The most frequently cited global statistics on human trafficking indicate
that men and boys represent nearly half of the total number of human
trafficking victims; yet the identification and proper care of male victims remains
an enormous challenge to governments and care providers around the world.
Too often, men and boys go unidentified and remain in perilous situations,
deprived of their freedom. When they do escape their trafficking situations,
they are likely to be neglected by governments and service providers whose
programs were established to shelter and assist women and girls. Instead of
being treated as exploited individuals, they are at greater risk of being penalized
or fined for offenses, such as crossing a border illegally, or of facing charges and
imprisonment for crimes committed as a result of being trafficked.

Male victims of forced labor have been found in nearly all work sectors, including
mining, forestry, construction, health care, factories, hospitality, and agriculture.
Recent investigative reports have documented the severe abuse of men on
fishing boats in South East Asia for years at a time and the exploitation of boys
in forced labor on fishing vessels on Ghana’s Lake Volta. In addition, there
have been recent reports of men forced to work in construction in Qatar as it
prepares for the 2022 World Cup and in agriculture in the UK and the United
States. Around the world, the sex trafficking of boys and men continues to be
hidden and underreported, and there is a severe shortage of programs to meet
their needs. For example, reports have documented boys sold into sex trafficking
in Afghanistan, including for bacha bazi, where men use young boys for social
and sexual entertainment. In the United States, men and boys are sold in the
illegal commercial sex industry.

Recent research has documented the physical and mental health impact of
human trafficking on men and boys who may have experienced physical and
sexual abuse and threats of violence, deprivation of basic nutrition and sanitation,
and loss of freedom of movement. Despite experiencing such conditions, male
survivors often do not initially see themselves as having been the victim of
the crime of forced labor. Instead they are likely to view their labor trafficking
situation as bad luck, their own “guiltiness,” and a “normal” consequence of
labor migration. This is reinforced by commonly accepted or traditional gender
roles or stereotypes in which men are expected to stand up for themselves and
provide for their families. In addition, authorities, such as immigration officers,
labor inspectors, and police, often do not recognize male victims due to biases
or the tendency to perceive males as less vulnerable to human trafficking or
erroneously view human trafficking as exclusively the sex trafficking of girls
and women.

Most programs established to assist trafficking victims do not focus on meeting
male survivors’ needs. In many countries, even when authorities identify a male
trafficking victim, there are few anti-trafficking programs able to provide men
or boys specialized assistance, especially safe housing.

Male survivors of trafficking need access to comprehensive and culturally
appropriate assistance to meet their needs, such as housing, medical care,
mental health services, legal support, and employment assistance, offered
through centers that tailor services to individuals, for example:

- **Housing**: Access to housing that is safe and has resources to meet
  their unique needs. The use of homeless shelters is often inadequate for
  traumatized male survivors.

- **Health**: Access to a wide range of trauma-informed physical and
  mental health services, including alternatives to traditional care such as
  peer-to-peer counseling.

- **Legal Support**: Access to legal support to ensure male survivors are
  aware of their rights, have access to legal proceedings, and are assisted
  in contacting consular services from their home country and seeking
  compensation for lost wages and injuries and other forms of restitution.

- **Employment Assistance**: Access to employment assistance that
  includes education, skills training, and job placement.

While some governments have made progress to improve the anti-trafficking
response for male victims, much work remains to ensure men and boys are not
overlooked or under-served. Governments should ensure services are sensitive
to the needs of all victims, regardless of gender, and adapt methodologies as
needed. All trafficking victims should be offered high quality individualized
assistance, supported in regaining control of their lives, and empowered to
make informed decisions about the options available to them.