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## Key Points

While technology can be used to facilitate the insidious practice of human trafficking, technology can also help combat it.

Microsoft is applying its experience in addressing technology-facilitated crime and investing in research, programs and partnerships to support human rights and advance the fight against human trafficking.

Issues related to human trafficking are particularly complex and there is no simple solution. Effective action in this fight is possible only through strong public-private partnerships and cooperation with intervention efforts that are founded in solid research and a nuanced understanding of the implications, consequences and impacts of action.

## Background

Awareness of human trafficking issues and the mobilization of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), governments and socially-responsible businesses to fight trafficking may well be at an all-time high, but the world has only scratched the surface in understanding the role that technology plays in facilitating human trafficking, let alone the multitude of ways that technology can be effectively employed to help fight it. Commercial sexual exploitation, forced labor and other forms of modern-day slavery are all horrific abuses of human rights in which technology considerations may be relevant. Unfortunately, due to the lack of evidence-based research, we do not know if there are more human trafficking victims as a result of technology, nor if law enforcement or NGOs can better identify perpetrators and victims through technology. There is also limited scientific research to understand which technological interventions might be most effective in this fight and which may hold unintended consequences that could end up doing more harm than good. In a world of limited resources, such complexity and uncertainty of knowledge results in wasteful, ineffective global investments. Advances in socio-technical research, privacy, interoperability and data sharing offer great potential to better employ technology to help address trafficking across jurisdictions, borders and agencies.

Anti-trafficking advocates, law enforcement and governments have long been working to combat human trafficking globally. However, similar to the fight against other forms of technology-facilitated crime, Microsoft believes technology companies also have an important role to play in driving deeper research and innovation to employ technology in effective disruption of the human trafficking trade. It



is both a technology issue and a human rights issue, making cross-sector cooperation essential.

## Microsoft's Approach

Microsoft recognizes its responsibility as a global corporate citizen to respect human rights and aid in the fight against human trafficking. Microsoft's approach builds on the Microsoft Global Human Rights Statement released in July 2012 in accordance with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Through the breadth of its products and services, as well as Microsoft Research's long history of collaborations with the academic community and the work of the Microsoft Digital Crimes Unit and the newly established Microsoft Technology and Human Rights Center, Microsoft has a unique opportunity to work with a range of stakeholders in combating trafficking globally. This effort includes:

**1. Research and Informed Innovation:** The first step to effective action is ensuring a strong baseline understanding of the problem and the potential impact of interventions. Human trafficking is an evolving issue and Microsoft is committed to investing in research and partnerships to drive a more scientific understanding of the role of technology in child sex trafficking. In December 2011, Microsoft Research and the Microsoft Digital Crimes Unit issued a request for proposals to advance academic research in the field. Six research teams were sponsored with Microsoft's \$185,000 grant focused on the role of technology in the advertising and sale of child sex trafficking victims and the purchase of victims by johns, with results anticipated to be released later in 2013. Microsoft is also collaborating with Harvard Kennedy School of Government and the University of Southern California Annenberg School on additional research, and is working with leading computer science institutions and NGOs on efforts such as the International Girls Only Hackathon which empower girls to be producers of technology innovation for this problem. It is Microsoft's sincere hope that through this research and continued collaboration across academia, government, law enforcement, NGOs and industry, we can help build a stronger foundation for progress in the fight against trafficking.

**2. Partnerships:** Microsoft has a long history of working with organizations and experts in diverse fields to help address some of the world's most pressing challenges and partnership will be essential in the fight against human trafficking. Microsoft has similarly been working with leading advocates and law enforcement agencies globally to help protect children against technology-facilitated sexual exploitation, and with the help of partners such as the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and through international initiatives such as PhotoDNA, we're beginning to see progress in the disruption of child pornography online. Today, PhotoDNA image-matching technology is used by NGOs, law enforcement and companies like Facebook, NetClean and Microsoft to help victims of sexual exploitation. Microsoft is a member of the Global Business Coalition Against Trafficking and is



also working with the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and the Council on Women and Girls as well as with leading U.S. state attorneys general, UN.GIFT, local police agencies and others on a variety of public-private initiatives to address human trafficking. In September 2010, Microsoft also joined the Thorn Foundation as a founding member of a technology task force with Facebook, Twitter, Google and others to explore new ways technology can address the child sex trafficking problem. In addition, Microsoft provides support for NGOs who are working to combat trafficking and support victims more broadly in communities and regions around the world, such as the Polaris Project, International Justice Mission and many more. Also, through partnerships, nonprofits and businesses, the Microsoft YouthSpark program aims to positively empower youth worldwide to imagine and realize their full potential by connecting them with greater education, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

**3. Policies and Best Practices:** As a technology service provider, Microsoft has a stake in ensuring its technologies and processes are not contributing to exploitation, including in its operations and those of its suppliers. All companies doing business with Microsoft must agree to abide by our Supplier Code of Conduct, which outlines required ethical business practices, employment practices, and compliance with environmental and worker safety requirements, and explicitly prohibits use of forced labor. Microsoft has invested heavily in a supply chain social and environmental accountability program for its hardware manufacturers, which includes independent third-party auditing to help ensure the Microsoft Supplier Code of Conduct and local and national regulations are met and/or exceeded by its packaging and hardware suppliers. If these standards are not met, suppliers risk remedial action including termination of their contract. Microsoft also uses technologies such as PhotoDNA on Bing, SkyDrive and Hotmail to help mitigate use of its online services for child sexual exploitation and the distribution of child pornography.

**4. Disruption:** As with many other forms of technology-facilitated crime, Microsoft believes that disruptive action can and will serve an important role in shifting the dynamics that fuel the trafficking trade. Through cooperative efforts that raise the costs, risks and difficulty of doing business for traffickers, we can make it a less appealing trade. While it is virtually impossible to eliminate all crime, there exists great potential to have a dramatic positive impact on the problem. Microsoft is working with leaders in the anti-trafficking community to collaborate on creative research-founded disruptive approaches to human trafficking.



## Best Practice Recommendations

Microsoft supports the enactment and enforcement of human trafficking laws that recognize and protect victims while holding traffickers accountable.

Researchers and technology companies should continue to work proactively with governments, law enforcement, advocates and others in the anti-trafficking community to help understand and address the abuses of technology to facilitate trafficking, investigate effective research-based intervention techniques and establish industry best practices and guidance. Best practices can include investment in scientific research, enforcement of codes of conduct, the provision of mechanisms for customers to report potential problems, increased visibility of trafficking hotlines and information for victims and cooperation with non-governmental organizations and law enforcement on anti-trafficking initiatives.

## Helpful Resources

[Microsoft's Global Human Rights Statement](#)

[Microsoft's academic research initiative on child sex trafficking](#)

[Microsoft Citizenship](#)

[Microsoft Digital Crimes Unit](#)

[Microsoft Research](#)

[Microsoft PhotoDNA](#)

[Technology and Trafficking: A Project of USC Annenberg](#)

[U.S. State Department Trafficking in Persons Report](#)

[The Polaris Project](#)

[Global Business Coalition Against Trafficking](#)