MARCH 2024

Human Trafficking Front

IMPACT & PROGRESS REPORT

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Human Trafficking Front

INTRODUCTION

Human Trafficking Front (HTF) is committed to ending human trafficking and online child sexual exploitation. We equip parents, relevant professionals, and community members with the knowledge and tools necessary to combat exploitation crimes both online and offline.

The landscape of child sexual exploitation has been irrevocably transformed by the internet. Nothing in history has brought such a profound shift in the character and practice of this heinous crime.

The internet, a tool once hailed for promoting human rights and providing opportunities for growth and education, has now become a double-edged sword for our children. While it offers them freedom of expression and access to a wealth of information, it also exposes them to grave risks, particularly the insidious threat of sexual exploitation.

Child sex trafficking has found fertile ground in the digital environment, where predators lurk behind screens, preying on innocent victims with impunity. The ease of hiding one's identity, connecting directly with children, coercing them into sharing explicit or exploitative images, and trading those images within vast criminal networks has never been greater.

The proliferation of the internet and mobile technology has facilitated every aspect of the crime of child trafficking and its related exploitation. Traffickers now use social media sites to recruit and groom their victims, while online classifieds serve as a marketplace for the sale of minors for sexual purposes. What was once confined to the streets and back alleys has now moved into the shadows of cyberspace.

Children, our most vulnerable members of society, are ill-equipped to navigate the complexities of online exploitation. They may not fully understand the concept of exploitation or grasp the consequences of their actions, making them easy targets for predators lurking in the digital realm.

Online child sexual exploitation and trafficking are not abstract concepts; they are alarming realities unfolding in real-time, transcending jurisdictional boundaries and involving multiple victims from different communities, states, and countries.

As responsible citizens, we cannot afford to remain complacent in the face of such atrocities. We must mobilize our collective efforts to combat this scourge, demanding more from technology companies, law enforcement agencies, and policymakers. We must strengthen safeguards, invest in advanced AI algorithms, and educate ourselves and our children about the dangers of online predators.

Let us stand together, united in our resolve to eradicate child sexual exploitation from the internet and digital platforms. Let us be the voice for those who cannot speak for themselves and ensure that every child can grow up in a world free from fear and exploitation.

MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADER

Dr. Beatriz Susana Uitts founded **Human Trafficking Front** to be a research and advocacy organization dedicated to the study and prevention of human trafficking, modern slavery, and online child sexual exploitation through research, education, and capacity-building programs.

The surge in online activity raises the risk of child sexual exploitation, affecting millions of children online. Exploitation takes various forms, facilitated by digital platforms, leading to increased child sex trafficking. Children are particularly vulnerable, necessitating urgent action. Addressing gaps in legislation is crucial as we strive to protect children online. Our mission is to ensure their safety through proactive measures and collaborative efforts across sectors, mitigating established realities and emerging threats like financial sexual sextortion and AI-generated content.

Main SDGs Targets related to the goals of the Center are to eliminate every form of violence against all women and girls in both the public and private spheres, including trafficking, sexual, and other types of exploitation (SDG 5.2), eliminating all harmful practices, such as child, early, and forced marriages and female genital mutilation (SDG 5.3), eradicating modern slavery among children and child labor in all its forms (SDG 8.7), and ending the abuse, exploitation, and trafficking of children (SDG 16.2).

> To effectively prevent and combat online child sexual exploitation, it is imperative that we establish stricter legal frameworks, ensure rigorous law enforcement, strengthen technology safeguards, provide comprehensive support services to child victims, enhance education on online child safety, and broaden public awareness campaigns. Crucially, all these actions must uphold the principle of the best interests of the child, ensuring that it applies universally in both online and offline contexts.

Vision and Mission

Human Trafficking Front is at the Forefront of Education, Training, and Advocacy to Prevent Human Trafficking and Online Child Exploitation

Vision

A world free of human trafficking, forced labor, and modern slavery, where the human dignity and fundamental rights of every person are respected and protected.

Mission

We are committed to:

- Advancing knowledge and responses towards ending abuse, exploitation, and trafficking, particularly that of women and children.
- Collaborating with governments, the business community, civil society organizations, and key stakeholders to strengthen a multi-faceted response that effectively prevents and addresses forms of human trafficking and modern slavery.
- Supporting concerted efforts to protect trafficking victims, their families, and children who have been abused and exploited via the internet and mobile technologies.

OUR ALLIES

Since 2020, Human Trafficking Front has been incredibly fortunate to work with and have the support of the following contributors and allies:

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

THE CHILDREN'S TRUST

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

THE MELISSA INSTITUTE
For Violence Prevention and Treatment

CHILDHOOD
WORLD CHILDHOOD FOUNDATION
FOUNDED BY H.M. QUEEN SILVIA OF SWEDEN

STU
The John J. Brunetti Human Trafficking Academy

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

The Miami Foundation
For A Greater Miami

josé maría vargas UNIVERSITY

WeProtect GLOBAL ALLIANCE

ITU Child Online Protection

Memorial Healthcare System

THE WOMEN'S FUND
MIAMI-DADE
WOMEN STRONG ■ WORLD STRONG™

THE PROBLEM IN NUMBERS

Internet child abuse can include grooming, coercion for explicit pictures, or sextortion. All these practices harm the minor. In addition, the Dark Web's growth, accessible solely via specialized software, amplifies online child sexual exploitation and harbors some of the most heinous forms of child abuse.

12 to 14

is the **average age of girls** of entry into **prostitution and pornography**

Online exploitation of children correlates with **higher likelihoods of experiencing severe abuse** such as torture and rape compared to offline cases

750,000

perpetrators are online at any moment, posing a threat to

800 million

children on social media

4.9 million

images and videos depicting child sexual abuse and exploitation **in Europol's repository only**

More than 36 million

instances of **online child sexual exploitation** reported in **2023**

88.3 million

child **sexual exploitation files** circulated **online** in **2022;** Out of these, **38% of images** and **22% of videos** were

unique

Dark web marketplaces that accept **cryptocurrency payments** for **child sexual exploitation images and videos** have

doubled

nearly every year since 2018

There was an increase of

over 300%

in **online grooming cases** from

2021 to 2023

FOCUS AREAS

Under a human rights-based and trauma-informed victim-centered approach, Human Trafficking Front assists first responders, relevant professionals, advocates, and community members to advance the understanding of human trafficking and online child sexual exploitation and improve responses to address and prevent these crimes through the following:

Research

The research team at HTF creates articles and guidelines detailing how online child exploitation arises, prevention methods, and policy responses. By staying informed, HTF has developed up-to-date strategies targeted at addressing modern issues.

Education

Human Trafficking Front offer specialized courses both in English and Spanish to train professionals to prevent, detect, and respond to online child exploitation. HTF also offers consultations on policy issues regarding human trafficking and cybercrimes against children.

Protection

Human Trafficking Front works to:

- Restore the lives of victims
- Increase information sharing and raise awareness
- Develop intervention strategies to prevent and reduce victimization

Advocacy

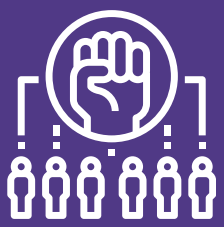
Human Trafficking Front campaigns raise awareness of online human trafficking and child exploitation to disseminate evidence-based victim-centered resources. In doing so we help develop early intervention and prevention strategies and restore the lives of victims.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

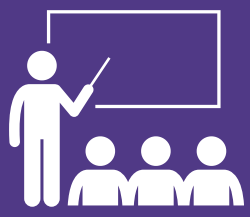
Our Vital Work

Human Trafficking Front fights for online child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA) victims and helps protect children from the worst forms of online abuse.

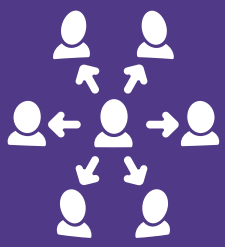
We empower parents, community members, and professionals with essential knowledge to challenge online child sexual exploitation.



Our teaching and capacity-building efforts have helped parents, investigators, and professionals identify and protect victims.



Putting an End to the Online Sexual Exploitation of Children: Preventing Victimization and Strengthening Child Protection Systems.

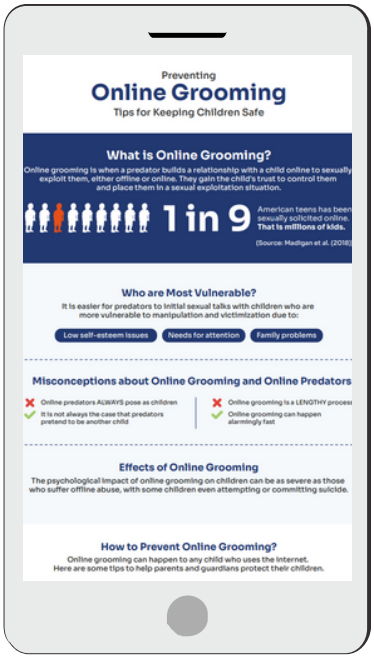


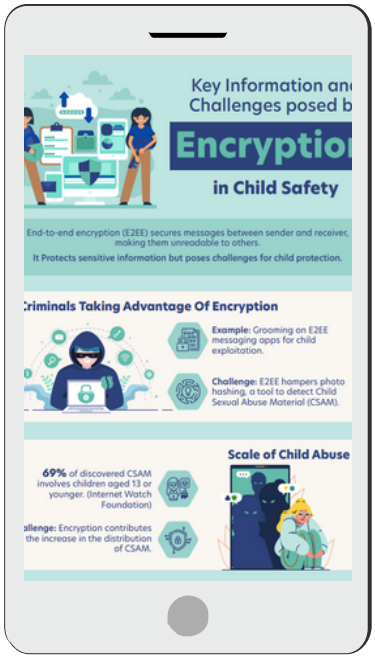
We promote informed public and private coordination as the best way to combat online abusers.

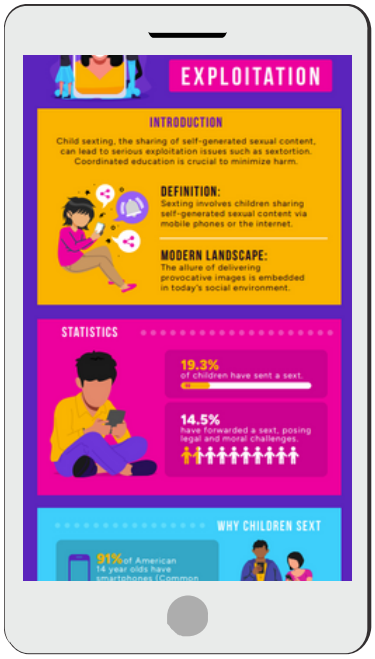
Stronger legislation and willing, conscientious internet platforms to form a powerful anti-child-abuse duo.

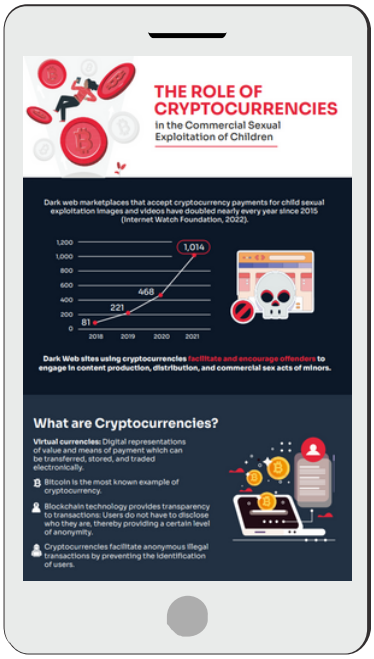
OUR HTF RESPONSE

Human Trafficking Front created and disseminated the following evidence-based Prevention Tools in the form of infographics to first responders, professionals serving children and youth, and parents, both in English and in Spanish:





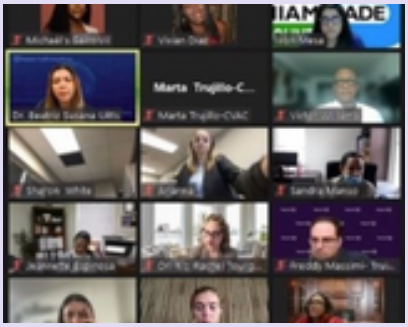




For convenient access to our evidence-based Prevention Tools, explore our Resources page at https://humantraffickingfront.org/resources/. Additionally, dive into our evidence-based blog articles for insights and strategies for early intervention at https://humantraffickingfront.org/blog/.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Human Trafficking Front works in collaboration with relevant authorities and the community for a *Stronger Greater Miami*:



January 27, 2023

Human Trafficking Front delivered a Specialized Educational Presentation at the Miami-Dade County 9th Annual Human Trafficking Conference to victim advocates, social service providers, and professionals delivering services to victims of violence from Miami Dade County' Community Action and Human Services Department.

January 30, 2023

Human Trafficking Front conducted a hybrid Specialized Educational Presentation at the 4th Annual Human Trafficking Awareness and Prevention Summit, which was held simultaneously at the Miami-Dade Medical Campus and on Zoom, to educate professionals and students on the possible risks faced by children in cyberspace.

April 5, 2023

Human Trafficking Front delivered a specialized best practices training focusing on the regulation of various non-cash forms of payment and the responsibility of internet companies to implement measures to protect children to students and professionals of the Business Associations Class at Louisiana State University Law.

April 5, 2023

Human Trafficking Front delivered a specialized best practices training focusing on the links between protecting children online and payment systems and lack of regulation opens the door to the exploitation of vulnerable children to students and professionals of Payment Systems Class at Louisiana State University Law.

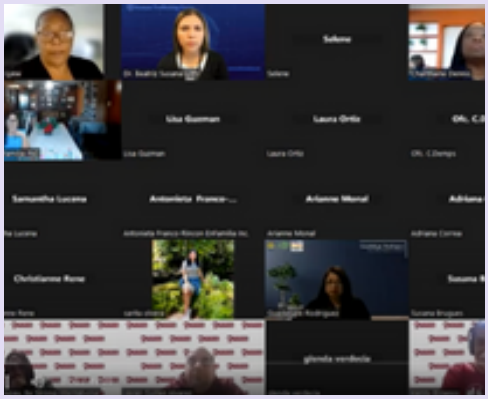
COMMUNITY IMPACT

April 7, 2023

Human Trafficking Front delivered a specialized best practices training to equip child protective investigators from the State of Florida Department of Children and Families to detect online crimes against children for sexual purposes and apply victim-centered approaches to respond to harm.

May 18, 2023

HTF conducted a specialized best practices training for law enforcement, including investigators and detectives, and professionals working in Homestead Police Department's victim services unit and other agency partners, including MUJER, Le Jardin, Be Strong Intl., Miami-Dade Count, Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County, International Rescue Committee, Kristi House, and EnFamilia.



May 24, 2023 (English)

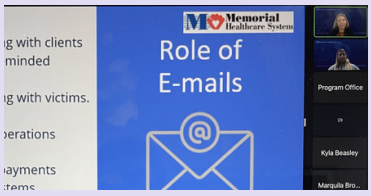
May 31, 2023 (Spanish)

In collaboration with One Miami Church, Human Trafficking Front conducted the webinar titled: Improving Child Safety on Social Media and Internet Platforms, aimed to educate parents and professionals in One Miami Church's congregation and its sister congregation in Broward County about online child sex trafficking. The webinar was also open to the Miami Dade Public Schools at the district level.

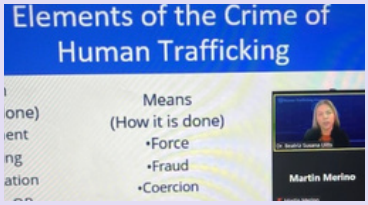
Human Trafficking Front delivered two specialized best practices trainings to professionals from the State of Florida Department of Children and Families, Child Protective Investigators to equip them to identify and respond to online crimes against children for the purpose of exploitation, and incorporate victim-centered and trauma-informed approaches in their response to cases of potential online abuse of children.

August 29, 2023

9:00am



2:00pm



COMMUNITY IMPACT

September 12, 2023

Human Trafficking Front was invited to deliver a specialized educational presentation at the Changemaking Festival hosted by Miami-Dade College Medical Campus to engage with doctors, nurses, and students within the healthcare sector and underscore their pivotal role in identifying and responding to the care and protection of children who are victims of online exploitation and abuse.

November 8, 2023

Human Trafficking Front conducted a best practices educational presentation for parents and guardians at the Pembroke Pines Charter Middle West Campus, focused on enhancing child safety on social media and internet platforms, raising awareness regarding trends in online CSEA, and equipping parents and caregivers with evidence-based strategies to protect children online.

December 21, 2023

Human Trafficking Front partnered with Vargas University to hold an evidence-based webinar on human trafficking's impact on children online for the Spanish-speaking community and equip participants with evidence-based tools to detect and respond to exploitation, especially concerning children on the internet.

HTF has proven success by instructing nearly 2,000 child-adjacent professionals and parents on best practices and child-centered and trauma-informed approaches.

UN ENGAGEMENTS

October 10, 2023

Human Trafficking Front was invited to present our Putting an End to the Online Sexual Exploitation of Children: Preventing Victimization and Strengthening Child Protection Systems. program at the 19th meeting of the Council Working Group on Child Online Protection to the UN ITU in Geneva, Switzerland.

October 16, 2023

Human Trafficking Front participated in the high-level meeting "Placing Child Protection at the Core of Sustainable Travel and Tourism" at the UN headquarters in NYC. Hosted by the World Childhood Foundation, the meeting featured keynote addresses by H.M. Queen Silvia of Sweden, H.E. Amina Mohammed, and Dr. Najat Maalla M'jid.

HTF SPECIAL THANKS

Human Trafficking Front extends sincere thanks to **Her Majesty Queen Silvia of Sweden, Her Royal Highness Princess Madeleine** and **World Childhood Foundation USA** for their partnership in combating CSEA, especially online. HTF is grateful for attending the **2023 Gala** and inspired by their unwavering commitment to this cause.

RESOURCES

Human Trafficking Front's founder and director, Dr. Beatriz Susana Uitts, published the book *Sex Trafficking of Children Online: Modern Slavery in Cyberspace* to offer new, important knowledge and a unique contribution to the field with a conceptual and contextual analysis of online child sexual exploitation in the context of human trafficking and modern slavery.

PARTNERSHIPS

Human Trafficking Front is honored to be listed in the National Human Trafficking Hotline's *Public Referral Directory* as a resource for professionals, community members, and survivors seeking training and support through the Hotline.

Human Trafficking Front joined UN ITU's Child Online Protection initiative, advocating urgent global action against the rapid rise of online child sexual exploitation. Our partnership aims to develop and implement effective legislation, policies, and programmatic measures to protect children online.

Human Trafficking Front became a proud member of the WeProtect Global Alliance, joining forces to promote strategies and solutions aimed at preventing and combating online CSEA. This partnership underscores our commitment to addressing the pressing need for global alignment to protect children online.

TESTIMONIALS

Human Trafficking Front collects feedback and testimonials from attendees and participants in order to identify our strengths and weaknesses to enable us to continuously improve our course delivery and content. Here are some examples:

Human Trafficking Front is a premier source of reliable and current information regarding the trafficking of children online. Dr. Beatriz Susana Uitts is not only a subject matter expert on this topic, but also an excellent facilitator of workshops. Dr. Uitts effectively presents in Spanish and English to various audiences, be it academic, professional, parents, or community members. She is passionate about this social issue and communicates her expertise in an empathetic manner.

Dr. Kelly Hernandez, Miami-Dade College, Medical Campus – One Miami Church

Excellent course. I truly appreciated that the course is data driven, evidence based, a approaches the problem from a global perspective

Principal Michael Castellano. Pembroke Pines Charter Middle School West Campus

The part of the training I enjoyed the most was being able to learn about different resources and how to obtain access to them.

Bryanna Duran, State of Florida Department of Children and Families. Child Protective Investigator

The aspect of the course that I liked the most was: In an age where technology is used in almost every aspect of our lives, and where children have become so technology literate, discussing online-grooming helped me gain a better understanding of how one can keep children/ teens safe while on the internet.

Brenda Itzep, Case Manager, MUJER

[We want to] let you know how appreciative we are that you came and gave your phenomenal presentation on this important and relevant topic. We got such great feedback and really value the fact that you made time for our school and our parents to share your knowledge on this topic. Thank you for all of the hard work that you do and for serving our kids and our community. We are lucky to have you advocating and protecting our kids and families. So... THANK YOU!

Mindi, PTSA President, Pembroke Pines Charter Middle School West Campus

El aspecto del curso que más me gustó fue: Los detalles de las estadisticas y las estrategias para cuidar de los niños.

David Pineda, One Miami Church

The aspect of the course that I liked the most was: How informative and up-to-date it was. It brought different perspectives on the topic which is very important for us who work in the field.

Larissa Duran. Health or social service provider.

LEADING WITH PURPOSE

Human Trafficking Front is guided by a scientific board of legal and violence prevention experts:

Board Members

Beatriz Susana Uitts
J.S.D.

Hortensia Núñez
Ph.D.

Enarda Cuni
LL.M.

Team

Founder and Director:
Dr. Beatriz Susana Uitts

Executive Assistant:
Ishka Rogbeer

Social Work Advisor:
Elizabeth Fornoni (LMSW)

Prevention Specialist:
Nicolette L. Polly

Legal Research Interns:
Katelyn Schickman
Nina Pitonakova
Vanessa Arnel V. Baptista

Dr. Beatriz Susana Uitts is a human rights specialist, Internet child safety advocate, and the founder of Human Trafficking Front. She holds a J.S.D. and LL.M. in Intercultural Human Rights from St. Thomas University College of Law in Miami Gardens, FL.

In her book, *Sex Trafficking of Children Online: Modern Slavery in Cyberspace*, she proposes solutions to prevent the spread of human trafficking and promote a safer Internet for children and adolescents worldwide.

Human Trafficking Front is at the forefront of preventing and combating human trafficking and modern slavery by equipping professionals with best practices, empowering communities to be less vulnerable to exploitation, and promoting more effective implementation of legal and policy frameworks that address prevention and protection. For further information see: **www.humantraffickingfront.org**

We thank you for your continued support in our efforts to contribute to the SDGs.

501(c)(3) non-profit organization
EIN: 84-4998853

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