HUMAN TRAFFICKING

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It is difficult to be exact about the number of people trafficked because it is a crime that is kept hidden. It is believed that more than 1.5 million people are trafficked each year. The industry is said to be worth $57 billion annually. Through it, human life is reduced to a commodity. This constitutes a tragedy of huge proportions for those who become trapped.

It is important not to confuse trafficking with smuggling of people, which refers to procuring or facilitating the illegal entry of people into another State for financial gain, usually using false documentation. Unlike people who have been trafficked, those smuggled – once in the country – will normally be left free to make a new life as best they can.

The crime of trafficking in persons presents a great challenge to Christians everywhere. In the articles which follow, different aspects of this challenge are examined. Two case studies – one from Eastern Europe and the other from West Africa – give a glimpse of the experience of a person caught up in this crime. A list of resource material and websites with further information is included at the end.

In her piece, ‘Understanding, Preventing and Assisting Trafficked Persons’, Stefanie Blicke from Germany says one of the main aims of those who are concerned should be raising awareness among people – including employers and potential customers – about the scale of this criminal activity.

American scholar, Helene Hayes, has taken up the mission of giving a voice to those who have been trafficked. In her article ‘Global Trafficking in Women: A Haunting Cry in our Time’ she tells of her travels to Southeast Asia, Europe and the United States where she interviewed women who have been trafficked. She summarises the questions she asked and the responses she received. She says ‘the sixty adolescent girls and women that I interviewed are among the world’s most silent, dispossessed and nameless of women.’

Based in the UK, Rev. Carrie Pemberton is the founding director of CHASTE – Churches Alert to Sex Trafficking across Europe. She has contributed two pieces for this edition of Contact. The first on ‘Trafficking and Prostitution – the Challenge for the Churches’ raises the problem of ‘the muddied background of gender justice in the theological memory and still in many contexts, the current practice of church.’ In her second piece, ‘Religion, Penitence and the Journey of Healing’, she says religion can play an important role on the long road to recovery which each survivor undertakes.’

An Irish contributor, Chris McDermott is a doctoral candidate at NUI Galway. He writes on ‘The Development of International Law on Human Trafficking’. He outlines the development of international law on human trafficking since the turn of the 20th century. He says ‘the legal landscape was carved slowly and conservatively, with immigration control and state sovereignty taking precedence over victim assistance and protection.’

We also have contributions from two organisations that have taken practical steps to address the problem of trafficking:

From Geneva, Alessandra Aula of Franciscans International writes about ‘Advocacy and Victim Protection’ and describes how they have empowered people at grassroots level with relevant information and have brought the issue before the diplomatic community and UN agencies.

Camilla Burns in her reflection on Lk. 13:10-17, entitled ‘Behold a Woman’, sets the problem of trafficking in the context of the message and practice of Jesus Christ. As the churches face the challenge of trafficking in persons in the world of our time, the words of Jesus ‘woman, you are set free’ (Lk. 13:12) are our headline.

We conclude with a reflection on Psalm 69 from the perspective of a women trafficked into forced prostitution by Rev. Eva-Sibylle Vogel-Mfato of the Lutheran World Federation.
This Prayer for an End to Trafficking expresses well how urgent and how difficult it is to deal with the phenomenon of human trafficking.

We cannot, of course, fully comprehend and express what victims of human trafficking experience if even they themselves can hardly talk about it. International Organisation for Migration (IOM) noted that many victims are found in “a state of physical exhaustion, confusion, disorientation and fear. … (They) also display a tendency to ‘lose memory’ of the painful moments of the trafficking experience, and also have an altered or distorted sense of the time when the events took place. Any recollection of these painful moments is usually followed by intensely distressing emotions.” Furthermore, experiences, methods, strategies and purposes of trafficking differ so widely that it is hard to describe the phenomenon comprehensively. The UN-definition given in the document commonly known as the Palermo Protocol (2000) is the one which is mostly used.

When “dignity and rights are being transgressed through threats, deception and force” then trafficking means a serious offence against a wide range of human rights, thus calling its outcome a modern form of slavery does not exaggerate reality. Prostitution is only one form of exploitation next to several other forms of trafficking in human beings. This modern version of slavery constitutes a danger not only to “women and girls” but to all people.

Human trafficking occurs when a woman agrees to a false job offer in another place – often outside her home country. She is then transported to this place, her passport is confiscated, she is coerced into working as a prostitute and held in this place through violence, debt bondage or other forms of coercion. We also hear stories of trafficking experienced – for example – by young men in Brazil who decide to work in a mine. They sign a contract which has no meaning, and are then forced to work in this mine for 16 hours a day under worst conditions and are locked in a hostel for the rest of the day without ever really earning any money. Human trafficking also occurs when poverty-stricken parents are persuaded to sell their children. These are then taken away to places where they have to work hard or to beg.

In all these processes profit and greed are found on the one side. On the other side there is poverty, despair, unbearable inequality and the
hope of a better life and the possibility of supporting the family at home.

**How to prevent and assist**

Prevention and assistance are two crucial ways of tackling the problem. As long as there is demand for cheap labour there will be supply. One of the main aims therefore should be sensitization, to raise awareness among people, among employers, potential clients of forced labour and among potential customers of prostitution.

The Palermo Protocol\(^5\) Part III, article 9f, explicitly highlights the importance of prevention. The article includes measures such as research, information and mass media campaigns, cooperation with non-governmental organizations, other relevant organizations, alleviation of factors that make persons, especially women and children, vulnerable to trafficking, such as poverty, underdevelopment and lack of equal opportunity, improving legislation, information exchange, training for all actors concerned with anti-trafficking, border measures and security and control of documents.

One of the latest and most relevant European legal documents, the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings of 2006\(^6\), focuses on the protection of the victims, their human rights and adequate assistance. It sets minimum standards of assistance in the victims’ physical, psychological and social recovery.

- standards of living capable of ensuring their subsistence, through such measures as: appropriate and secure accommodation, psychological and material assistance;
- access to emergency medical treatment;
- translation and interpretation services, when appropriate;
- counseling and information, in particular as regards their legal rights and the services available to them, in a language that they can understand;
- assistance to enable their rights and interests to be presented and considered at appropriate stages of criminal proceedings against offenders;
- access to education for children.\(^7\)

However, this Convention is binding only when it has been signed and also ratified by at least 10 states of which at least 8 must be members of the Council of Europe.

**Health Aspects**

When discussing these standards, it is important to keep in mind the extremely hard situations victims of human trafficking find themselves. The US Government Report on Human Trafficking 2006 looks at the health effects on victims of sex-trafficking, which cover a wide range:

“Reviewing regional studies offers a sense of how physically and psychologically traumatizing sex trafficking is. For example, a study of women and girls trafficked for prostitution in East Africa reported widespread rape, physical abuse, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and HIV/AIDS. An assessment in Nepal of trafficking in girls found that 38% of rescued victims suffered from HIV/AIDS, as well as STIs and tuberculosis (TB). In a study of women trafficked to the European Union, health impacts included extreme violence that resulted in broken bones, loss of consciousness, and gang rape. Complications related to abortions, gastrointestinal problems, unhealthy weight loss, lice, suicidal depression, alcoholism, and drug addiction were also reported. Another study of women trafficked to the European Union found that 95% of victims had been violently assaulted or coerced into a sexual act, and over 60% of victims reported fatigue, neurological symptoms, gastrointestinal problems, back pain, vaginal discharges, and gynecological infections.”\(^8\)

Accordingly, these health effects can be categorized into 6 groups:
Infectious diseases: HIV, STIs, and TB
Non-infectious diseases: malnutrition, dental health problems, and skin diseases
Reproductive health problems: forced abortions, high-risk pregnancies and deliveries
Substance abuse: alcohol, inhalants, intravenous drugs
Mental health problems: depression; Post Traumatic Stress Disorder; suicide
Violence: physical and sexual assaults; murder

The focus of this report as well as of many other reports has been on sex trafficking whereas other forms of trafficking have not been taken into account as much, so that effects of those forms on the victims’ health are not clear.

In the discourse
Despite being narrowly focussed on sex trafficking this report shows how comprehensive assistance to victims of human trafficking must be. Legal protection, adequate shelter and social reintegration are important. When it comes to the victim’s rights and legal status, opinions of different governmental and non-governmental actors frequently clash. The minimum time to be given as a reflection period for the victim to recover and consider taking legal steps against the trafficker or giving testimony in court is 30 days, according to the Council Convention. This is regarded by most organisations as far too little and should instead be at least 3 months, bearing in mind that a person who has been trafficked has experienced severe trauma. Furthermore, NGOs demand the right to long-term residence status if the trafficked person does not wish to return to his/her country of origin. If the victim chooses to return to the home country, help will be required regarding the organisation of documents; family reunification and risk assessment international cooperation of all actors concerned as well as in the prosecution of the traffickers. All of the above is highly important to ensure reintegration and to prevent more trafficking or even re-trafficking of the victim.

In order to improve this cooperation several growing networks have been founded. COATNET, a network of Christian Organisations Against Trafficking is one among them. Several organisations – mostly Eastern European – work together under the La Strada umbrella. A global network is the Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW); and there are many more who already have gained much knowledge and experience and can be contacted for assistance by not so much experienced actors. There are also international organisations who dedicate great part of their work to combating human trafficking, such as Antislavery International, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Caritas and many others. They all work hard not only to keep this sad topic high on the political agendas but – as urgently – to prevent this phenomenon of modern slavery and to assist all those victims of human trafficking whose “dignity and rights are being transgressed through threats, deception and force.”

Stefanie Blicke, is studying for her Master’s in Social Sciences, for which she is focussing on several aspects of migration and the phenomenon of human trafficking.

References:
1 S2 School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND), quoted in the booklet of the Morning Prayer of the Churches Against Trafficking in Utrecht, 20 May 2006, p. 3.
2 International Organization for Migration (IOM): Special Issue: Trafficking in Human Beings and Public Health; Migration and Health Newsletter, March 2003.
3 “Trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of 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 person, for the purpose of exploitation.” http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/pdf/protocoltraffic.pdf
31/08/2006.
4 One of the most active international NGO’s is AntiSlavery International, based in UK http://www.antislavery.org/
31/08/2006.
7 Article 12 of the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings.
GLOBAL TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN:
A Haunting Human Cry in Our Time

The specific mission of my Congregation, the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, comes right out of the New Testament story of the Good Shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine well-tended sheep to go in search of the “lost one”. Over our one hundred and sixty seven year-history and in each of the sixty seven countries where we are located, we have tried to discern ever anew in each era and culture, who the “lost ones” are; the poor, the marginalized, the ostracized, those wounded by life and excluded from full participation. This mission places the individual who is at risk or in any way excluded at the heart of our ministries. Not surprisingly, the issue of human trafficking emerged as a top priority.

My own involvement in the human trafficking issue has led me to design and carry out a research project on behalf of my religious community that took me to Sri Lanka, Thailand, South Korea, the Philippines, Belgium, Paris, Milan, Palermo and the United States to interview women who have been trafficked. While human trafficking also includes labor trafficking of men, women and children, domestic servitude and child sexual trafficking, trafficking of women into the sex industry remains the most common and lucrative form of human exploitation.

My choice of specific locations in Southeast Asia, Europe and the United States was based on the fact that Good Shepherd Sisters are already involved on the ground and have relationships with women who have been trafficked in each of these locations either in our own Good Shepherd programs or other programs serving trafficked women. This process facilitated my access to trafficked women and reduced the possibility that the interviews would re-traumatize the women. The variables studied were the women’s “social and emotional adjustment”, “life before trafficking”, “the experience of being trafficked”, and “life after trafficking”.

I used two research instruments; an in-depth structured interview of trafficked women and a structured interview of key informants and service providers working with the women. I asked both groups similar questions on the four sets of variables being studied but also asked service providers several questions about ‘best practices’ in terms of treatment, how the trauma that the women have been through manifests itself in counseling, and legal and policy relevant issues specific to their countries. Key informants that I interviewed included administrators from development, policy and women’s advocacy programs, the International Organization for Migration, Caritas Sri Lanka, Caritas Ambrosia and specific social service workers.

The sixty adolescent girls and women that I interviewed in Southeast Asia, Europe and the United States are among the world’s most silent, dispossessed and nameless of women. Although they were interviewed in recovery programs in eight different countries they came from eighteen countries of birth: Albania, Belarus, Central African Republic, China, Czech Republic, Ivory Coast, Laos, Lithuania, Mexico, Moldavia, Morocco, Nigeria,
the Philippines, Romania, Russia, Sierra Leon, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

Although I have not yet fully analyzed the data, I can open a window into the world of trafficked women by sharing some of the women’s direct quotes in response to two questions: “What was the hardest part of your experience of being trafficked?” And, “What was your greatest fear during that time?”

**What was the hardest part of your experience of being trafficked?**
- “Being treated violently, drugged, beaten, making you do something you do not want to do.”
- “The trafficker had a commanding voice, he screamed, threatened with a knife, created fear.”
- “He treated me like a dog, a slave, he had no feeling for me.”
- “Working all alone on the road in the dark night.”
- “This was my life, what right did they have to take it?”
- “Being obliged to have forced sex, you are nothing. You are merchandise. There is only silence and tears.”
- “I complied because I did not want to die.”
- “Going with the clients. It is not normal.”
- “I am very bitter, no girl goes into this on her own. A hatred grew within me.”
- “I kept saying to myself, I’m not supposed to be here. How did I come to this?”
- “I had a memory of family, my mother knew when I had a headache. She gave me a pill and cared for me. No one knew me. I was totally alone.”
- “I feel when I am doing this work that I am killing myself.”
- “I am never able to forget what happened to me. Only God could clear it from my mind.”

**What was your greatest fear during the time you were trafficked?**
- “If I don’t get away, one day he will kill me.”
- “Getting AIDS or getting killed by street boys.”
- “That I would lose my mind.”
- “If I run away, they have my address in Romania.”
- “One of the girls jumped from a building and died, and I envied her.”
- “On the road you go into the cars. You don’t know – maybe they will kill you. You want to die. I die, so what?”
- “Clients treat us so bad because they have in mind that they have paid.”
- “I experienced terrible things, violence, horror, the death of my friends at the hands of men in France.”
- “That she (the Mama San) will kill me with poison or Voo Doo or in some way.”
- “I was afraid most of sadistic clients.”
- “Always feeling fearful in the night, afraid of being beaten or raped.”
- “That all my dreams would die.”

Lastly, I’ll share some of the responses of the key informants to questions regarding the most damaging aspect of being trafficked and how the trauma manifests itself in counseling:

**What is the most damaging aspect of the experience of being trafficked?**
- “Psychologically and physically they are women without an identity in terms of papers and passports and also their internal identity has been stolen.”
- “The person has been destroyed in
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herself, she is not able to choose, her life does not belong to her.”

- “Most damaging is not to be a human being anymore, only a thing, a piece of merchandise.”
- “Isolation, no freedom, sexual and physical violence.”
- “The whole personality is broken. You could say their dignity is gone. There is a scar on their self worth.”
- “Psychologically, they lack confidence, they never speak of specific violence. They are ashamed of what they have been through.”
- “The most intimate part of the personality has been destroyed. The best part of their life is gone.”
- “It is a situation of total violence and humiliation on the part of the clients and those who control the women.”

How does the trauma that the women have been through manifest itself in counseling?

- “They are closed in on the self, silent and depressed, no rapport and quite suspicious.”
- “Broken, destroyed people, physically and psychologically. Going down to the very depths and trying to come back up.”
- “They have lived through a trauma, similar to incest or being raped. It depends on their capacity to face it all. For some, getting help is like a whole new project. For some, the birth of a child, the love of someone, all give a lift. And their rage helps them.”
- “Crying, breaking down, terrible nightmares, screams in the night, frightened all the time, want to change the whole of their appearance.”
- “Mental breakdown for younger girls, ages 16 and 17. Traces of the trauma are always there.”
- “They feel used, betrayed, and emptied. They fail in relationships and keep on repeating the same patterns.”
- “Victims are often not able to have affective relationships and their mental health is fragile.”
- “They have great difficulty in trusting, at first great dependency but find it extremely hard to open up and talk, no confidence, no self esteem. They fear that things will never get better for them.”
- “The effect of trafficking is soul damage, a forced expulsion from their own bodies. They kill all their feelings so that those feelings do not kill them. Healing is a process of re-entering their own bodies and letting their souls re-enter too.”

The last question asked the women who had been trafficked what was their experience of the interview. Many said that it was very difficult to go back there in memory but if it could help one girl not to experience what they had been through, it was worth it. The goal of this research is to publish a book that places the voices of these women at its center. Carefully rendered research can make it difficult for governments and individuals to avoid facing this harrowing global crime. Seeing trafficked women as full human beings can be the first step towards a needed shift in consciousness and conscience. What is at stake in the issue of human trafficking in a very stark way is our core Christian belief that every human person is of infinite worth and dignity, not a commodity to be bought and sold for profit. Martin Luther King Jr. reminds us that “our lives begin to end the day we become silent about the things that matter.” The issue of trafficking in persons is a stark, haunting, human cry in our time that matters deeply and must be answered.

Helene Hayes PhD, a member of the Good Shepherd Sisters, NY, has traveled extensively to research a book to give voice to women and girls who have been trafficked.
One of the challenges for a church based organisation working in the arena of human trafficking, is the muddied background of gender justice in the theological memory and still in many contexts, the current practice of church. Women in the theological texts which underpin Christian organisations have been seen as whores, as temptresses, as unnamed women who have been raped, beaten, have bled and been sources of pollution. For many denominations women are still not able to represent the founder of the religious tradition as liturgical leaders or Priests. This is certainly the case in the two oldest denominations, the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox churches, whose churches are present in number, and in cultural and political prominence in many of the countries in which trafficking occurs, both as countries of demand and source.

This challenge has forced powerful conversations to take place both inside the tradition of the churches and in the corridors of contemporary ecclesial power. These conversations have had their own tributaries of impact in the organisations in which they have taken place. Unfortunately the presence and potential transformation of these conversations into the wider public space has not been achieved. Secular organisations and the wider public by and large, meet a church in the West which is absorbed with falling congregational numbers and an internecine struggle around sexuality, principally male, and the primacy of heterosexual expression. This is very depressing for those of us working in the arena of countering violence against women. What is clear to women working in this field is that the level and extent of violence against women, practiced within congregations and the communities which they serve, is completely unacceptable, and requires the full weight of the moral opprobrium of the churches and their energy behind practical steps for transformation. This is extremely hard to achieve whilst the leadership of the churches at executive level is almost ubiquitously male. It is a state of affairs which urgently requires attention. Equality of representation at every tier in the structures of faith communities is not simply an internal religious matter to be settled by men. It is a matter which will either impede or enhance the delivery of justice to women who suffer daily violence at the hands of men and of the societies they live in, by those who insist that the world has meaning beyond commerce, and beyond the splitting of the atom.

Yet the question needs to be raised as to how much one can use organisations and tools which have been the place of undoubted gender oppression within their histories and practice, notwithstanding sites of some extraordinarily liberating motifs and praxis. It is a powerful and justifiable question which must be received and worked with. However, at the same time, there is huge potential in working with organisations which have millions of members across the world, many of whom are appalled at the phenomenon of trafficking for sexual exploitation. They are prepared to put their energies and resources into working with others to block its extension, to deal with the damage it causes in the wrecking of human lives and dignity, and to work towards cultural change.

In 1999 the Conference of European Churches (CEC) released a statement on Trafficking from Driebergen in the Netherlands. In this statement, which gathered the work of a week-long consultation of participants from
27 countries across Europe, CEC stated that:

Churches are a part of the problem. Most find it impossible to acknowledge the existence of sexual abuse in their own communities and homes, and yet hidden among their members, protected by the culture of silence, they include perpetrators as well as victims of trafficking. It is not only from the issues of sexual abuse that they shrink. Most have difficulties with sexuality generally. In a continent whose cultures were shaped within Christian traditions and theologies, among churches whose structures, liturgies and assumptions affirm unequal power relations between women and men, we find ourselves questioning whether the God we worship is really the passionate, creative God who “created humankind in God’s image: in the image of God, God created them male and female God created them.

We believe that churches have the obligation to provide a counter-cultural impetus in times of political and social change. It is an abuse of bodies, minds and spirits which are the temple of the Holy Spirit and the dwelling place of the incarnate Christ. ... The implications challenge our vision of the church itself: the household of God in which all have a place and all are honoured.' (Churches 1999)

This is an area which CHASTE seeks to address through theological engagement with sister churches in the UK and through interaction with other NGOs working with these churches in countries outside of the UK. This sort of change is, however, necessarily slow and can often deplete our spirits. Nevertheless, every once in a while there is a breakthrough, with either a new initiative emerging from a church at regional or national level, or through a small group of priests and religious leaders catching a vision of what following Christ might mean in this area, where Christian discipleship means accompanying women whose lives are being menaced by the scourge of grooming, prostitution and trafficking. CEC has financed a European-wide web information sharing network called COATNET which encourages the sharing of good practice, information and difficulties through the portals of the web and now developing inter-continental partnerships.

One of the challenges still to be properly addressed, due mainly to the substantial tasks currently in hand in bringing the Christian denominations to the table of co-operation and joined-up action, is that of empowering other faith communities to engage, in particular those of Islam and Hinduism. There has been an expression of interest by some Muslim women’s groups to start the conversation around the use of prostitutes and the risk of trafficking within their communities. However, this is a deeply problematic area. Although the teaching of the Koran clearly proscribes the use of prostitutes and the abuse of the human person within prostitution, like their Christian and post-Christian male neighbours,
Muslim males are to be found amongst the client base of sex parlours and massage parlours, and also amongst the ranks of those who traffic women for sexual exploitation. The mobilisation of the mosques and the temples against this scandalous and abusive crime is amongst the longer term goals of CHASTE working within the UK. It is important to emphasise, however, that we would want to replicate the CHASTE model of mobilisation within the faith tradition, rather than by any imperial management of the faith communities from without. A discourse needs to emerge based on the created dignity of women and men before God and before one another across the communities rather than competition between deities and their devotees.

This attention to the dignity of men and women would drive forward a powerful engagement with the real drivers of trafficking for sexual exploitation and what is required to overhaul the horrors which emerge in its practice. These include the long term challenges of poverty both in its absolute and relative senses, dispossession, vulnerability to deception due to gendered disempowerment, poor networks of information and the opportunity vector, which drives people to look for opportunities away from the location of their particular spheres of safety. Some of the drivers for movement are unlikely to be switched off in the near future. People uprooted by intra and international conflicts have never been so wide-ranging. The speed of information impacts upon their plight. The sophistication of international transportation routes is another important factor – whether these include modified sea containers, small motorised dinghies, short distance budget flights, long haul road transportation, rail journeys or the more ancient mode of camel train. And here we are only relaying some of the broad factors affecting the countries of source and supply.

In terms of the countries of demand there needs to be a serious engagement with the responsibility which a country of demand must carry. That is the presence and hunger of the market for women and children’s bodies accessed for cash, often as low as 25 pounds for half an hour’s activity. The cost on those subjected to this form of commodification is high. The report by Cathy Zimmermann commissioned by the European Union in 2003 with a follow up report in 2006, noted extensive physical effects of enforced prostitution which includes vaginal, oral, or anal rape, unwanted pregnancies, forced abortion and misuse of oral contraceptives. Some of the medical outcomes of the hard labour of engaging up to 16 clients a day include physical fatigue, poor nutrition, nerve, muscle or bone damage, dental problems, lacerations, head trauma, damage to the vaginal tract, irritable bowel syndrome, stress related syndromes, urinary tract infections, cystitis, cervical cancer and infertility. The mental health, psychological abuse and social well-being issues to be addressed, alongside the risks associated with marginalisation and lack of economic support add a further depressing wash to the account.

Rather than showing a world of choice and liberation through prostituted sex, these statistics of violence and violation, show a world ripe for conversion through a gospel which fervently advocates the transformation of the way in which we view each other’s equality and dignity, both interpersonally and internationally.

Rev. Carrie Pemberton is an Anglican Priest and a Women’s National Commissioner. She is founding director of CHASTE – Churches Alert to Sex Trafficking across Europe, and Author of Circle Thinking African Women Theologians in dialogue with the West Brill (2002).

References:
2 Cf. www.coalnet.com
3 The Health risks and Consequences of Trafficking in women and Adolescents: Findings from a European Study, Zimmermann, C., 2003, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.
4 Stolen Smiles: a summary report on the physical and psychological health consequences of women and adolescents trafficked in Europe, Cathy Zimmermann; Muzeda Hossain, K. Y., Brenda Roche, Linda Morison and Charlotte Watts, London School of Tropical Hygiene and Medicine, 2006.
HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND RELIGION

Religion can play an important role in the long road to recovery which each survivor of human trafficking undertakes. Guilt and shame are powerful inhibitors, and very rarely surfaced in the professional discourse around secular recovery programmes but nevertheless need to be dealt with as rapidly as possible. As much of the language of shame and guilt is developed within religious constructs, it is important to mobilise all the forces available to demonstrate clearly to the woman that she was neither responsible nor in any way to blame for what happened to her.

Sometimes a woman has been seriously deceived but blames herself for her naivety. This leaves her feeling responsible for the series of events which subsequently befell her. It has been significant for CHASTE in our trust building and relationship building with clients to demonstrate that the religious body of which the client is a part does not condemn or blame her in any way, and also that the divine energy which she so desires to placate is already in action to bring the healing and repositioning which she desires. For some this may be enhanced through the action of the confessional, for others through prayers, for others by the exchange of religious artefacts and symbols, and yet for others what is significant can be simply the quiet acceptance and accompanying of a religious leader.

But in this deeply personal and challenging journey of healing, in which we participate every time a survivor of sex trafficking undertakes the sacred journey of restoration, we have to remember that the voice of Christ addresses those responsible for the marginalisation, rejection or damaging of people in these ways. There is in Christ’s praxis a robust challenge to the leaders of the society, whether in the religious, economic or political spheres. Whited sepulchres, den of thieves, blind leaders of the blind, brood of vipers, strong terms of disapproval and reminders of the seriousness of abrogation of protection. Here is the place of penitence which all those responsible for the severe discrepancies in life opportunities between countries of supply and demand need to approach with humility. Here is the place where all those involved in the hugely profitable business of this contemporary trade in flesh need to fall down on their faces and recognise the enormity of their crime. Here is the place where those who rape, use, ignore, ejaculate and use up the lives of women in the sex markets of the world need to expend themselves panting for mercy. Because the crime of sex trafficking is not simply about the illicit trade in flesh worth an estimated $12 billion per annum with secondary spin offs worth upwards of $45 billion by recent estimates.

The offence of sex trafficking is primarily an offence against the image of God expressed in the faces, bodies and relationships of hundreds of thousands of women, children and men across our world today. It is to refuse the sister in the woman who is deceived into this world of sexual abuse, the mother in the one sold on from trafficker to trafficker, pimp to pimp, the daughter in the beautiful woman who is beaten into submission and raped several times each day in each act of non-consensual sex. It is to refuse the theological meaning of what sex expresses beyond the reductionism of reproduction, that of profound consensual joy in the giving.
and receiving of each other’s body for warmth, comfort, transcendence and joy. And wherever that denial, and the denial of the voices of those who currently are, or have been in the process of becoming victims of this global trade we must raise our cry of lamentation and resistance.

Cultures which accept the inevitability of prostitution are deeply implicated in the crimes of trafficking particularly in the expansion of the markets into which traffickers can penetrate. It is time for the churches to turn their attention seriously to the many interventions which are required to turn the tide on trafficking, in countries of source, demand, transit and recovery, and to explore their own practices in terms of the dignity, equality and inviolability of each human being they welcome into their worlds, at organisational, pastoral and ecclesiological levels. The conversation could lead to some dramatic changes in ecclesial practice and attitudes. Traffickers and those who buy women and children for sexual pleasure require words of judgement, and those sold need the words of liberation, but most of all the world needs a new culture of respect, mutuality and equality, of which the church is called to be a harbinger. The time for tough conversations has started, but resources are to hand and the urgency and levels of current abuse make delay inconceivable. CHASTE in the UK is calling on all churches to create a day in their liturgical calendars to engage the issues of sexuality, power, abuse, violence against women in prostitution and trafficking. The WCC is invited to bring the weight of their constituency behind such a call; powerfully uniting the constituencies of source, transit and demand countries in their response. By responding at all levels, theologically, politically, economically and socially, churches can make a powerful difference. The power for transformation is not lost in our time, merely resting.

Rev. Carrie Pemberton
THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL LAW ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Introduction
Trafficking in persons first appeared on the international agenda at the beginning of the last century. There has since been a proliferation of treaties, conventions, protocols and declarations aimed at combating the practice. The purpose of this paper is to outline the development of international law on human trafficking since the turn of the 20th century. Due to space constraints, I am precluded from discussing national or regional responses to trafficking and will instead focus on international legal instruments that invite the ratification of all the states of the world. It will be seen that the legal landscape was carved slowly and conservatively, with immigration control and state sovereignty taking precedence over victim assistance and protection.

Historical Perspective
The first international treaty to address human trafficking was ‘The International Agreement for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic’, adopted in 1904. Its objective was to “halt the sale of women into prostitution in Europe”. The first notable point is that the agreement applied exclusively to white women. In any case, while its aspiration was deserving of accolade, the provisions of the agreement were so weak as to leave it ineffective. Under its terms, States were merely obligated to collect data on the procurement of women from abroad, exchange information, identify victims and regulate employment agencies. Essentially, it was concerned only with recruitment and not exploitation.

The ‘International Convention for the Suppression of White Slave Traffic’ 1910 supplemented the earlier agreement. Article one provided that “Whoever, in order to gratify the passions of another person, has procured, enticed, or led away, even with her consent, a woman or girl under age, for immoral purposes, shall be punished, …”. This provided a high level of protection to underage girls and removed the possibility of the defendant invoking the consent of the victim as a defence. Article two aimed to protect women that had reached the age of majority – “Whoever, in order to gratify the passions of another person, has, by fraud, or by means of violence, threats, abuse of authority, or any other method of compulsion, procured, enticed, or led away a woman or girl over age, for immoral purposes, shall also be punished, …”.

Notwithstanding these welcome additions, the failing of the Convention was that it proscribed only the act of trafficking and considered the subsequent exploitation to be within the purview of the domestic jurisdiction of States. Furthermore, both agreements discriminated against non-white women and against boys by excluding them from their scope. The League of Nations remedied this discrimination by adopting two treaties on trafficking, the first of which was the International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children 1921.

This treaty was more comprehensive and provided protection to non-white
women and all children\textsuperscript{12}. It sought to address trafficking by: (1) prosecuting\textsuperscript{13}, punishing\textsuperscript{14} or extraditing persons\textsuperscript{15} who trafficked women and children; (2) licensing and supervising employment agencies\textsuperscript{16}; and (3) protecting immigration and emigrating women and children\textsuperscript{17}. The exclusion of racial terms was a progressive step towards equality, and all women were entitled to equal protection under international law. The second treaty on trafficking adopted by the League was the ‘International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women of Full Age 1933’\textsuperscript{18}. This criminalized the trafficking of women over twenty-one years of age, and interestingly provided that consent would not constitute a defence to the crime of trafficking\textsuperscript{19}. The Convention declared that “whoever, in order to gratify the pleasures of another person, has procured, enticed or led away even with her consent, a woman or girl of full age for immoral purposes to be carried out in another country, shall be punished”.

It has been submitted that the ineffectiveness of these two treaties was due to their failure to address prostitution and brothels in countries of destination\textsuperscript{20}. Therefore, in order to address the demand side of trafficking, the League of Nations drafted a new convention, which was concluded in 1940 but, due to the onset of the World War II, never adopted\textsuperscript{21}.

The 1904, 1910, 1921 and 1933 Conventions considered the subsequent exploitation of trafficking victims to be a matter of domestic jurisdiction and, consequently, they only addressed the issues of recruitment and transportation\textsuperscript{22}. The first encroachment into what was considered domestic jurisdiction came in the form of the ‘Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, 1949’\textsuperscript{23}. This consolidated the preceding instruments and took an abolitionist stance on prostitution. Its title recognises the nexus between trafficking and exploitation. Furthermore, its preamble implicitly acknowledges that trafficking is a human rights violation: “…prostitution and the accompanying evil of traffic in persons for the purpose of prostitution are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person and endanger the welfare of the individual, the family and the community\textsuperscript{924}.

**United Nations Protocol\textsuperscript{25}**

The evolution of international law on human trafficking culminated on the 15th of November, 2000 when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the ‘United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children’.\textsuperscript{26} The Protocol endowed the act of trafficking with an internationally accepted definition - the product of both State and non-State party submissions.\textsuperscript{27} Article 3 (a) defines trafficking as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of position of vulnerability or for the giving or receiving or payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include 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”. Article 3 (b) vitiates the consent\textsuperscript{28} of the victim where any of the means set out in subparagraph (a) have been used.

The Travaux Preparatoire states that ‘abuse of a position of vulnerability’ is understood to refer to any situation in which the person involved has no real and acceptable alternative but to submit to the abuse involved’. Furthermore, the phrase ‘exploitation of the prostitution of others and other forms of sexual exploitation’ refers only to prostitution in the context of trafficking in persons and is without prejudice to how individual State Parties address prostitution.\textsuperscript{29} However, the definition
also includes situations where the relationship between the prostitute and employer is exploitative. In recognition of the particular vulnerability of children, consent is irrelevant regardless of the means of recruitment used. The phrase “For the purpose of exploitation” introduces a mens rea requirement. For a defendant to be found guilty of the offence of trafficking, the prosecution must establish that the defendant intended to exploit the victim.

Part II (Articles 6-8) deals with protection of and assistance to victims of trafficking. Articles 6(1) and 6(2) oblige State Parties ‘in appropriate cases and to the extent possible under domestic law’ to protect the privacy and identity of victims of trafficking, and to provide them with information and assistance during legal proceedings. The inclusion of these two caveats sets the tone for a section laden with ambiguous and discretionary language. In equally pliable terms, article 6(3) obliges States, where appropriate, to ‘consider’ implementing measures to provide for the physical, psychological and social recovery of victims through providing, inter alia, appropriate housing, counselling, medical, educational, material assistance, employment, educational and training opportunities.

Article 6(5) requires States to ‘endeavour’ to provide for the physical safety of victims while they remain on its territory. Under article 6(6), States must ensure that their domestic legal systems contain measures that offer victims the possibility of obtaining compensation.

States, under Article 7, are obliged to ‘consider’ granting victims of trafficking in persons the right to remain in their territory either temporarily or permanently, giving appropriate consideration to humanitarian and compassionate factors. According to accounts of the drafting process, this was a crucial issue during negotiations, with NGOs and the Inter-Agency arguing for the inclusion of a right of residence in countries of destination. Government delegations opposed a blanket right on the ground that it might create a means for illegal migration, but recognised that, in certain cases, there might be a need for victims to remain “for humanitarian purposes and to protect them from being victimised again by traffickers”.

Article 8 provides for the repatriation of victims of trafficking, and requires State Parties to facilitate the repatriation of its citizens, ‘with due regard to their safety’. While article 8(2) states that repatriation ‘shall preferably be voluntary’, this provision is ineffective as the Travaux Preparatoire specifies that the phrase is understood not to place any obligation on the State Party.

Part III (Articles 9-13) requires State Parties to establish preventative policies, programmes and other measures to safeguard victims. The measures include research, mass media campaigns, social and economic initiatives, cooperation with civil society, developmental measures, bilateral agreements, educational, social and cultural measures to “alleviate the factors that make persons... vulnerable to trafficking”.

Appraisal of Protocol

There are a number of inherent weaknesses in the protocol. Firstly, in light of the potential difficulty of distinguishing between trafficking victims and smuggled migrants, it is unfortunate that the drafters of the protocol failed to provide guidance on the identification of trafficked persons. This danger is particularly stark when one realises that the definition of a smuggled migrant could encompass all trafficked persons, with the exception of the minority residing legally. Moreover, under the terms of the convention, it would appear that in cases where force or coercion are not overtly obvious, the burden of proof may rest on victims to establish that they have been trafficked and are thus deserving of protection.

Secondly, assistance and protection are not given as of right but are at the discretion of State parties. In their joint
substitution, the Inter-agency Group questioned the discretionary nature of the protection and noted that it was ‘unnecessarily restrictive and not in accordance with international human rights law’. Indeed, this could lead to the further violation of human rights, arbitrary provision of assistance to victims within states and discrepancies across states. This discretionary character of the victim assistance measures is a result of financial consideration, particularly among developing countries.

Thirdly, the drafters of the Protocol failed to establish a mechanism for reviewing States Parties’ adherence to their obligations, or to create an international body to receive individual complaints by persons who may be the victims of trafficking.

Conclusion

As is clear from the foregoing, the development of international law in the area of trafficking has been frustratingly slow, and the measures adopted are focused on the interests of State Parties, and not the plight of the victims. While the protocol is the most progressive legislative act to date, it is fundamentally flawed due to the discretionary nature of protection and assistance measures. Essentially, the international community is attempting to counter human trafficking through immigration control and criminal justice while bypassing human rights – a strategy which has thus far failed. Finally, with respect to State party implementation of the protocol, it is relevant to note that the Protocol’s requirements represent minimum standards. States, in their domestic law and policy, may extend the scope of the above-mentioned measures, increase penalties and pursue more effective victim assistance and rehabilitation programmes in their own jurisdictions.

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References:

1 International Agreement for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic, May 18 1904, 35 Stat 1979, 1 LNTS 83. It was amended by the Protocol extending the International Agreement for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic and the International Convention for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic, and Annex to the Protocol Amending the International Agreement for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic, 30 UNTS 23. The Convention was signed in Paris on the 18th of May 1904, consist of nine articles and entered into force on the 18 of July 1905.


5 United Nations Department of Economic Social Affairs, Study of Traffic in Persons and Prostitution, ST/SOA/SID/D (New York: United Nations Publications) (1959), p. 1. Also see Corrigan, Katrin, Putting the Brakes on the Global Trafficking on Women for the Sex Trade: An Analysis of Existing Regulatory Schemes to Stop the Flow of Traffic, 25 Fordham INT’L LJ 151, 53 (2001) at 164-65 noted “the problem of holding women in brothels against their will for purposes of forced prostitution was beyond the scope of the 1910 Convention because Member States considered such matters to be within a country’s “exclusive domestic jurisdiction”.


7 Chuang, Janie; Redircting the Debate over Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling, Paradigms and Contexts, 11 Harv. Hum. RGFTS. J. 65, Spring 1998, p. 75.

8 Article 1.

9 Article 2.

10 Article 3.

11 Article 4.

12 Article 5.

13 Article 6.


16 This treaty was amended in 1947 and since the amendment, it has attached 42 ratifications.


18 The International Convention for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic, and Annex to the Protocol Amending the International Agreement for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic, 30 UNTS 23. The Convention was signed in Paris on the 18th of May 1904, consist of nine articles and entered into force on the 18 of July 1905.


21 Article 6(3)(a)


23 Article 6(3)(b)

24 Article 6(3)(d)


26 As is clear from the foregoing, the development of international law in the area of trafficking has been frustratingly slow, and the measures adopted are focused on the interests of State Parties, and not the plight of the victims. While the protocol is the most progressive legislative act to date, it is fundamentally flawed due to the discretionary nature of protection and assistance measures. Essentially, the international community is attempting to counter human trafficking through immigration control and criminal justice while bypassing human rights – a strategy which has thus far failed. Finally, with respect to State party implementation of the protocol, it is relevant to note that the Protocol’s requirements represent minimum standards. States, in their domestic law and policy, may extend the scope of the above-mentioned measures, increase penalties and pursue more effective victim assistance and rehabilitation programmes in their own jurisdictions.

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Franciscans International (FI) is a unique project within the Franciscan Family whose various branches support, for the first time in history, a common ministry at the United Nations. Franciscans International serves more than a million Franciscans and members of FI in 180 countries around the world by acting as peacemakers, accompanying the poor in their struggles, and promoting respect for the environment.

Since 2002, Franciscans International has run an Anti-Trafficking Program as several Franciscans, working at the grassroots level with trafficked persons, requested our offices in Geneva and in New York to give international visibility to their activities and concerns namely in relation to victims' protection. Indeed, several Franciscans exercise their ministry with and on behalf of trafficked persons and carry out timely, practical activities, namely in Canada, France, Germany, Madagascar, India, Italy, Lebanon, Pakistan and Togo.

In particular, FI has been facilitating Franciscan testimonies to several UN bodies where our brothers and sisters have offered first-hand information as well as the fruits of participation of Franciscans and members of other religious communities in training courses on human trafficking and forced labor.

Franciscans International has also used its research and advocacy capacities to effectively interact with the diplomatic community, UN agencies, mechanisms and procedures related to trafficking and other NGOs and shared the outcomes of these efforts with interested groups.

In addition, we published a Handbook on Human Trafficking (2004) in order to explain the content of the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (also known as the Palermo Protocol) in an easy, accessible language. The Handbook also offers a practical tool where to learn concrete information that can be useful in developing local initiatives. Furthermore, in view of providing a comprehensive picture of human trafficking and its ramifications, FI published a Handbook on Migrant Workers (2004), the Acts of a Colloquium on the Protection of Trafficked Persons, jointly organized with the Human Rights Institute of the Catholic University of Lyon (2004), a research study on Migrant Workers in Lebanon (2005), a Handbook on Forced Labor (2006) and a Toolkit on Human Trafficking for Franciscans working in the United States (2006). Throughout 2005, Franciscans International and the Franciscan Family of Lebanon have also been instrumental in calling for and supporting the organization of the visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking to Lebanon.

Guided by the principles enshrined in the Palermo Protocol, Franciscans International’s work on human trafficking is based upon the following considerations:

Excerpt from Fatima Mariasusai’s testimony to the UN Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery.
Trafficking is a global phenomenon that involves all human beings - women and girls, as well as men and boys;

Both the sexual and the economic forms of exploitation of trafficking must be taken into consideration if we want to effectively combat this scourge;

Victims' protection must be at the center of anti-trafficking initiatives, independent of the victims' status in the country of origin, transit or destination and his / her possibility to cooperate with the authorities. Under no circumstances should victims be punished or subjected to discrimination;

National legislation in every country must establish human trafficking as a criminal offence;

States should strengthen cooperation, both at the regional and international level, in order to track down traffickers' networks. States should also introduce legislation that includes extra-territorial provisions so as to facilitate the prosecution of traffickers acting from abroad.

In our view, the definition provided in Article 3 of the Protocol is a fundamental cornerstone in the fight against human trafficking as it identifies:

The material constitutive acts of trafficking – recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons;

The acts committed without the free and full consent of the trafficked person – use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or of a position of weakness or vulnerability;

Exploitation – exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs – as the purpose of these acts and means.

It is important to note that if one of the above-mentioned acts has been committed, the victim's consent, be it free or vitiated, is irrelevant. In other words, merely having used these means implies having committed a criminal offence, regardless of the willingness or the consent of the victim to be exploited. The ultimate objective of this provision is, therefore, to reinforce the victims' protection in order to ensure their social reintegration and to focus on the whole trafficking process.

Though discretionary, we can also find some basic principles dealing with the question of victims’ protection in Articles 6 and 7 of the Palermo Protocol, which make reference to judiciary procedures and victims’ security as well as their rights to physical and mental health, housing, work, education, and training. Measures to protect victims should aim at assisting, supporting, and empowering those who have been trafficked in order to enable them to address the violations they have suffered.

Franciscans International is convinced that a human-rights based approach to victims' protection should, therefore, include assistance and support components as well as the empowerment of those who have been trafficked in order to enable them to address the violations they have suffered.

We believe that the joint efforts of States, intergovernmental and non governmental organizations can effectively contribute to alert public opinion on the scourge of human trafficking and to sensitize society on the abuses that the victims endure. A coherent juridical framework, based upon the respect of human rights, systematized and concerted cooperation among different actors, and the political will to combine prevention, protection and prosecution measures are core elements to support millions of human beings in their efforts to recover their dignity.

Alessandra Aula, Senior Advocacy Officer at Franciscans International, Geneva, coordinates the organization's human rights advocacy efforts at the United Nations.
HUMAN TRAFFICKING

BEHOLD A WOMAN

“Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And just then behold a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, ‘Woman, you are set free from your ailment.’ When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight, and began praising God. But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the Sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, ‘There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the Sabbath day.’ But the Lord answered him and said, ‘You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the Sabbath day?’ When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing” (Luke 13: 10-17).

The usual translation “there appeared a woman” weakens the idiomatic force of Luke’s biblical diction: “behold (idou) a woman.” “Behold a bent woman” becomes “behold the bent women of trafficking.” Behold the victims of the third most lucrative criminal activity in the world after arms and drugs.

She has been bent for eighteen years and we wonder what invisible force bent her spirit and her body. In the thirteenth chapter of Luke, she stoops between a passage about a fig tree, fruitless for three years, yet given one more year to mature and produce, and a passage about the Kingdom of God that compares it to a tiny mustard seed that grows into a tree large enough to give sanctuary to the birds of the air. The bent woman is caught between a tree that produces nothing nourishing and a tree that provides sanctuary. This is the only healing miracle in the Gospels where Jesus heals on his own initiative. All of the other stories begin with a request of the one who needs healing.

The bent women of trafficking are caught between systems that produce no fruit for them. The tree is spared to give it more time to mature and produce. We have limited time to change the systems that entrap these women. Our prophetic voices must be heard in the halls of political power. These women of trafficking are slaves unable to escape from their bondage. Like Jesus, we must approach them with healing hands.

NAME BASED ON DISABILITY

The woman in Luke’s narrative doesn’t have a name, other than the one given to her by the town, a name based upon her disability. She doesn’t have an identity other than that of a victim. We know nothing of her family or occupation, nothing other than her deformity. She is the one who is bent, stooped, bearing upon her shoulders an invisible yet heavy burden, the burden of being different, the burden of not looking like everyone else, the burden of not being able to do what everyone else does. She is the crooked woman, the bent woman.

Identity is a critical issue with the Bent Women of Trafficking. They have many names to hide their distinctiveness rather than proudly claiming one. They
often don’t have papers and therefore no legal identity. They are ashamed of their present situation and suffer the humiliation and guilt for years. The system has stripped them of their legal rights and offered them the ignominious name of “Women of the Street.”

“Once a person is trafficked, escape from that situation is always very difficult and often fraught with danger. Survivors of trafficking almost invariably face a multitude of challenges, if they manage to escape the clutches of those that are trafficking or exploiting them:

- Denial of access to legal rights and basic human rights
- Criminalisation, persecution and penalisation
- Denial of access to legal protection
- Denial of access to medical protection and counselling services
- Assistance is often conditional upon cooperation with authorities, regardless of the danger to which this may expose the trafficked person
- Stigmatisation and discrimination, not only of the trafficked person but also of his or her family and environment”

“On the street the ‘prostitute’ must lie in absolute secrecy and in strict obedience to their traffickers and mamans. In addition, they are liable to the dangers of the street - maltreatment, abuse, road accidents and even death. Every year several girls experience martyrdom on our streets, either from clients, maniacs or traffickers.”

**DAUGHTER OF ABRAHAM**

Jesus encounters the bent woman. Jesus heals her and she is able to stand up straight, to look straight ahead, to be restored. But perhaps just as wonderful is the way Jesus speaks to her, what Jesus says about her. He does not call her disabled, or hindered, or a victim of life’s unfairness, though from most points of view, she is. Jesus seems to have no need to make her a professional victim, so that her disability defines her whole life.

Jesus calls her “a daughter of Abraham.”

We must call to the Bent Women of Trafficking by name. They are our sisters with the same inheritance as ours. We are their sisters and brothers who share their inheritance. Their name, country of origin and family have been taken away from them. They assume many different names for concealment. Their identity has become their disability – “Bent Women of Trafficking.” Let us devote our efforts to calling them by name – Regina, Gladies, Patricia, Rita and Gloria. They are beneficiaries of the same astounding promises that sustain us in our daily lives. These “Bent Women of Trafficking” have a right to know their identity as recipients of the Love of God. They will not know this good news until another human person calls them by name and offers a healing hand.
YOU ARE SET FREE

The first recorded words of Jesus in this story of healing are “woman, you are set free from your ailment.” Only then Jesus lays his hands on the woman and heals her. “When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight, and began praising God.” You are set free from the spirit that bent your body. You are set free from the malady that has replaced your name. You are set free from being a victim. You are free to claim your upright identity as a daughter of Abraham.

The Bent Women of Trafficking belong to a slave trade where women and minors are for sale. “Prostitution is not a new phenomenon; what is new is that a global and complex trade currently exploits the situation of poverty and vulnerability of many women - twenty-first century slaves.” They have been promised freedom, employment and endless opportunities only to be tricked into the slavery of prostitution. These women are bent by a system that is one of the most lucrative criminal activities in the world. Globalization has strengthened the network that entraps these women.

“The Trans-national dimension of the global crime of trafficking in human beings requires the combined efforts of responsible actors in the countries of origin, the countries of transit, and the countries of destination of the trafficked people.”

THE OBLIGATION TO HEAL

“There are six days on which work ought (dei, it is necessary) to be done.” It was the synagogue leader who introduced the phrase “ought”, “it is necessary”. He speaks of the “necessity to work.” He does not speak of the days one is allowed to work. The leader’s principle speaks of the necessity ‘to work’ and in this case, the work of healing. His argument is that it is necessary to heal on six days of the week, but not on the Sabbath.

The synagogue leader seems to recognize the necessity that lies upon Jesus, the responsibility to use his powers for the good of others. Jesus picks up this phrase: “and ought (dei) not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the Sabbath day?” Reminding his addressees of their weekly practice of caring for the well-being of animals, he suggests that there is a necessity that they do that, an obligation they would and should readily admit. So too, on the human level, there is an essential need that people be cared for with compassion. The motivation for this can only be love of neighbour, the love for which Jesus has only praise (Luke 10:27).

The emphasis of this law, this necessity, for Jesus is shaped by the ways in which he can be neighbour to all people. His abilities, his powers, are especially those of teaching and healing. His word is powerful. What is emphasized in this story is the peculiar necessity of healing which lays upon Jesus. He ‘must’ heal, out of love of neighbour. This is his obligation. As Christians, it is ours too.

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References:
3 Ibid., Sr. Eugenia Bonetti, MC
4 Ibid. “Created in the image of God, treated like slaves…”
Case study:

ENCA’S STORY

Enca from Bolivia, a lone parent with two children and a hairdresser by profession, was offered a more profitable position overseas. She paid her own fare to Ireland, and was told to buy a mobile phone and given a mobile number to contact on arrival. Enca was met by a man who had a picture of her on his mobile and was taken by him to a house where she found three other women of the same nationality.

She quickly discovered that her ‘new job’ was very different from her expectations. Enca learned from them that her job would be to provide sexual favours for men and that her work times and places would be dictated by mobile messages. She was moved around the country and each week found herself in a different place. What kept Enca going in this job was fear - fear for the safety of her children, as she was threatened that if she did not comply, her family would be at risk, even of death.

Enca complied for three months. She followed mobile text orders of when and where the next client would present. She was also given various bank account numbers to which she should lodge her income. One day while she was making a lodgement, a bank official called her aside. She had presented counterfeit notes. Very soon she found herself in the Women’s Prison.

While there it was suspected that she had been trafficked and her plight was brought to the notice of Ruhama* – a Dublin-based NGO that provides support services to women involved in prostitution and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation. Ruhama personnel took up her case, assisted by the Irish police and IMO. With this support, she was helped to fulfil her choice to return to her family. Through the efforts of the network of Religious Sisters, Ruhama was able to put her in contact with another support agency in her own country.

Questions to ask yourself:
What feelings did it evoke in you?
How does this story challenge you?
* See www.ruhama.ie

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

At a personal level

- Talk about Enca’s story
- Be alert to references to trafficking in persons in newspapers, on TV and other media
- Include people like Enca in your prayer
- Support Fair Trade
- Be alert to other ‘Encas’ in your locality

At community/Parish level

- Invite someone to speak to your interest groups
- Raise the matter with your local politicians
- Support action taken to combat trafficking in persons

Students/Young Adults

- Why not have a school/college debate on the issue?
- Why not form an action group to combat this modern form of slavery?
Case study:

ELIZABETH’S STORY

Elizabeth was the eldest of five children. They lived in one of West Africa’s large cities. Her father was a gambler. He had been imprisoned and their mother, deeply depressed after the death of a new-born infant, simply could not cope. She ran away, abandoning the children. To help feed her younger sisters and brothers, Elizabeth got some work at the down-town market.

One day, a girl called Magdalena came up to her stall. She seemed very scattered, her hair untidy, her clothes torn. She told Elizabeth a very sad story about what had befallen her and begged Elizabeth to help her and to teach her how to trade in the market. Because of her own suffering Elizabeth decided to help Magdalena and took her to the room where she was living. For one week Magdalena stayed with her, understudying her at her trade. She prayed with her, ate with her, moved everywhere with her, and - most of all learned how she could take a phone call through the help of some neighbours.

At the end of the week, Magdalena told Elizabeth that she had two brothers in the capital city who would be very grateful that Elizabeth had saved Magdalena’s life and that she should go with her to meet them as they would want to thank her. On arrival they were welcomed by the brothers. Elizabeth was thanked for her kindness. She was taken to a boutique where they bought her new clothes. After a day or two she was given money and returned home, very happy that she now had friends in the capital city, who might help her if she wanted to return there in the future.

Six weeks later, Elizabeth got a message saying she should stand by the phone of her neighbour to receive a call from the capital city. This she did. It was Magdalena’s two brothers informing her that Magdalena was now in Germany running a supermarket for her aunt. Because of the help Elizabeth had given to Magdalena and had saved her life, the brothers wanted to help Elizabeth to go to Germany to join her. Elizabeth could not believe her good fortune.

The process began, getting her passport and papers in order. Eventually she went. Her brothers and sisters heard no
more from her. As far as they were concerned she had disappeared.

When she had left home she was flown, not to Germany, but to Rome. At the airport she was met and taken to the home of a woman from her home country who ran a brothel. She was welcomed and told she would have two weeks to learn what to do and to learn Italian. Elizabeth thought she was in Germany and asked why she had to learn Italian. Then it dawned on her how she had been duped and what kind of 'supermarket' it was. She told the Madame that if the work involved prostitution, she was not going to enter into it.

She remained in the house for two weeks at the end of which she was dressed as prostitutes are dressed and taken to the street with another girl. She screamed and made so much noise that the Madame had to take her home again. She was flogged until she bled and a well-known custom of invoking evil spirits was used to frighten her. She was warned that if she did not comply with the rules and regulations of that house she would die. Elizabeth told the Madame she was ready to die but was not ready to enter into prostitution.

The next night, broken and bruised, she was put on the street again, and she repeated her performance of screaming and shouting but the Madame left: her there and drove away. An Italian man happened to be passing that way. He stopped his car and asked her what the problem was. Elizabeth was too upset to speak and didn't know enough Italian to explain. Another girl in prostitution close by explained the problem but said she felt that in time Elizabeth would enter the business.

The man asked Elizabeth to wait there saying that he was coming back. He went home and collected his wife and together they came back to Elizabeth and took her off the street. They were the parents of two children around Elizabeth's age. Every night for two weeks they took Elizabeth to their home, each morning giving her money to pay the Madame.

This couple knew they couldn't continue this, and all the while they were trying to find a solution. They called on their relatives to help and managed to collect 30,000,000 lire between them. The wife accompanied Elizabeth to the Madame to pay the money for her release but the Madame said she required 70,000,000 lire and locked up both the wife and Elizabeth. Realising what had happened, the husband came with an axe and cut down the door and rushed them into his car. In releasing his wife and Elizabeth the money was dropped and no receipt was issued.

The couple made room for Elizabeth in their home and cared for her like parents. Then began the long process to get her a work permit to remain in Italy. Meanwhile they got her a job looking after an elderly couple where she was very comfortable.

Elizabeth was fortunate to have been rescued by a Good Samaritan. She was advised never to return to her home country as her life would be in danger. In Italy she met a young man from her own country, to whom she is now happily married. Countless other young women like her are still at risk.

Questions to ask yourself:
What touched you most about this story? In what way does it challenge you?
PSALM 69

translation from the perspective of a woman trafficked into forced prostitution
by Eva-Sibylle Vogel-Mfato

Save me, o God, for the waters have come up to my neck. My feet can no longer touch bottom in the deep mire where I am sinking. I have screamed my heart out, my throat is so hoarse, I have waited so long for my God that I hardly dare hope any longer.

More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without any cause. Those who are unjustly against me, and want to ruin me completely have me totally in their power. I am supposed to pay back money I do not even owe.

God, you know how innocent and naive I was; that I am partly to blame for my situation is no secret from you. Do not let those who wait and hope for your help be troubled because of me. Let those who seek you, o God of my people, not face scandal and shame because of me. For your sake I bear my disgrace and my face betrays my shame.

I have become a stranger to my own sisters and brothers. If they knew how I earn my living here, they would refuse to know me any longer. It was, it is, longing for the life in all its fullness which you have promised to all the world, which has brought me low. The insults of those who scorn your name have fallen on my head.

Weeping bitterly, I fast while they make fun of me. If I were to seek justice in a court they would pull me to pieces, and my tormentors would sing drunken songs about me. My prayer rises up to you, O Lord. Let the time come for me to receive mercy. In your great love, answer me, with your faithful help, rescue me. Reach down, pull me out of the mire before it closes over my head. Snatch me away from those who are destroying me, save me from the floods rushing over me, do not let the deep waters drown me or the Pit swallow me up.

Answer me, God, for it is so comforting to be embraced by your kindness and motherly love. Do not hide your face from your daughter. I am so afraid!
Answer me quickly, come into my life with your help, redeem my life, buy me back, because of my enemies. You know how I am insulted and shamed, you know who they are, my tormenters. Shame has broken my heart and brought me to despair. I long for someone who sees me and cares about my pain but no one is there. I long for someone to take me in her arms and comfort me but I cannot find anyone.

They put drugs in my food, and when I am overcome with thirst, all I get is a bitter drink, which numbs me but does not quench my thirst.

Let their own table full of food make them sick and be a trap for them. Let their eyes be struck blind, so they can no longer gape at me, and let their loins be impotent forever! Pour out upon them your punishing anger and let your burning indignation overtake them. Let their houses be laid waste, so no one can live there. For they persecute those whom you have already punished enough and they make fun of the pain of those who are already deeply wounded.

Add guilt to their guilt and do not let them have any place in your justice. Let them be blotted out of the book of life; let them not be included among the righteous. I am in misery, my whole body aches. Help me, o God, and protect me.

I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify God with thanksgiving. My sisters with whom I share this slavery see me, and sing their gladness; those who looked to God for counsel and help, find new courage in their hearts. For God hears the voice of the poor and needy, God identifies with those in bondage, and does not despise her own.

Let heaven and earth praise God, the seas, and everything that moves in them. For our country is precious to God, she will help us, and will build the cities again, so that her people may live in them, and make their living with what they have there. And this our descendants will inherit, and those who love God will be able to live there in peace.

http://www.cec-kek.org/content/psalm_eva.shtml

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8. UNHCR: Combatting Human Trafficking, Overview of UNHCR Anti-Trafficking Activities in Europe, Bureau for Europe Policy Unit 2005, 146 pp plus appendices Includes: Information on Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Republic of Moldova, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia-Montenegro and Kosovo, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom. For each country includes overview and profile of victims, legal framework, implementation, response/prevention, case law and legal practice and UNHCR involvement, outstanding issues and other resources.


12. "Don't become a victim of human traffickers". Published within the framework of the project "Development of a network of innovating social services in Ukraine for women victims of trafficking" by Cantas Ukraine, 2004.


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Contact Magazine
A publication of the World Council of Churches
http://wcc-coe.org/wcc/news/contact.html