

Human Trafficking and the Church's Response

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Introduction

2011 was ushered in with hope for Ayanda, a 17 year old girl from Umlazi, Durban, as she got on the bus heading for Pretoria. She had answered a job advertisement in the newspaper and was delighted that she had actually been accepted. The young girl's delight, however, soon turned into a nightmare on her arrival. She was locked into a room by her employer where subsequently she was forced to sleep with more than 20 men a day. Food was only given to her in the evening. Eventually Ayanda was put on the street to attract clients. It was then she plotted her escape. With the help of the police Ayanda was brought to a place of safety and her "boss" was arrested.¹

Ayanda's story is, unfortunately, one of many similar stories in this new millennium. Human trafficking has once again raised its ugly head and is, of late, topping the list of crime stories around the world. Kevin Bales estimates that there are at least 27 million slaves in the world today with over 1 million people being trafficked each year.² The IRIN report of the 12th December 2011, states that at any given time an estimated 130,000 people in sub-Saharan Africa are engaged in forced labour as a result of trafficking.³ There is no doubt that this highly lucrative business is on the rise in Africa and indeed all over the world. According to Nicholas Kristof & Sheryl Wudunn, authors of *Half The SKY*, far more women and children are shipped into brothels each year, than were African slaves shipped each year into slave plantations in the early 18th and 19th centuries.⁴

Human Trafficking is not only a highly lucrative business but also a very hidden phenomenon. One of the main purposes of the Counter Trafficking in Persons Office (CTIP), a joint project of the Leadership Conference of Consecrated Life (LCCL) and the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC) established in 2008, has been that of educating people about human trafficking so as to protect potential victims.

It is thanks to the United Nations for sounding the alarm when they met in Palermo, South of Italy in 2000. They created a protocol to ensure that there was a universal document that addresses all aspects of human trafficking and then called on states to put measures in place to combat this terrible evil.⁵ The protocol entered into force on December 25, 2003. and by the end of 2009, 117 states had signed and 133 states were party to the protocol.⁶ Included in the signatories at Palermo was South Africa, who in turn ratified the agreement in 2004.⁷ In the meantime most of the SADC countries have ratified the agreement and Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique and Zambia are among those who have put legislation in place. South Africa has not yet done so. The Bill as it now stands has been passed in Parliament and by the Houses of the Provinces. All that remains is for it to be signed by the President for it to come into law.

Understanding what human trafficking is

Human trafficking is far more complex than people think. It has often been confused with smuggling people across borders, which it is not, although there may be a considerable overlap. Neither can it be equated with cheap labour or prostitution as such. Article 3 of the United Nations' Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, (known as the Palermo Protocol), defines trafficking as:

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.⁸

They see it as a process consisting of three phases namely: (i) recruitment (ii) transportation, and (iii) exploitation. The Palermo convention established the ground-rules and basic mechanisms for inter-country cooperation to tackle this transnational crime. Trafficking, however, can occur within national boundaries as is the case with South Africa.

The term "Modern Day Slavery" gives us a deeper insight. It is true that in our post-modern liberal world we find it incomprehensible that slavery still exists; that people become the property of someone else; are bought and sold, transported all over the world and their labour exploited but this is human trafficking in essence.

Challenges to the Government in combating Human Trafficking

As in other parts of Southern Africa, South Africa has many of the conditions traffickers capitalise on: endemic poverty; unemployment that creates a demand for better opportunities; high rates of regular and irregular migration that mask the movements of traffickers and their victims. The country is often referred to as the economic giant of Africa and is seen as a source, destination and transit country for human trafficking. It is also commonly regarded as the main country of destination within the SADC region for human trafficking.

There is the added problem of porous borders, which makes border control difficult. South Africa shares borders with 6 other countries. It has 72 official ports of entry and a number of unofficial ports of entry where people come in and out without being detected. This has left the country open, as a ripe hunting ground for trans-national criminal organisations as well as the small-scale local syndicates that recruit locals - be they acquaintances, friends or family members.

Both internal and external trafficking are sources of concern. Research has shown that there are long-distance flows to South Africa of women trafficked from Thailand, Philippines, India, China, Bulgaria, Romania, Russia and the Ukraine.; women and children trafficked to South Africa from within the African continent are mostly from Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Swaziland and Lesotho.⁹ Organisations working with trafficked women say that more than 1000 Mozambican women are trafficked each year, mostly to South Africa.¹⁰

Women and young girls are favourite targets for well-organised trafficking rings. Besides the demand from certain types of men for sex with children, there is the demand for sexual

services linked to tourism development. Clients prefer younger girls whom they believe are less likely to be infected by HIV/AIDS. With locals there is also the legend that AIDS can be cured by sex with a virgin and these beliefs have increased the demand for girls as young as 10 or 11 years being kidnapped and sold for the purpose. Young boys, although trafficked to be beggars, street vendors, housebreakers and drug runners, are more and more being trafficked for commercial sex.

A condition laid down by the Palermo Protocol to suppress human trafficking is that ratifying states adhere to its minimum requirements viz:

- Criminalise human trafficking
- Investigate, prosecute and convict traffickers
- Undertake border control measures
- Provide measures to protect and assist victims
- Train law enforcement and border officials
- Inform and educate victims, potential victims and general public
- Cooperate with each other and civil society

In response to the requirements of the Palermo Protocol, the South African Government is to be commended for its efforts at a coherent and integral approach to the problem. It launched its anti-trafficking National Plan of Action *Tsiriledzani* in 2009 after some lengthy workshops in which I as representative of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference took part. An "Intersectoral Task Team" was first set up at national level by the SOCA unit (Sexual Offences) of the NPA (National Prosecution Authority). The European Union provided 6.3 million euros for the launch of this project. With the help of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), it has undertaken the provision of specialised training and specialised personnel to tackle the problem. Subsequently, "Regional Intersectoral Task Teams" are being established in most of the provinces. While the majority of team members are from different government departments there are representatives from NGOs and faith based organisations on the teams at regional level. We have to admit, however, that no easy solutions exist to this multidimensional problem. We are dealing first of all with something that has become a huge industry and which poses a serious threat to the stability of societies and honest labour relations. Secondly, there are root causes underlying the phenomenon, among which the macroeconomic situation certainly should not be overlooked.

The Human Trafficking Bill drafted by the NPA is comprehensive and takes into account the proper rehabilitation of victims. Statistics on trafficking are not easily available in South Africa as information reported to the police is captured under alternative charges such as racketeering, abduction, or the Sexual Offences Act. Meanwhile in March 2010, the country's National Prosecuting Authority obtained its first conviction for human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Subsequently in 2011, South Africa sent a clear message to sex traffickers by sentencing Aldina De Santos to life imprisonment for trafficking three teenage girls from Mozambique and prostituting them in South Africa. As regards victim assistance, the government has earmarked 13 existing shelters around the country to accommodate rescued victims. However, many shelters are not equipped to deal with drug dependent survivors and the latter quickly return to where they came from. No doubt much

has still to be done in the area of prevention, victim assistance and tightening of border control. However, governments cannot do everything.

The Role of the Church in combating Human Trafficking

Catholic social thought, the church's articulation of its reflections on the human person in society, has as its foundation stone Genesis 1: 27 (NRSV):

So God created humankind in his image. In the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

Human trafficking is a grave offence against the dignity of the human person and a direct violation of human rights. It was with this in mind that Pope John Paul II, in a letter to Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran (to be read on the occasion of the International Conference on Human Trafficking held on 15 May, 2002) stated:

The trade in human persons constitutes a shocking offense against human dignity and a grave violation of fundamental human rights. Already the Second Vatican Council had pointed to "slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children, and disgraceful working conditions where people are treated as instruments of gain rather than free and responsible persons as 'infamies' which poison human society, debase their perpetrators and constitute a supreme dishonour to the Creator" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 27). Such situations are an affront to fundamental values, which are shared by all cultures and peoples, values rooted in the very nature of the human person. Who can deny that the victims of this crime are often the poorest and most defenceless members of the human family, the 'least' of our brothers and sisters.¹¹

Pope Benedict addresses the trafficking in human persons within the migration phenomenon, naming it a "scourge" of modern times. He calls for respect for all human beings, especially women's vulnerabilities:

It becomes easy for the trafficker to offer his own 'services' to the victims, who often do not even vaguely suspect what awaits them. In some cases, there are women and girls who are destined to be exploited almost like slaves in their work, and not infrequently in the sex industry too.¹²

Subsequent to the Palermo Protocol there has been a definite move by the Church at various levels to prioritise human trafficking in its pastoral exhortations. In this, much credit is also due to the various U.S. Ambassadors to the Vatican who initiated projects to fight the "scourge."

Religious Sisters in the Vanguard against Human Trafficking

In a number of cases it has been women religious in different parts of the world who brought the issue of human trafficking to the attention of lawmakers and government officials. Sister Eugenia Bonetti, a Consolata Missionary, is an outstanding example. In March 2007 she was named and awarded "Woman of Courage" by the U.S. Embassy to the Vatican, for her bold and tireless efforts to combat human trafficking. Already in 2004; Sister Eugenia along with 5 others

were named “Heroes Acting to End Modern Day Slavery” in the annual report of the U.S. Department of State’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.

From 2001 to 2005 Mr Jim Nicholson filled the post of U.S. Ambassador to the Vatican. He was of the opinion that the Sisters of different Congregations were best suited to address such a situation, especially given their widespread presence throughout the world. Since the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) works in 144 countries throughout the world, he requested that the UISG (Union International of Superiors General) and IOM both work together, with funding coming from the U.S. Department of State. Since 2004 the IOM and UISG have developed important initiatives and have provided training on prevention and assistance to victims of human trafficking to more than 450 Sisters in 31 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and South America.

Contribution of the Church in South Africa in combating Human Trafficking

Like most, the Church in South Africa was steeped in ignorance about the phenomenon of human trafficking until recently. Around 2004 certain congregations of religious sisters (known as Constellation 6), who had their Generalates in Southern Africa, urged the participation of the Church at national level in the combat against this evil. It was not until 2008, however, that the Leadership Conference of Consecrated Religious (LCCL)(SA) and the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference (SACBC) succeeded in establishing the Counter Trafficking in Persons Desk (CTIP) now upgraded to an Office – as a joint witness project. The Desk was housed at the head office of the SACBC in Pretoria and initially linked with the Justice and Peace Department. One person was chosen for this initiative, namely myself as coordinator.

Capacity Building programmes to combat human trafficking

Since one of the best defences against human trafficking is education, the first major task of CTIP was that of awareness raising. To this end the Office has conducted over fifty 2-3 day capacity building programmes in the various dioceses of the SACBC, which include those of Botswana and Swaziland. The programme mainly consists of: defining what human trafficking is; the Palermo Protocol; who are the traffickers; the modus operandi of traffickers; methods of controlling victims; how to identify a victim of trafficking; victim assistance; human trafficking –as a serious human rights violation; the social teaching of the Church; plan of action . Participants of workshops draw up their own plan of action and continue the awareness raising and prevention campaigns in their parishes and among the wider community in their vicinity. Some have used significant days to mobilize parishes to pray and march calling for an end to human trafficking. Others have moved further afield. Father Matt Gormley OFM and Father Hermes Paononga of the Pallotines, undertook the responsibility to travel throughout the Eastern Cape and carry out a number of two day capacity building workshops. The youth from Sekwele Youth Centre in Bethlehem together with the Oblates of Mary Immaculate took the responsibility of carrying out capacity building workshops in the Bloemfontein metropolitan area.

The Waterkloof Parish group in Pretoria, under the guidance of Father John Allen-Green, embarked on a campaign to have St Bakhita, patron saint of Sudan, once a victim of trafficking, to be declared patron saint against human trafficking to be celebrated by the Church on 8 February each year. For those not familiar with the story of Bakhita the CTIP

Office has produced a booklet the title of which is *Human Trafficking Awareness Day For Africa - 8 February*, in which the story of Bakhita, a victim of trafficking, is recounted. Bakhita, at the age of 8 or 9 was kidnapped by Arab slave traders and over the course of the next eight years was sold and resold five times in the markets of El Obeid and Khartoum. One of her most terrifying memories was the way she was tattooed, the deep cuts over her body being filled with salt and flour to ensure permanent scarring. Bakhita's final owner was an Italian diplomat who brought her to Italy. During one of his travels, the diplomat left her and his daughter in the care of the Canossian Sisters. While with the Sisters Bakhita became a Catholic, refused to return to her "owner" and eventually became a Canossian Sister. She was noted for her sanctity. She died on 8 February, 1947 and was canonised in 2000. The above are but a few concrete examples of various efforts of the local church in the fight against human trafficking.

The CTIP Office continues to conduct capacity building workshops for different organisations and groups belonging to different denominations as well as supporting the efforts of trainees with resources for their workshops. At times we are invited to do mini workshops in schools and community centres.

The SACBC's Parliamentary Office (CPLO) held two Pound Table discussions on the Human Trafficking Bill and submitted the outcomes of suggestions and areas of concern to Parliament. It has followed the discussion and the evolution of policy regarding the Trafficking in Persons with great interest and attention to the details in the eventual Bill. The CPLO also had the opportunity to engage with other Episcopal Conferences in order to benefit from work done around this issue in other countries and to contribute to the emerging theological stance around trafficking.

Pastoral Letter

In November 2008, the Southern African Catholic Bishops issued a pastoral letter entitled *Fighting Human Trafficking – our Christian Responsibility*. They asked that it be read in churches on 14 December, 2008 in which they exhorted communities to become conversant with the reality of human trafficking. They list various ways saying: "You can do this by:

- Educating yourselves in what Human Trafficking is
- Making yourselves familiar with how traffickers operate
- Checking out the genuineness of job offers, be they local or overseas
- Making sure children are registered
- Being alert to what is happening in the environment
- Reporting suspicious cases of trafficking."¹³

Some parishioners after hearing the letter were anxious to learn more about human trafficking. There were many, however, when questioned said they did not hear the letter being read out in their particular church. Some parish priests said they did not receive the letter. Others asked why it was not translated into the different languages? It appears at that stage there was not as yet that sensitivity to the seriousness of human trafficking in our regions.

Celebrating Big Events

CTIP has so far organised three big events to express our solidarity with victims of trafficking and raising awareness to protect potential victims.

(i) Open-Air Mass

The celebration of Holy Mass, to pray for an end to human trafficking and the protection of children during the World Cup, was held on Saturday 8 May, 2010 in the grounds of Christian Brothers College, Pretoria. This was a beautiful and memorable occasion as expressed by the many who attended – coupled with the fact that for many it was their first time to see the cardinal in person. Five bishops and about thirty priests concelebrated.

Among the invited guests were representatives from the Salvation Army, the Ambassador of Ireland, his wife Aisling, and Advocate Malebo Khotu- Rammopo from the National Prosecution Authority who was also director of the “South Africa’s National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking,” namely, *Tsiriledzani*, launched in 2009. She spoke briefly at the end of Mass. Archbishop Buti Tlhagale gave a powerful homily in which he chided Government for their silence on the issue of human trafficking and particularly now on the eve of such a giant event taking place in our country, namely: the FIFA World Cup. There were about 1000 who attended the Mass - representing our multicultural society. Children from various schools processed with banners they themselves had prepared. In the judging competition at the end of Mass all emerged as winners and all got soccer balls. Babuthi Business Partners through their project “Planet Waves” contributed R20000.00 towards the event. Misereor financed the soccer balls and T-shirts.

(ii) Awareness Campaign around the FIFA World Cup

South Africa hosting the FIFA World Cup during June and July, 2010, provided a great opportunity to raise awareness among people about the phenomenon of human trafficking taking place in our land and to protect potential victims. The participation of municipalities, police and others was remarkable and provided a real sense of solidarity in crying out against this wicked crime. The CTIP posters and stickers designed with the help of Hoge Advertisers were very popular in the run up to the World Cup. The office was constantly aflood with takers - which added to our own distribution efforts around the country. The poster with the soccer player holding up the red card on which was written “Out with Human Trafficking” was especially popular, as well as the Red Card bumper stickers. A number of trainees were busy at Fan Fests around the country, handing out pamphlets etc. Others entertained youth in various ways.

Justice and Peace Departments and Caritas in various dioceses took human trafficking as their main focus as well as did particular dioceses and the vicariate of Ingwavuma. In some areas too, priest and congregation together made a collective response. Local churches were extremely active both in awareness raising and encouraging nosy neighbours to report suspicious activity in their neighbourhoods.

Only a few cases of trafficking were reported during the World Cup, and although there is an absence of statistics, we would like to think that our awareness-raising campaign, along with that of others, played a significant role in stemming the increase of sex trafficking during the period of the World Cup.

(iii) Interfaith Prayer Day

In honour of Women’s Day held on 9th August each year, CTIP organised an interfaith prayer day on Saturday, 6 August, 2011. This was held at the Sacred Heart Cathedral, Pretoria to pray for and express our solidarity with victims of abuse and human trafficking. A number remarked on their delight on seeing so many youth taking part, some wearing shirts with the

slogan: “PROUD TO BE CATHOLIC.” Fr Sammy Mabusela opened his sermon with the words from a well known pop song “Shout, shout let it all out, these are things we should talk about, so come on, let’s talk about it.” He said it was time that we as Christians started talking about issues such as human trafficking and making others aware of what is happening out there.

Among the speakers were Diane Shaw from the Sacred Heart Healing Centre, Mrs Malebo Kotu-Rammopo from the National Prosecution Authority (NPA) and Wilna de Beer from Tshwana Leadership Foundation. Before the service concluded, we were accompanied by metro police, out on to the street where we moved along in silent procession wearing red ribbons covering our mouths. This was to express our solidarity with all those abused women and children – the silent suffering. It was truly a day of prayer to plead for an end to the horrible scourge of trafficking and to all that threatens our dignity as human persons.

Research/Fieldwork

In April, 2012, Deputy Home Affairs Minister Fatima Chohan cited South Africa as a country which has the largest number of asylum seekers in the world and more than half asylum seeker applications have been made by Zimbabweans fleeing economic hardships and human rights violations back home.¹⁴ Identifying victims of human trafficking within the migration phenomenon is a new challenge the Church in this region has to face. There are many stories of border jumpers, both children and adults, who, after encountering real dangers on their journey, some crossing big rivers risking being attacked by crocodiles or ambushed by the “amaguma-guma” (a criminal gang) who take their belongings, then on arrival in South Africa find themselves horribly exploited.¹⁵

As part of ongoing research I paid a visit to Musina and the Beitbridge border between South Africa and Zimbabwe during the first half of 2011. I was accompanied by two reporters from the *Leihlo la Sechaba* programme featured every Thursday on SABC 2.whom I had invited to come along in order that they do an exposure documentary. Some of the findings were horrendous. Initially we drove along the border fence at Beitbridge observing the huge cuts in the fences on both sides. Later we were accompanied by two police officers from their campsite situated close to the border fence. After moving through the holes in the fences into an opening in the thicket on the Zimbabwean side, what was truly sad was the sight of so much clothing, mainly underwear of women and children strewn around. This was one of the places where migrants are ambushed. The warrant officer referred to the scene as “bush undertakings,” explaining that the smugglers pose as stranded passengers and make genuine stranded passengers trust them and they agree to travel together. On arrival at the bushes they rape and beat up women and even kill the men.

The warrant officer also informed us about a group referred to as the “Malayshia” who act as informal transporters to a set down point near the border. They do this for people who cannot afford the price of passports and are willing to be smuggled into South Africa. Makakapuni is said to be a notorious place where people on the next stage for crossing are guided through a river and the thick fence. Besides the rape of many women and children in the bush, we were told that those crossing the Limpopo River when in flood are blackmailed to add more money. This happens especially when the middle of the river is reached and women along with children are threatened to be dropped in the river if they do not meet the demands of their smugglers. Back on the South African side, as the warrant officer was

explaining to us the role of the police and the army in the area, it so happened that just down the hill from us a group of about eight border jumpers were caught on camera appearing and disappearing across the road in a flash as they entered the thicket on the South African side.

Later we visited the shelter in Nancefield, Musina, run by the Holy Cross Sisters. There, much of what the police had to say was confirmed. One woman had paid the “Malayshia” R900 for her three children and R500 for herself to be smuggled across the border. It was still cheaper, she said, than trying to obtain a passport. She was lucky to escape unharmed. Others were very downcast and said they were not so lucky as once in the bushes all their belongings were taken from them by the “amagama-guma.” One young girl’s family in Zimbabwe has refused to accept her back because she was raped by a gang of “amagama-guma,” held captive for some time and now has a child.

The IOM in Musina is very concerned with the general rights of migrants, and in protecting and assisting them in voluntary return to their home countries. They told us they found cases of exploitation especially in the farms where many foreign workers are recruited to work under very inhuman circumstances. As regards human trafficking, it was said that due to the high number of smuggled people it is very difficult to determine how many of those smuggled are trafficked as well. Musina seems to be a transit place for human trafficking, but it is difficult to prove intent.

There was an instance where the police arrested a woman who was travelling with 12 children who were not hers. The police confirmed they could not do much as there is no clear legislation to prosecute suspects of attempted human trafficking. Zimbabwean children, however, have been used in “sweatshops” in South Africa. It seems certain also that there are “safe houses” near the border which are known to keep girls and women overnight and who are then smuggled away afterwards.

The “Say No to Prostitution” Campaign

Prior to the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa, CTIP embarked on a “say no to prostitution” campaign. A number of the women religious joined in this initiative by sending cards to municipalities in the major cities around the country, especially to those who were advocating the legalisation of prostitution for the duration of the World Cup.

During this time, also, three possible law reform approaches to prostitution were provided by SALRC (South African Law Reform Commission) namely: Criminalisation model, Regulatory model and Total Decriminalisation¹⁶. The paper was put to the public for discussion and response. Responses and suggestions put together by church members and CTIP were forwarded to SALRC giving reasons why prostitution should not be legalised. These were as follows:

(i) Legalising prostitution (we saw no difference between decriminalisation and legalization) not only leaves the door wide open for trafficking to the sex industry but blurs the difference between right and wrong. We can ask ourselves: what values have we to pass on to the next generation? Prostitution affects families – wives of men, children. We need rather to work more towards the emancipation of women through equal education and employment.

(ii) Prostitutes can easily be trafficked. Moreover, the men, the buyers of commercial sex acts, are the ultimate consumers of trafficked women and children.

(iii) We suggest that we follow the Swedish model by prohibiting the purchasing of sexual services while, at the same time not penalising the prostitutes themselves. In the 1960s Sweden legalised prostitution but have since acknowledged legalisation's failure. It has now criminalised the

procuring of prostitutes and any man found guilty of buying sex from a woman is liable to six months in prison. For a girl the penalty is two years. The women and girls involved, since they are regarded as the victims, are not charged. The Swedish Government has created programs to help them escape from the bondage of prostitution. In contrast to the days when prostitution was legal, the trafficking of foreign women into Sweden for the trade has fallen to an almost negligible level.

(iv) Creating legal brothels increases the demand for prostitution and enhances the opportunities for criminals. The Netherlands is an example of where prostitution is legal but also has to deal with the fact that it is a receiving country in the process of human trafficking, especially trafficking for the sex industry.

(v) The legalising of prostitution is essentially the legalising of an addiction. Men who buy sex acts report that their encounters are not fulfilling, yet they continue to practice compulsively. Are we actually considering legalising an unsatisfying compulsion?

(vi) Gender equality will remain unattainable so long as men buy, sell and exploit women and children by prostituting them.

In 2009 the idea of decriminalisation did not go down well with the majority of the public so the paper was shelved. Yet we continue to have a thriving sex industry in South Africa despite the fact that prostitution is still illegal in the country. Trafficked girls are often found among ordinary sex workers and many, too, suffer severely from being made drug dependent.

“Truckers against Human Trafficking” Campaign

The Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People held its first integrated meeting for the pastoral care of people of the road/street for Africa and Madagascar in Dar-Es-Salaam from the 11th -15th September 2012. Three of us from South Africa attended this meeting. At present we in South Africa do not have a particular ministry to the “women of the street” as is happening in other countries. Archbishop Buti Tlhagale of South Africa was invited by the Commission to present a paper titled: *Evangelisation / Education along the Road (Truck Drivers and Road Security)*.¹⁷ The role of the Church in the pastoral care of truck drivers who face long and hazardous journeys was emphasized. There is a strong connection between truckers and road prostitution and besides traffickers use ad hoc flexible networks including truckers in their operation schemes.

Subsequently a project of CTIP was the formation of a “Truckers Against Human Trafficking” campaign. The aim in this particular campaign is to educate, equip, empower and mobilise members of the trucking industry to combat sex trafficking on our continent; be able to spot traffickers and report them; get our trucking-industries to make information and training on human trafficking as part of its orientation for all its truck drivers.

During the Conference 9th – 12th April, 2013 organised by CTIP, and held at Good Shepherd Retreat Centre, Hartbeespoort, we had our first launch of “Truckers Against Human Trafficking”.¹⁸ *FRUIT SPOT* became the first trucking company to engage in the campaign. The huge truck was unable to be driven up the driveway to the centre therefore the ceremony took place in the grounds of the church below the driveway. Both driver and truck were blessed and stickers posted in different places on the truck. Various speakers during the Conference had already pointed out that truckers can play a significant role in safeguarding victims and potential victims of trafficking in the transportation phase simply by reporting offenders encountered at truck stops – especially those offering underage girls to them.

The presence at the Conference of 15 Police units who man the borders of the Northern Cape was highly appreciated by all present as a source of strength in our fight against Human Trafficking.

Another launch of “Truckers Against Human Trafficking” is being planned by the Northern Cape police unit for later in the year. In the meantime we are busy approaching other trucking companies to join the campaign. Booklets for truckers are now in the process of being printed.

Networking/ Partnering

Finally we need to realise that we cannot go it alone in tackling such a complex issue as human trafficking. As church against human trafficking, we need to partner, share our findings, expertise and resources especially at provincial and local government level. In every province there should be a regional task team headed by the NPA (National Prosecution Authority) in operation. As it is intersectoral they work alongside church and NGOs and collaborate with various agencies and organizations in specific environments. CTIP is a member of the Regional Gauteng Task Team along a representative from the Salvation Army, who do much work against human trafficking, on the team.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO), clearly professes an active commitment to the campaign against forced labour and the phenomenon of human trafficking. IOM in most countries is clearly committed to assisting those working to combat human trafficking and has been most helpful to CTIP in placing rescued victims of trafficking in shelters. The Sisters of Mercy who run a shelter for abused women have provided short term shelter to numerous victims rescued from human trafficking and placed there by IOM or Government. The former has given help to over 400 rescued victims in the country. For security reasons information about shelters is restricted. CTIP is a member of the National Freedom Network (NFN) which connects all the anti-human trafficking NGOs here in South Africa, and both receives and passes up to date information on human trafficking.¹⁹ CTIP is also member of the Tshwane Counter Trafficking Coalition.

There have been attempts at having the church in the SADC region work more closely together so as to address cross border trafficking. The 18th–19th May, 2010, saw our first Inter-Regional Meeting with representatives from the Bishops of Southern Africa Conference (IMBISA) on Human Trafficking in Midrand, Johannesburg. One of the resolutions taken was the establishment of satellite offices in the IMBISA region which would lead to more collaboration between desks of Bishops’ Conferences. To date this has not materialised. We realise the importance of having key figures to support such projects.

Conclusion

It is the responsibility of the Church to teach and spread its moral and social doctrines, which give clear guidelines for behaviour and calls for a commitment to work for justice. Human trafficking is indeed a great sign of evil in our world and paints a dark picture on our moral landscape. It is into this dark place that we are called to shine the light of the Good News. In John’s Gospel, Jesus tells us, “I am the good shepherd... The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (Jn 10:14 - 15 NRSV). To join the fight against human trafficking is to join Jesus in his search for these lost and scattered ones. The promise of the gospels is that the work we do to rescue and bring to safety the vulnerable and powerless is work we never do alone. Always, we are joined by a God who has gone before us, who opens our eyes, and leads us to His scattered children.

Finally let’s always remember to pray for victims – the hidden to society. St Bakhita, once a slave herself stolen from her home in the Sudan, put in shackles, sold and resold, finally landing up in Italy- freed - became a catholic and a nun; pray for us.

Endnotes

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- ¹ Kola Alli She, "Escape from Sex Hell", *Daily Sun* (Jan. 2011).
- ² Kevin Bales, *Disposable People*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 8.
- ³ See "Southern Africa: Counter-trafficking measures trail commitments", *IRIN*, December 12, 2011; <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/94445/SOUTHERN-AFRICA-Counter-trafficking-measures-trail-commitments>. [Accessed 24 September, 2012]
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www.slideshare.net/tharemachinational-freedom-network-for-web [Accessed 30May, 2013]