

Human Trafficking and Interserve's Response

Interserve Newsletter
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A Letter from Deborah Morris

Interserve Partner and Western Canada Representative

Grace to you and peace from God our Father - to you my faithful brothers and sisters in Christ." This is how Paul opens his letter in Colossians 1:1-2. We, who are living in the power of the resurrection of our Lord, willingly see and seek comfort in such words. We are close to these words and can feel them and be touched by them. But there are those in our world who live desperate and separate from this everyday comfort; people who have not heard the name of Jesus Christ; people who suffer at the hands of those who do not follow the golden rule "Love your neighbor". In 2008 I attended my first international conference on human trafficking and have grown evermore aware of a world where millions of people are exploited for financial benefit.

Experts say it is impossible for the statistics derived from a hidden world to be precise, and everyone who works to understand the exact nature of this expanding world of human exploitation, believe the statistics are under-reported. The following stats are the most commonly reported from reliable sources like United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the Global Alliance Against Forced Labour (ILO). While the stats are staggering and dehumanizing, I sincerely believe that we who sup at the Lord's table, have a unique calling to act in the face of evil, hear the broken heart of God, and put faces to the suffering millions.

ILO estimates 20.9 million people are trafficked globally, and the combined industry of labour and human trafficking (HT) is \$150 billion USD globally. The most common forms of trafficking are sexual exploitation (80%) and labour trafficking (20%). Approximately 80% are women and children, and up to 50% are minors. The largest illegal market has been drugs, however, trafficking in humans is growing and reports say that trafficking groups are switching their cargo from drugs to human beings, in search of higher profits at lower risk. The fact that human trafficking (HT) is expanding everywhere, is why I believe God calls us to be vigilant and to be active in counteracting the growth. We understand that in EVERY country the conditions, such as poverty, homelessness, foster children, runaways, refugee migrants, broken societies, create vulnerable people. UNICEF estimates 1.2 million children are trafficked every year. I'd like to share a bit of what Interserve is doing to help curtail this growing phenomenon.

Interserve's Work Globally

Sarah Wong, Social Worker

With a background in social work, Sarah is passionate to help people discover the full life that Jesus brings as she walks with them in their life journey. As an On Tracker, Sarah supported local social workers within an anti-human trafficking organization called Daughters of Cambodia in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. As the field of social work continues to grow in Cambodia, Sarah hopes to return to Cambodia as a Partner to engage in building the capabilities and strengths of local social workers.

Cambodia at a sharing by Brian McConaghy, founder of Ratanak International. Though I was a recent social work grad at that time, seeking local work in Canada to develop my skills, God used this sharing to impress on me His vision for what He was already doing in the brokenness of the world and how I could possibly join Him in His restorative work. God continued to bring up Cambodia in various ways, which led me to join Interserve in 2014 under the On Track+ program, working with Cambodian social workers who support victims of trafficking through a local organization called Daughters of Cambodia.

During my time in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, several things stood out that have shaped how I see the landscape of anti-human trafficking work in Cambodia and the possibilities that lie ahead as I hope to return as an Interserve Partner.

Firstly, there are many organizations involved in anti-human trafficking work in Cambodia, largely due to the country's general openness to foreign investments since the end of the Khmer Rouge genocide in the late 1970s. With a large body of players confronting the issues of poverty and trafficking on various fronts, there are many opportunities to learn from each other, partner and collaborate. Interserve workers with various skill sets can be a part of this diverse, dynamic landscape, which has been gaining momentum over the past 10-15 years.

Secondly, the people to invest in, and those who will have the greatest impact in anti-trafficking work, are young Cambodians, such as recent university graduates, who are employed by organizations working on the front line of social work. An honest look at the complexity of practicing in a post-genocidal, trauma-filled context is quite daunting. The rate of burnout for young Cambodian workers in the field of counseling and social work is regrettably high. For our Cambodian brothers and sisters to be the Gospel bringers to their own people, my hope is that they can engage in social work with the abundance of life that Jesus brings through deeply rooted spiritual formation practices, strong self-care and solid communities of support to weather the darkness of the daily work they face. As I anticipate returning to Cambodia, my desire is to invest in discipleship and mentorship amongst female Cambodian Christians practicing in the social work field so that they can have sustainability in serving amongst their own people.

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The global issue of human trafficking can often lead to varying responses. The shock of such an issue and the overwhelming need can lead us to withdraw, for to face such suffering is something our North American spirituality often does not want to address. Conversely, we can remain open-hearted and engaged amidst glaring injustice and pain, trusting that God is already at work redeeming brokenness and seeking to discern how we can join in His work, even in small ways.

As a social worker with experience mostly in community health settings with newcomers, refugees and street involved persons, my energies haven't focused solely on human trafficking. However, elements of this kind of exploitation can be seen across all vulnerable people sectors and I believe that anyone who commits to reduce poverty, build up families and strengthen justice systems are all engaging in the anti-human trafficking movement.

In 2008, I first heard about the prevalence of child exploitation through human trafficking in

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Human Trafficking in North America

Estimates put trafficking victims in the USA at hundreds of thousands each year, and in Canada estimates are 20,000 per year. Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) claims that 800,000 runaway children will be lured into exploitation each year (USA).

Did You Know

- Youth are primarily recruited through internet, malls, schools, foster care, and any place that youth hangout.
- One-in-three runaways are trafficked within 48 hours of leaving a 'safe' environment, often within several blocks of their home.
- Of the trafficked persons one-in-five will be runaways, and 86% of runaways are from foster homes.

While these are US stats, they remain similar in Canada, where minors make up a significant number of forced labour and sex trafficking.

- Nearly 50% of HT victims in Canada fall within the 18-24 age cohort, and 41% of the perpetrators (persons that lure youth into HT) are within this cohort.
- Youth frequently enter the traumatic realm of trafficking between the ages of 12-14. In Canada 65% of trafficked persons are of aboriginal descent, although the aboriginal people only make up 4% of our Canadian population.
- The annual salary of a pimp in Canada is over \$350,000 per girl and each trafficker will have a 'stable' of 3-5 girls.
- Victims of trafficking experience serious and long-term trauma, falling within the category of "non-state torture".

Interserve's Work in Canada

Deborah Morris's Letter Cont'd

I became a front-line worker against human trafficking in 2008. As an Interserve partner, I worked with trafficking survivors in Calcutta, India from 2010 to 2016. One of the ongoing initiatives I was involved in had been to train women rescued from trafficking, to become bakers for a coffee shop that is considered one of the top coffee shops in the country. The work enabled women and their children freedom to leave the brothel area. They hear the gospel daily and are continuously learning to put their faith in God. Since 2016, I have moved back to BC where I work as the Western Canada representative of Interserve, and work to mobilize the church in Canada to combat trafficking in persons.

Efforts to combat human trafficking in Canada are beginning to receive priority focus with funding and resources, but as I meet with front-line workers across the country, it is apparent that we are facing a growing and complex problem. Those on the front-lines are police, social services, child welfare, youth workers, medical workers, and the justice system. I believe God has called us, as His church, to educate ourselves and be actively creating community safety nets for the vulnerable in our society. I would like to add 'faith workers' to the list of front-line workers combating HT in Canada, and other countries around the world.

Please contact me for more
information at
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What's New

Announcing the Canada Country Team!

Interserve Canada has formed the Canada Country Team. Working with Partners located in Canada, we will serve the Church in reaching out to newcomers and developing important ministry within our country. More details will come soon.

Interserve's New Partners

Aiden Choi



Aiden is a Korean-born citizen of Canada with a background in tourism and baking/barista. Also, he has served in Korean churches as a pastor until 2015. Aiden was ordained in May 2016.

Aiden's vision is to share the Word of God with newcomers to Canada, particularly from the Arab world, by sharing his life with them, supporting them as they settle into Canada and encouraging them along the way. Aiden is doing this by working with Adam House, a home for refugees located in Toronto. He is building friendships and offering hospitality, as well as a warm welcome to newcomers and refugee claimants from all over the world. Even after the newcomers have left Adam House, Aiden encourages them to contact him for continued support. Aiden's work is varied, involving direct contact with refugees and providing bridges of communication between the newcomers and the local churches or groups who want to get involved in this important ministry.

The idea of Christians forming a family of faith is important to Aiden's identity as a follower of Jesus Christ. "Being part of a family means caring, supporting, and empowering others to grow into who God created them to be – to love God and to love one another." Aiden sees himself on a continuous journey that will take him past the margins of society to care for and engage with the marginalized in Canada who need help as they settle into a new life.

Ben & Hannah Wideman

Ben and Hannah Wideman grew up in Calgary, Alberta and were married in 2012. Hannah went to school at Ambrose University where she obtained a Behaviour Science degree in psychology and sociology. Ben also attended Ambrose for a year in Biblical studies, after which he transferred to University of Calgary and completed his degree in Mechanical Engineering.

Growing up around family businesses, and managing a small business while going to school has given Ben the experience and desire to serve Cambodians through job creation and business as missions. For the last 2.5 years they have been living in Cambodia, most of that time in the rural town of Stung Treng. There they were helping locals get started in small business ventures.

In September of 2016, they moved to the city of Siem Reap. There they got connected with Interserve Switzerland team members David and Anne-Eva Keller. They run a chicken egg business selling to top hotels and restaurants in the city while ministering to and providing jobs for Cambodians. Ben has been helping find solutions to water filtration, electricity distribution and heat reduction out on the farm. Hannah has been teaching the staff English as well as volunteering at other NGOs.

