

Honduras



Population: 7,989,415 (July 2010)
Population Growth Rate: 1.935% (2010 est.)
Birth Rate: 25.61 births/1,000 population (2010 est.)
Life Expectancy: total population: 70.51 years; male: 68.82 years; female: 72.28 years (2010 est.)
Literacy Rate: total population: 80%; male: 79.8%; female: 80.2% (2001 est.)
Net Migration Rate: -1.27 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2010 est.)
Unemployment Rate: 6% (2009 est.)
Gross Domestic Product per Capita: \$4,200 (2009 est.)
Religions: Roman Catholic 97%, Protestant 3%
Languages: Spanish, Amerindian dialects
Ethnic Groups: mestizo (mixed Amerindian and European) 90%, Amerindian 7%, black 2%, white 1%
Capital: Tegucigalpa¹

Trafficking Routes

Honduras is a country of origin, destination, and transit for trafficking in women and children. Young girls are trafficked from Honduras to other Central American countries, such as Costa Rica, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala, as well as Mexico and the United States. Honduran boys are reportedly trafficked to Canada for drug trafficking operations.²

Women and children from El Salvador and Nicaragua are trafficked to Honduras, and Nicaraguans are trafficked through Honduras to other countries. Honduran children are also trafficked internally.³ Traffickers move the children from small rural communities to larger urban areas.⁴

Factors That Contribute to the Trafficking Infrastructure

Economic and living conditions in Honduras and the Central American region have a strong impact on human trafficking. Honduras is one of the poorest nations in the Western Hemisphere.⁵ Almost half of the population lives on less than one dollar a day, and the country endures a troubling unemployment rate.⁶ The lack of positive economic opportunities pushes

¹ CIA, THE WORLD FACTBOOK (2010), <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ho.html>.

² American Anti-Slavery Group, *Country Report: Honduras* (2009), available at: http://www.iabolish.org/slavery_today/country_reports/hn.html.

³ Covenant House/Casa Alianza, *Trafficking in Children in Latin America and the Caribbean*, available at: http://www.childtrafficking.com/Docs/casa_alianza_trafficking_i.pdf (last visited June 30, 2010).

⁴ Michelle Binker, *The Thin Blue Line Ministries Work in Honduras*, Libertad Latina, July 15, 2009, available at: http://www.libertadlatina.org/Crisis_Latin_America_Honduras.htm.

⁵ Mark P. Sullivan et al, *Latin America and the Caribbean: Issues for the 109th Congress*, Library of Congress Congressional Research Service, Sept. 13, 2006, available at: <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/75268.pdf>.

⁶ American Anti-Slavery Group *supra* at 2.

young people to leave their homes and communities in search of better lives. Some are drawn to more prosperous neighboring countries, while others migrate north, attracted by the economic promises of the United States. Impoverished women and children are particularly vulnerable and are often tricked or forced into the commercial sex trade. The victims are promised work as domestic servants, waitresses, cooks, and other service-related jobs; however, once they arrive at their destinations, they are made to work under inhumane conditions in forced labor or as sex slaves.

Violent crime and corruption within government agencies are also factors that contribute to the human trafficking infrastructure in Honduras. In many instances, Honduran officials provide counterfeit passports and issue visas, while some customs and immigration officers accept payoffs to turn a blind eye to trafficking crimes.⁷

Trafficking activity throughout Central America is aided by the free transit agreement between El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, and weak monitoring at the borders. Additionally, Honduras' hundreds of miles of mostly unpopulated Atlantic coastline attract smugglers, traffickers, and other criminals.⁸

Trafficking may also be facilitated by social and cultural factors and unstable families. Many Central American societies are patriarchal, with men holding power at not only the social level, but within the family unit as well.⁹

Forms of Trafficking

Women and children are trafficked to and from Honduras for sexual exploitation and prostitution. Honduran girls, many quite young, are routinely trafficked by crime syndicates and then sold into brothels in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Mexico.¹⁰

Other forms of trafficking and exploitation have also been reported. Babies are illegally trafficked from Honduras to wealthier countries for adoption. In many of these cases, the children are instead used for organ trafficking once they have arrived at their destination.¹¹

Government Responses

In 2005, Honduras issued Decree No. 234-2005, Reform of the Penal Code, to make Honduran law more responsive to prosecuting those who facilitate human trafficking, prostitution, and commercial sexual exploitation, particularly of minors.¹² To decrease the demand for prostitutes, the Criminal Code of Honduras punishes women engaged in prostitution. Pimping and promoting and abetting prostitution are prohibited for both males and females.¹³

⁷ American Anti-Slavery Group *supra* at 2.

⁸ *Honduras: Unwanted Tourists*, THE ECONOMIST, Mar. 17, 2005, available at: <http://www.hacer.org/current/Hondu03.php>.

⁹ Maria E. Villarreal, *Children Sexually Exploited in Central America*, CHILDREN'S RIGHTS INTERNATIONAL (2005), available at: <http://www.childjustice.org/docs/villarreal2005.pdf>.

¹⁰ Diego Cevallos, *Central America: 'If You Turn Up Dead, No One Will Wonder Why', Says Child Sex Ring Victim*, INTER PRESS SERVICE NEWS AGENCY, Mar. 10, 2005, available at: <http://ipsnews.net/print.asp?idnews=27817>.

¹¹ Prakriiti Gupta, *The Deadly Trade of Child Organ Trafficking*, ASHARQ ALAWSAT, Jan. 20, 2007, available at: <http://www.aawsat.com/english/news.asp?section=3&id=7723>.

¹² DECRETO NO. 234-2005 [Decree Nr.234-2005] (Honduras), (2005), available at:

[http://www.poderjudicial.gob.hn/juris/Leyes/Codigo%20Penal%20\(actualizada-07\).pdf](http://www.poderjudicial.gob.hn/juris/Leyes/Codigo%20Penal%20(actualizada-07).pdf).

¹³ CÓDIGO PENAL DE HONDURAS [Criminal Code of Honduras] art.148, as reformed by Decreto No. 234-2005, available at: http://genero.bvsalud.org/lildbi/docsonline/1/8/681-OIT_DECRETO_234_2005.pdf.

The law also requires prostitutes to receive medical tests twice a week in public health centers to decrease the number of individuals infected with venereal diseases.

In addition to reforming legal provisions, the government has made efforts to better enforce these measures. The Honduran Office of the Special Prosecutor for Children in Tegucigalpa now has four analysts monitoring cases involving sexually exploited children, resulting, at times, in rescues.¹⁴

The government has increased antitrafficking training for police, prosecutors, and other government officials. The government's Division Against Abuse, Trafficking, and Commercial Sexual Exploitation has conducted operations throughout the country and trained Honduran consular officials on the process of identifying trafficking victims and referring them for further assistance. The government also established a national trafficking system to monitor cases in San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa.¹⁵

Honduras is implementing a National Plan of Action to Eradicate Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. The plan was introduced in 2008 and will last for seven years. It has five strategic objectives: promote inter-institutional cooperation and coordination among governmental, nongovernmental, and civil society organizations; work to guarantee justice for child victims of commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking; lower risk factors in the child population to prevent exploitation; promote child participation in the creation of networks to combat commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking; and encourage victims' social reintegration.¹⁶

Nongovernmental and International Organization Responses

Casa Alianza is a nongovernmental organization dedicated to the rehabilitation and defense of street children in Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and Nicaragua. Since its relocation to Honduras in 1986, it has been very active in advocacy for children who have fallen victim to commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking. Currently, Casa Alianza Honduras has a team of street educators, a crisis center for children, a transition home for boys and five group homes, a rural-based drug rehabilitation program, a family reintegration program, and a legal aid office for street children.¹⁷ The organization serves approximately 12,500 children a year.¹⁸ Casa Alianza has also assisted in training and educating judges, police, civil society, and schools on commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking. Furthermore, the NGO has established a media campaign aimed at deterring exploiters by disseminating information about the legal consequences of their actions.¹⁹

¹⁴ UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, 2007 FINDINGS ON THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR (2008), available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,USDOL,,HND,4562d94e2,48caa4768,0.html>.

¹⁵ *Id.* at 14.

¹⁶ Comisión Interinstitucional Contra La Explotación Sexual Comercial de Niñas, Niños, y Adolescentes en Honduras (CICESCS), *Plan de Acción Nacional Contra la Explotación Sexual Comercial de Niñas, Niños y Adolescentes en Honduras 2006-2011*, CICESCS (Jun 2006), available at: http://white.oit.org.pe/ipecc/documentos/plan_esc_honduras.pdf.

¹⁷ Casa Alianza Honduras-Street Children, available at: <http://www.casa-alianza.org.uk/northsouth/CasaWeb.nsf/Street-Children/Honduras?OpenDocument> (last visited Sept 9, 2009).

¹⁸ *Id.* at 17.

¹⁹ Press Release, United Nations Department of Public Information, Women's Anti-Discriminatory Committee Takes Up Report of Honduras: Child Labour Working Conditions in Maquiladores Among Issues, July 26, 2007, available at: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2007/wom1641.doc.htm>.

The International Labour Organization's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour is currently administering a \$8.8 million regional program in cooperation with the government of Honduras to combat commercial sexual exploitation through a wide range of activities including capacity building and legal reform. The project aims to withdraw 713 children and prevent 657 children from commercial sexual exploitation in the region.

Honduras also participated in a \$300,000 regional project, administered by the Organization of American States, with the goal of improving international cooperation across nine foreign governments working to prevent human trafficking.²⁰

Multilateral Initiatives

In July 2009, Honduras took part in the 14th Regional Conference on Migration (RCM) in Guatemala City. The RCM consists of 11 countries: Honduras, Canada, United States, Panama, Nicaragua, Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Belize, and the Dominican Republic. Participants discussed policies used to combat human trafficking and migrant smuggling, as well as issues such as regular migration and border management, and the collection and sharing of valuable data on those issues.²¹

²⁰ Department of Labor *supra* at 14.

²¹ Press Release, International Organization for Migration, Fourteenth Regional Conference on Migration and Launch of Regional Information Campaign, July 10, 2009, available at: <http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/media/press-briefing-notes/pbnAM/cache/offonce?entryId=25595>.