

**A PRESENTATION AT AN EVENT ORGANISED BY KEW CHURCHES  
TOGETHER, TAKING PLACE AT THE BARN CHURCH, ATWOOD AVENUE  
ON THE 20<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2017.**

**2017 LENTEN SEMINAR ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING AMONG PEOPLE IN  
CRISIS: A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE**

**INTRODUCTION**

I thank the organisers of this event: “Lent 2017 People in Crisis: A Christian Response” for inviting me to be one of the speakers. This week, the group is reflecting on the issue of human trafficking as it affects People in Crisis situation and proposing a Christian Response.

Allow me to start with a short personal reflection. I wish that I could say that human trafficking is a thing of the past in the country where I come from. Unfortunately, that is not the case. I come from a country that today some unlawful individuals engaged in the cruel trade of human trafficking. It is becoming part of our history particularly in the part of Nigeria where I come from and we should make conscious effort to stop this evil. Nigeria is rated as number two globally in this cruel trade.

Trafficking networks have gone global. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, victims can be found in 106 countries.

Closely connected to human trafficking is the issue of people smuggling. This has taken on new proportions in recent months, especially in the Mediterranean region, and it is clear that organized criminal networks are taking advantage of the humanitarian crisis for financial gains.

Human trafficking thrives where the rule of law is weak or non-existent.

In some of today’s conflict situations, we are confronted by armed groups that not only openly engage in enslavement and forced labour, but actually argue that human trafficking is legal. For example

In Syria, Da'esh has organized slave markets and even published manuals instructing its fighters on how to capture, control and trade enslaved women and girls. The leaders of Boko Haram have also argued that slavery is legal.

Fleeing the threats of conflict situation, refugees and displaced people confront new ones. As people take to the road seeking for a place of safety from a conflict situation, traffickers take advantage of their movements.

Traffickers often coerce and manipulate individuals for profit and make them victims of exploitations of one kind or the other. Terrorists and violent extremists use sexual enslavement as a tool for recruitment. Drug traffickers use kidnapping and ransom to finance their operations. Criminal gangs force unaccompanied children into a life of crime.

Human trafficking takes many forms. Some of these forms include sex exploitation, forced labour, debt bondage, domestic servitude, drugs, organ harvesting, child armed conflict and so and so forth.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development can also help us break the chains of exploitation. Three of the goals explicitly address human trafficking, including sex trafficking, forced labour, child labour and the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

Human trafficking has truly become a global threat to vulnerable men, women, and children worldwide. It is an injustice that affects millions of people every year on every continent and at all socioeconomic levels. Human trafficking is a highly-organized and lucrative business, generating \$150 billion per year. It is the second highest profitable form of transnational crime after drug trafficking. It is indeed; risk-free transnational crime and the profits of the crime are often reused and recycled.

The walk free foundation estimates that there are 35.8 million people in slavery today around the world. The Home Office has estimated that in 2013 that there were between 10,000 and 13,000 potential victims of modern slavery in the UK.

Human trafficking is an international problem. It does not respect borders and the victims can be from any nationality.

## **WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING?**

It is the action or practice of illegally transporting of people from one country or area to another, typically for the purposes of forced labour or commercial sexual exploitation.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) defines human 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 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.

Human Trafficking is a serious and brutal crime in which people are treated as commodities and are exploited for criminal gain. It is indeed a grave violation of human rights.

Every year, thousands of men, women and children fall into the hands of traffickers, in their own countries and abroad. Almost every country in the world is affected by trafficking, whether as a country of origin, transit or destination for victims.

## **ORIGINS OF TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS FROM NIGERIA TO ITALY**

According to statistics, in the early 1980s, many women from Edo State Nigeria came to Italy for trade in gold and at the same time many of the women, in order to make money, worked on farms by picking tomatoes. However, when the farms closed, in order to survive they had to start making money in other ways, such as transporting drugs or

offering sexual services. But income for sex workers is still minimal, sometimes only 10 euros! Many sex workers from Nigeria have chosen to work in the forest; they will place a mattress in the forest to provide sexual services on it.

Some experts trace the beginning of trafficking in Nigerian women and girls for prostitution in Italy to the second half of the 1980s as a result of economic depression in Nigeria and the adoption of the Structural Adjustment Programme. The resulting economic deprivations forced many Nigerians to leave the country in search of better economic opportunities in Europe, Saudi Arabia, the United States, and other countries. Persistent unemployment among the youth and rising poverty led to the young desiring to go out of the country in search of greener pastures. It also marked the beginning of trafficking in women and minors and escalation of illegal migration out of the country. While the well-educated Nigerians usually found it easier to obtain visas and work permits, this was not the case with the less educated youth, male and female. Increasing poverty, persistent unemployment and increased stringency in immigration laws, led to the emergence of a market for services that aid illegal and/or irregular migration such as provision of fake travelling documents, transportation, clandestine border crossings, temporary accommodation and job brokering. Women and young girls and boys also started to leave the Country on promises of well-paid jobs in factories, offices and farms in Europe. At the early stages, it was possible for women and girls to obtain work in tomato fields and other menial jobs. Traffickers saw an opportunity to make profits and moved in. By the 1990s, say from 1991 and 1992 onwards, more Nigerian women and girls who had been deliberately tricked arrived in Italy. They arrived in Italy to find themselves sold into sexual slavery and forced to engage in prostitution. From 1995 onwards, more women arrived who were probably aware that they would have to engage in prostitution to repay their debts. They were, however, unaware of the conditions of violent and aggressive exploitation that they would be subjected to. Many of those who came earlier have ended up as the madams who have helped to perpetuate the trade because of the increasing profitability of trafficking in women. At present, scores of enterprises in Edo State have invested in trafficking, they include the recruiters, trolleys, passport racketeers, forgers, and others believed to include embassy staff, immigration officers, Police, lawyers, and fetish priests who administer oaths to victims.

## **CAUSE OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

Poverty and the desire for change

Conflict

Insecurity

## **ELEMENTS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

Human trafficking has three constituent elements:

**The Act** (What is done): Recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons

**The Means** (How it is done): Threat or use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or vulnerability, or giving payments or benefits to a person in control of the victim

**The Purpose** (Why it is done): For the purpose of exploitation which includes exploiting the prostitution of others, sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery or similar practices and the removal of organs.

Human trafficking is a hidden crime as victims rarely come forward to seek help because of language barriers, fear of the traffickers, and/or fear of law enforcement.

Traffickers use force, fraud, or coercion to lure their victims and force them into labour or commercial sexual exploitation. They look for people who are defenceless for a variety of reasons, including psychological or emotional vulnerability, economic hardship, political instability, natural disasters or lack of a social safety net. The trauma caused by the traffickers can be so great that many may not identify themselves as victims or ask for help, even in highly public settings.

## **THE EFFECTS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING ON VICTIMS**

Human trafficking has a direct effect on the physical and mental well-being of victims. During the initial trafficking, victims are coerced and deceived usually through the exploitation of their current circumstances, as most victims have a history of abuse and

are already living in precarious circumstances. Once enslaved, victims typically are forced into unsanitary and stressful living conditions and receive little to no healthcare or basic services. Their movement is often restricted, their personal documentation withheld and mostly experience significant physical, emotional, sexual, and psychological violence. Escaping from slavery is extremely difficult and dangerous, putting the victim at great personal risk. If rescued, integration back into society is incredibly difficult because of the shame, stigma, threat of retribution, and trauma experienced during enslavement.

## **GENERAL INDICATORS TO WATCH OUT**

Trafficking victims are often lured into another country by false promises and so may not easily trust others. They may:

- Be fearful of police/authorities
- Be fearful of the trafficker, believing their lives or family members' lives are at risk if they escape
- Exhibit signs of physical and psychological trauma e.g. anxiety, lack of memory of recent events, bruising, untreated conditions
- Be fearful of telling others about their situation
- Be unaware they have been trafficked and believe they are simply in a bad job
- Have limited freedom of movement
- Be unpaid or paid very little
- Have limited access to medical care
- Seem to be in debt to someone
- Have no passport or mention that someone else is holding their passport
- Be regularly moved to avoid detection
- Be controlled by use of witchcraft e.g. Juju

## **SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

Be aware: ordinary residential housing/hotels are being used more and more for brothels.

People forced into sexual exploitation may:

- Be moved between brothels, sometimes from city to city
- Sleeping on work premises
- Display a limited amount of clothing, of which a large proportion is sexual
- Display substance misuse
- Be forced, intimidated or coerced into providing sexual services
- Be subjected to abduction, assault or rape
- Be unable to travel freely e.g. picked up and dropped off at work location by another person
- Have money for their services provided collected by another person

## **DOMESTIC SERVITUDE**

A particularly serious form of denial of freedom; this includes the obligation to provide certain services and the obligation to live on another person property without the possibility of changing those circumstances. They may:

- Be living and working for a family in a private home
- Not be eating with the rest of the family
- Have no bedroom or proper sleeping place
- Have no private space
- Be forced to work excessive hours; “on call” 24 hours a day
- Never leave the house without the ‘employer’
- Be malnourished
- Be reported as missing or accused of crime by their ‘employer’ if they try to escape

## **FORCED LABOUR**

Where all the work is done under the menace of a penalty or the person has not offered himself voluntarily and is now unable to leave. They may experience:

- Threat or actual physical harm
- Restriction of movement or confinement
- Debt bondage i.e. working to pay off a debt or loan, often the victim is paid very little or nothing at all for their services because of deductions
- Withholding of wages or excessive wage reductions
- Withholding of documents e.g. passport/security card
- Threat of revealing to authorities an irregular immigration status
- Their employer is unable to produce documents required
- Poor or non-existent health and safety standards
- Requirement to pay for tools and food
- Imposed place of accommodation (and deductions made for it)
- Pay that is less than minimum wage
- Dependence on employer for services
- No access to labour contract
- Excessive work hours/few breaks

## **CHILD ABUSE**

An abuse of a child's vulnerability by a person's position of power or trust, exploiting that position to obtain sexual services in exchange for some form of favour such as alcohol, drugs, attention or gifts. You may notice a child that is:

- Often going missing/truanting
- Secretive
- Has unexplained money/presents
- Experimenting with drugs/alcohol
- Associating with/being groomed by older people (not in normal networks)

- In relationships with significantly older people
- Taking part in social activities with no plausible explanation
- Seen entering or leaving vehicles with unknown adults
- Showing evidence of physical/sexual assault (including STD's)
- Showing signs of low self-image/self-harm/eating disorder

### **COMMON WORK AND LIVING CONDITIONS**

- Is not free to leave or come and go as he/she wishes
- Is in the commercial sex industry and has a pimp / manager
- Is unpaid, paid very little, or paid only through tips
- Works excessively long and/or unusual hours
- Is not allowed breaks or suffers under unusual restrictions at work
- Owes a large debt and is unable to pay it off
- Was recruited through false promises concerning the nature and conditions of his/her work
- High security measures exist in the work and/or living locations.

### **POOR MENTAL HEALTH OR ABNORMAL BEHAVIOUR**

- Is fearful, anxious, depressed, submissive, tense, or nervous/paranoid
- Exhibits unusually fearful or anxious behaviour after bringing up law enforcement
- Avoids eye contact

### **POOR PHYSICAL HEALTH**

- Lacks medical care and/or is denied medical services by employer
- Appears malnourished or shows signs of repeated exposure to harmful chemicals
- Shows signs of physical and/or sexual abuse, physical restraint, confinement, or torture.

## **LACK OF CONTROL**

- Has few or no personal possessions
- Is not in control of his/her own money, no financial records, or bank account
- Is not in control of his/her own identification documents (ID or passport)
- Is not allowed or able to speak for themselves (a third party may insist on being present and/or translating)

## **OTHER**

- Claims of just visiting and inability to clarify where he/she is staying/address
- Lack of knowledge of whereabouts and/or of what city he/she is in
- Loss of sense of time
- Has numerous inconsistencies in his/her story

## **GLOBAL EFFORTS TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

There are several international organizations fighting against human trafficking at the global level. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime combats human trafficking worldwide through promoting policies that incriminate traffickers and protect victims. The UN agency also produces tools and publications to help train law enforcement officers and raise awareness of this injustice worldwide.

Additionally, many governments are taking action to protect potential victims from trafficking predators. The UK government established the office of Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner whose responsibility is to work independently from the government in the area of the fight against human trafficking and to hold the government to account.

To effectively carry out the fight against human trafficking, everyone (NGO, government bodies, law enforcement agencies, and civil society) is invited to abduct the principle of the 4Ps: prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership.

Some of the greatest work being done to combat human trafficking is performed by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These anti-trafficking groups are working hard to prevent human trafficking, protect vulnerable populations, lobby for policy reformation, and even rehabilitate victims both at local and global levels. The church is not left out in this fight and some of the examples are the Salvation Army, Santa Marta Group, COSUDOW, etc.

## **HOW YOU CAN HELP COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

You can join us in our fight to stop human trafficking and end modern-day sex slavery through engaging in any of our four areas of action – prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership – through committing to praying for victims, raising awareness, advocating for policy reform, and donating to organizations who are combating this injustice, you are playing a direct part in ending slavery today. You can also use the Modern Slavery helpline: 08000121700 if there are issues of human trafficking that anyone wants to report. Please feel free to visit the modern slavery website for more information: [www.modernslaveryhelpline.org](http://www.modernslaveryhelpline.org)

## **THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

In April 2014 at the Vatican conference, the Bishops' Conference brought together twenty-four heads of national and international police and law enforcement agencies including UK National Crime Agency, Interpol, Europol, US Homeland Security, the Argentine Federal Police, Ghanaian, Indian, Thai, Australian, Irish and many European Police Forces to look at how they and the Church could work together to help victims at a conference entitled Combating Human Trafficking: Church and Law Enforcement in Partnership. During this meeting, those present signed the 'Declaration of commitment' on combating human trafficking.

## **THE SANTA MARTA GROUP**

The Santa Marta Group, endorsed and supported by The Holy Father Pope Francis is an alliance of international police chiefs and bishops from around the world working together with civil society to eradicate human trafficking and modern day slavery.

It was named after the Papal residence where the participants from the Vatican Conference stayed in April 2014 and resulted in a signed 'Declaration of Commitment' by all the Chiefs of Police present to work together on the international stage to develop strategies in prevention, pastoral care and the re-integration.

The Santa Marta Group is a vehicle for building trust regionally and internationally in a structured way, but removed from the limitations imposed by legislative frameworks that often impede support for victims.

### **THE PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE OF THE GROUP**

The purpose and objective of the Group is to combine the resources of the Church with those of Law Enforcement Agencies to prevent trafficking and modern day slavery, provide pastoral care to victims and assist them with reintegration.

Santa Marta Group is also to develop further partnerships that bring civil society and law enforcement together to support victims and focus on the prosecution of the traffickers.

It is also to bring together strategies that will utilise resources regionally, nationally and internationally to improve the care and support provided to victims and promote better relationships between law enforcement agencies and the NGO sector. One of the main objectives of increased partnerships will be the sharing of intelligence resulting in the identification of more victims and a significant increase in prosecutions.

Human trafficking is serious organised criminality on a vast scale targeting the most vulnerable in society. The Holy Father, Pope Francis is very much concerned of the suffering and exploitation inflicted by traffickers on innocent victims that he has committed the Church to tackling this scourge. The Holy Father described trafficking as "an open wound on the body of contemporary society."

However, the Santa Marta Group aims to engage a response on an international level with the most senior of participants taking responsibility for driving activities. This will bring a common objective, with a clear focus on the needs of the victim, the sharing of best practice and the development of national or regional actions and activity to address and eliminate human slavery.

The unique opportunity that Santa Marta Group provides is the face-to-face conversations and negotiations taking place between senior representatives from sending, transit and receiving countries to develop some responses in tackling the issue of human trafficking in collaboration with senior members of the Church and civil society.

One of the significant advantages of this is to allow an increase in public confidence by having external involvement outside of law enforcement and the engagement and use of the varied resources that civil society can provide.

## **SAFE HOUSE**

In order to help victims, the Santa Marta Group operates Caritas Bakhita House: a place where victims are rehabilitated. The House is named after St Joseph Bakhita a slave girl from Sudan. The contact detail of Caritas Bakhita House is as follows:

Caritas Westminster,  
Vaughan House  
46 Francis Street  
London SW1P 1QN  
020 7931 6045

Other safe house and their contact details are:

The Salvation Army  
Territorial Headquarters,  
101 Newington Causeway,  
London, SE1 6BN  
020 7367 4800

Franciscan Servant of Mary  
2 Commerell Street,  
Greenwich, London  
SE10 0EA  
07404125657

The Congregation of the Adoratrices  
39 Kensington Square,  
Kensington, London W8 5HP  
020 7937 4582

Medaille Trust  
The Medaille Trust  
c/o Caritas Diocese of Salford  
Cathedral Centre  
3 Ford Street, Salford  
M3 6DP

## **CENTRE FOR LEARNING**

Santa Marta Group also established a Centre for the study of modern slavery at the Catholic University of St Mary's. The centre will help in undertaking research and making policies in the area of human trafficking.

## **CONCLUSION**

The overriding aim of the Santa Marta Group is to play a major role in the eradication of the serious organised crime of human slavery. This is a new and unique approach bringing together international partners to develop a common commitment and objective. The current members agree that to remain effective and achieve the most from the Group, the meetings should be open to discuss issues in an environment that is not clouded by bureaucracy or a lack of innovation by limiting activity to restrictions often imposed upon governmental agencies or protocols. Everything should be about victim support and the pursuit of offenders. This ethos will continue throughout the life of the Santa Marta Group.

Permit me to end this presentation by making reference to Mr William Wilberforce. On that day, Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> May 1789, in the House of Commons as Mr William Wilberforce

delivered his famous abolition speech, he arose and said: .....Having heard all of this you may choose to look the other way but you can never again say that you did not know.

**THANK YOU.**

*Rev Fr Mark E. Odion, MSP  
Santa Marta Group African Project Coordinator  
Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales*