



UNITED STATES MISSION
TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
IN GENEVA

July 16, 2015

Ms. Maud de Boer-Buquicchio
Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography
Geneva, Switzerland

Dear Ms. de Boer-Buquicchio:

Thank you again for the questionnaire dated March 31, 2015 regarding assistance and rehabilitation programs to child victims of sale and exploitation, including sexual exploitation. As noted in the earlier response we sent to you in May, we forwarded your letter to relevant authorities within the U.S. government for response. Please see below for the answers to your questions.

1. Provide information on the legal, policy, institutional and budgetary framework developed by your country to establish assistance and rehabilitation programmes for child victims of sale and exploitation, including sexual exploitation.

The United States protects child victims of sale and exploitation, including sexual exploitation, through numerous federal departments and agencies, including the Department of State (DOS), Department of Justice (DOJ), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). More details are contained within the answers to the questions below.

The United States protects child victims of sale and exploitation, including sexual exploitation, through numerous federal laws including:

- **Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment and Adoption Reform Act of 1977:** Amends the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act to provide for the dissemination of annual summaries of research on child abuse and neglect, and training materials on the prevention, identification, and treatment of child abuse and neglect.
- **Victims of Crime Act of 1984:** Establishes the Crime Victims Fund. The Fund is used to support victims of all types of crime, primarily through grants to the states that provide services for victims and compensation for certain statutorily identified crime-related expenses.
- **Child Sexual Abuse and Pornography Act of 1986:** Amends the federal criminal code, including provisions that protect children from predators; protects children from child pornography; seeks to prevent sexual abuse; prohibits transfer of obscene material to minors; increases penalties for offenses against children and for repeat offenders; and makes criminal, procedural, and administrative reforms.
- **Protection of Children from Sexual Predators Act of 1998:** Amends the federal criminal code to prohibit, and set penalties for, using the mail or any facility or means

of interstate or foreign commerce to knowingly initiate the transmission of certain information of a person under age 16 with intent to entice, encourage, offer, or solicit any person to engage in illegal sexual activity.

- **Missing, Exploited, and Runaway Children Protection Act of 1999:** Amends a previously existing law, the Missing Children's Assistance Act, to provide for annual grants to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children; authorizes the Secretary of Health and Human Services to make grants to provide services for runaway and homeless youth and their families, including providing street-based services to those who have been subjected to or are at risk of sexual abuse, prostitution, or sexual exploitation.
- **The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2003, the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2005, the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008, and the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2013 (Title XII of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013)** provide the tools to combat trafficking in persons both worldwide and domestically. The Acts authorize the establishment of the Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. They require the President to establish an Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking to coordinate federal anti-trafficking activities, including victim protection, trafficking prevention, public awareness, and non-governmental consultation efforts. Among many other provisions, the Acts expand benefits and services to victims of trafficking in the United States without regard to immigration status of victims, create a non-immigrant status for certain victims of trafficking and their immediate family members, and provide services to assist potential trafficking victims and minor dependent children of trafficking victims. The Acts direct the President to provide grants to foreign non-governmental organizations that provide for transit shelters operating at key border crossings; establish programs to increase awareness on the dangers of trafficking; and develop and disseminate materials to alert travelers that sex tourism is illegal and will be prosecuted. They also provide anti-trafficking assistance to foreign countries for investigations of individuals and entities involved in sexual exploitation and establish an assistance program for U.S. citizen and lawful permanent resident victims of trafficking.
- **Prosecutorial Remedies and Other Tools to end the Exploitation of Children Today (PROTECT) Act of 2003:** Amends the federal criminal code related to sexual violence offenses against children to include eliminating the requirement to prove intent of the child sex tourist, and authorizes activities which respond to those crimes.
- **Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006:** Establishes a comprehensive national system for the registration of sex offenders and offenders against children, seeks to protect children from sexual attacks and other violent crimes, seeks to prevent child pornography, and awards grants for mentoring programs, among other provisions.
- **Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005:** Amends the Violence Against Women Act of 1994, including by authorizing the provision of access to legal services for certain undocumented persons who are

victims of sexual assault or trafficking; training law enforcement to protect victims of sex trafficking; and awarding grants addressing adult and youth domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or trafficking.

- **Protecting Our Children Comes First Act of 2007:** Amends the Missing Children's Assistance Act to provide for support for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to establish programs to identify victims of child pornography and other sexual crimes; prevent child abduction and sexual exploitation; and enhance internet safety.
- **Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013:** Amends the Violence Against Women Act of 1994, the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, and the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968. Changes include providing for grants to Indian tribal governments to address the needs of youth who are victims of, or exposed to, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, sex trafficking, or stalking; adding provisions aimed at preventing child marriage; and providing for the appointment of child advocates at immigration detention sites to advocate for trafficking victims and vulnerable unaccompanied children.
- **Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014:** Requires the development of policies and procedures for identifying, documenting, and determining appropriate services to any child or youth within the state agency's care who is at risk of being or is a victim of sex trafficking or a severe form of trafficking in persons.

Other relevant federal policies include, but are not limited to, the Attorney General Guidelines for Victims and Witness Assistance, the Violence Against Women's Act of 1994, and the Crime Victims Rights Act of 2004.

2. *Based on your experience, what elements are necessary for a comprehensive and rights-based care and recovery system of child victims of sale and exploitation, including sexual exploitation?*

The U.S. government recently developed the first-ever government-wide strategic action plan to strengthen services for trafficking victims. In the *Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services to Victims of Trafficking in the United States, 2013-2017*, the U.S. government outlines seven core values that inform federal anti-trafficking activities:

- Victims of human trafficking play a key role in elevating understanding and awareness of human trafficking, improving service delivery, and informing policy. Meaningful engagement with victims in all aspects of program development, implementation, and evaluation is critical to developing effective service networks.
- Services should be accessible for all trafficking victims, regardless of race, color, national origin, disability, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, immigration status, or type of trafficking.
- Victim services should promote safety, healing, justice, and rights for victims, and should empower them to participate in efforts to bring traffickers to justice.
- Public awareness and understanding of human trafficking at federal, state, territorial,

tribal, and local levels are needed to improve victim identification and access to services.

- Anti-trafficking efforts should be victim-centered and culturally relevant, holistic, comprehensive, evidence-based, gender-responsive, and trauma-informed.
- All those who engage with victims must acknowledge and respect an individual's experience of victimization and capacity to move beyond victimization.
- Services for long-term needs, in addition to services that address immediate and emergency needs, are critical. Victims should be provided with tools and opportunities for financial stability that will support their long-term independence.

A **Department of Justice**-funded report, *Confronting Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Minors in the United States*, outlined guiding principles as an essential foundation for understanding and responding to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors:

- Commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors should be understood as acts of abuse and violence against children and adolescents.
- Minors who are commercially sexually exploited or trafficked for sexual purposes should not be considered criminals.
- Identification of victims and survivors and any intervention, above all, should do no further harm to any child or adolescent.

The *Report of the Attorney General's National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence* recognizes exposure to violence as a national crisis affecting approximately two out of every three children in the United States. Task Force recommendations addressed overall objectives to end the epidemic of children exposed to violence, identify children exposed to violence, provide treatment and healing of exposure to violence, create safe and nurturing homes, equip communities to rise out of violence, and rethink the juvenile justice system.

The **Department of Health and Human Services** Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Children's Bureau issued *Making Meaningful Connections: 2015 Prevention Resource Guide*, which promotes a focus on well-being to be integrated into all aspects of child welfare services to reduce risks and increase safety and protective factors against child abuse and maltreatment. The Children's Bureau Information Memorandum, *Promoting Social and Emotional Well-Being for Children and Youth Receiving Child Welfare Services*, describes the well-being framework. In addition to fostering child well-being, the Children's Bureau works to strengthen families, supports positive youth development, and promotes permanent homes for children. In the *Surgeon General's National Prevention Strategy*, HHS recognizes that witnessing or being a victim of violence (e.g., child maltreatment, youth violence, intimate partner and sexual violence, bullying) are linked to lifelong negative physical, emotional, and social consequences.

ACF's Family and Youth Services Bureau, Division of Family Violence Prevention and Services grantee, the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, updated their Runaway and Homeless Youth Relationship Violence toolkit to include resources and information on domestic minor sex trafficking, including definitions, dynamics, challenges to

service provision, effective service strategies, and a list of additional resources to support service providers work with children and youth who are sexually exploited. (See <http://www.nrcdv.org/rhydvtoolkit/critical-issues.>)

3. *Provide examples of good practices and successful initiatives of assistance and rehabilitation programmes which facilitate the rehabilitation and reintegration of child victims of sale and exploitation, including sexual exploitation.*

The **Department of Homeland Security** applies a victim-centered approach when investigating human trafficking, child sex tourism, child pornography, and other exploitation-based crimes. Investigators work in concert with victim specialists to help victims and refer them to victim service providers when necessary. Best practices include the assessment of the victim's immediate needs, use of specially trained victim sensitive interviewers or forensic interviewers, and close coordination and referral to non-governmental partners for social service and legal assistance. Additional examples of best practices during the investigation and throughout the judicial process include: 1) keeping the victim informed on the status of his or her investigation; 2) possible provision of immigration protection; 3) on-going threat assessments for the victim and for families; and 4) continued coordination with nongovernmental service providers for on-going assistance. Threat assessments and safety concerns for the victim evolve over the course of the investigation and prosecution. Such threat assessments are available for victims, witnesses, and their families, if needed.

The **Department of Justice's** Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), provides culturally competent and trauma-informed services for victims of human trafficking through organizations funded under the OVC Services for Victims of Human Trafficking Program. Within this grant program, grantees provide services using a comprehensive service model, or they provide specialized services for trafficking victims identified within a specific geographic area. Under the comprehensive services model, grantee organizations provide a comprehensive array of services, including intensive case management, medical care, dental care, mental health treatment, sustenance and shelter, translation/interpretation services, legal/immigration assistance, transportation, and other services. Some grantees within this program provide direct services in specific service settings or to specific sub-groups of trafficking victims, including youth.

Through the 2010 **Domestic Minor Victims of Human Trafficking Demonstration Project**, OVC provided funding to implement a comprehensive strategy for serving trafficking victims under age 18 who are U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents. This strategy includes identifying promising practices for providing services to young victims of forced labor or sex trafficking, including commercial sexual exploitation. In January 2015, an evaluation of this program was released, providing insights that can be used in program development and organization. (See this link for the evaluation: <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/248578.pdf>.)

OVC also funds State Compensation and Assistance Programs. Child abuse is an ongoing priority service area for OVC's State Compensation Funds and Assistance Programs. These Funds and Programs are sub-grants to service providers, and are administered by the 50 U.S.

states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories. They provide direct financial compensation and direct services to child victims and their families as well as support to adults who experienced child abuse (and disclosed this as an adult). Efforts are now underway to expand the guidance to U.S. states on how they can expend their funding to more comprehensively support all crime victims, including children and youth who experience victimization and/or are exposed to violence (including victims of child pornography, commercial sexual exploitation, sex trafficking, and exposure to other forms of violence).

Two major grant programs at OVC address child exploitation, child abuse, and neglect issues for tribal nations. Children's Justice Act (CJA) grants provide funds for tribes to enhance their investigation and prosecution of child abuse and exploitation cases, as well as provide funding for Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) and victim services. Comprehensive Tribal Victim Assistance (CTVA) grants provide funding for victims service activities for tribes that span a wider range but include services to child exploitation victims.

The **Department of Health and Human Services** Administration for Children and Families funds many community-based programs assisting victims of sale and exploitation, including sexual exploitation:

- The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) provides individuals with the opportunity to maximize their potential in the United States. The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Program identifies and serves victims of human trafficking through grants and assists foreign trafficking victims in the United States to become eligible for public benefits and services to the same extent as refugees. ORR also raises awareness and builds capacity through grants to local organizations and a toll-free national hotline.
- The Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) promotes safety, stability, and well-being for people who have experienced or been exposed to violence, neglect, or trauma. FYSB supports programs that provide shelter, community services, and prevention education through the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program, Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program, and the Family Violence Prevention and Services Program.
- The Children's Bureau partners with federal, state, tribal, and local agencies to improve the overall health and well-being of our nation's children and families, including the Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, which provides leadership and direction on issues of child maltreatment and the prevention of abuse and neglect.
- FYSB's Division of Family Violence Prevention and Services grantee, the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, has recently updated its Runaway and Homeless Youth Relationship Violence toolkit to include resources and information on domestic minor sex trafficking, including definitions, dynamics, challenges to service provision, effective service strategies, and a list of additional resources to support service providers work with children and youth who are sexually exploited. (See <http://www.nrcdv.org/rhydvt toolkit/critical-issues>.)

4. *Describe the challenges that your country has identified in the establishment and management of assistance and rehabilitation programmes for child victims of sale and*

exploitation, including sexual exploitation.

The *Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services to Victims of Human Trafficking in the United States* outlines areas for improvement in strengthening the federal victim service response. Stakeholders identified a lack of consistent guidance from the federal government as a barrier to coordinated service provision, including differences in how human trafficking is defined and described among the various federal agencies; confusion when working with agencies that have different or overlapping authorities; a lengthy and complicated process for connecting victims to services; and a lack of standards for victim services.

Other areas for improvement include expanding data collection, research efforts, and evidence-based practice; enhancing understanding and awareness; overcoming resource constraints and limitations in access to services; and improving coordination between federal, state, local, and tribal governments and nongovernmental organizations as needed.

Upon recovery of a minor victim of sex trafficking, securing safe and secure housing is often one of the most difficult tasks that professionals face. Placement in traditional settings such as foster care can be harmful to not only the survivor, but it may place the family and the other children already in the home at risk if there are ongoing safety concerns related to the trafficking situation. In addition to safety issues, often the survivor will initially run from unsecured placements. This has also been seen to occur when minors are placed in other unsecured placements, such as runaway shelters or drug rehabilitation facilities

Another ongoing challenge is to prevent the criminalization of child victims of sex trafficking. While the United States' position is that governments should not arrest, detain, or prosecute trafficking victims for acts performed as a result of being trafficked, the federal government recognizes that the criminalization of child victims of sex trafficking regrettably still occurs in the United States, especially at the state and local level.

5. *How do you ensure that the views and needs of children are duly taken into account in the design and provision of care and recovery services?*

The **Department of Homeland Security** (DHS), through U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), combats trafficking through victim-centered investigations, partnerships, capacity building, and outreach, including the Blue Campaign, which is the unified voice for DHS's efforts to combat human trafficking. Victims and their well-being are critical to successful prosecutions of those responsible for human trafficking. HSI's comprehensive, victim-centered strategy allows the victim to tell his or her story in his or her own words while also providing assistance to the victim and aggressively investigating the trafficker. Forensic Interview Specialists are available to support investigations and interview victims, as needed. If needed, Forensic Interview Specialists offer case consultation and coordination services and deploy around the world conducting forensic interviews with the goal of ensuring victims are treated fairly, with dignity, and that victims have access to the rights and services to which they are entitled by law. Additionally, HSI's Victim Assistance Specialists provide timely information regarding investigations and prosecutions, facilitate access to services and local resources, provide case

management, and foster cooperation by building trust, rapport, and stability. This support is crucial for victims in order for them to participate actively and fully in the criminal justice system process.

On January 14, 2014, the Department of Justice OVC held the Human Trafficking Survivor Forum and Listening Session in Washington, D.C., to hear from survivors on effective, strategic, and meaningful ways to incorporate survivor voices and perspectives in technical assistance, training, and outreach; programming for serving survivors; and research and evaluation. Nineteen survivors from diverse areas of the United States and types of trafficking participated, with over 30 federal agency representatives as listeners. A number of these survivors were children at the time of their exploitation. Topics included challenges in victim identification, working with law enforcement, providing effective victim services, and reaching underrepresented survivor populations. The Forum launched a platform for sustained engagement and dialogue between the federal government's human trafficking efforts and survivors that is key to creating and maintaining a victim-centered approach.

The **Department of Health and Human Services** ORR's Division of Children's Services (DCS) provides care and placement for children who come into the United States from other countries without an adult guardian. DCS treats all children in its custody with dignity, respect, and special concern for individual needs, and considers the best interests of the child in all placement decisions.

6. How do you ensure access of child victims to support services?

To assist trafficking victims in the United States, the U.S. government has developed the first-ever government-wide strategic action plan to strengthen services for trafficking victims, which is comprehensive, action-oriented, and designed to address the needs of all victims, including children.

The **Department of Homeland Security** (DHS) ICE has 25 full-time Victim Assistance Specialists in local investigative offices and more than 250 special agents, who have the collateral duty as Victim Assistance Coordinators. They work to ensure that potential human trafficking victims are rescued, transferred to safe locations, and provided, as appropriate, shelter, social services, legal advocacy, short-term immigration benefits known as Continued Presence, long-term immigration benefits, including T and U nonimmigrant visas, case management, and other services.

DHS U.S. Citizen and Immigration Service Asylum (USCIS) Officers receive training on international and domestic laws regarding trafficking, common forms of human trafficking, rights and immigration relief from deportation for victims, identifying red flags in the context of interviewing asylum applicants and adjudicating applications for asylum, and what Asylum Officers should do if they suspect that an asylum applicant, whether a child or an adult, has been or is being trafficked. Each Asylum Office has designated a human trafficking point of contact, each of whom has established communications with his or her local ICE Special Agent in Charge (SAC) trafficking points of contact and local ICE Victim Assistance Coordinators in order to establish referral and information-sharing mechanisms on

human trafficking-related cases so that ICE can investigate. Asylum Officers also notify the Office of Refugee Resettlement of the Department of Health and Human Services when they encounter an asylum applicant under 18 years of age whom they discover may be a victim of a severe form of trafficking in persons so that HHS can provide interim assistance to any such individual.

In addition, the DHS Blue Campaign and the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center conduct training for law enforcement officials that emphasizes the importance of a victim-centered approach in law enforcement investigations of child victims of human trafficking and other crimes.

To improve access to services at the state level, the **Department of Justice** OVC currently funds a state demonstration initiative, called Linking Systems of Care for Children and Youth, with a concurrent evaluation supported through the National Institute of Justice (NIJ). This initiative aims to ensure that every child entering any of the relevant systems is assessed for victimization (including exploitation and trafficking), that children and their families are provided comprehensive and coordinated services to fully address their needs, and that practices and policies are established to sustain this approach long term.

Each of the 93 U.S. Attorneys' offices has a victim assistance program, with over 240 Victim-Witness personnel nationwide. The U.S. Attorneys' offices' Victim-Witness personnel are trained to assess victims' needs and make appropriate service referrals; they also attempt to coordinate their efforts with the Victim Assistance Specialists/Victim Witness Coordinators at the relevant law enforcement agencies. Particularly vulnerable victims (e.g., children) and victims of specific types of crimes (e.g., human trafficking and sexual assault) receive a number of additional services aimed at addressing their unique and challenging needs. Also, each U.S. Attorney's office is congressionally mandated to participate or lead a human trafficking task force. The majority of these task forces work with victim service providers in coordinating referrals for services for human trafficking victims.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation has over 130 Victim Specialists throughout the United States who work alongside trained Agents and Child Adolescent Forensic Interviewers. These interviewers work with victims of sexual exploitation to ensure they are notified of their rights and work with state and local agencies to provide support services.

The **Department of Health and Human Services** FYSB's Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Program provides street-based and emergency shelter services to children and youth who are at risk of being trafficked or who have already been exploited or trafficked. Principal among the provisions are screening and assessment protocols to determine the most appropriate services and placement option for the child. In addition to the screening process, youth are actively consulted in their own case planning and have an active voice in the decision-making process.

As a result of the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act of 2014, child welfare agencies in U.S. states are building capacity to improve identification, screening, and

service provision for trafficking victims, and improve accurate reporting of trafficking victims and children missing from foster care.

FYSB's RHY program funds more than 300 organizations nationally, providing support and services to children and youth who have become homeless or who leave and remain away from home without parental permission. These children and youth are disproportionately at risk of becoming victims or have already been victimized. They lack sufficient resources to obtain care and may live on the street for extended periods, which can put them in danger, unable to achieve stable, safe living arrangements. Many are urgently in need of shelter and a full array of services, including victim support services. FYSB provides the RHY programs with training and technical assistance resources to build capacity to provide comprehensive and coordinated services that are trauma-informed and focused on the needs of the individual child.

7. *How do you ensure the adoption of a gender perspective in the establishment and management of the assistance and rehabilitation programmes? Do the programmes provide gender-specific measures for the care and recovery of boys and girls?*

Internationally, the **Department of State** (DOS) works to improve protections for trafficking victims, and increase accountability of trafficking offenders through its efforts to combat human trafficking around the world, including through efforts by the DOS Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP office).

Domestically, federal departments and agencies support gender-responsive initiatives as part of one of the seven principles guiding the *Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services to Victims of Human Trafficking in the United States*.

The **Department of Homeland Security** CBP provides prevention and intervention programs specific to gender identification and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transexual, and Intersex (LGBTI) issues of those in its custody. CBP issued its Policy on Zero Tolerance (ZTP) of Sexual Abuse and Assault. The CBP operational offices' protocols state that searches or physical examinations of a detainee conducted for the sole purpose of determining the detainee's gender are prohibited. If the detainee's gender is unknown, it may be determined during conversations with the detainee, by reviewing medical records (if available), or if necessary, learning that information as part of a broader medical examination conducted in private, by a medical practitioner. Cross-gender strip searches or cross-gender visual body cavity searches shall not be conducted except in exigent circumstances, including consideration of officer safety, or when performed by medical practitioners. CBP officers shall not conduct visual body cavity searches of juveniles and, instead, shall refer all such body cavity searches of juveniles to a medical practitioner. All strip searches and visual body cavity searches shall be documented in accordance with existing CBP policy.

The **Department of Justice** OVC's grantees are required to provide victim-centered services and many provide gender-specific programming. OVC is working to support development of specialized services for boys and men, as well as programs for LGBTI persons to ensure that their needs are met and that they are appropriately identified as victims.

The **Department of Health and Human Services** addresses gender-based violence through multiple operating divisions. The Health and Human Services ACF *Guidance to States and Services on Addressing Human Trafficking of Children and Youth in the United States* recognizes that boys are under-recognized as victims of sex trafficking and LGBTI youth can be up to five times more likely than heterosexual youth to be victims of trafficking. The HHS-funded National Human Trafficking Resource Center received calls referencing 5,042 cases of human trafficking in 2014, where 14 percent of victims were male in cases where gender was known. As an example of strengthening services for male victims of exploitation, HHS ACF awarded a grant to an organization working with young American Indian men aged 16 to 21 who are at high risk for involvement in commercial sexual exploitation.

A HHS-funded report, *Human Services for Low-Income and At-Risk LGBT Populations: The Knowledge Base and Research Needs*, found that LGBTI youth may experience barriers to social service access related to insufficient provider expertise in serving LGBTI youth, lack of LGBTI-specific resources, and discrimination. Other studies have found that LGBTI youth are disproportionately represented in runaway and homeless youth programs and child welfare systems. In a 2012 survey of 354 runaway and homeless youth agencies, approximately 40 percent of programs reported that their clients identified as LGBTI and 42 percent of those clients had a history of sexual exploitation. Similar findings were noted in another HHS-funded report of more than 650 street youth from around the country, *Street Outreach Program Data Collection Project - Executive Summary*, with nearly 37 percent of respondents identifying as LGBTI and 60 percent reporting some form of victimization, to include sexual assault, being beaten up, or robbery.

In other efforts, FYSB is working to develop a blueprint of LGBTI-focused services for runaway and homeless youth in order to build capacity to better serve their specific needs. The project, when complete in 2016, will conduct a systematic review of existing literature; develop a comprehensive needs assessment of LGBTI youth; and identify and analyze screening and assessment tools, existing and emerging practices and interventions, and trainings for RHY providers.

HHS Children's Bureau funded the Recognize, Intervene, Support, and Empower (RISE) project to address barriers to existing foster care to permanency experienced by LGBTI youth. The RISE report indicates that LGBTI youth are over-represented in the foster care system, with approximately one in five youth in the Los Angeles County foster care system identifying as LGBTI. Many of these youth report feeling unsafe in their placements and higher rates of emotional distress. The HHS *Recommended Actions to Improve the Health and Well-Being of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Communities* outlines steps the department is taking to address service gaps, including actions to continue to address discrimination, harassment, and violence against all individuals, including LGBTI individuals through domestic violence and other violence prevention programs.

8. *Provide information on prevention programmes developed by your country with a specific focus on children at risk or in vulnerable situations (e.g., children working*

and/or living on the street, children placed in institutions, unaccompanied migrant children)?

The U.S. government continues to prepare educational materials about trafficking. In January 2015, it published a guide for educators and school staff about the indicators of possible human trafficking and how to address and prevent child exploitation. In addition, it hands out more than one million informational “Know Your Rights” pamphlets each year to temporary workers and students who apply for U.S. nonimmigrant visas, which describe rights and protections.

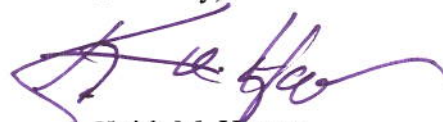
At the international programming level, the United States provides foreign assistance to prevent human trafficking, assist in the prosecution of traffickers, and support programs to assist and protect trafficking victims around the world. In 2013, Congress passed legislation giving **DOS** a new innovative tool to combat trafficking of children, the Child Protection Compacts. The compacts can help build sustainable and effective systems of justice, prevention, and protection. DOS’s TIP Office is moving forward to propose the first Child Protection Compact Partnership, to be developed and implemented jointly with the Government of Ghana. This compact Partnership will include developing a collaborative plan to implement new and more effective policies and programs to reduce child trafficking and improve child protection in Ghana.

The U.S. is the largest overall contributor to UNICEF, which as part of its core development work, assists governments in strengthening laws, policies and services including legislative review and reforms, establishing minimum labor standards, and supporting access to education. UNICEF also works with communities to change norms and practices that exacerbate children’s vulnerabilities to trafficking.

And finally, state child welfare agencies continue to increase their efforts to build the capacity to train staff working with at risk youth, including those youth that are in foster care. The **Department of Health and Human Services** Children’s Bureau has funded a Capacity Building Center that will provide technical assistance to states in the issue of trafficking, including prevention for at risk populations such as children involved in the child welfare system.

Thank you for reaching out to us regarding your concerns on child victims of sale and exploitation. We continue to strive for the advancement of children’s rights.

Sincerely,



Keith M. Harper
Ambassador

U.S. Representative to the United Nations
Human Rights Council