

Causes and Consequences of Organ Trafficking

Alyssa Buettner, Webster University – Saint Louis

A worldwide organ shortage has left many people on the transplant list in search of alternative methods of obtaining an organ. As a result, the organ trafficking industry has expanded, quickly becoming one of the more prominent forms of trafficking. Despite this, there is minimal awareness about this issue, as is evident by the lack of legislation regarding organ trafficking. In addition to the lack of legislation, governments have played a major role in allowing organ trafficking to exist and flourish. Corruption is a problem, and so is poverty due to government inaction. These social issues have led to human rights consequences stemming from lack of health care for the after effects of transplant surgery, as well as problems related to exile and further impoverishment after victimization. Organ trafficking also opens the door to other forms of trafficking and exploitation, making victims even more vulnerable to labor and sex abuse.

A worldwide shortage of organ donors has caused people to turn to alternative illegal options. With little intervention from the government and an inability to enforce the few laws that do exist, the organ trafficking industry is quickly growing into one of the more prevalent forms of trafficking, leaving countless victims in its wake. The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, also known as the Trafficking in Persons Protocol, defines human trafficking as:

the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2015).

Organ trafficking was not included in this trafficking definition until 2015, when “the removal of organs” was added to the Protocol as a method of exploitation, thus incorporating organ trafficking as an official form of trafficking and providing a legal platform for protecting the victims (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2015). However, this acknowledgement of organ trafficking as a type of trafficking is rare; most countries do not have domestic legislation that recognizes organ trafficking, leaving many loopholes open for the industry to continue to grow.

A lack of legislation is only one of the governmental causes of organ trafficking. Government corruption fuels the organ trafficking industry, as well. Bribed political and law enforcement officials help to further the trafficking networks by turning a blind eye or assisting traffickers – for the right price (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2011). In some cases, the government is even the one instigating the trafficking by trying to boost its economy through the harvesting of the organs of those in the prison system (Kilgour & Matas, 2007). Poverty is another cause of organ trafficking; due to inaction by the government, many communities are deeply impoverished and vulnerable to exploitation (Satterthwaite & Mitlin, 2013). Feeling like they have no other options, some turn to selling their organs out of desperation as a last effort to provide for themselves and their families. This ends up leaving them worse off in the long run, as this opens up the door to other forms of trafficking and harm, as well.

Three human rights consequences happen in a domino effect set into motion by the after effects of organ harvesting surgery and a lack of health care. Because of the unsterilized environments where the harvesting surgeries take place, many people have health complications afterwards (Scheper-Hughes, 2014) and do not have the money to see a doctor for post-operative care. Without access to adequate health care – even though health care is recognized as a basic human right (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1976) – the victims end up in a worse position than they were in before, since they remain poor but are also now in ill health. Many victims are unable to work and are

pushed deeper into poverty, which is another consequence of organ trafficking. They are shunned from society, often deemed unclean because many communities condemn organ donation (whether it is done by choice or force). Once again in a desperate position, they are often then vulnerable to labor or sex trafficking and/or exploitation as a way to pay off debts and have some form of income. Government inaction drives the organ trafficking industry; left unchecked and unchanged, organ trafficking continues to grow while also fueling other forms of trafficking and rights abuse. It is crucial to examine the governmental causes of organ trafficking, as well as the human rights consequences that result, so that proper action can be taken to combat it in the future.

Donation vs. Trafficking

In countries such as the United States, recipients have a long road ahead of them as they wait for a transplant. Upon determining that a transplant is necessary, extensive testing is performed and fees are paid in order to register on the transplant list. They are then put on a waiting list, where their placement is determined by assessing a patient's condition and the expected results of the transplant (Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network, 2016). With nothing to do but wait, patients can be on the list for years. Due to organ shortages, unfortunately many people do not get their matches in time (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016).

Deceased donors make up the majority of the donor population. They are able to give heart valves, hearts, lungs, intestines, livers, kidneys, pancreases, skin, corneas, tendons, and bones (United Network for Organ Sharing, n.d.). Upon the declaration of brain or circulatory death and written consent from either the patient or their family, a potential donor goes through thorough medical exams and tests to confirm the credibility of their candidacy and to safeguard against any diseases or issues that may prevent the organ from being viable. While the testing is occurring, the potential donor's blood pressure and vital signs must be monitored, as well as administered medicinal therapies or drugs as

needed (Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network, 2016). If the candidate is deemed fit for donation, the waiting list is searched for a match – including comparisons of organ size, blood and tissue types, wait time, medical urgency, and geographic location in order to find the best recipient for the organ (United Network for Organ Sharing, n.d.). After the matches have been found, the organ recovery begins and the donor is pronounced dead, providing people with another chance at a healthy life.

Living donation, although not as common, is another source for organ donation. Living donors are only allowed to donate something that it is possible for them to live without, such as one of their kidneys, a section of their lungs, a section of their liver, a part of their pancreas, or a small portion of their bowel (Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network, 2016). Before someone undergoes the procedure to transplant the organ, there is a process that they must go through. First, living donors must undergo a medical and psychosocial evaluation. They are then appointed an Independent Living Donor Advocate whose job is to operate separately from the transplant team and look out for the best interest of the donor. Informed consent must also be established, meaning that the donor is well informed and willing to donate without the use of force or deception. The hospital is required to provide pre- and post-operative care, including a post-operative follow-up to verify that the donor is continuing to heal without complications. If the candidate passes the exams and still decides to move forward, they are registered and checked against the waiting list for a possible match using the same criteria that is used in cases of a deceased donation (Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network, 2016).

Because a patient has to wait for so long on the transplant list without a guarantee of receiving the organ they need, many choose to seek out alternative solutions. Some look into the black market and forms of transplant tourism, ignorant of where the organ comes from as long as they get what they need. This way, the vast network that exists behind the scenes stays hidden and the dark aspects of organ trafficking remain out of sight. Meanwhile, the demand for organs skyrockets and the industry

continues to grow. In the organ trafficking industry, the buyers remain on the outskirts, doing what they can to keep their hands clean until it's time for the transplant. Coming from wealthier countries, buyers may travel across the world to receive a new organ, most often looking for a new kidney. While they want to know as little about their donor as possible, they do have certain standards that must be met. For instance, most buyers want a live donor instead of one from a deceased donor. The majority of the buyers are men and they generally prefer educated, healthy male donors that are between the ages of 20 to 30 years old who has not had to "work hard for a living," as well as assurances that they will get the healthier of the donors' kidneys. They will pay between \$100,000 to \$180,000 USD for their new organ (Scheper-Hughes, 2014). Buyers have high standards for themselves, but do not show the same concern for their donors.

Brokers are at the heart of the organ trafficking industry. They are the people constructing the deals, connecting those in need of an organ with those who have them to supply. They orchestrate everything, working with travel agents, laboratory technicians, doctors, surgeons, and even criminals in order to complete the deal. Well-connected and often unafraid of government or police interference, brokers have access to the medical professionals necessary to perform the procedures, travel agents that are capable of organizing travel, passports, and visas, and criminal enforcers to recruit sellers and "make sure that 'willing' sellers actually get up on the operating table once they realize what the operation actually entails" (Scheper-Hughes, 2014). Brokers target those who are weak in the community, often those who are in poverty and deeply in debt. They know that these are the people who are more likely to agree to sell their organs, as they are desperate and vulnerable. Because of this desperation, they are able to offer very little money and give them even less after the surgery without fear of repercussions (O'Connor, 2014). All of these parts come together to create the transaction of trading money for a new organ with the goal of making as much profit as possible.

Sellers, the people giving up their organs, are the ones who suffer from organ trafficking. Organ trafficking victims are typically broken up into three categories based on how they became involved in the industry. The first way would be when traffickers either influence or swindle victims into allowing them to remove their organ. This can occur with victims who are already being trafficked, as they have no control or power to fight back, or it can be done using methods similar to the ones that traffickers use to bring people into the sex or labor trafficking industry by preying on the vulnerable people of society, such as people who are illiterate, migrants, or impoverished. The second category of victims includes those who agree to sell their organs, but are either paid less than the originally agreed-upon price or are completely conned out of their money altogether. The third category consists of people who are in a moment of weakness, already being treated for an illness. In these situations, the organ is often extracted without the victim knowing (Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking, n.d.). After the surgery takes place, the victims continue to face hardship. There have been reports of deaths from suicide, failure of the remaining organs, and even beatings when community members felt that donors had disgraced their villages. Some were banished from their homes and disappeared (Scheper-Hughes, 2014). The victims sell their organs out of desperation, hoping that it will be enough to help them support themselves, but are often left in even worse conditions.

Government Causes

Government corruption is one of the biggest contributors to organ trafficking. Trafficking thrives in places where the government is weak because a fragile government means that it can be easily molded to meet the needs of the traffickers (Arsenault, 2011). Whether the government allows organ trafficking to exist by taking bribes to look the other way or by instigating it themselves in an effort to make a profit, governments possess the power to perpetuate organ trafficking as much as they hold the power to stop it. However, in order to stop organ trafficking in their country, governments have to find a

way to end the corruption, as it can be the initial seed as well as the water that allows for the illegal organ harvesting industry to grow. When a government is corrupt at the top, some of that trickles down into the smaller, local forms as well, such as local police and officials. Brokers count on local government indifference and police protection to succeed because these actors are the ones more likely to see what is happening in the community and pick up on illegal activity (Scheper-Hughes, 2014). There have been multiple reports of corrupt law enforcement officials who have helped traffickers in exchange for money (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2011), and these are just the officers who have been caught. There are many more police and city officers who engage in corrupt activities that are still out there.

Corruption may take various forms, and brokers need people at all levels of government to pass or deny legislation, hinder investigations, buy or sell information, help obtain necessary travel documents, or simply look the other way so that they can go unpunished for their actions (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2011). The brokers have worked hard to set up their vast networks, and they are not going to let their operation fall apart because of one person. They buy off everyone they need to in order to make their system successful. There is no one to hold these officers accountable, as their bosses are also corrupt and involved in the same illegal activities. This may be beneficial for the brokers in order for them to keep their operation moving, but it also prevents their victims from coming forward. Since many of them are on the broker's payroll, the victims cannot go to the police without being threatened and punished by the broker's enforcers. It is simply not worth the risk and they are left not knowing who to turn to or whom they can trust.

The government in China is one example of a corrupt administration that has been instigating organ trafficking in an effort to make a profit. Since cutting funding for the health care system, the government has looked for alternative ways to line its pockets, turning toward systematically and illegally harvesting organs as a means of income. There are immense amounts of money to be made off

of organ transplants and so the Chinese government and its military, who has also been encouraged to raise its own private funds, have decided to take a cut by harvesting the organs of those in their prison system. While spending their time in prison being tortured and abused, the prisoners are also put through extensive medical testing to determine if they are viable candidates for donation matches. As the prisoners are often tortured to the point of death, a steady stream of organ donors becomes available for the Chinese government to profit from. It is extremely difficult to keep track of just how many “donors” this affects, as the only data available comes from the Chinese government. Also, because organ transplantation is frowned upon in Chinese culture, there is no formal system to oversee organ transplantation or donation, or many regulations in place to help protect the victims (Kilgour & Matas, 2007). Even though the selling of organs is technically illegal in China, a law was passed in 1984 that makes it legal for organs taken from executed prisoners to be transplanted (Frenkel, 2004). These laws are not enforced or monitored, however, and government corruption creates problems when trying to prove how the organs were obtained, as well as making it challenging to determine how many people this is happening to since researchers do not have much to rely on besides what is reported by the Chinese government.

Another governmental enabler that leaves the door open for organ trafficking is a lack of consistent legislation outlawing it. Countries have passed laws prohibiting the selling of organs or paid organ donation, but many of these laws are not enforced. Even if they were, the majority of them do not apply to trafficking cases, nor do they cover the crimes that often accompany trafficking such as threat, abduction, and violence. Most importantly, they do not include an ability to prosecute everyone that may be involved, such as the broker (Pugliese, 2007). The current laws are not strong enough to truly bring to justice those behind the organ trafficking industry, and they do not give law enforcement the necessary support or resources to implement the already lacking legislation.

While many countries have passed laws to help fight human trafficking and protect the victims, organ trafficking continues to fly under the radar and be left out of legislation. The United States, for example, currently does not have any laws in place to protect against organ trafficking. They do have the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, but it does not list organ trafficking as a form of trafficking, setting its perpetrators free from prosecution and its victims exempt from protection. A bill was introduced in the House of Representatives but it keeps getting passed around to various subcommittees instead of being passed into law (United States Congress, 2015). The European Union does not have consistent laws, either. In 2015, statistics regarding organ trafficking showed that it was a pervasive problem and various legislation was proposed by experts, but current organ trafficking legislation still does not exist (Bos, 2015). The United Nations has passed the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking In Persons, Especially Women and Children, which is meant to promote the prevention of human trafficking and protect the victims (United Nations General Assembly, 2000), but even the United Nations did not recognize organ trafficking as a form of trafficking until 2015 (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2015). This lack of recognition does more harm than good, causing capacity building efforts to fail because they simply aren't comprehensive (Pugliese, 2007). When taking into account how tangled together the various forms of trafficking can be, this lack of awareness and strong legislation not only hurts the few attempts being made to combat organ trafficking, but it puts up road blocks in front of all of the efforts to help fight the war on human trafficking as a whole.

The current legislation regarding the sale of organs hurts the victims of organ trafficking just as much as the lack of legislation is hurting them, despite intentions to do the opposite. As previously stated, many countries have made it illegal to sell bodily organs (Frenkel, 2004), including in the countries where organ trafficking is most common such as Brazil, Israel, India, and China (Arsenault, 2011). However, by outlawing the selling of organs, governments are preventing the victims of trafficking from telling anyone what has happened to them. Fear of prosecution or retribution keeps

many people from coming forward, as they do not want to face the legal implications of selling their organs, since technically that is what they have done. Even if they did admit to the police what they had done, they could be confessing to someone on the broker's payroll who would not only not punish the broker, but would physically harm the victim for telling the authorities (O'Connor, 2014). By not allowing for a trustworthy method to report these abuses, these governments are going against Article 8 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which bestows "the right to an effective remedy...for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him [or her] by the constitution or by [international] law" (United Nations General Assembly, 1948). Without a reliable and effective way to prosecute those responsible for the organ trafficking industry, it will continue to exist, harming the victims but allowing the perpetrators to go free.

Poverty exists as a part of every society and it remains another perpetuator of organ trafficking. Every day, hundreds of millions of people live below the global poverty line, which has been determined by The World Bank to be less than \$1.90 a day (The World Bank, 2015). Countries where organ trafficking is more prevalent also have higher percentages of its people living in poverty, which is why the majority of the sellers have been found to be poorly educated, unemployed, and uninsured individuals living below the poverty line who experience inadequate health care systems. By not having access to proper welfare systems or opportunities to find a job, they are left with very few options when it comes to finding a way to provide for themselves and their families. Large amounts of the people in poverty are also in debt. In fact, studies have shown that the main reason for most people resorting to selling their organs is that they are heavily in debt and they have been promised financial compensation in exchange for their organ that can help relieve that pressure, or take care of it all together. This makes them the perfect candidates in their vulnerable state for brokers to manipulate and take advantage of (Budiani & Karim, 2008.) As is true with other forms of trafficking, traffickers use the time when people are weakest and exploit them, promising whatever they have to in order to get what they want.

While it is important to understand how poverty affects the victims of the organ trafficking industry, it is just as essential to understand why these implications are occurring in the first place. Government inaction is at the heart of the lack of proper infrastructures and social services in impoverished communities because there are “political systems and bureaucratic structures that are unwilling or unable to act effectively to address these deprivations” (Satterthwaite & Mitlin, 2013). Some of these deprivations may include, but are not limited to, inadequate household incomes, a lack of public infrastructure in the form of running water and sanitation, or a nonexistent health care and welfare system. The communities who do not have access to these services become blocked off from the more economically stable areas and are forced to live in poverty (Satterthwaite & Mitlin, 2013), as they do not have access to the basic necessities that are required to have the adequate standard of living afforded them by the Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including food, shelter, medical care, and social services (United Nations General Assembly, 1948). Without these rudimentary assets, the people living in these conditions are forced into a position of desperation. In need of money, they are left susceptible and vulnerable, making it easy for someone to take advantage of them. By sitting back and failing to address these issues, governments are not only allowing poverty to continue to affect their country and its people, but they are permitting the effects of poverty to exist – including organ trafficking.

Human Rights Consequences

The inaction of government results in a variety of human rights consequences. Because governments have not done their job and taken care of their people, many individuals suffer a denial of their basic human rights as guaranteed by international law. Typically, rejection of a human right is thought of as a deliberate action on the part of the government, but it can just as easily occur when a government sits back and does nothing as its people undergo hardship. In regards to the government’s

lack of action concerning organ trafficking, the people have experienced a violation of their right to health care and to not be held in slavery (see: United Nations General Assembly, 1948).

Health care is a universal human right. In Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the right to an adequate standard of living is granted. This right includes, among other things, the right to the access of quality health care (United Nations General Assembly, 1948). The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights also provides individuals with the right to health care. Article 12 states that everyone should have the “enjoyment of the attainable standard of physical and mental health” (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1976). Yet health care is not universally provided in a variety of countries, poor and rich alike. While this in and of itself is an issue, the lack of health care is made infinitely worse when an individual has had their organ removed. If it was by force or through a pre-arranged agreement to sell their organ for money, it does not matter. Regardless of the conditions in which the organ harvesting took place, medical care is essential so that the donor heals properly.

In a typical, legal transplant where the organ harvesting occurs with a living donor, a doctor will always require that the donor has post-operative check-ups. The donor must go through careful examinations to make sure that they are not experiencing any new health problems and the site of incision must be checked in order to ensure that it is healing correctly. Eventually, the stitches will have to be removed, as well (Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network, 2016). These exams are done in cases where everything involving the transplant is done very carefully. Extensive testing is performed, donors are evaluated, and the transplants are performed in a sterile environment with trusted doctors. This is the way that every transplant case should be addressed. Even though the same amount of care and precision is required in cases where organ trafficking has occurred, the victims are not treated this way.

From the very beginning of the organ transplant process to the end, the sellers are given minimal health care services. Leading up to the surgery, the sellers go through just enough medical testing to determine the necessary criteria to find the match. They do not perform any other testing to check and make sure that there are not any other health issues that could prove to create issues or make life more problematic for the seller after the removal of the organ. No psychological evaluation is completed to verify the mental health of the seller and how they may react after the surgery occurs. When it comes time for the surgery, the procedures are not even performed in medical facilities. Instead, the surgeries are performed in illicit clinics that have often not been sterilized. These clinics are often makeshift operations out of someone's house or a back alley. Since these sites are not actual sterilized operating rooms, the sellers are extremely vulnerable to infection and botched surgeries (Arsenault, 2011; O'Connor, 2014; Scheper-Hughes, 2014). Any surgery has risks, but surgeries that take place outside of a hospital in an unclean environment are even more likely to result in complications. Throughout the entire ordeal, there is no one there to advocate for the seller. They are not seen as people, only as the organ they are providing.

Victims can experience many different health effects after the surgery. In some cases, the after-effects inhibit quality of everyday life. Infections from the incision site and other health problems that arise make life very difficult for the victims. The majority of the sellers reported problems performing intensive work, as well as continuing debt and poverty. They also expressed psychological distress and regret about the organ donation, discouraging others from taking the same path if possible (Budiani & Karim, 2008). By being unable to work and bring in an income, the victims are pushed further into their pre-existing debt and deeper into poverty. In other cases, the damage is more life threatening. In some cases where they have sold their kidney, victims have their other kidney fail. Now, they are on the other end of the transplant process. Instead of selling their kidney, they are the one in need of one. However, due to a lack of money and proper health care, this will not be an option for them and they will most

likely die from kidney failure. Others are shamed and shunned by their community. Since organ transplants are seen as an unclean practice, close-knit communities hate those who decide to sell their organs. Many victims of organ trafficking are severely beaten by people who used to be their neighbors. They are often injured within an inch of their life, causing even more health problems, and many are beaten to death. If their community does not kill them, others choose to take their own lives due to shame and being overwhelmed by their new situation (Scheper-Hughes, 2014).

Trafficking is a human rights violation in itself, but it also ties to other abuses – making the human rights implications of trafficking widespread. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees the freedom from being kept as a slave, as well as being tortured or treated cruelly (United Nations General Assembly, 1948). These rights are directly violated in every form of trafficking, as the traffickers use the victims as their slaves to do whatever they need them to do. While victims of organ trafficking may not always be kept as slaves in the long term, the argument can be made that they are exposed to torture and cruel treatment during the surgery to remove their organs. For instance, in Mexico, a man traveling with his wife was kidnapped by gangsters. The couple was put in separate rooms, but the man could hear his wife screaming. When he entered the room, he saw her body laying on a table; her chest was wide open, missing her heart and kidneys. Her organs had been forcibly removed without drugs to dull the pain (Arsenault, 2011). These methods may not be what one typically thinks of when it comes to torture, but that does not mean that the victims of the organ trafficking industry do not experience them.

Another human rights consequence involves the way that organ trafficking connects to other forms of trafficking. Victims of trafficking, regardless of the form, are manipulated and taken advantage of by traffickers in order to obtain something from them. Whether it is labor, sex, or organ trafficking, all three of them have this in common (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2015). Often, the types

of trafficking tend to overlap. While many victims of organ trafficking only have this one interaction with the broker, other victims have already been trafficked when their organs are taken. Victims who were brought into the industry for labor trafficking may also become victims of the sex trafficking industry. Sex slaves may also be used for other forms of labor if that is what the trafficker requires. This also means that sometimes pre-existing victims of sex or labor trafficking have their organs taken from them, as well. In some ways, harvesting organs from the people who are already are part of the trafficking industry is easier. The victims do not put up much of a fight, because they are often drugged, making them easier to manipulate and coerce into doing whatever they want them to do, including give up an organ. Some do this as a means to buy themselves back from their trafficker, hoping to end their servitude and finally obtaining the freedom to get away from the person who has been holding them as their slave (Budiani & Karim, 2008). This is just another form of deception, however, and the victims remain a slave to their trafficker. Now, though, they are expected to do the same work even if they have further health complications from the surgery, making things infinitely more difficult for them.

Other times, the brokers use harvesting the organ as an opportunity to bring the sellers into other forms of trafficking, as well. As with other forms of trafficking, the brokers prey on the victims when they are most vulnerable. After the surgery, when the sellers are now in positions that were worse than before when they had agreed to sell their organ, the broker will come to them with an offer to help them earn money or work off debts. Because the accumulation of debt is so high, whether it is from business loans or medical bills given to them by the brokers for their surgery, they have no other option then to make a deal with the broker again. Vulnerable and open to exploitation, they may now enter into either the sex or labor trafficking industry with little to no hope of ever working off their debt. Trapped in a cycle of poverty and confined into a life of servitude, what they had hoped would be their lifeline has turned into a noose.

Recommendations and Conclusions

Trafficking is not a new problem. In its various forms, trafficking has affected people all over the world for a long time. Legislation has been created in an effort to stop it, and various nonprofit agencies have arisen to help as well, but still trafficking exists. While effective legislation is definitely an issue, this is also largely due to the fact that organizations are trying to deal with every social problem as an individual issue, instead of seeing the interconnectedness of all of the difficulties society faces. Therefore, major changes need to occur both inside the government and in society.

To truly combat organ trafficking, changes to legislation have to be made so that the present victims of organ trafficking can be better protected, and efforts can be made to keep it from happening again. Current legislation exists but often do not recognize organ trafficking as a form of trafficking, although recent changes in the UN definition of trafficking gives some hope (see: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2015). Still, organ trafficking is left out of the majority of the legislation pertaining to trafficking, leaving the door wide open for traffickers to take advantage of loopholes. If organ trafficking were to be added in to laws pertaining to trafficking, many improvements can be made to the cause. First, an expanded definition could make more resources available for fighting organ trafficking – not just sex and labor trafficking (Pugliese, 2007). Incorporating organ trafficking in the definition would allow for real progress to be made. Another benefit to the addition of organ trafficking into legislation would be that it would help the victims obtain assistance. If organ trafficking is recognized as a form of trafficking, then the victims could receive the same benefits that the victims of other forms of trafficking receive. In the United States, for example, trafficking victims are considered to be refugees and would be treated as such. However, first, they must prove that they were a victim of a “severe form of trafficking”; because organ trafficking is not seen as trafficking, the victims are currently denied benefits such as job training, health care, and housing (Pugliese, 2007). The inclusion of organ trafficking into

regulations would mean that more people would have an opportunity to have a better life. Integrating organ trafficking would also mean that more traffickers could be brought to justice. There has been an increase in the amount of people being prosecuted for their trafficking, and this has largely been due to the boosted actions of law enforcement to bring traffickers up on charges and bring them to trial. Similar outcomes could happen for those involved in the organ trafficking industry if law enforcement officers had the legal jurisdiction to pursue brokers, as well as an opportunity to expand the search to include other actors within the industry, including corrupt government officials (Pugliese, 2007).

Society in general has some responsibilities, as well, when it comes to stopping organ trafficking. Since the main reason for the organ trafficking industry is that there is a major organ shortage (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016), it is important that people are made aware of this organ shortage and that they are encouraged to become donors themselves. While not everyone needs to become a living donor, they can give their permission to become a deceased donor in the event that something should happen to them. This would help to alleviate the scarcity of viable organs and allow for more transplants to occur. In turn, voluntary organ donation would save not only the lives of the people receiving the transplants, but of the potential victims of the organ trafficking industry as this would completely extinguish the need for the trafficking industry.

Above all, a recognition of how trafficking is connected to other issues is a critical step in combatting not just organ trafficking, but all forms of trafficking. First, the realization of how organ trafficking is linked to sex and labor trafficking is a critical one to make. Instead of focusing efforts on one form of human trafficking, all forms of trafficking need to be focused on because it is not possible to extinguish one form by itself. The interconnectedness of the system will not allow for that, as the traffickers will just use victims from one industry to fuel the other, bringing in new victims as they need them. Thus, it is important to look at the picture of human trafficking as a whole, not just focusing on

how it exists, but why. As discussed earlier in this paper, poverty is a huge contributor to why human trafficking continues to be a thriving industry. Out of desperation, people are forced to sell themselves for sex, labor, and body parts in order to try and take care of themselves and their families. While eliminating poverty is not an easy task that can be accomplished overnight, addressing government corruption is one thing that will help alleviate poverty, as it provides the opportunity to ensure that the people in office truly care and want what is best for their people. Other efforts must be made as well, such as reforms for social programs and putting more funding into education. The task to eliminate a human rights issue is never easy. When something can be done, though, it should, and steps can be made to help stop organ trafficking. By simply implementing governments that are active and interested in truly serving and protecting the people instead of their own self-interests, legislation can be passed and movements can begin to bring about changes that are needed in society. Every country is different; operating in their own way with their own customs, so it is difficult to suggest a one size fits all solution. However, if everyone can agree to fully commit to the same goal of eliminating poverty, true progress can be made to combat not just organ trafficking, but human trafficking in all of its forms.

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