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ILLINOIS COMMUNITIES ENGAGE AT HUMAN TRAFFICKING FORUM
Leaders and residents unite to protect Federal anti-trafficking programs

CHICAGO, Ill. (September 20, 2011) – Just weeks after Chicago police exposed a significant child sex trafficking ring, concerned Illinois residents, policy makers, trafficking survivors, community advocates and other local and global leaders in the fight against modern-day slavery and human trafficking united yesterday evening to address the fastest-growing and second-largest¹ criminal industry in the world.

With only one month left for Congress to reauthorize the only Federal bill that works to prevent trafficking crimes and protect its victims, global human rights organization International Justice Mission (IJM) hosted a Human Trafficking Forum at Chicago's Park Community Church, where more than 700 community members gathered to discuss the urgency of the reauthorization of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA).

“The American people disagree about all kinds of things, including the federal budget and the best use of our tax dollars,” said Holly Burkhalter, IJM's vice president of government relations. “But one thing we agree on is that people are not for sale. Not here, and not anywhere, and we want our government to respond effectively and generously to help end modern-day slavery in our lifetime.”

In the wake of IJM's recent joint rescue effort with local government in Chennai, India in which 522 bonded laborers in a brick kiln were set free, IJM framed the global issue while elected officials and community leaders shared about the domestic problem.

“I'm honored to work with International Justice Mission, an organization tirelessly combating human trafficking,” said Congressman Peter Roskam (IL-06). “Trafficking is an international horror becoming a disturbing and growing tragedy in our own backyard. To protect basic life and liberty it's important this is combated.”

Jennifer Greene, Violence Against Women policy advisor to Cook County State's Attorney Anita Alvarez, spoke to the audience about the critical need to raise awareness within the Greater Chicago area. The Cook County State's Attorney's office led “Little Girl Lost,” Illinois' most recent gang-operated child sex trafficking ring investigation in Chicago.

A former child trafficking victim from the DreamCatcher Foundation, a survivor-run organization in Chicago empowering victims of trafficking, shared her story of enduring forced captivity in

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2009). Fact Sheet: Human Trafficking. Retrieved January 21, 2010 from http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking/about/fact_human.html

Chicago where she was held against her will for two years while being violently raped and beaten as a teen.

In October 2000, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA) (Public Law 106-386) was enacted. Prior to that, no comprehensive Federal law existed to protect victims of trafficking or to prosecute their traffickers. The law addresses the various ways of combating trafficking, including prevention through public awareness programs, protection and assistance for victims, and prosecution and punishment of traffickers. The TVPA was reauthorized through the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) in 2003, 2005 and 2008. The bill is due for a fourth reauthorization this year; the current law expires on September 30, 2011.

Trafficking in humans generates profits in excess of \$32 billion a year for its perpetrators who, by force and deception, sell human beings into slavery and sexual bondage. Nearly 2 million children are exploited in the commercial sex industry worldwide (UNICEF).

After drug dealing, trafficking of humans is tied with arms dealing as the second largest criminal industry in the world, and is the fastest growing.²

The Human Trafficking Forum, hosted by IJM, was moderated by Lynne Hybels of Willow Creek Community Church. Co-sponsors included the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE), the Salvation Army's STOP-IT Initiative Against Human Trafficking, the Salvation Army Partnership to Rescue our Minors from Sexual Exploitation (PROMISE), TraffickFree, and the DreamCatcher Foundation.

About International Justice Mission

International Justice Mission (IJM) is a global human rights organization that brings immediate relief to victims of violence, sexual exploitation, slavery and oppression. Since 2005, IJM has assisted more than 9,000 individuals, many of whom were victims of forced labor slavery or sex trafficking. A multi-national team of lawyers and law enforcement professionals conduct criminal investigations and collect evidence to relieve victims and bring perpetrators to justice, and IJM social workers secure appropriate aftercare for victims of abuse. IJM's multi-national staff work in 13 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America to ensure that the global poor are protected from violent forms of oppression by their countries' own laws.

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² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2009). Fact Sheet: Human Trafficking. Retrieved January 21, 2010 from http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking/about/fact_human.html