with Darrell L. Bock, Matthew Williams, Barry D. Jones, and Kim Jones
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Darrell Bock: Welcome to The Table, where we discuss issues involving God and culture and our topic today is one which is something a lot of people don’t know a lot about: human trafficking. And so I have brought in three guests to discuss this with us. I have to my right Barry Jones, who is responsible for spiritual formation here on campus and chairs the department that is responsible for spiritual formation. Barry’s office happens to be right next door to mine here on campus. His wife Kim Jones, who is here with us who’s work in a ministry that’s involved in human trafficking you’ll be hearing more about. And then Matt Williams, who is with us via Skype from Tennessee where he is involved in a ministry that is very engaged with activity on the continent of Africa. So I think to begin I’ll just let each of you tell your story about how you’re involved with human trafficking and how you came to be involved with it. Matt, I’ll let you start us off. How – tell us a little bit about the organization you work with and tell us how you got involved in this topic.

Matt Williams: Okay, great. I work for an organization called Exile International. Now, we provide rehabilitation to former child soldiers and war-affected kids in Northern Uganda and Eastern Congo. These war-affected kids are not just former child soldiers, but the girls are often trafficked as sex slaves as well. Yeah, that’s the short version. You want a longer one?

Darrell Bock: So, yeah, how’d you get into this? I mean, it doesn’t sound like – I mean, you're a seminary grad. Most seminary grads end up in a church, so how did you end up out there in Tennessee connected to Africa?
**Matt Williams:** Gotcha. I was a seminary grad in the counseling program. Early on in the counseling program I visited Uganda after a documentary about child soldiers. And after seeing the need firsthand of the former child soldiers and rehabilitation needs from post-traumatic stress, I knew that’s where I was going to use my training. So I started honing the rest of the program towards understanding trauma, understanding sexual abuse and any other type of trauma that there was any research out there on. And after graduating from DTS, just a mutual friend connection landed me with Exile. I looked on their web page, read their mission statement, and it was kind of the mission statement of my life. I knew I had to get connected, so I began bombarding their executive director till she would finally meet with me. Eventually got a 15-minute meeting, which turned into an hour and a half. They’d been saying they were praying for a male therapist to come alongside them, and I was praying to find them, so it was a perfect fit.

**Darrell Bock:** Oh, great. And how long have you been with them now?

**Matt Williams:** About 15 months.

**Darrell Bock:** Oh, wow. That’s great. And you told me you’d spent four months out of last year in Africa itself. Is that right?

**Matt Williams:** Yeah, four months out of last year working alongside our partners there.

**Darrell Bock:** That’s amazing. Well, we’ll hear more details in a moment. Kim, why don’t you talk about how you got involved in this area?

**Kim Jones:** Well, for me, first of all, I’m a stay-at-home mom. I homeschool my kids, so I’m sort of the person who you would think is least likely to get involved in this kind of issue. But for me I guess it was about six years ago, Ashley Judd was interviewing Madeleine Albright. In that interview she basically said two words that I’d never heard of before and those were human trafficking. And it just caught my imagination, caught my mind. And afterwards, I thought, I need to find out more about this, started looking into it and just researching, went all over the Internet. And to be honest with you, at first it was overwhelming to me because, again, I’m a mom, I homeschool my kids and what kind of response can I give? What – this is too great for me. This is too big for me. And to be honest with you, I actually put it away and just said I can’t do anything.
But then God, I think, just kept pursuing me and it kept coming back up again and again and again. And one organization in particular that kept coming to the forefront for me was Love 146, and it’s an organization that started their work primarily in Southeast Asia specifically doing aftercare in the Philippines and so from there have just volunteered with them, recently was in Southeast Asia and have just – God has just given me a heart and has opened a lot of doors for me in terms of giving awareness and just a lot of different opportunities, opportunities that I thought I would never have.

**Darrell Bock:** Interesting and, Barry, how’s your – what’s your connection to this? You're along for the ride?

**Barry Jones:** In a lot of ways I am. My academic work is in spiritual formation, and I for a long time really have felt strongly about the idea that our becoming engaged in the needs of the world, responding to issues of justice and caring for the marginalized is part of our becoming like Jesus. But it was really my wife that brought me to a greater awareness of this particular issue and how those things are connected. In addition to the work that I do here at the seminary, I’m also a teaching pastor at Irving Bible Church, which is a very missional globally minded church. And so through the connection then that Kim and I have there, we’ve been able to see IBC connect with Love 146 and be involved in some of the initiatives that they're doing both internationally and domestically, some of the cool things that are going on here. And so in a lot of ways I have been along for the ride, but the more that I’ve learned really through Kim, the more passionate about this particular issue I think I’ve become as well.

**Darrell Bock:** Yeah, my path of discovery of this topic goes back to a global meeting that I attended in Thailand. And we went to a seminar and I was expecting the normal mission seminar on here’s what the church does and here’s what the church is doing in Thailand. And lo and behold, one of the key ministries that was – that we were presented was an outreach that the church was doing in relationship to human trafficking, rescuing girls from that situation. And in the midst of it they quoted a whole series of statistics and things that showed how pervasive this was in certain parts of the – certain parts of Asia. And it was like two things coming together that I had never thought about connecting and being connected and being related to one another.
And you mentioned the spiritual formation dimension, which I think is important. I liked – when I teach about Jesus and the Gospels, talk about how Jesus presents the word of the message of the Gospel, and then he immediately goes out and ministers in such a way that reinforces it so that there’s a combination of word and service that come together that you see side by side. Luke 4 is probably the best illustration of this. You see him preaching in the synagogue about release to the captives and that kind of thing. He’s dealing with his outreach, particularly to the marginalized. And then in the very next scene he’s in Capernaum and he’s healing people who are one the edge and on the fringe that society has forgotten about, that kind of thing.

And so this kind of audiovisual support for what the Gospel is fundamentally about is very, very important dimension of the total equation. And so when I encountered this in Thailand, I thought to myself, well, I may not have brought these two things together, but it really does fit. There is something that belongs here, belongs together.

Let’s talk a little bit about human trafficking. Matt, I’m going to ask you since you're involved directly in the ministry. Talk a little bit about the kinds of human trafficking. What exactly are we talking about? There might be some people listening to this who’ve never even heard the phrase so having no idea what we’re talking about. So why don’t you help us get our hands around what it is that we’re considering.

**Matt Williams:** Okay. I think starting with one statistic will help you start getting your mind around it. About 27,000,000 slaves are alive today, and then the FBI estimates about 2,000,000 more are trafficked each year. And this slavery a lot of times is – human trafficking is multiple categories of sex trafficking, girls who are trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation. About 70 percent of girls involved in prostitution are pimped out. I don’t know that there’s a more …

**Darrell Bock:** Delicate way to say it, yeah.
**Matt Williams:** That’s just coming from some statistic put together by Half the Sky and Half the Sky Movement, and any version of that is sex trafficking. They are there not of their own free will, and there’s no real easy way out. And I think the church has a unique opportunity to help provide a way out for a woman who all she has ever known is sexual exploitation, that’s abducted as a young child and forced to commit acts that leave you with heavy marks of shame and guilt. And then to maybe even have a child and not to be able to take care of that child without this means of income or if, I guess, if you’re lucky enough to have income from it.

But then moving on, also there is forced labor, which is a huge problem across the world that 27,000,000 accounts for that as well and then on my side as well with child soldiering would also be forced against your to be a part of the forced labor.

**Darrell Bock:** So we’ve got three categories that you’ve mentioned. One are girls who oftentimes are just abducted or caught off the street. I take it they’re young teenage or even preteenage oftentimes. Is that right? Yeah, go ahead, Kim.

**Kim Jones:** Sorry. Yeah, well, it depends. There’s a variety. I mean, you find that gangs are actually involved in it now. It’s sometimes found with families as well. You have mothers selling their daughters because perhaps they can’t pay their rent or they need to pay for their drugs, and so in order to get their drugs they sell their child. Or you’ve got grandparents that are doing it as well so you have – it’s not necessarily the idea of just going out and taking a child, which that inevitably does happen, but you see it in a variety of ways.

And one of the statistics that I found to be quite alarming when I first got involved was that the average age of entrance into prostitution is 13. And so, for example, there’s an organization here in Dallas called New Friends New Life that works with women exiting the sex industry. And inevitably when they talk with these women, you will find that their stories point back to around this age and that they had been exploited.

And so I think in some ways when we think about the word prostitution, when we think about the things that go along with that, we have to change the way that we think, that it’s not a choice, that inevitably it was something that had been done to them exploited at such a young age that becomes a cycle that they, quite frankly, it’s very difficult to break.
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**Barry Jones:** I think it’s also important to note Kim has been to Southeast Asia, three different countries there, and seen just the horror of this on the streets there. Mark has seen how this has impact on the continent of Africa. It is a huge problem internationally, but we also have to wrestle with the reality that it’s also very much domestic problem. It wasn’t that long ago that there was a police sting operation that took place at a hotel that it’s five minutes away from where Kim and I live. And they just set up an operation there where they called a number that they found off of the Internet to solicit prostitutes. They called the first number. A woman showed up. They arrested her. Second number, a woman showed up. They arrested her. Third call that they made completely unintentionally, a woman showed up with a 15-year-old girl. And they had to shut down the operation because suddenly they were confronted with something they were unprepared for. Other stories of things that have happened right down the street from us literally. I’m pastor at a church in Irving, and there was a situation not long ago where a little girl was picked up. Thirteen-year-old girl picked up from a basketball game by a couple of guys who were going to take her to get a tattoo, and she was gone for ten days, held against her will and forced into …

**Kim Jones:** She was sold again and again and again, yeah.

**Barry Jones:** And so I think that’s one of the things that has been so alarming to learn is that this isn’t just something that happens internationally, though it is rampant and we have a responsibility to be aware of and respond to that. But it’s also something that’s happening here domestically as well.

**Darrell Bock:** Yeah, it was surprising in preparation for this last night, I sat down, you know, do what anyone does is getting oriented. And I just went and Googled human trafficking and what was interesting was the sub-bar, sidebar on the bottom. You know, when you sometimes Google, you get the subtopics, and it was human trafficking in Dallas, human trafficking in Texas, all little sub-areas. And so I hit – I clicked on the Dallas one just to see what was happening locally, and there had been periodic stories over the last year about the situation here in Dallas because I do think that a lot of people tend to think oh, that happens elsewhere. It happens overseas, but it isn’t going on in the States.
Okay, that’s one kind. That’s the human trafficking involving sexuality. Let’s – we have two other categories we kind of have to overview, but before I do that, Matt, you have anything you want to add to what we’ve said about the sexual human trafficking issue?

*Matt Williams:* No, I think Kim and Barry did a great job giving you an overview there.

*Darrell Bock:* Let’s go to the forced labor. What exactly does that involve because that may be a little more of an ambiguous category. I’ve read stuff because I’m not directly involved with this, but I’ve read stuff that says sometimes it involves the way in which people are allowed to immigrate from – into a country, that kind of a thing. So what does forced labor involve, Matt?

*Matt Williams:* Wow, what does it involve? It involves somebody being forced to work against their own will. Perhaps they're not being paid or they're being underpaid. There’s indentured servitude where someone is offered an opportunity to come to the United States. Hey, you're going to work off your debt, but when you get here, I’m going to provide you with a place to stay and your meals, and I’m going to charge you more than you're actually making, so you become eternally indebted to this person. So it is forced labor so that’s another means in which people are trafficked. But even locally whether that’s within the United States or within communities outside of the United States where men, women and children are forced to work in camp situations or in warehouse situations where it’s sunup to sunset – work, sleep, work – and there’s no foreseeable way out.

*Darrell Bock:* And I’ve even seen descriptions of these warehouses and camp situations where you're brought to a location. You're literally not allowed to leave. I mean, you are basically there and the grip that keeps someone there is that it is they are given very, very basic levels of sustenance but that’s it so …

*Matt Williams:* Or there’s the threat of death, not only your own death but then the threat of “We’ll harm your family. We’ll take your children so help us.”
Kim Jones: Or even if they’ve taken the children, then they threaten the children that “We’ll kill your parents.” You see that in Africa where you see the harvesting of the cocoa beans. Chocolate’s a big issue right now in terms of child slavery there, and we have a lot of large companies throughout the world that really are kind of looking away at where they are getting their beans from and how they're being harvested. And these things are happening there. They're getting the children. They're coerced. They say, “Hey, we want to provide you a better life. Hey, c’mon with me.” And when you're in a situation where your village is struggling, whatever it means. It could be in Africa or it could even be here in the US. There’s a struggle for survival. And coercion … people can be convinced to do things when they're barely getting by.

Darrell Bock: Right.

Kim Jones: And so then they find themselves in these situations. A lot of children find themselves in these situations being treated in horrible ways, never being able to be released. They're always told “You can work this off” but eventually they're not. But even here in the United States I think there’s some things that we don’t even realize as well is that the service industry, people that are serving us in our restaurants or our dry cleaners or perhaps the girls who are doing our nails, pedicures, manicures. The things that we need to be open to is being aware of who it is that is in our lives, questioning. You find people that if you're in situations like that and they don’t have freedom to move about or perhaps their identification is kept. They don’t have the ability to get a license or they don’t have – so you’ve got some signs. You’ve got some things that are pointing to questionable things that are happening.

Darrell Bock: Yeah, there was one site I looked at last night. It was actually a piece written by a lawyer here in the United States talking about how difficult it is in some cases to discover that, in fact, human trafficking is going on. And it was a piece written to suggest some things to look for and how to recognize that it might be going on and this is a local lawyer. This is, you know, he’s talking about local situations. Barry, you have anything you want to add?
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**Barry Jones:** No, I thought of a story that David Batstone tells in his book Not For Sale, a great Christian perspective on this whole subject. And he tells a story about being in a restaurant and just noticing some things that seemed a little out of sorts with regards to some of the folks that were working there and through a process of discovering coming to find out that, indeed, these were people who were really — they had been promised opportunity if they came and essentially coerced to stay and serve kind of trying to pay off this debt that they could never get out from under. And so, again, it really is a matter of having open eyes to see, take notice of what’s going on all around us.

**Darrell Bock:** Okay, now the third area that we’ve raised is what you’ve called forced soldiering, Matt, and this is one that I know you're directly, very directly involved with in Africa. Let’s talk about that area. And that involves children of all kinds of ages, doesn’t it?

**Matt Williams:** Yeah, all ages. I mean, we’ve seen children as young as four abducted, though at that age that’s not the most common. But the target age is around 7 to 14 years old because at that age they're old enough to carry a weapon but they're young enough to be molded, shaped and brainwashed. And oftentimes these children are forced to commit terrible acts when they're first abducted so that they're not able to return to their communities, so that they're not able to return to their families. And in some of the worst cases, some of them are even forced to kill their own family members when they are first abducted. So now not only will their community not welcome them, but they have no family to run away to.

But this is a really common practice in many countries in Africa. We work just in Uganda and DR Congo, but it’s very prevalent and very well documented. There’s organizations working in multiple countries. Sierra Leone is just one of many where this is also a major issue. I don’t have that statistic in front of me, but I want to say it’s around 200,000 is the estimated number of child soldiers currently being utilized in Africa as a continent. This is not the only continent this is happening. It’s happening in other places of the world as well. Even the Congolese government themselves are officially using child soldiers until 2008 and 2009 when they began their own disarmament program supposedly. But, well, I won’t get into politics.

**Darrell Bock:** Well, I actually was going to take you there next. Now, this is something — is this something the United Nations is involved in or not?
Matt Williams: Yeah, we actually have a little bit of involvement with them in Congo. They could be doing a bit more for sure. They do – they are helping get a lot of kids out. Since a recent – about a year, year and half ago, a man named Thomas Lubanga was tried and convicted by the International Criminal Court. He’s the first man convicted of child soldiering by the International Criminal Court. And after that the UN at least in Congo has struck up a deal with some of the rebel leaders where as long as they’ll give over any of the children under 18, they won’t, I guess, prosecute them or pursue them as heavily. So a lot of children have actually been released in the last two to three years there, about 40,000 officially. That just means that they’ve gone through some official channels as in the UN, but there’s many others who haven’t actually gone through those channels. But where the gap is is really rehabilitation and what do you do with these kids after you are able to remove them from the rebel groups? Where do they go? They have no community, no home to go to.

Darrell Bock: And so the difficulty here is that we’ve got this situation going on. It’s clear that it’s exploitation of other human beings. I can’t think of something more fundamentally a violation of the great commandment than what we’re discussing in many ways. And yet, the problem is these people feel very trapped. They have the sense there’s no place to go. There’s no way out. And so the next logical question is all right so where then does the ministry come in? Where does – what is or what could be and can be the responses to this situation going on? What kind of ministries exist and what – how do they help? Matt?

Matt Williams: Okay, wasn’t sure that was for me.

Darrell Bock: Yeah.

Matt Williams: There’s a few key areas where they're in need. Oh, first I would say is prevention. What can we do to make the world aware, make individuals aware? Not only aware but then also to take action so prevention, protection, protection so that it cannot happen to children. What steps or what policies, what procedures need to be in place so that children are protected? Prosecution is a key element. International Justice Mission does a phenomenal job all across the world, and that is one of their key focuses is prosecution so that there is a deterrent. So many countries there is no deterrent.
I spent some time in Cambodia working with a rehabilitation center there run by a Somali mom, and one issue that they run into is that many of these traffickers or these gangs and these rings have the cooperation of the government. There are local police there who have no motivation to do anything about it, and they often have motivation to assist the crimes. And then also finally the last category would be reintegration, so how do you reintegrate these children and these women back into society?

**Darrell Bock:** And so what is it that your ministry does there in Africa?

**Matt Williams:** Our primary focus is rehabilitation, rehabilitation and reintegration. For example, most children after they are released from a rebel group, they’re not wanted within any community. They’re not welcomed back into school or anything really.

**Darrell Bock:** They are totally orphaned, in fact.

**Matt Williams:** They are totally orphaned, yes, whether or not they actually have family. So it’s our goal to provide rehabilitation so they can get back on their feet and also a launching pad. Recently when I was there on this last trip about two months ago, I was able to visit with the headmasters of their schools. And he was able to explain to me how they typically do not welcome former child soldiers into their school. They cause problems. I mean, if you think – bring it into the context that more of us are familiar with, with gangs. If a child had been in a gang from adolescence or in early teen and all of the sudden he was released, he’s only known a few ways to get what he wanted, and most of those were not the most pure ways to get what you wanted. Many times it was by gunpoint or by theft. So understandably so, these headmasters don’t want these children in their schools.

But he was able to explain that these children that are now going through the rehabilitation programs that we have, they’re the leaders at the school. They’re the ones he can count on to actually take care of their business. So it’s awesome to be able to hear those stories and know that rehabilitation is possible, but someone has to help. Someone has to provide that rehabilitation place and then a launching pad for them to be empowered to hopefully become leaders because those kids that have survived, there’s a reason they survived. Many of them die, but those that have survived have a tenacity and a strength that they have the capability to become leaders. So we’re hoping, we’re praying and we’re actively pursuing restoring them and empowering them to do so.
Darrell Bock: And, Kim, what have you seen in the ministry that you’ve been involved with in terms of what can be done?

Kim Jones: Yeah, Love 46 specifically – well, they first started in the area of aftercare, and what they actually went to Southeast Asia to do was sort of on a fact finding mission, if you will. And while they were there, I believe they went with International Justice Mission. I believe they were there with them, and they were there in an undercover operation. And while they were there, they saw little girls that were standing behind glass windows, and they were in these individual little rooms that had little TVs that they were sitting and they were like four, five, six, seven, eight-year-old girls wearing little red dresses watching cartoons and seemingly just so innocent. And all of them wore numbers, and those numbers basically were for the men to identify which one they wanted. And so when you figured out which one you wanted, you basically gave the number and they would provide you with that child.

But there was one child in particularly and her number was 146 that still had this sort of look in her eye like “I’m not giving up”, that tenacity, that thing that I think that Matt spoke about: “You know what? This is not going to take me down. This is not going to get me.” And it was for her that the program – that the organization Love 146 was begun.

And what they recognized was that once these girls were rescued, once an organization like IJM went in, there needed to be an aftercare. There needed to be a place where these girls primarily – little girls, teenagers, preteens – could go and be rehabilitated in a holistic way: spiritual, education, providing for basic needs.

And so they started the Roundhouse, which is in the Philippines and there is a woman by the name of Guendalina Velasco – I believe that’s how her name is pronounced – and she is fantastic. She’s like a Mother Teresa. She has gone in and, like I said, I was in Southeast Asia, went to multiple different countries and got to go to the Roundhouse in the Philippines and me the girls there in the Roundhouse and it was the most wonderful experience I’d ever had. And it was just neat to see how God transformed these girls’ lives. Girls that had been so broken down and, quite frankly, the world around them didn’t want them and the shame that they were struggling with. And Guendalina has created this program that now she has been training other people, other organizations throughout the world. They have had an excellent success rate in terms of reintegration after they go through the program.
They have just received, I believe, six little girls that have been exploited, have been trafficked and it’s been neat to watch. And while I was there, they had sort of this thing called the Roundtable, which it’s kind of like a soup kitchen if you will for exploited children that they find on the street. And they come in and they just fill their bellies and – but the girls from the Roundhouse come and it’s sort of that wounded healer type of thing, and it’s so beautiful to watch them do that.

So there’s aftercare that is definitely needed, but then one of the other areas that I’ve seen that is huge is also prevention. Here is the US, I mean, they are doing prevention programs in Cambodia as well working with the military, going in and basically teaching them even about abuse, starting at that place, abuse within the family but then beyond that, the exploitation of women in general. And then here in the US prevention in terms of kids, going into the high schools and middle schools and really talking about what does – what is pimping? What is basic terminology, street terminology that kids are talking about that it’s in the music. It’s in their everyday lives and really sort of pointing to things that say hey, this is not okay, trying to help rewire what perhaps the culture has told them to be true. So prevention, aftercare are the two areas that I have worked in and then also, of course, awareness. Really a program like that just bringing that awareness is the first step in making advances and change in this problem. Awareness is a huge thing.

**Barry Jones:**

I remember the night that Kim and I met Rob Morris, who is one of the founders and now the president of Love 146. And having this conversation with Rob he said, “You know, the work that we have done has been like a triage at the bottom of a cliff,” right, these kids that have fallen off the cliff. They pick them up and bandage them. They help be a part of this healing and restoration/rehabilitation process. But he said, “What I really want us to be about is actually getting up to the top of the cliff and seeing that they don’t fall off to begin with. What can we do to actually rescue them on the front end?” And they're doing some great work.
And so that’s one of the things that, as a pastor, we’ve tried to bring awareness to this issue with our congregation. And oftentimes what happens is people become so disturbed they want to do something. And I remember talking to a woman – we had a Sunday that we dedicated to this issue – and I preached and talked a lot about it, and a woman came to me afterwards and she was ready to go kick down the door of a brothel, right? And yet, the fact of the matter is that most of us can’t be involved in that direct work of intervention like what organizations like IJM are a part of. But we can be involved in bringing awareness to this issue and then a sense of holistic prevention.

So the work that we do when we’re involved in our church sending mentors into local schools and working with at-risk kids, being involved – we have an organization that we work with here locally that is going into the juvenile detention centers and working with the girls. It’s Alert Ministries and it’s those kinds of things that don’t seem to be directly connected to human trafficking, but it’s part of this greater sense of holistic prevention because it’s these at-risk kids that find themselves being exploited. It’s kids that run away from home. One of the statistics is that one out of three kids that runs away from home or is kicked out will be exploited within 48 hours of leaving the home.

**Darrell Bock:** Wow.

**Barry Jones:** And so how can we get into these kinds of situations and respond to help provide that kind of holistic prevention for the kids that have the potential of being exploited.
Kim Jones: Yeah, I kind of go back to that phrase that I heard years ago “it takes a village” and it really, really does in this particular issue. And I think for the church, the church is the prime place for this, I think, change to take place. The church has the ability to work in just a multitude of areas that really directly affect this issue. Barry and I were always talking about even something his mother who’s a grandmother who goes down to the Salvation Army and provides books, and she goes down and she helps to put a reading program together. Those things count. Those things matter because it does affect those at-risk kids, and so I feel like the church needs to identify things in their area. Again, it’s back when we were talking about just knowing who your server is, knowing who the person is that’s taking your dry cleaning. But it’s also knowing the needs of your community. I think that a lot of us walk through life somewhat sleepwalking. We get very directed about where we’re going, what we’re doing, and we forget to look up. We forget to look up and look around to the people that God has put in our lives and that’s our community. And the church I feel like is really being called to connect with the community and meet needs that are not being met.