also an important factor” (U.S. Department of State, 2010, p. 20). Moldova is currently ranked on the Tier 2 Watch List for the second consecutive year because “The Government of Moldova does not fully comply with the minimum standards for elimination of trafficking” (U.S. Department of State, 2010, p. 236). Corruption still permeates government structures and many officials are involved in human trafficking in some capacity (BOL, 2010).

Beginning of Life runs a shelter for girls and women who have been rescued from trafficking and have returned home to Moldova. BOL helps them reintegrate into society through counseling and skills training. The organization provides a safe place for them to live and begin the recovery process. The Home Foundation interns are directly involved in the day to day operations of BOL, including work with the girls living in the shelter.

Bombay Teen Challenge – Mumbai, India.

Bombay Teen Challenge (BTC) was the first international partner of the Home Foundation. On Grant’s first trip to India she met with BTC’s founder, K.K. Devaraj and learned about the work he was doing for victims of sex trafficking.

Bombay Teen Challenge was started in 1990 in Mumbai. Since its inception, “It has evolved into an organization that: rescues and cares for sex slaves in the brothels of Mumbai,

cares for the children of sex slaves, juveniles roaming the streets, addicts and runaways” (BTC, 2010). BTC strives to provide holistic care by “meeting not only the physical needs, but the mental, emotional and spiritual needs as well” (BTC, 2010).

BTC’s work is both within the city of Mumbai and outside the city. The Home Foundation interns spend their internship at Ashagram, which means “village of hope”. Ashagram is a safe haven outside of Mumbai where “the women have an opportunity to start new lives in a protected environment of love, and receive education and job training in the hope that they can become productive members of society” (BTC, 2010). The interns live at Ashagram with the women and participate in their day to day activities. During my trip to India with the first two interns, I stayed at Ashagram and had a chance to see the work of BTC. I met girls and women who had been victims of trafficking. Instead of being sold for sex, they were getting an education and being trained in jewelry making, leather work, and tailoring. I saw joy on their faces as they sang and prayed during their morning prayer service. They had renewed hope because of the love they received from Devaraj and the other BTC staff.

Like Moldova, the TIP Report ranked India on the Tier 2 Watch List for the fifth consecutive year. The TIP Report explained:

India is a source, destination, and transit country for men, women, and children subjected to trafficking in persons, specifically forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation... Ninety percent of trafficking in India is internal, and those from India’s most disadvantaged social economic strata are particularly vulnerable to forced or bonded labor and sex trafficking... Women and girls are trafficked within the country for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation. (U.S. Department of State, 2010, p. 171)

India's Tier 2 Watch List rank is a result of its government's lack of effort in combating trafficking and punishing traffickers (U.S. Department of State, 2010). The Central Intelligence Agency (2011) explained that "a critical challenge overall is the lack of punishment for traffickers, effectively resulting in impunity for acts of human trafficking." Through the work of Bombay Teen Challenge, Devaraj is working hard to change the current response to trafficking in India and bring hope to those who have fallen prey to sexual exploitation.

The A21 Campaign – Thessaloniki, Greece.

The third international partner of the Home Foundation is the A21 Campaign. It began in 2007 with a passion to respond to human trafficking, and in 2008, the A21 Campaign opened its first shelter for victims of trafficking in Greece:

This shelter is located in a prime destination country in Europe, Greece – and we are now able to provide trafficked victims a safe, loving, and comforting environment, access to medical care and psychological assessment, vocational training, assistance in university education, life guidance/counseling, and access to legal assistance. (The A21 Campaign, n.d.)

Greece is ranked Tier 2 on the TIP Report, which indicated that "the Government of Greece does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so" (U.S. Department of State, 2010, p. 159). While this may be true, the A21 Campaign (n.d.) stated, "We work closely with police, hospitals and government officials, and are seeing justice being brought to new rescued victims each month." Kalli Mitelineos, the shelter coordinator in Greece, explained that "A21's job is to raise awareness and assist the victims of human trafficking by offering them a safe place to stay, legal assistance and hope for the future" (Personal Communication, March 14, 2011). The A21 Campaign is able to

be more effective in reaching out to girls and women that need help because of the assistance of other officials in the community.

The A21 Campaign also has a transition home for girls and women who are working on reintegrating into society. The Home Foundation intern lives in the transition home, works in the shelter, and is involved in the daily office operations. The A21 Campaign not only provides a safe place for girls and women to recover, but helps them reconnect with their families and return to their home country or begin a new life in Greece.

Personal Experience

I have had the opportunity to visit each of these internship sites and experience firsthand the work that Beginning of Life, Bombay Teen Challenge, and the A21 Campaign are doing to combat trafficking and to help those enslaved. Through my experience working closely with the interns and becoming familiar with the work of the Home Foundation's partners, I have seen the need for an intern training program that will better equip interns to make a positive contribution at each specific internship site.

I have been on a number of cross-cultural service trips and for each trip, whether it was for two weeks in Mexico or one month in Kenya or Canada, I was required to participate in pre-trip training. I had two to three days of training for the two-week trips and a full week of training for the month-long trips. The Home Foundation currently has two days of training scheduled for the six to eight week internships. The two-day training is intense, but not thorough enough for a cross-cultural internship. From my experience, it does not allow for detailed training and preparation.

From my experience it is impossible to be fully prepared for a cross-cultural experience; however, it is important to prepare as best as we can. Taking time to prepare shows respect for

the culture and its people. Lack of preparation can lead to mistakes that may negatively affect the cross-cultural relationships and the overall experience. The Home Foundation internship is still relatively new and each year that I have participated in the training, new elements have been added as we become aware of the gaps and needs. As the internship program grows and new countries are added, the Home Foundation has recognized the need to create a more structured and thorough training program in order to be more effective in partnering with organizations around the world. My hope is that what follows will not only benefit the Home Foundation interns, but any Christian who has a desire to join the fight against human trafficking.

Training

Training is an important piece in preparing to work with human trafficking victims to ensure awareness, understanding, and sensitivity to their needs. It can take different forms, whether through self-motivated learning or structured training sessions. From my personal experience, both forms of learning are important. Different areas of learning give us an overall perspective on working with human trafficking victims, both in and from another culture.

A Biblical Framework

We begin with a Biblical framework. This must guide all the work we do and the way we love and serve others. Ultimately, we want those who have suffered to experience the love and healing of Jesus and we must be examples of Jesus' love. This must always remain at the forefront of our minds. "A biblical framework provides a basis for a response to sex trafficking victims based on God as giver of life and purpose and on Christ's transformational love and power" (Grant, Kroeger, & Middleton, 2003, p. 91). There is nothing we can do to heal the victims we work with, but Jesus can use each one of us to show His love to them. He is the only one capable of bringing them healing and making them whole again.

It can be difficult to see similarities between ourselves and the victims we work with, but we must remember that we are all created in the image of God, no matter what our background or culture. Grant et al. (2003) described:

All life is created by God and stamped by His image (Genesis 1:27). That image has been marred but can be restored by the redemptive work of Jesus Christ and God's love (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 3:26). Each individual is unique in God's creation, endowed with God-given gifts and God-ordained purpose. As such, each man, woman, and child is equally deserving of love, respect, and dignity (Galatians 3:28-29). (p. 92)

This perspective allows us to define each person as an image bearer of God, rather than a victim. It will help us to be more open to love others as Christ loves each one of us.

We all need Jesus. Romans 3:23 states, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (ESV). We are all imperfect and need the new life that only Jesus can offer. "Jesus Christ demonstrated that He came to earth to bring healing and new life to the whole person – body, soul and spirit" (Grant et al., 2003, p. 93). To truly love and serve victims of human trafficking, we must have confidence in that truth. Once we know this truth, we can move into the other areas of working with trafficking victims.

Cultural Awareness and Understanding

When anyone prepares to work in a different country or culture, understanding is vital to their success. Cultural training is a key element to the Home Foundation's intern training; however, it is not thorough enough. One example is a training session I assisted with for an intern going to Moldova for two months. The training was several hours over the phone. The two of us conducting the training had never been to Moldova, so we had no cultural understanding. We were only able to provide limited information. The Home Foundation can never fully prepare

an intern for a cross-cultural experience, but they must make the effort to help an intern develop awareness and specific understanding of the culture they will be working in. This training will give the intern a good base of knowledge to engage with the culture and the survivors they work with on a daily basis.

Cultural differences not only occur from one country to another, but also within one's own country. "Generally, most of our culturally acquired knowledge and behaviors are unconscious. People are seldom aware of the cultural knowledge and behaviors they have acquired growing up" (Wang, 2002, Conclusion, para. 1). We must learn to recognize how our culture influences who we are and how we live.

Culture also influences each of us differently. My culture as a Caucasian American from Seattle may be much different than a Black American or even Caucasian American from the South. "Culture is richly layered for every individual, and even though people may come from the same country or be of the same race, their culture is often very different" (Engelsvold, 2003, p. 260). We must be aware that differences exist, even if we cannot identify the specific differences immediately. "The world is full of confrontations between people, groups, and nations who think, feel, and act differently" (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005, p. 2). Each of our lives are affected by culture and we must keep that in mind when preparing to work with trafficking survivors that come from various cultures and are often living outside their home countries.

Defining Culture.

We must define culture in order to begin to understand it. Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) defined culture as "*the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others*" (p. 4). Culture is not genetic, but is learned through our

social environment and defines our values and worldview. “Culture is the lens through which people see their world. Culture tells people the way they should think; what to believe about themselves, others and the world; and how to understand what they experience each day” (Engelsvold, 2003, p. 259). We are affected by culture from the day we are born. “Every person carries within him- or herself patterns of thinking, feeling, and potential acting that were learned throughout their lifetime” (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 2). Culture lies at the core of who we are, whether we recognize it or not. Wang (2002) described:

Culture is indeed an evasive and complex concept. It is evasive because we are surrounded by culture and we live deep in it; in a practical sense, culture is the air and water we breathe and drink day in and day out. (Culture & Communication, para.1)

Each of us is influenced by our culture. It affects how we dress, eat, and interact with each other. I have experienced cultural differences in each country I have visited and learned to adapt to fit into the cultural context during my stay. We must be aware of differences and have cultural sensitivity when we enter a culture unlike our own. We may not be able to understand other cultures as we do our own; however, learning about other cultures will help us be more aware and sensitive to the needs of those different from us.

Developing Cultural Awareness and Understanding.

We each see the world differently and may think that our culture is the right or normal way; therefore, it can be difficult to relate to those with a different cultural framework. “One should think twice before applying the norms of one person, group, or society on another” (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 6). One culture is not necessarily better than another, just different. Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) explained:

Everybody looks at the world from behind the windows of a cultural home, and everybody prefers to act as if people from other countries have something special about them (a national character) but home is normal. Unfortunately there is no normal position in cultural matters. (p. 363)

To develop cultural awareness, we must recognize that our culture does not define normal nor should it be the culture we measure other cultures against. We are often not aware of how ingrained our own cultures are and how they influence what we do. “It is often a significant challenge for us to be fully aware of our culturally acquired knowledge and behaviors because, in part, such knowledge and behaviors are generally perceived by people around us as ‘common,’ ‘natural,’ or ‘habitual’” (Wang, 2002, Introduction, para. 1). Developing this perspective will help us be culturally aware, both within our own country and in foreign countries.

When working with human trafficking survivors, it is imperative to have cultural awareness and sensitivity. Victims are often lured outside of their home countries by a relationship, a modeling contract, or the promise of a new job to help them support their family. Once they arrive in the destination country, the trafficker will confiscate their passports and travel documents (The A21 Campaign, 2010). They are in foreign countries, unable to speak the language, and are taken advantage of daily by those who have no understanding of who they are and where they come from. They may eventually learn the language of the country where they are, but they have no real chance to adapt to the culture they are in because they do not have freedom to engage the culture. They are under the control of their traffickers and may be in a facility that is heavily guarded (The A21 Campaign, 2010).

Home Foundation interns working in Greece may work with rescued victims that come from Romania, Moldova, or Libya. They do not necessarily need to have an understanding of

each culture, but they must be willing to put aside their own cultural preferences and have the patience to learn from those they are working with. “Learning about culture will allow every caregiver to work with individuals across the world in ways that appropriately show love and aid in the healing process” (Engelsvold, 2003, p. 259). The understanding they gain will make them more productive in their work and give them the ability to build relationships, which is ultimately the goal of the internship.

We can always be in a state of cultural awareness, but cultural understanding takes time to develop. “We must discipline ourselves to see the patterns of the new culture. Cultural understanding emerges slowly, over time” (Elmer, 2006, p. 128). We cannot understand a culture simply by meeting people from that culture or even spending a few days immersed in the culture. It takes time to learn, and one of the models that is particularly helpful in understanding how to approach cross-cultural learning is Elmer’s three-pronged approach to learning (2006). The model looks at how you can learn about, from, and with others.

We begin by learning about others. “Learning *about* others yields facts that help us adjust our expectations and generate fruitful avenues for deeper learning after entering the culture” (Elmer, 2006, p. 106). We can learn about other cultures in a number of different ways before we actually enter the culture. We can read books, study facts, and talk to others who have experience in the specific culture (Elmer, 2006). Mitelineos, the shelter coordinator for the A21 campaign suggested:

Study the country in which you will be working and also the surrounding countries (some victims may be trafficked from or through neighbouring countries). Ask the organization that you will be going to work with for some support and insight into which nationalities

the victims they help are from and also whether they have any reading material to help you prepare. (Personal Communication, March 14, 2011)

There are many resources available to learn about culture. We each have the responsibility to find the right tools to learn as much as we can.

I have helped to train the Home Foundation interns going to India. During training, I shared about my experience going to India and working with Bombay Teen Challenge. I gave details about culture shock, cultural differences, proper dress, the food I ate, personal expectations and boundaries, the Indian culture, and the specific culture of Ashagram where the interns live and volunteer. This allowed the interns to learn about the Indian culture and Bombay Teen Challenge through my personal experience. We also brought in past interns who shared about their day to day experiences during their internship, including the struggle of adjusting to a new culture. Hearing from those who have already experienced the culture is one way to begin learning about India and to prepare for the cultural differences.

When we learn about a culture, we must ensure that we do not assume we have a full understanding of the culture. “The major danger of learning about is that we may think, even unconsciously, that now we know the people of the culture” (Elmer, 2006, p. 94). Marianna Rombola was the Home Foundation’s most recent intern to Greece. She worked with the A21 Campaign and spent a lot of time working in the shelter with trafficking survivors. When asked how the interns can be culturally aware, Rombola responded:

Whilst it is impractical to have in depth cultural information on every single culture they may come in contact with in the shelter, an understanding of what their own culture is, that their own way of doing things is not the only way, and an acceptance that there are

going to be major differences in culture is key. (Personal Communication, February 14, 2011)

When we think we know a culture and its people definitely, we can hinder ourselves from further learning. Our initial exploration into a new culture must lead us to continue the learning process and devote time learning from a culture and its people.

The next form of learning is from others. “Learning *from* others yields understanding that moves us into strong, enduring and trusting relationships resistant to colonialistic attitudes and dependency” (Elmer, 2006, p. 106). We learn from others by spending time with them; we learn through conversations and by asking questions.

When I was in India, I would ask questions if I did not understand something or was unsure of the right way to approach a certain situation. When I was there, two Americans were on staff, so I was able to speak more honestly with them to make sure I understood different aspects of the culture. Some of the girls that lived at Ashagram spoke English, so I was also able to ask them questions. It was not always easy to ask questions because I did not want to look like I did not know what I was doing, but I found that when I did ask, people were willing to teach me and help me understand. It was more productive to learn from them than to try to figure it out on my own. “When we learn *from* someone, it is one of the great honors we bestow on them” (Elmer, 2006, p. 97). Learning from others within another culture takes us to a new level of understanding and is a way to show we value their perspective; it gives us a greater ability to connect with the culture we are in. “In addressing the needs of trafficking survivors, it is important to understand the values that survivors have developed and the influences that impact the way they perceive themselves, others, and their environment” (Engelsvold, 2003, p. 267).

Trafficking survivors have been through traumatic events that most of us cannot comprehend. Their cultural beliefs and perspectives dictate the way they view themselves as survivors.

I spent some time interviewing Alex Miller, who works with trafficking victims in Thailand. She commented, “Give yourself patience... You’ll have a number of different communication barriers. Give each other grace. Be in tune as much as you can; use listening skills as best as you can. Pay attention to whatever details you can” (Personal Communication, January 11, 2011). We must have patience to learn from each survivor how they view themselves and the world around them. As we learn from others, we must “Pray for the Holy Spirit’s discernment the whole time” (Miller, Personal Communication, January 11, 2011). We can observe and understand certain things on our own, but through the discernment of the Holy Spirit we can be more in-tune with the personal and cultural dynamics. As we begin to understand who the victims are and how they perceive the world, we can build effective relationships with them and hopefully find ways to contribute to their healing process.

The final form of learning is with others. “Learning *with* others yields authentic partnerships where each probes deeply the mind and heart of the other, bringing interdependent growth and culturally sensitive ministry” (Elmer, 2006, p. 106). Learning with others creates a partnership where we rely on each other for learning. It requires vulnerability and a willingness to be transparent. “A caregiver’s main responsibility is to demonstrate love and compassion through human relationship. Caregivers can only be valuable to survivors as those survivors learn to trust the caregivers and become willing to accept their help” (Engelsvold, 2003, p. 271). A relationship is built by investing time with each other and eventually, trust is built. We are only able to help if we understand each other. “By learning *from* and *with* each other, we sharpen our vision and practice in ways that could never happen alone. We need each other. Our

connected lives (and cultures) make us better people” (Elmer, 2006, p. 102). We must not let pride lead us to thinking we can learn all we need to know on our own. If we truly want to understand a culture, we must be willing to learn with others. This learning will lead to more authentic relationships and meaningful service.

The ultimate example of learning with others was Jesus (Elmer, 2006). He left His position in heaven and became a man on this earth, so that humankind could be restored to God. As Christians, we are called to imitate Jesus, humble ourselves, and experience life with others who are different from us. Elmer (2006) explained:

The Son of God entered human culture and learned about its bondage to sin and its inability to reconnect with its Creator apart from divine intervention. Unless we too connect deeply with the people of our host culture, we will neither see nor interpret their situation accurately: their pain, their values, their structures, their social limitations, their dreams, their ethos and pathos. (p. 104)

It is easy to assume we have something to offer those we are going to serve, but we cannot forget they have something to offer us. If we truly want to understand the people we are with, we must be willing to learn from and with them. I have found that at the end of a cross-cultural experience, I have learned far more than I was able to give. I leave the experience feeling humbled and enriched by all that I have learned through the relationships I have built.

Training Model

Developing cultural awareness and understanding is a vital part of training for those interested in working with trafficking victims, but it is not the only important component. Training individuals to specifically work with victims is equally as important. Without the proper training, mistakes may be made that are detrimental both for the participant and those receiving

care. Mistakes may still be made with training, but the likelihood is much less. This suggested training model will have four components, including pre-trip preparation, orientation, outreach trip, and debrief. There are two components that I believe should be included in training prior to the outreach trip – pre-trip preparation and orientation. I will also look at the importance of learning during the outreach trip. Finally, I will address the benefit of debriefing following the outreach trip. In the following sections I will describe each of the four components, share my perspective and personal experience, and specifically address how the Home Foundation can benefit from adopting each recommendation.

Pre-trip Preparation.

Training begins with pre-trip preparation. We can prepare in a number of ways through our own initiative. Many resources exist, including books, documentaries, articles, and reports that can provide valuable information and insight. In regards to the Home Foundation, I think it would be beneficial for the interns to have a required reading and viewing list they must complete prior to on-site training (see Appendix A). These books and videos will help educate people on human trafficking; and better education will lead to more effective work.

Individuals can also begin by using their day to day life to practice cultural awareness and sensitivity. They can read books to help them understand culture as a whole and specifically the cultures where they will serve. “As we consider entering another culture, the natural thing is to begin learning about the people of that culture” (Elmer, 2006, p. 93). It is important to find ways to learn, whether through reading books about the culture or talking to someone who has been or is from that culture. When the Home Foundation looks through internship applications, they look for individuals who demonstrate cultural understanding and experience. Understanding

takes time to cultivate, so it is important for people to already have a cultural foundation before they try to work with trafficking victims from and in another culture.

Individuals can also take time to read information that specifically addresses the issue of human trafficking. Mitelineos stated, “The best place to start is by researching what Human Trafficking is, the current situation and statistics” (Personal Communication, March 14, 2011). The problem may look different from country to country, but there must be an understanding of the issue as a whole. Individuals can also spend time learning about trafficking specifically in the country where they will be going. The *Trafficking in Persons* report, released by the United States Department of State annually, provides a profile on human trafficking for each country. This report provides the facts on the number of people trafficked, where they are trafficked from, and what the country is doing specifically to address the issue.

We can become educated about culture and human trafficking through a number of means and we must take personal initiative to do so. This will enable us to work more effectively with trafficking victims and contribute to their recovery process.

Self-motivated learning is important, but structured learning is also essential before working with trafficking victims. I will make the case for why orientation, outreach, and debriefing are each valuable, based on my personal short-term service experience.

Orientation.

Prior to an overseas trip to work with human trafficking, it is vital to have an orientation, specifically focused on preparing to work with trafficking victims and, if applicable, on the specific organization where one will be working. A key part of the orientation must include a spiritual component because that is the foundation for the work the Home Foundation does.

The Home Foundation currently has a one- or two-day training session for their interns going overseas for four weeks to six months. The interns going to India have been trained in person, whereas the interns going to Greece and Moldova have been trained via Skype or conference call. This training has prepared interns to a certain extent, but has not been as thorough as it should be. The first interns to India did not know what to prepare for and had to improvise once they arrived. The training has evolved and improved over the past three years of the internship program, but there is need for continued improvement.

I have been involved in short-term service trips over the past 16 years as both participant and leader. From 1995 through 2002 I was involved with an organization called Youth Mission International, now called Mennonite Brethren Mission and Service International (MBMSI). I participated in five, two-week trips to Mexico, California, and Canada, in a program called SOAR, as well as in two, one-month trips to Kenya and Canada in a program called ACTION. Each SOAR trip is 10 to 14 days and consists of two to three days of orientation prior to the five to seven day service assignment. Each ACTION trip is six weeks and has one week of orientation prior to the four-week assignment (MBMSI, 2011).

When I participated in the SOAR trips, our orientation was with all the church groups from Canada and the United States. We had morning and evening worship and speaking sessions all together and during the day had training specifically within our own teams. During the team training we would prepare lessons and activities for the children in Mexico we would work with, we would practice skits for church services and neighborhood outreaches, and we would clearly define what our specific mission was.

The ACTION orientation was similar to the SOAR orientation; however the teams consisted of people who had never met. On both of my ACTION trips I had a few days of leader

training before the team orientation. Each team went to a different country, so some of our individual team sessions were focused on learning about the specific culture we would be going to. Training did not stop after orientation, but orientation set the tone for the rest of the trip. It allowed us to prepare for the daily activities and become unified as a team as we learned together.

Specifically looking at the Home Foundation internship program, it is apparent that the training structure needs improvement. From my experience, a two-day training session or conference call does not fully equip an intern for a cross-cultural experience or for working with trafficking victims. The existing training does not need to be discarded, but rather, built upon. A model similar to what I experienced in preparation for my ACTION trips would work well for the Home Foundation internship program.

When the Home Foundation first started the internship program, they sent two interns to India. Training was specifically focused on training those two interns. However, the training program has expanded and now includes interns going to Greece and Moldova and possibly more countries in the near future. It would be more efficient and effective for the Home Foundation to conduct an intern training for all of the interns at one time. Two days of training does not provide enough opportunity to learn and process, especially when preparing for a four week to six month internship. Based on my previous training experience, I would recommend five to seven days of training, including group sessions focused on human trafficking and cultural awareness, and individual sessions focused on the specific country each intern is assigned to. This type of training would allow them to make specific preparations for the work they will be doing in that country and with the organization they will be partnering with. It is important for the interns to be trained by people who are experts on the issue of human

trafficking, have experience in the countries they are going to, and are connected to the organizations they will be working with.

The internship training would also allow for specific opportunities for interns to put knowledge into action. One of the things we did during our SOAR orientation was hold an afternoon carnival in a neighborhood nearby. This would allow us to practice working with kids, to perform our skits, and to share the gospel. During ACTION we participated in an “urban plunge.” We would go into the closest big city and break into teams of two or three. We were given a certain amount of money that we could choose to use on ourselves for dinner or find a way to help someone we came across in the city. In my experience during the urban plunge, we took out a homeless person for dinner. We would spend time talking and eating with them, which was a way for us to step outside of our comfort zone and meet a practical need of someone in the city. This was a cross-cultural experience because we were interacting with someone different from ourselves. We were within our own culture, but trying to see it differently than we normally would.

An orientation is pertinent for the Home Foundation internship program and for any team going overseas to work with trafficking victims. An effective orientation can: give interns a thorough understanding of the partner organization’s specific work and deeper awareness of the culture they will be in; prepare the intern to be an effective participant in the work the partner organization is doing; teach the interns how to properly approach their work with the trafficking victims; and give them the proper tools for the work.

Outreach Trip.

Each day of the outreach trip is a chance for the intern to put what they have learned into practice and demonstrate Christ’s love through their actions. As I have seen and experienced, no

amount of training will ever fully prepare someone for the experience he/she will have. One of the main things to remember each day is to be flexible. I have realized this on each of my service trip experiences, including my trip to India with the Home Foundation. Rombola (2011) commented, “Be flexible and ready to adapt quickly... Keep your focus on one day at a time” (Personal Communication, February 14, 2011). Mitelineos agreed and stated, “Be flexible in everything you do – due to the emotional state of the victims, things can change very quickly and it’s important to be flexible around that change” (Personal Communication, March 14, 2011). Trip preparation is important, but it is also important to hold on to expectations loosely.

It is important to go into the experience expecting to learn; if we do not, we will miss out on so many rich experiences. I had expectations for each of my cross-cultural trips, but found the experience to be different than what I had anticipated. The people we can learn the most from are those we are working with – the trafficking victims themselves. We cannot come into the situation looking at everything through our own worldview; we must be willing to learn how the victims perceive themselves and the world around them. “Be aware that the things that are normal to you may not be normal to them... some of these victims come from very different and difficult backgrounds and cultures. Don’t assume anything” (Mitelineos, Personal Communication, March 14, 2011). We can also learn through each experience and, at times, through our mistakes.

We must also be extremely patient. Our cultural understanding will be tested and we will be working with individuals who have experienced horrific situations we can never understand.

Mitelineos commented:

A great deal of patience and understanding is required – when you are dealing with broken and hurting people that come from different countries and cultures, think

differently, behave differently and don't speak your language, it can be frustrating, tiring and your patience will be tested without a doubt. (Personal Communication, March 14, 2011)

We must continually remind ourselves that the outreach experience is different than our everyday lives and that we are spending time with those who are struggling to find healing from their past. When we are willing to be patient, we will have more grace for ourselves and those we are working with.

Overall, we must remember that we are called to love and serve each person we come in contact with. Mitelineos explained:

Treat each victim as an individual – each person and case is unique. By treating the victim as an individual that matters and counts and perhaps finding a way of relating to some of their normal interests (i.e. music, dancing, fashion etc.) is a good way to relate to them without it being about their past and it gives a common ground to both sides.

(Personal Communication, March 14, 2011)

That recognition must constantly be at the forefront of our minds. If we lose sight of it, we fail in the work we are doing. Each day of the outreach will hold new challenges and experiences and will give us a new opportunity to love each trafficking victim.

Debrief.

An important element of the whole experience is a time to debrief after the outreach. During my SOAR experience, all of the teams would come back together for one or two days of debriefing, and following each ACTION trip we had one week of debriefing. This time was designed for individual and team closure, as well preparation to return home (MBMSI, 2011). It was also a time for teams to share about their experience with the whole group. I found this

experience particularly beneficial after my one month trip to Kenya. The trip was unusually intense, failing to meet expectations, and challenging in a number of ways. No one else could understand the experience we had. The debrief period allowed us to process our trip and gain new perspective once we were removed from the experience and before we returned to our respective homes.

Debriefing allows individuals to process their experience and to have a time to receive counseling – an element the Home Foundation is currently considering for their interns upon return from their service. Not every person may need this counsel, but it may prove to be beneficial after working with victims who have been deeply traumatized. Working through the mental and emotional stress we may be experiencing is an important part of our ability to share and to continue to respond.

Currently, the Home Foundation has no debriefing time for their interns. Interns go straight home after their season of service, which is an abrupt way to end an intense experience. Debriefing allows for a smoother transition because there is time to process the experience before resuming “normal” life. This is also an important time for each intern to evaluate the trip and present both positive and negative feedback. This time will not only allow the interns to process their experience, but will help the Home Foundation improve the internship program in the future.

Along with important reflection time, debriefing can also be a great way to educate the interns on how to stay involved in the fight against human trafficking in their home cities. The internship is not meant to provide a one-time experience, but the goal is to develop lifelong abolitionists. The Home Foundation could provide a guide that includes useful tools to stay engaged in the issue.

To have a successful internship program or outreach, components must be in place to prepare each individual to work in another culture with victims of human trafficking. Each of us must each take initiative to educate ourselves about the issues, and to be taught how best to serve those who have suffered. Working with trafficking victims is not something we can take lightly and it is our responsibility to do our part to be as prepared as we can.

Conclusion

Human trafficking is a prominent issue around the globe. Many are responding to it and fighting for the victims who are suffering. The Home Foundation is one example of an organization working toward eradication of human trafficking. The individuals at the Home Foundation are finding a way to inspire others to join the efforts through the internship program. The intern training program is in need of growth to better equip each intern they send overseas. The pre-trip preparation, orientation, outreach, and debrief model does not just benefit the Home Foundation, but can benefit others wanting to respond to the call to action. Our response is important, but we must be prepared to respond. We cannot go in blindly, expecting to have good results. We must learn as much about human trafficking as we can. We must cultivate cultural awareness and understanding. And we must remember that our ultimate goal is to love and serve others.

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Appendix A

Recommended Reading and Viewing List

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