

## Human trafficking Conference held in Hamburg on February 23-25 February 2015

### Restoring God's Image – by Fulata L Moyo, a WCC specialist on Gender justice based in Geneva

She spoke of her visit to Myanmar where she saw a heavily pregnant girl with troubled mind. She looked into her eyes and saw despair. She said she was constantly told to forgive the three rapists that trafficked her from Myanmar and to accept her pregnancy as a gift from God. She asked was anyone listening to her views and pain. How does the incorrect interpretation of scriptures oppress the voiceless and empower the exploiters?

In Indonesia she witnessed illegal prostitution was witnessed. The women were sold for over \$US 2000 each and kept at illegal settlement within a forest in Indonesia where prostitution is supposedly illegal. Over 250 women were there with uniformed men visiting and pimps taking money off them. The women were ashamed to return home due to shame. She again led a group of 45 women and men to Chiangmai Mai, Thailand in December 2009. On this occasion most of the traffickers were older women that had been trafficked before but no longer in use then became middle women as a source of living.



Conference participants

These raised several questions for the Church - how exploited dignity struggles its way back through accompaniment of love? How do you involve men in this struggle? How could we use scriptures to assist girls and protect their innocence rather than suppress them? How do we help build theologies of hope and develop liturgical ritual for healing and wholeness e.g. adopting the book of Ruth based on Naomi protecting and guiding Ruth? How do we develop a Christian ethic of care that creates safe spaces for girls and women? How could we better access “sexuality” education and reproductive health care on protection? What other options are there?

It was noted that there were existing challenges such as:

- An estimated annual profit of over 150 million is realised by human traffickers making it more profitable than drugs and other crimes
- The commodity can be sold over and over again
- In some faiths, women and children are disposable
- In some culture slaves are still considered as properties
- 27 countries have gender discriminatory roles where women cannot transfer their nationalities to their children. 14 in Middle East and North Africa, 6 Asia- Pacific and 7 sub- Saharan
- Stateless children are easier targets e.g. in Sudan boys were abducted and trained as Child soldiers
- In Hong Kong and the Middle East, lots of construction and domestic workers were trafficked from Philippines
- Ongoing conflicts such as Boko Haram terrorism supports human trafficking

Some concerned Christians with partner churches in Africa, Asia and Germany then decided to take up this issue as a matter of urgency to increase awareness and joint up thinking. These conference

participants were from UNICEF, WCC, EMW, YWCA, Hamburg, Latin America, Hong Kong, Germany, Nigeria, Indonesia, Brazil, Netherlands and Britain.

### **Professor Mirjam van Reisen - Voices from Sinai - Amsterdam**

Mirjam is a Professor of Psychology in a Dutch university and researched the problem on human trafficking through Sinai. The Eritrean government operates a blanket national service with no time limit and age of enrolment keeps dropping. Many of the girls that enrolled were pressurised into offering sex and when they get pregnant the best option is to run away. Many girls, boys and men who do not wish to serve in the brutal regime then proceed to Sinai being the closest route of escape. En-route through Sinai to Israel they were often accosted and kidnapped by traffickers or shot at by Egyptian border police. Those kidnapped were tortured and then forced to phone relatives for ransom and those caught by the Egyptian police are imprisoned and often sent back to Eritrea after release. The affected Eritrean community both in Israel, the Diaspora and Eritrea were asking...*"How are the most vulnerable being oppressed yet no one intervenes or challenge the traffickers"*.

A 20 minute DVD was shown to help us listen and recognise that it was real and how lucrative the business is. This trafficking started in 2009. Initially churches collected money for about \$1000 but then it



Presenters at the conference

rose to \$59,000 depending on how brutal the traffickers were. Is it organised trafficking? How best to help? What is the role of the Eritrean community in the Diaspora? There is added treat from politicians saying Eritrea and Sudan are now safe places to live due to immigration pressure in Europe, where is the voice of the church? The Pope, Archbishop of Canterbury and President of the British Methodist Conference spoke against human trafficking recently, how can we ride on this to increase awareness on the issue? Time has come for action and working with the Egyptian and Ethiopian churches as well as the All African Council of Churches, maybe just maybe things could turn around for good.

### **Sister Mary Onwubiko, Cusuodo Office, Benin My body is not for sale- the Nigeria situation**

Reverend sister Mary studied in Rome and travels to Europe from time to time. The Nigerian Catholic sisters became aware of the increasing number of Nigerian girls being trafficked to Italy and getting involved in the sex trade and those trafficked locally for domestic work. They came together and built a rehabilitation centres for returned trafficked persons as well as liaise with European organisations and non-governmental agencies. Rehabilitation is done step by step with dedication and love and the aim was to reintegrate back into the community.

#### **1. Step one - Welcome, accommodate and start dialogue**

Often their names are changed and documents obtained were in false names. Therapy usually starts with disclosure of actual name and disclosure of problems with drink, drug and or sex.

#### **2. Step two - Comprehensive health check**

Consider comprehensive health check to identify status mentally and physically

#### **3. Step three - Skills acquisition**

The victims are taught how to handle anger, stress etc. The victim is thinking more about the present and future to regain legal and psychological rights. They are encouraged to join in prayer and praise sessions

to distract them before contemplation. After three months enquire how she could be self- sufficient and what skills to develop. This phase may last up to six months.

#### 4. Step four - Post rescue

Now they know how to better cope, participate and contribute to society. The victim will learn to accept the situation, think positive, shun greed, laziness, self-pity and have good friends. She could then move out of the communal accommodation by moving to independent living, utilise her skills to generate income and support him or herself. Then monitor and evaluate to resettle them and ensure she does not run back abroad.

- In the case of early marriage victims encountered, mother and baby victims were not kept in the house but accommodated elsewhere
- With regards to child labour victims captured at Morocco, their families were traced where possible

#### **Migrants from Indonesia working in Hong Kong – by Pastor Maryam Magdalena**

A centre was opened in Hong Kong to help Indonesia migrants adjust to the new culture. 100 women visit each Sunday and about 25 on Saturdays. It offers counselling and accompaniment programs in addition to encouraging positive defiance i.e. learning from other solutions. It also trains and improves human rights awareness e.g. there was news about the British banker that killed Indonesian and Philippina prostitutes in Hong Kong. There were other victims physically abused by employers with no paid wages for eight months and then later taken to the airport for deportation.

The programme includes:

- Offer of Christian pastoral care using art work as entry point and adopt media for instance What'sapp and Facebook for positive messages. They were visited at hospital, at work, at home etc
- Provide individual and group counselling on family, employer, work, money management, pregnancy issues, relationship and psychology problems e.g. some have stroke, cancer and still refuse to return due to sponsoring children in education or supporting families
- Character development is shared with participants who were mostly Muslims
- Share interfaith prayers and dialogue. They were encouraged to participate in spiritual dance, meditation and soul drama
- Links with employers and employees to improve employee relations



Participants at Hamburg Conference

**Indonesia case study** - Positive Deviance is implementing special practice to tackle issues by discovering better approach. As a case study, we can refer to the use of uncommon behaviour to find better solutions using same resources in East Java, Indonesia. Dr Alhinus Kambodji of the Christian Conference of Indonesia explained the various processes staff engaged with such as:

- Identified the sending community for sex industry 14 - 18 years
- Carried out inquiry by situation analysis
- Recognised positive deviant individuals and or families in the community
- Enquired why these daughters were not sent away. Examples of responses -
  1. Parents wanted their children to stay home because of fear of HIV, drugs, police etc
  2. There was good open communication between parents and children

The organisation advocated support against trafficking by linking with local government right from the start

- Support was given to families because many of the parents believed education can transform lives
- Engaged families in small business to generate more income

#### **Outcomes**

- By 2005 no girls had left Gadungsari for the sex trade
- There was an established Community watch group driven by community values which deterred the exploitation of youths by traffickers.

#### **Brazil circumstances by *Armindo Klumb, Executive Director Diaconia***

It was reported that child abuse and exploitation occurred in Brazil though not commonly spoken about. Trafficking was more common among the poor families mostly due to poverty and victims got little support from government politicians. The civil society had try to better control the situation since 1990

however the Clergy also worked with the Police and some have been convicted. Most victims were from broken families and from the slums though rich people were said to be involved in the exploitation too. The FIFA world cup exacerbated the problem and caused many internal problems so does tourism. In order to positively respond to the situation, the Street kid football championship was organised by educated volunteers working with these kids. This highlighted few of the issues about the plight of the Street kids as well as offer them skills, team spirit and participation among the youths.

Human Rights by - Theodor Rathgeber

Human trafficking is linked with enforced exploitation e.g. forced labour in bars, agriculture, construction, servitude, early marriages, begging activities, forced organ removals etc. Trafficking is a big business that involves trade of arms, personnel and drugs and exploitation is a core element. Trafficking includes

recruitment, transportation , transfer, harbouring, or receipt of persons under coercive circumstances plus sale of children, forms of slavery, migrants and internally displaced people. There is therefore the need to protect and assist victims and uphold the rights of women and children using International UN HR Treaties on the Protection of the Aright of all Migrant workers and the members of their families (1984). This is a challenge for Churches and Institutions for Mission and Ecumenical worldwide therefore political and ethical anti-trafficking strategies need to be adopted since Churches have access to politicians and could persuade grass root participation to prohibit and report this appalling practice.

Please see the joint recommendations from participants at the Hamburg Conference on further actions to discourage human trafficking.

Thank you

Dr Bunmi Olayisade  
Africa Partnership Coordinator



Professor Reisen with Bunmi at the conference