



# Transactions

*Dutch Foundation of Religious against Trafficking in Women  
(Stichting Religieuzen Tegen Vrouwenhandel)*

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**Dutch Foundation of Religious against Trafficking in Women**

**1991 - 2006**



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## Introduction

Recently – when taking formal leave as Dutch National Reporter of Traffic in Humans at the end of last September – I received an antequely looking booklet, with the revealing title 'Sold'.

It turned out to be a novel, translated from Norwegian, with the specification: 'Novel in order to counteract the traffic in women', from 1908! It had an accompanying word from the 'Dutch National Committee for action against the traffic in women' that used the opportunity to draw attention to establishment 'with support of Government' of a National Agency on Information for protection of Women and Girls, situated in Amsterdam. It announced that this Agency freely provides information to women and girls regarding the trustworthiness of employment-opportunities offered in the home country or abroad, in order to prevent that girls going to make a living elsewhere experience such 'terrific disappointment'. (It also had an accompanying word of the German National Committee mentioning the burning question of the trade in girls.) The novel was meant as a warning against the white slave trade, which is indicated as one of the greatest blots on our so-called civilised society, 'destructive to the generations coming after us'.

So, you see, a century ago commotion about this traffic already existed, be it, that the main concern was about the virtuous (white) girl that was at risk of falling for the tricks and intrigues of the traders, procurers, persuaders, spreading their nets all around!

Sadly, that language may still be recognised in our world of today, with its greatly increased possibilities for mobility and communication. According to a recent United Nations' report, never before in history was such a great number of young people 'on the move', especially in search of employment. The risks for exploitation in different employment-relationships and types of labour are present everywhere. Reason for each one of us to remain alert and persistent in the struggle against traffic in humans!

In this special edition of their 'Transaction' communication bulletin the Foundation of Religious Against Traffic in Women (SRTV) concentrates itself on the struggle against trade in women and girls for the sex-industry, against forced prostitution. It is encouraging to read that in the past and in the

present many from the membership SRTV have been involved without any prejudice and with genuine dedication to help the victims of this trade.

Gratitude for this must be expressed, naturally with the expectation that those laudable activities will not be discontinued, for they remain badly necessary.



A. G. Korvinus

'A journey of a thousand miles commences with a single step', old Tao-wisdom says. That step was made by SRTV, small scale, 15 years ago, as described in this magazine. When reflecting on this joyful fact on 6<sup>th</sup> of April 2006, I contributed by bringing to mind the legendary march of Gandhi, who with an ever growing flock of followers on the way towards the coast of India, tried in 1930 with that apparently minor-looking protest-move to break the British Monopoly on winning salt. And successfully! This example from the past shows that – even when it concerns a stubborn and persistent phenomenon such as human trade and even if the power of organised crime is great in this area – it may at times be effective to join efforts, move into action and remain so.

To eradicate the trade in humans seems virtually impossible in our world with its great differences towards education- and employment-opportunities, often still discriminating against women and girls to begin with. But to work against it, to diminish it, and to struggle against the basic causes of it remains a requirement of Justice. May this Magazine have many readers, and may SRTV in its journey of a thousand miles, strengthened by an ever-increasing number of followers, continue its struggle in the conviction that the value of human dignity must be upheld.

A.G.Korvinus

(Mrs. Korvinus was Dutch National Reporter on Traffic in Humans until 1st of October 2006)

## “This is how we started ...”

### The origins of Religious against Trafficking in Women

Shocked by an article in a newspaper, about trafficking in women, Sister Michel felt compelled to do something about the problem. But what?

She knew she could count on support from different religious bodies who felt the same way about this phenomenon.

Her own congregation, the sisters from 'Our Lady of Amersfoort' have always provided positive contributions and were always ready to help. They helped with copying documents and folding brochures etc. We could use their materials and if we needed could make use of a location to carry out our work.

Sister Michel tried initially to gain more information. Together with Joke den Dulk, she paid a visit to the Foundation Against Trafficking of Women (STV), and asked if she could join. The foundation was located at that time in Den Haag.

After consultation she decided to set up her own work group. In this way the first steps were taken to establish a much needed network. The religious bodies have after all, contacts in many countries, and are acquainted with different cultures and languages.

She received immediate support from an employee from the STV, who also had links with the Centre for Development Cooperation (COS). She offered administrative help and had a lot of knowledge concerning the battle against women traffickers. She eventually became the only paid part-time member of staff. Another woman (who worked for the Municipal Health Department in Amsterdam) offered advice and support.

#### **Involvement of the religious bodies**

The primary question asked by the sisters during the first meeting was: “Can we ask the religious bodies, in countries where the women come from, to help make the women more resistant towards the traffickers?” As part of the answer, the sisters developed a warning folder printed in different languages which was distributed worldwide.

It was of vital importance that the workers were missionaries in the countries where the women were rounded up. Their relations and experiences in these countries could be put to good use. Another important point was the contact between the COS in the Netherlands and abroad.

It was decided to make contact with other religious groups, like the WRGV, the SNVR and with congregations and organisations abroad like Solwodi in Germany and Le Nid in Belguim.

At the start of 1991 the WRTV was a fact. The work group consisted of nine members and two advisors. In order to gain recognition within the world of the religious organisations it was necessary to inform them concerning the plans of the WRTV. This job was allocated to the members of the work group.

An information-morning was organised and the video 'Multinational without a name' was shown. This videotape provided good up to date information about woman trafficking.

#### **Objective**

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of October 1991 the objective of the WRTV was formulated.

Prevention became the primary aim, seeing that this approach had never been taken before. The warning folders were available in the Netherlands, and more importantly they went to organisations and projects in foreign countries.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs made an important contribution by providing all their embassies with the warning folders in different languages. Our network of women's organisations, churches and religious bodies were approached and asked to help distribute the folders in the countries where most of the women come from.

Where do the girls come from? How are they rounded up? To who are the girls sold? At that time most of the women came from the Philippines, Latin America and the North African countries. They were sold, especially, to traffickers in West Europe.

#### **More recognition**

The work of the WRTV did not remain unnoticed, the media became interested and interviews were given. However a Dutch daily newspaper did not rise to the occasion. On one page of the newspaper there was an interview which cited the case against women traffickers while on another page, there were advertisements which clearly had links to the trafficking of women. This caused Sister Michel much consternation.

She contacted the newspaper about this. The editorial staff had never thought of this, but nonetheless the advertisements were scrapped.

Members of the working group were invited, everywhere, to give lectures. The awareness of our group increased and this also increased our financial position, especially when collections were made for our work group.

#### **Helping the women**

In these first years we decided to help women, with legal proceedings, who were prepared to press charges against traffickers. All we could do was offer them moral support by being silent and visible in the courtroom.

Members of the WRTV who were present in the courtroom, to give the women moral support, wore purple sashes. We found out about one such case in Haarlem. Different people were asked to attend the court case. This made a deep impression. However we were rarely given the right date and time of court proceedings. These circumstances forced us to stop.

WRTV gained more recognition. We took part in conferences about the trafficking of women, which broadened our horizons and made cooperation with other groups easier.

**Finance**

For giving lectures, we regularly received small contributions. We also make collections during our lectures. All this money is very welcome.

In order to keep the costs of our organisation under control we asked congregations, institutions, family and friends for contributions. Furthermore, during our lectures and conferences we run a small shop selling post-cards, bags and other items.

After some time the religious bodies promised to support our work structurally.

Thanks to the tremendous effort from many people we have been able to achieve a lot in a short space of time.

*Joke den Dulk,  
partly on behalf of Sister Michel Keesen  
from the Sisters Of Our Lady Of Amersfoort.*

*Joke den Dulk wrote this article partly on behalf of Sister Michel who having suffered a stroke was unable to write it herself. The SRTV still has regular contact with her and she sends her love to all.*



*Working Group of Women Religious against Trafficking in Women 1997*

*Board, Staff and workers  
of the SRTV*



*wish you all a very blessed 2007!!*

## Thank You Sisters, Thank You

Through my work as a police detective in the Vice Unit in the 1980s, I was confronted by young girls who were forced into prostitution. In bordellos, we saw and heard that there was big competition between Dutch girls and Eastern European girls. The Eastern European girls worked for less money and would do more. They were available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. They slept in the club, their place of work, at camping sites in old caravans, with many in the same small apartment. Hovering around them were always the same shady characters who did everything to remain unidentified. Via the Department of Health we heard that a number of sexually transmitted diseases were occurring much more frequently. Cases of tuberculosis were reported.

From the club owners we heard that a surplus number of 'whores' were now on offer. They could take their pick. What a luxury. They didn't expect any interference from the police or justice department. Prostitution was tolerated at that time. Who would be bothered by it?

The word 'prostitution' was nowhere to be seen on the political agenda. Local governments couldn't develop any regulations because bordellos were officially forbidden in the Netherlands at that time. At the same time we heard stories from Dutch prostitutes that everything was quickly going wrong.

Most of the foreign prostitutes were being forced to work – they were abused and exploited. The atmosphere in the clubs was getting more and more aggressive and drug use was on the rise. Furthermore, the club owners were increasingly under pressure from foreign criminals.

### New Problems

We suddenly had to deal with people who couldn't speak the language and whose backgrounds we didn't know. People from Czechoslovakia, Poland, Belorussia, Ukraine. These people followed 'other' rules. Threatening with a loaded weapon was standard practice with them. Women were beaten and simply disappeared ...

The first women we managed to get in our interview room could tell us nothing. Slowly, with ups and downs and

much support from the women's movement, we started to see what the problems truly were.

One of the biggest problems was the housing of the women. We are still spoiled here in the South of the Netherlands by monasteries and cloisters left to us by the rich Roman Catholic times of the past. The religious do not judge and are always willing to help those in need.

### Shelter by the Sisters

Via my colleague Hans Castro in the South Limburg region, I made contact with Sister Mechtild in Geleen. When we met I knew immediately that this was a woman who trusted and believed in people. That image has always stayed with me. We didn't bring the easiest women to her. They climbed out the window, hung their lingerie outside, and were sometimes loud and boisterous. Sister Mechtild was strict but fair to them and quickly won their respect. Via Sister Mechtild we came into contact with other sisters who were able to shelter these women and take care of them.

At one point we were able to house women in Geleen, Tegelen and even in Germany. I know that some of the women are still in contact with each other during the holidays. We were always welcome-day or night. We always received a cup of coffee, a room and a chat. What was so striking was how the criminals had respect for the Orders and never came to the door to make trouble.

My whole life long I will never forget how much understanding and peace existed within the cloister walls for these women who had been so trapped and humiliated. Without judgment they were listened to and given help. For us this meant that we had a safe place to talk to these women. That was a tremendous help to our investigations. Not many people knew this at the time. And it was never told afterwards either. Now is the time to at least say 'thank you'. I know for certain that I say this on behalf of all of the many women you have helped.

*J.H. Hermans, Regional Police Detective  
Security Investigations Dept.*

## In the News

### Prostitution Divides Europe

At a hearing held in Paris on 13 September, Council of Europe parliamentarians and experts discussed a comparative study on the legal situation of prostitutes in the organisation's 46 member states. Legal in some countries, illegal and outlawed in most of them, prostitution divides Europeans.

According to a motion for a resolution of members of the Parliamentary

Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), the differing attitudes negatively impact on cooperation in the fight against forced prostitution, the one and only form of prostitution unambiguously condemned in Europe.

According to the Chairperson of the PACE Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, Minodora Cliveti (SOC) from Romania, who organised the hearing, there is also an unacceptable tendency to discri-

minate against women in this field. "Prostitutes – most of whom are women – are usually faced with stricter penalties than the clients in those countries which criminalise prostitution," she said.

The hearing also dealt with public health issues such as HIV/AIDS prevention and drug use. For more information look at:

[www.assembly.coe.int](http://www.assembly.coe.int)

# SRTV celebrates 15th Anniversary with Symposium

## Revision of the law on human trafficking ... what are the consequences?

On November 14<sup>th</sup> the SRTV, together with 'CMC People with a Mission', organised a symposium on the consequences of the Revision of the Law on Human Trafficking. Here follows part of the opening speech given by Ivonne van de Kar, coordinator of the SRTV.

In 1991 several energetic sisters, led by Sr. Michel Keesen, decided to form a working group of 'Women Religious Against Trafficking in Women'. It is not surprising that the initiative came from women religious; ever since the founding of their congregations they have cared for people at the edges of society, people for whom governments in those days could not provide. Religious women took initiatives in caring for the sick and handicapped, and in educating girls when no-body else yet did this.

In the charters (or statutes) of many congregations, it is stated that their members cannot remain indifferent nor deny that unjust structures exist in the church and society which reduce women to second class citizens. In 1991 the sisters realized that women are the first victims of all kinds of misery, especially of poverty. Their struggle against such injustice gave them new missionary zeal to return to women their human dignity.

In the course of the past 15 years the SRTV has seen many changes, especially with regard to women's trafficking. After the fall of the Berlin Wall the countries of origin of the women changed.

From the extension of the definition of Human Trafficking and the consequent revision of the law in 2005, it is clear that also other forms of human injustice, such as forced labour and slavery-like situations, are considered human trafficking.



Many organisations in the Netherlands are in a process of reorientation to see if their name or their goals need to be changed.

The SRTV has discussed this question several times but has concluded that in spite of the now official definition of Human Trafficking, it is mainly women that remain the victims of violence, exploitation and forced prostitution. We have therefore decided to keep our original goal and to remain focussed on women. In our vision women often need extra support. Women migrants are more often in danger and in many parts of the world their life is very difficult.

We will not close our eyes to other forms of human trafficking, but on behalf of the sisters who started this organisation and the many religious sisters around the world who joined the movement, our mission will remain to give women the rightful human dignity which is theirs.

*Ivonne de Kar, coordinator SRTV*

### **Symposium, November 14th:**

In the morning Mrs. Marjan Wijers of the *Verwey-Jonker Institute* outlined the history of women's trade and the relevant laws in the past 120 years. After this the police and experts from crisis- and social assistance organisations gave examples from their experiences. In the afternoon we dealt with the new definition and content of human traffic. A co-worker of the National Reporter gave us some insight in numbers, based on a recent research project. Some Philipino women and someone of the Trade Union (AbVaKaBo) gave with some practical examples. The morning as well as the afternoon provided sufficient time for the many questions from the varied public: delegates from Dutch organisations against Women Trafficking; organisations for social assistance and crisis management; Ministries; Trade Unions; migrant organisations; religious congregations.

The day was concluded with inspiring words from Manon van der Kaa, director of CMC-people with a mission.



**SRTV**  
in action for 15 years



## The Inspiration

**“I have seen how cruelly the women are being treated and have heard them cry out to be rescued from their slave drivers.”** (based on exodus 3,7)

The Lord saw the suffering of the slave women. From these convictions, Sister Michel Keesen devoted herself in 1991 to the Religious Against Female Trafficking Workgroup.

She was not able to bear the injustice. No wonder, since Ans Keesen is the daughter of parents who were very much involved in society and in fighting the injustices faced by people both close and far away.

Her father was a typesetter and a trade union man through and through. He was someone who truly knew what labourers went through. Her mother came from West Friesland, and was a generous woman who spoke her mind when it was necessary. Ans is the youngest of four children, a tight-knit family.

From an early age, Ans was aware of her health problems. She had always suffered from headaches, most likely the result of a very hard fall on a granite floor as a small child. She also suffered from many other ailments, lasting throughout her life. Not only did she treat these problems with regular prescriptions from the local doctor, but she also chose to seek other cures from alternative healers, often with success.

### Education

Through highschool and the war education program, Ans received training to become a teacher. She worked for a time in a poor neighbourhood in Rotterdam. The families won her heart over. One of the religious persons at school got her thinking about life in an educational congregation. Eventually she found herself with the sisters of Our Sweet Lady of Amersfoort. She chose the cloister name of 'Michel', which means 'who is as powerful as God?'

Via Dordrecht, Sister Michel became the head of a new school in Groningen. But she wasn't happy there, and so moved to Haarlem. She got a place of her own, passed her teaching qualification exam and became a teacher at a highschool in Katwijk. There she met Joke den Dulk and together they began working with problem children. Due to her health problems, Michel became eligible for disability allowance from the government.

Shortly thereafter, she and Joke moved in together in Haarlem. Later they moved to Bennebroek. Joke, who was a member of the Reformed Church, was an associate member of the congregation of the sisters of Our Sweet Lady of Amersfoort.

### Working group of Religious Against Trafficking in Women

Michel and Joke established 'De Terp', an organization which works with others in the aid and assistance of homeless children. It caused them much pain when they had to say farewell to 'De Terp'.

In 1991, at the age of 63, Michel began a new challenge. She established the Workgroup Religious Against Traffic-

king in Women. Two years later, Joke also joined in. In no time, Michel had organized a substantial group of religious persons to join the workgroup: many old missionaries, a sister who had worked with trafficked women who had escaped from their pimps, and a few more sisters. It soon became a worldwide network. Michel and Joke, as well as other members of the workgroup, had good ideas, such as the warning leaflet, which has now been translated into 48 different languages and has been distributed throughout the whole world via schools, hospitals, embassies, etc.



*Sr. Michel (1997)*

### The Fight Against Female Trafficking Conference

'Men bring evil into the world, men must therefore help remove it from the world,' according to Michel. She knew that this notion would convince a number of men to get involved with the workgroup, as well as a number of women.

In 1997 the workgroup experienced a high point. Thanks to the efforts of many persons, a conference was organized in Amersfoort for religious persons about the fight against female trafficking, called 'Nofos', an abbreviation for 'Not for Sale'. 80 women, all dedicated to the fight against female trafficking, took part in this conference. The women came from many different European countries, including Eastern Europe.

The conference was a huge success with excellent speakers, successful workshops and a good action plan. Bishop Muskens, also a member of the support group (as the original men's group was called) gave an inspiring closing statement.

### **Foundation of Religious Against Trafficking in Women**

The work expanded and efforts were made to give the group a legal structure. Michel saw that it was necessary. She was advised by many people, some of whom were lawyers. A board was formed and the workgroup became a foundation. Until that time, Michel had been the central person of the workgroup. On the one hand, she felt that she should hand her work over, especially when considering her failing health. On the other hand, she found it very hard to let go. She arranged things so that the activities of her successor would be transferred from the home to the abandoned post office in Bennebroek. That would

ensure that she would be close-by in case she was ever needed. The board understood that this solution wouldn't work for the long term, and so eventually moved the office to Den Bosch.

Two years later, Michel suffered a stroke. Together with Joke, she had established a crisis relief centre for women trying to escape female trafficking. She wanted to do so much more. And what she is still able to do, she does.

The workgroup/foundation has been in existence for 15 years now, and has become much more professional along the way. But Michel's heart will always reside in the souls of the co-workers.

Michel and Joke, thank you for everything.

*Mr. Gijs Liefvering  
SRTV member*

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## **Government policy and the victims of women traffickers**

In 1987, I started work at the 'Foundation against Trafficking in Women'. Trafficking in women was not yet on the political agenda. Everything was new and one of our biggest worries and frustrations was: Where can we find a haven for 'our' women? In the existing shelters they were regularly refused admittance: at one address because they were threatened, and at another because they were not threatened, or because they had no children or because they had children. Or they were refused because they couldn't formulate an official request for help.

A ridiculous situation! Once, in a fit of rage I wrote an article about the situation. My colleagues advised me not to publish it. They were right. Noi from Thailand and Jasna from Poland ended up staying with the sisters. They had a very pragmatic approach. Somebody needs help? Now we can offer that help. That made us and our women very happy. With the help of one of the sisters Noi made a little Buddhist altar in the corner of her room. Jasna shared her amazement about the sisters with us. Sisters, who wore normal clothes, built walls and drove cars! This was very different to the way sisters behaved in her country. I remember that at the opening of our new office one of the sisters lashed out at the Minister of Justice about the policy regarding the trafficking of women.



### **Relief for victims now**

In 2006 it seems that the relief work for victims has greatly improved.

There are regional relief networks and case managers. There is a policy which ensures that women are not immediately deported. There are directives for the police and for the judicial authorities. Worldwide preventive measures are taken. The trafficking of women is high on the national and international agenda.

Meanwhile the international definition of women trafficking has been expanded to include all types of forced labour and not just forced prostitution.

### **International policy**

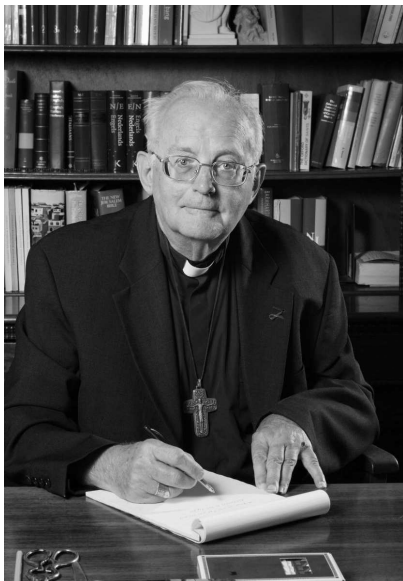
Is the problem solved now? No, I don't think so. Not in the Netherlands, not in Europe and not on an international level. In the Netherlands women only have access to help and protection if they are willing to press charges. In other words: only if they are useful for the police and the justice department. When the case has been to court, the women can apply for a resident's permit on humanitarian grounds. However this

is seldom granted (although I must mention that the policy regarding this matter has recently been amended). Also, on a European level, help and protection for the victims depends on whether or not they are helpful to the police in tracing and arresting the traffickers. In their haste to implement measures many countries confuse the trading in humans with prostitution and frontier running, the result being that measures against trafficking in women too often change into measures against prostitution and migration. At the moment prostitutes are having a hard time because America has decided that prostitution and the trafficking of women are one and the same. They have begun a crusade against prostitution. What this means is that organisations that receive money from the U.S. (and there are many) can no longer cooperate with prostitutes on an equal footing. They may no longer give advice about safe sex. They may not help the sex workers organise themselves, so they can lobby for better working conditions. This way the struggle for human rights for one group is realised at the expense of another group. This cannot be and must never be the intention. In other words, we still have plenty of work to do. We have to keep our sleeves rolled up.

*Marjan Wijers  
Verwey-Jonker Institute*

## Trafficking in Women

During the world championship football in Germany many women from Eastern Europe were lured to Germany under false pretences. They were promised attractive jobs with a good salary. Many young women living in hopeless situations were tricked into believing these promises. Upon arrival in Germany they discovered that there were no jobs as hotel receptionists or as au pairs. Instead they were coerced into prostitution. Brothel owners forced them to prostitute themselves. When the tournament was over they were quickly dumped on the side line. The money they earned flowed into the pockets of the criminal gangs. In Eastern Europe gangs enrich themselves with this form of modern slavery.



*Bishop Muskens*

Both the football world and the church protested against this exploitation. The president of the German football association, Theo Zwanziger, supported the campaign 'Blow the whistle on forced prostitution'. Within the Dutch church organisations, SRTV and Church in action organised a stamp campaign called 'Make trading in women offside'. They asked institutions and organisations to stamp all their outgoing mail with the slogan 'Make trading in women offside'.

As a diocese we happily participated in the campaign. In this manner attention was focused on the injustice of forced prostitution.

This is absolutely necessary. According to figures from the United Nations, more than 30 million people were traded as merchandise in the last century. Of the 30 million victims, 10 million were young girls between the ages of 5 and 15.

The causes of this trade are numerous and diverse. Besides poverty, discrimination against women in certain cultures plays a major role.

Sister Philomena D'Souza from India points out that many Asian parents consider their daughters to be first and foremost financial burdens. They want to have them married off as soon as possible. When traffickers arrive on the scene and are prepared to pay money for the girl, the 'marriage' is quickly arranged and the girl disappears into prostitution.

It is obvious that the trafficking of human beings is unacceptable for Christians.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church calls it a sin against human dignity and against the fundamental right that people have not to be used as consumer goods or as a source of profit. (CCC 2414) But it requires more than moral condemnation. The problem demands a specific approach concentrating on poverty eradication, education and the promotion of equal rights for women. The Western countries cannot escape their responsibilities. This is where the source of the evil lies. By introducing specific legislation they have to combat the trafficking of human beings and prostitution. The Council of Europe made an important contribution to this goal by ratifying the treaty for action against the trafficking of human beings in 2005. Fourteen smaller countries have already signed the treaty. The Netherlands has not yet signed. It would be an important step in the fight against the trade in women if the Netherlands also signed the treaty.

*Mgr. Martinus Muskens  
Bishop of Breda*

### *In the News*

#### **Amsterdam puts red lights out in war on crime**

The famous 'window' brothels of Amsterdam are under threat after the city council refused to renew 33 licences in a crackdown against organised crime.

The clampdown may spell an end to the sight of scantily clad women displayed in the neon lights of the street windows, beckoning to customers. Now a tourist attraction, the alleyways have been a magnet for prosti-

tutes and their clients since the 17th century.

The city council says that the enforced closures are the result of suspected money laundering in the red light district.

Human rights groups have hailed the move as recognition that some brothels are involved in crimes such as people trafficking.



Claims of links to organised crime are fiercely denied by the nine brothel owners facing the loss of their lucrative enterprises. They will challenge the council's decision in court on January.

*Nicola Smith, Amsterdam  
The Sunday Times, January 07, 2007*

## Combating modern slavery

The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe is the European ecumenical umbrella organisations of churches in Europe working on all kinds of question related to migration – be it asylum and refugees, labour migration, undocumented migrants, integration or anti-discrimination.

CCME member churches and agencies are based in 18 countries across Europe, and in majority come from a Protestant, Orthodox or Anglican background. Some are ecumenical umbrella organisations themselves (the Roman Catholics Bishop conferences are therefore in a number of countries indirectly member).

CCME's work in connecting churches and in advocacy towards European political institutions is based on the biblical message, which insists on the dignity of every human being as created in the image of God.

### Faith based network

The issue of trafficking became a priority issue for CCME in the late 1990ies when more and more member organisations were beginning to recognise that trafficking, mainly for sexual exploitation, was becoming an ever more alarming problem.

While CCME's sister organisation, the Conference of European Churches, had in 1999 started to develop work to raise the awareness on trafficking among churches, CCME members expressed the wish to further develop operational capacity to combat trafficking.

It took some further reflection until CCME in 2002 launched the project 'Christian action and Networking against Trafficking in Women (CAT)', in cooperation with a number of its own members as well as Caritas organisation from across Europe.

In a first phase, the project looked at existing form of work in prevention of trafficking and assistance and the transferability of existing work to other countries. From 2003 onwards the project grew in size and scope into a broader network: while more Christian organisation – such as SRTV – joined in, it now also started to involve secular NGOs as well as governmental institutions.

The transfer of existing knowledge was continued and project partners developed standards in the areas of assistance, outreach, prevention and multidisciplinary cooperation. In its current phase the project tries to understand and respond to new challenges – be it the challenge of more subtle form of sexual exploitation, but also exploitation outside the area of sexual exploitation.

### Worldwide Justice

CCME has been eager to take up the knowledge, which was developed in the project, in its advocacy efforts towards EU institutions, the Council of Europe and the UN, often in cooperation with other Christian partner organisation.

CCME does not see the plight of trafficking as an isolated issue, but rather as the most dramatic result of systematic social exclusion, particularly of women, across the globe, global injustice and inappropriate migration poli-

cies in Europe. CCME's commitment against trafficking therefore is embedded in the context of a broader struggle for the fundamental rights of all migrants and against modern-day slavery.

Churches as organisations addressing a broad range of such as social exclusion and global justice on all levels, and with a view to both material and spiritual needs of each human being, seem particularly well-placed to respond to the broad causes of trafficking.

It has therefore been important for CCME to further increase the visibility of the work against trafficking within the churches, so that all parts of churches may be mobilised against it.



*Mr. Torsten Moritz*

### Not moralising

Indeed more and more churches have joined activities of the network and developed their own initiatives. This work has always happened in a context of having to respond to extremely difficult dilemmas in the day-to-day work – where the question how a Christian response could be moral but not moralising, often made practical steps very difficult and professional exchange with like-minded organisations a must.

### New strategy

CCME will use the year 2007 to review its current work on trafficking and to re-conceptualise it.

While it is clear that trafficking in women will remain a priority, it is also evident that other forms of modern slavery will need more attention.

The experience since 2002 of having developed a network with some 35 partners from 25 countries in a spirit of mutual respect, learning and even enthusiasm – despite the abhorrent focus of the networking – makes CCME enter this phase of reformulating its commitment against modern-day slavery with great hopes, eagerness and confidence.

*Mr. Torsten Moritz, Project Secretary  
Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe  
(CCME), Brussels*

## Trafficking in Women keeps haunting me ...

The first time I was confronted with a victim of woman traffickers was in 1988 during my work for 'People in Need' (Mensen in Nood; a Dutch development organisation). A Philippino woman was lured to the Netherlands under false pretences. She was promised a well-paid job in a hotel. Upon arrival in the Netherlands she was forced into the prostitution business. She managed, however, to escape, returned to the Philippines and wanted to press charges against the man who had tricked her into going to the Netherlands. At the request of the Foundation Against Women Traffickers (STV) 'People in Need' helped the woman with the legal expenses. I joined in a demonstration at the Philippines embassy. I was upset about everything that happened to this woman. The problem would not leave me alone. As a member of the Grail<sup>1)</sup>, an international women's movement, I thought that we had to use the movement to call a halt to this type of modern slavery.

### Religious network

When I retired in 1987 I joined the SRTV. Since then I have tried, during the international Grail meetings, to focus attention on the struggle against women traffickers. People listened attentively but there were so many other worthwhile causes. However in the last few years the importance of fighting against the trade in women has been recognised.

The Grail now has its own international network. This network, of which I'm a member, is called 'Human Trafficking'. At the international general meeting, which was hosted in America earlier this year, the network coordinators were asked to organise a mini-exhibition explaining their work. I did this for the network 'Human Trafficking'. At the same time I highlighted the cooperation between the Grail and the SRTV. The necessary information was also available. This has ensured that, in the coming years, the fight against women traffickers is high on the agenda for the international Grail movement. Every Grail country has a designated contact person whose task it is to investigate the situation concerning the trafficking in women in their own country. Do many victims come from that country? Is it a final destination country? Or is it, like the Netherlands, a final destination and a transit country? The English DVD's with information about human trafficking were very helpful. This way we hope to gain a good insight into the situation regarding the trafficking in women in different countries. Hopefully we can act upon this information.

### Poverty world wide

The trafficking in women, a consequence of poverty and globalisation, is gaining more publicity. The SRTV distributes warning leaflets in 48 different languages. For illiterate girls the dangers are illustrated with cartoons. These folders are distributed through different women's movements and through the Dutch embassies. In spite of warnings many young women are nevertheless still misled. "This young man was so nice." "He even made acquaintance with my parents." "He wants to marry me." "He

cant have bad intentions ..." Upon arrival in the Netherlands they soon learn the wicked truth.



Mrs. Ton Brouwer

I recently paid a visit to Caritas in Lithuania. Here five social workers are busy on a daily basis trying to rehabilitate 1500 victims of women traffickers. Every year, as a result of police raids or escapes, a similar number of heavily traumatised women return to Lithuania. Parents often refuse to accept or forgive their daughters because they have been prostitutes, even though it was through no fault of their own. Buying and selling women is more lucrative for traffickers than trading in drugs.

Drug dealers are more likely to be arrested and the prison sentences are longer. If the traffickers are not apprehended, the trading will continue unabated. This is true for Lithuania, but also for the other countries. Women are afraid to press charges. They are threatened by the traffickers, who often know their families. If a victim, for example in the Netherlands, decides to press charges she may remain in the Netherlands until the case has been to court. During this time she is entitled to lodging, maintenance and medical care. She may also seek work. When the court case is over and the trafficker has been sentenced, the woman has to return to her native country. When the trafficker is released from prison, he too must return to his native country. This situation is inhumane and incomprehensible. In these cases a victim should receive a resident's permit on humanitarian grounds. At the moment the Dutch immigration Minister has promised to look into the possibility of granting victims of women traffickers a permanent resident's permit. Let us hope that this happens. It should be obvious that there is still a long way to go in the battle against women traffickers. There is still so much to do. For that reason the trafficking in women still continues to haunt me.

Mrs. Ton Brouwer  
SRTV member

<sup>1)</sup> *The Grail movement is an international modern women's movement with its roots firmly anchored in a long Christian tradition. Members feel connected to each other in the conviction that they can use their spirituality actively to contribute to more justice for every living thing on earth.*

## The fight against Trafficking in Women in Cameroon

Starting from 2002 the International Society for the Completion of the Creation (CIPCRE) seeks to resist violence in Cameroon, and in particular sexual exploitation and women trade. This phenomenon is alarmingly on the increase, not only in Cameroon but all over Africa.

### Our Struggle

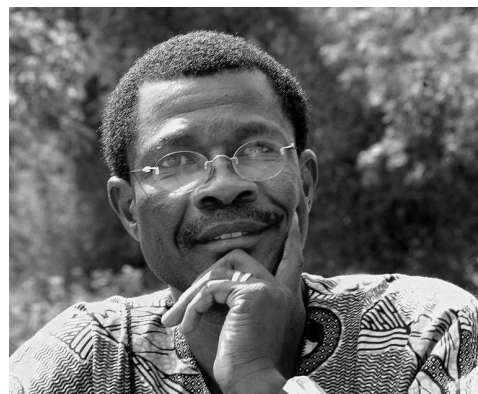
With the help of SRTV we have engaged an agency to investigate the occurrence of sexual violence in the five largest towns of Cameroon. It showed that more than 40% of all young girls are exploited one way or another for profit yielding purposes. A real sex market in young women is going on and grows from day to day. The people seem to be unaware; state and church authorities do nothing about it.

This inquiry made us engage Amélie James Koh-Bela, a Cameroonian lady who is a specialist in the subject of women trade. Her fact-finding shows that Cameroon, followed by Nigeria, is one of the main African suppliers of prostitutes. Two thirds of the women who are traded are still of school going age.

### Raising Awareness and Action taken

These inquiries made us in 2004 launch a campaign in Catholic, Protestant and Moslem communities lasting a whole year to make people aware of the extent and the consequences of sexual exploitation and women trade. We did this by organising lecturing tours, visiting schools, engaging public and private media and holding both formal and informal talks. All this to rouse the people and generate the will to combat the plague.

On several occasions Amélie James Koh-Bela was called in to disclose to audiences that in Holland, Belgium, France, Spain, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait many of the prostitutes come from Cameroon and Nigeria. This campaign is aimed at reaching parents, appealing to them to take their parental responsibility and protect their children better.



*Pastor Jean-Blaise Kenmogne*

### Influencing politics

In our campaign we also contacted political people and people in high functions. Now we look for an opportunity to engage our parliamentarians in a debate, hoping for quick legislation to curb the sex market and women trade. We have also approached the churches in Cameroon to publicly raise their voices.

### Our plans

We are determined to continue our campaign. Moreover, we want to expand our operations by

- assisting young victims of sexual exploitation and help them start off on leading a truly human existence;
- setting up a network of former victims and making them join our battle against women trade;
- forming and training teams – as many as possible – to carry on the task of raising awareness, activating and influencing others.

*Pastor Jean-Blaise Kenmogne,  
General director of CIPRE and  
Publications Director of ECOVOX, Cameroon  
(Translated from the French and adapted by F. Kwik)*

## *In the News*

### European Union and Entire African Continent to Launch Partnership on Migration and Development

At the first Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development, which has been held November 22-23 in Tripoli, the EU and Africa have agreed to work together in a spirit of mutual partnership and shared responsibility to manage migration more effectively.

The EU is developing a comprehensive approach to migration, which aims to make migration meet the interests and priorities of countries of origin, transit and destination, as well as migrants themselves, by fos-

tering partnerships with third countries and international organizations and bringing together the various policy areas that are relevant to migration, such as good governance, human rights and development policies.

European Commission Vice President Franco Frattini, responsible for Justice, Freedom and Security, and EU Commissioner Louis Michel, responsible for Development and Humanitarian Aid, have participated.



Press release European Union, November 20, 2006

<http://www.eurunion.org/newsweb/HotTopics/Africa.htm>

## Falling between two stools

*The Dutch organisation 'Vluchteling in de Knel' (Refugee in Distress) offers assistance to asylum seekers whose asylum request has already been processed. The foundation is an initiative of female religious persons. The refugees they help are often victims of female trafficking.*

At the moment we are helping out two women who are victims of this terrible business. One of the women was brought from Guinea to the Netherlands and forced to work as a prostitute. After three months, she luckily escaped. She reported herself to the police, who in turn sent her to the reporting centre in Ter Apel to request asylum. Unfortunately, an official police report was never filed since the organizations involved are not required to do so nor was the woman aware of how important this was. We made contact with the human trafficking team in Eindhoven to see if there was something we could do for her. The chances are slim that the police could be of help to her now, considering that it has already been three years since she came to the Netherlands and since she can't recall well enough the details of her ordeal as a forced prostitute.

The other woman came to the Netherlands on her own after experiencing the horror of her own country, Congo. While she was waiting for the official result of her asylum request, she lost her right to government-provided shelter and she fell into the hands of a pimp. This pimp kept her locked up for six months and abused her. When he lost his use for her, he left her at the central train station in Eindhoven. She too reported herself to the police, but she encountered the same problems as the other woman, since she wasn't able to provide enough specific details (such as where exactly she had been held and by whom) to start an official investigation. The police could do nothing for her. At the moment we are making another request for asylum for this woman.

### **No procedure, no help!**

It is incredibly sad that these girls do not officially fall under the procedure for victims of human trafficking. If, after one or two police interviews, not enough specific details can be told, then there is no reason to undertake an official investigation. If a police investigation can't be started, neither can the human trafficking procedure begin. These women fall outside the system, as far as a temporary residency permit, housing, insurance and the like are concerned. Where can they go and what can they do? The fact that they can't say exactly where they were held and by whom, doesn't make what they experienced any less horrific. They also need help.

Together with these two women, we are looking into what is possible. Perhaps there is a better chance trying a different procedure, such as asylum. Or maybe they want to

go back to their own countries. But what happens to women who aren't in touch with any aid organization?

These are not the only women who we are trying to help with their futures. We also want to prevent more women getting lost in the same procedures. This is of critical importance since they are in such a fragile state. At the end of 2005, we began working with Humanitas to give information about loverboys to the women we are trying to help. The women found it all very interesting, and we hope that we have made them more aware of the dangers of forced prostitution. These women form a very vulnerable group, considering that they have no residency papers or social security. Going along with a man who makes nice, yet false, promises is tempting when one's hope of escaping dead-end reality has been raised.



### **Future victim**

Another problem that concerns us is what will happen to the 170 single, underaged asylum seekers. Those who have just turned 18 are facing being thrown on the street by January 2007, if they haven't been already. These young people came to the Netherlands as minors and received temporary residency permits and assistance. Once they are 18, however, they lose their residency status, financial assistance and aid. Before they even realize what is happening, their fate is sealed. They can easily fall into the hands of pimps and other predators. We are working with local governments to try to prevent these girls becoming victims of female trafficking. Prevention is always better than recovery.

It remains of great importance that human trafficking and forced prostitution be tackled at all levels. It is of particular importance to our clients that they receive support and assistance in order to improve their hopeless situation and prevent them from becoming victims. The problems of processed asylum seekers, and of those still being processed, are made worse when considering all of the social services provided by the government to which they have no right. We must try to prevent them from falling into forced prostitution. Even more important is the help that must be given to those who have already become victims of female trafficking, but are still not allowed to proceed with the B9 procedure. They especially need our help from falling between two stools.

*Dianne Horsting  
Co-worker, Vluchteling in de Knel*

**SRTV mail:** [srtv@srtv.info](mailto:srtv@srtv.info)

**SRTV website:** [www.srtv.info](http://www.srtv.info)

## “A Call to Action: Joining the Fight against Trafficking in Persons”

*“Trafficking in humans constitutes a shocking offence against human dignity and a grave violation of the fundamental human rights. Already the Second Vatican Council had pointed to ‘slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children, and disgraceful working conditions where people are treated as instruments of gain rather than free and responsible persons’ (Gaudium et Spes 27). Such situations are an affront to fundamental values that are shared by all cultures and peoples, values rooted in the very nature of the human person”<sup>1)</sup>*

These words, spoken by the late Pope John Paul II, in May 2002, are an inspiration, and actually an appeal, to Christian organizations and institutions to engage in the fight against trafficking.

Women Congregations too in order to be faithful to their prophetic role in the Church and to the specific Charism of their origin, have been urged “to examine the signs of the times and to interpret them in the light of the Gospel”.<sup>2)</sup>

The traffic in human beings for sexual exploitation, is a serious violation of human rights and dignity; it is a global problem involving, urging and stimulating all forces - lay and religious operating in this field - to come together to provide adequate strategies apt to safeguard the dignity and the sacredness of each person.

Actually, Churches and faith-based organizations, along with other actors in civil society, have for years denounced trafficking as an unacceptable human rights violation taking up the commitment to fight against all forms of slavery.

To better understand why and how faith-based organizations must and can be active against trafficking, I share some facts about the nature and the magnitude of the problem. The first consideration is that ‘Slavery still exists in the year 2006’ and that its victims are women and children living in poor and vulnerable conditions.

It can - and does - happen everywhere. It is not a ‘third-world issue’ only. It is a global issue. In Western Europe alone, we estimate that 120,000 women are trafficked annually from Central and Eastern Europe, mainly for the sex industry. But we are also talking about 20 million women who are enslaved in India, 25% of whom are under 18 years old. Tens of thousands of women from the former Soviet Union are trafficked into the Middle East, the Emirates, and Israel. The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency estimates that 50,000 people are trafficked into or transited through the U.S.A. annually as sex slaves or as domestic workers.

Italy too has had significant involvement in the sex industry. Organisations directly involved with victims report that as many as 50,000 - 70,000 immigrants from West Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe live and toil on

the streets of our cities and countryside. Recently, this activity has also moved into apartments and nightclubs to hide victims from the risk to be picked up by police and repatriated to their respective countries of origin. Of these victims, 30-40% are minors (between 14 - 18 years of age, mainly coming from Romania). As they are in Italy illegally, it is difficult to estimate their true number, age, origin and movements. What we do know is that the majority of them are slaves-true victims of human trafficking.



*Sr. Eugenia Bonetti*

The commitment of the Italian women religious belonging to the Union of the Major Superiors<sup>3)</sup> has increased over the past years along with the commitment of the civil society and institutions. In the 2000, an ad hoc Counter-Trafficking Office, was implemented, to co-ordinate the service of many religious who, facing the challenge of a new kind of slavery, gave answers to this phenomenon. Recently, because of the increased awareness and various strategic solutions, the phenomenon has changed names, faces, routes and modality of recruitments while the exploitation still remain the same: reduction to slavery for thousands of women and minors. The various criminal transnational mafias constantly change their strategies to ensure enormous earnings through the recruiting of young victims to respond to the great demand for paid sex.

The women victims of trafficking are stigmatised and traumatised. They fight to recuperate their sense of life and of the marred and denied feminine values. The trafficking of human beings for sexual exploitation brutalises the person, depriving them of their deep values. It destroys her being as a woman, annihilating her self-esteem, her concept of love and self-oblation. Besides living clandestinely in absolute submission to criminal organisations, these young women experience also the risks of the

streets, such as abuses, maltreatment, abortion, road accidents and, worst of all, being killed.

What do we hope and advocate to abolish such a slavery? Our greatest strength is and will remain networking with all Religious Congregations of man and women alike present in all corners of the world to work together in communion and coordination in order to:

- inform potential victims and their families about the risk of being trafficked;
- educate youth to the right relationship and respect of gender;
- offer job opportunities;
- help victims to be reintegrated into society, mainly by healing their deep wounds;
- working in collaboration with all forces to break this invisible chain.

How do we see the future?

In a globalise world we can hope and see a better future only if we are able to fight against all forms of poverty, discrimination, exploitation and inequality to build a so-

ciety where everybody is accepted, valued, respected, appreciated and loved.

*Sr. Eugenia Bonetti MC  
Unione Superiore Maggiori d'Italia;  
Counter-Trafficking Office*

- <sup>1)</sup> *Letter to Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran on the occasion of the International Conference 'Twenty-first Century Slavery - The human Rights Dimension to Trafficking in Human Beings', Vatican City, 15 May 2002.*
- <sup>2)</sup> *Message of His Holiness Benedict XVI for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees (2006)*
- <sup>3)</sup> *USMI is the Italian Union of Major Superiors that gathers 627 women Congregations working in several fields in Italy and abroad, counting 83.000 members. At the moment there are 250 sisters – belonging to 70 congregations – who operate in 110 small shelters in counter-trafficking ministry. These sisters are forming and informing, supporting and stimulating, encouraging and sustaining this network of activity. Working together is our strength.*

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## Trafficking in Women on the Agenda of the Local Church

Female trafficking is not high on the list of priorities of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands. Not because we don't find it important, but because choices have to be made for our limited number of co-workers employed by Church-in-Action. Some support has been given to a few projects in Eastern Europe, though, for example in Romania.

The deacons in our church see the problems of the asylum seekers in our towns and villages. But female trafficking is another story. Victims of female trafficking don't just casually visit the church. It has happened a few times, but only after a request from the region to assist victims of female trafficking came into our national office. We are therefore very grateful that there are other organizations in the Netherlands, such as the Religious Against Female Trafficking Foundation (SRTV), that make this work their priority.

Within the scope of European cooperation in the Netherlands, an international conference was organized this year. Consequently, Church-in-Action has become more involved in

the issue of human trafficking. Due to the commotion around the World Cup and associated female trafficking, the subject received a lot of attention. We decided with the SRTV to start a stamp action and to offer cards to the Dutch supporters club. On these cards it was explained how to recognize victims of female trafficking with a help line number for women who had landed in the hands of traffickers.

Eventually it became possible to release a statement with the National Dutch Football Association (KNVB). It stated that human trafficking and forced prostitution are gross abuses of human rights. We received responses from all sides. Newspapers were interested and churches weren't far behind. It was impressive to see how the subject even entered the local churches. Various local congregations made use of the Church-in-Action leaflets about female trafficking, which also contained suggestions for Sunday readings. Soon, without making it official policy, local churches began dealing with the issue. Letters and emails arrived from church members who

were pleased with the cooperative efforts of the SRTV and Church-in-Action. Local congregations announced that they would devote attention to this issue during services. Board members from a local Passage group (Christian women's organization) also pledged their time to fight female trafficking.



In short, the issue of female trafficking has come to the attention of the church, even without victims at the front door.

And this is terribly important, since making changes can only stem from the awareness of the local church members. With this awareness, Church-in-Action will continue its efforts to fight female trafficking, preferably by the side of organizations who have the experience and expertise to make a difference, groups like the SRTV.

*Geesje Werkman  
Policy staff, Church-in-Action*

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After reading this Newsletter, don't throw it away. *Please pass it through to someone else.*

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## Combined action of police and aid agencies regarding Human Trafficking

My name is Henk Werson. At the moment I am working as expert/adviser at the Dutch Expertise Centre for Human Trafficking and Smuggling (E.M.M.). In that function I give advice, both asked and unasked, to various detection agencies, the Public Prosecutor and aid agencies. At the same time I offer training to all these agencies, if so requested.



*Henk Werson*

In 1995 I was first confronted with the phenomenon of trafficking in humans when an extensive investigation was launched into a Russian organization that had set to work more than 100 women in the provinces of Brabant and Limburg. This project led me to closer contact with victims of human trafficking. This in turn convinced me that there is more to life than catching crooks: viz. their victims and the practicability of engaging those objects of crime as subjects in its detection.

My problem was how to make use of human beings successfully, without taking unfair advantage of them.

This made me go back to the school benches and in 2000 I graduated as Bachelor in Social Work and Service. My degree project was 'The Integral Approach in Combating Human Trafficking', which focused on how police and aid agencies can work together towards that purpose.

Regular workers of the Foundation against Trafficking in Women (STV) helped me and we dreamed of a joint watch which would offer a 24-hour assistance service to victims. In doing this I felt that police and aid agencies came closer to each other and to mutual support. We no longer did things on our own: we worked ever more together and became a source of strength to each other. If one had no success, the other came to his/her help. I can no longer think of doing this work without cooperating closely. Our combined effort ranges from collegial assistance to mutual help in training programs. We wish to raise awareness among all concerned, whether detection agencies or aid agents, to make them realize that they are complementary and serve one common aim, i.e. to give help to all who need it and to eliminate this aggravating form of criminality which is, to my mind, the worst kind of criminality, for this abuse leaves a life-long mark on the victims, who are used and abused.

### **The 'not-in-my-backyard' or 'NIMBY' outlook**

As from the year 2000 the police is better prepared to deal with and combat human trafficking. The Police Academy has developed courses for training people to assist victims, our target groups, teaching them not only about the relevant laws, but also about how to actually deal with severely traumatized victims.

We train people who are competent to bring into play the right attitudes rather than filling in forms that build up sufficient evidence.

Apart from training-modules for police officers, modules have also been developed to guide Public Prosecutors to a close approach to reality and knowledge of the feelings

of victims as well of what happens in the streets and in sex establishments. None of those elements can be shrugged off with a not-in-my-backyard attitude. It is fortunate for many that this could be excusable but we cannot afford to ignore reality and its impact on victims.

Apart from the Police and Public Prosecution we find ever more supplementary services getting actively involved with helping victims and fighting the crime. Each of these is becoming more and more convinced of the need for cooperation of all involved if we seriously want to try and do something about the various aspects of human trafficking – and of the fight against it. The aid agencies are gaining more insight in the prosecution aspect and the prosecutors more in the aid aspect. In this way it becomes clear what each stands for and how together we can do more to help victims and fight criminals.

### **Mutual assistance in the future**

I take a positive view about dealing with human trafficking as well as fighting it. The National Criminal Investigation Department has set up an expertise centre which focuses on human trafficking and smuggling. This centre (E.M.M.) is staffed by police, constabulary, the social investigation and information services and immigration and naturalization departments. These combined agents and services make for better insight into all the signals we receive nationally and internationally about human trafficking and smuggling. This again helps us in its repression and prevention. The E.M.M. knows the short routes to all relevant partners and is on 24-hour alert every day, which makes access to E.M.M. easy for everyone. We cannot yet guarantee a completely flawless service, but we are learning every day and are making daily progress.

It is likely that we will occupy a central place in the future, especially since E.M.M. is also extending its activities to the countries of origin of the victims. This past year we have worked together with Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Romania. In all these countries we have contacts with investigating authorities as well as with N.G.O.'s. We are moving forward, step by step, in establishing a network of cooperating partners both on national and on international levels.

The steps forward that we take in dealing with and fighting human trafficking depend partly on the degree of awareness on the side of the public. It is a pity that people first have to be alarmed by events close at hand before they get the attention they need; too many people do not realize how grave the problem is. People often do not grasp that involuntary prostitution is a form of systematic sexual abuse and it is a great pity that we have to continually draw attention to that. As I said before, for many it is something they never have to face in daily life. But that is all the more reason to help injured parties to get the help they need - the kind of help you would wish for yourself if you were in their place.

*Henk Werson, Police Expertise Centre for Human Trafficking and Human Smuggling*

# SOLWODI hits the target

## The World championship Football 2006

The world championship in Germany is past. Many goals have been made. Solwodi too and many other NGO's have scored.

The world championship in Germany had not only a long established side-effect viz. an explosive increase of prostitution and – as rightly feared – of forced prostitution. Many journalists worldwide explored the existence of human trade and forced prostitution, making use of the findings of organisations that, for years, have looked after victims of this atrocity.

### Solwodi

Solwodi (Solidarity with women in distress) was founded in 1985 by dr. Lea Ackermann, a 'White Sister' (Sister of our Lady of Africa) in one of the bulwarks of international sex tourism in Mombasa, Kenya, with the help of worried African women. Alternatives to prostitution were developed and five years later the project was applied in Germany. This happened after Lea Ackermann had come across many German men who came to Mombasa to amuse themselves sexually at the cost of poor defenceless women.



In Kenya Solwodi has founded a number of centres which have since been handed over to African women. A new project, Solgidi (Solidarity with girls in distress) had been added for the benefit of daughters of prostitutes so that they will be spared the fate of their mother. The most important prerequisite for this is schooling which leads to jobs and an income, enabling them to build up an existence worthy of a human being. These minimal conditions are no longer the problem only of the poor living in the Southern hemisphere; they are developing especially in Eastern Europe now.

Solwodi is the principal NGO in Germany that combats women trade and forced prostitution. The 56 women of Solwodi (which includes eleven religious) work for migrant women who are threatened with honour-related violence, in addition to victims of women trade, forced marriages, mutilation or violent relationships.

Nowadays most of the victims of the modern slave trade in Germany and other West European countries are young

women from Russia, Ukraine, Rumania, Poland etc. Many of these women are deceived by false promises of worthwhile employment as e.g. dancer in a smart nightclub, hostess or even as chambermaid or stewardess. Poverty and the absence of job security compel these women to emigrate. They easily fall victim to worldwide organised crime. Sex slavery is a multimillion business.

### On the map of Germany

In the context of the German world championship 2006, Solwodi's main concern was with how to prevent this tournament turning into a catastrophe for young women who hoped to find, even temporarily, employment in Germany. We planned a major campaign geared to preventive instruction in Eastern Europe, for which Solwodi borrowed the familiar motto 'A Red Card for Forced Prostitution.'

Initially we met much opposition. The decision of the European Parliament to lend support to the 'Red Card' gave the hoped-for publicity to the theme of 'forced prostitution'. The problem had long been a taboo subject and if raised at all in society or in politics it was dismissed as a fringe phenomenon. Many people could just not believe that the slave trade of women and children had returned to what is considered a civilised country. Nor that those bought and traded young people were forced to suffer the most extreme forms of sex, often with so called 'ordinary normal men'.

Before, during and after the world championship Solwodi for three months kept a national hotline open in Berlin. This distress number was called 2200 times. Solwodi also discussed with those responsible in the two ministries how trade in humans and forced prostitution could be effectively combated by opening a permanent red line for distress calls.

The subject of trade in humans and of forced prostitution is connected with our concept of man. Women and children have been made into consumption articles. The consumer claims the right to be served to his own satisfaction. Supply and demand regulate the sex market, which has become a significant form of enterprise also in Germany.

The world championship 2006 was a special occasion and an enormous challenge to highlight one of the ugliest crimes. We hope that human trade and forced prostitution will now remain a permanent subject of concern.

*Sr. Dagmar Plum, Medical Mission Sister,  
co-worker Solwodi, Germany*



## The SRTV in Lithuania and Latvia

*Seven members of the SRTV were invited, by Caritas for an eight day trip to Lithuania and Latvia.*

### **Kaunas**

In Kaunas, Lithuania, we stayed in a convent and were warmly welcomed by the sisters there. The sisters are certainly not rich and do their best to earn a living. We met the director of Caritas Lithuania, Pastor Gregor, and some coordinators of a project run by Caritas Lithuania against the trafficking of women. A coordinator and a number of volunteers are active in each of the five dioceses. They all work under the guidance of a fantastic woman, Kristina Misiniene. They warn women and young girls, using information material, to watch out for 'sweet' seducers who turn out to be pimps. Victims only find out when it is too late. They care for women, former sex slaves, who have managed to return to Lithuania. Sometimes they can house them in safe apartments (Caritas pays the rent) or in convents. They listen to heart wrenching stories and try their best to help the girls return to their families in their home town or village.

### **Radio and newspaper**

Towards the end of the morning we were expected for a radio broadcast from the Catholic radio station in Kaunas. The broadcast was about the fight against the trafficking of women. Listeners were invited to ask questions. In the afternoon there followed an interview with a local newspaper.

### **Organisations against trafficking in women**

In Kaunas many NGOs are involved in the battle against the trafficking of women.

We met their representatives that afternoon. We told them who we were and what we came to do. Our goal in Lithuania and Latvia was to strengthen the network with related organisations. We also hoped to gain an insight into their work so that we could support each other. Television recordings were made and two of our group were interviewed. Everywhere we went, we left behind copies of 'Transactions' and our warning folders in Lithuanian, Latvian, and Russian.

### **Shelter and refuge for women**

The next day we visited two convents. Besides the work that the sisters do, caring for old people who have been neglected by their families, they also offer sanctuary to victims of women traffickers.

In one of the convents the sisters have the opportunity to offer the women counselling.

In the other one, the sisters have less time to offer counselling because of their other duties. The women can feel safe in the two convents. They can help the sisters in the garden of with the care of patients. Caritas is responsible for the women there. What the sisters had to say made a deep impression on us.

The next day we drove to Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania. There we had a talk with two policewomen. One of them was the head of the department of trafficking in human

beings and the other was from the department of detection and refuge/shelter.

They talked about the developments in Lithuania and also about the fact that prostitution was both illegal and punishable in Lithuania.



*SRTV with Pastor Rigas and Kristina Misiniene*

### **Riga**

We were very impressed with the work of Caritas Lithuania and the fabulous organisation of our visit to that country. After that we travelled with a Euroline bus to Riga in Latvia. When we arrived in Riga we made acquaintance with Father Edgar, the director of Caritas Latvia.

The next day we were warmly welcomed by 'Marta', a government organisation for women studies. Marta was also busy with a project against the trafficking of women. Three employees addressed us in English. The person with responsibility for the shelter and relief of victims showed us the schedule of the professional people attached to the project. For, at least the first six months after returning, women are offered help in their attempt to reintegrate into society.

There is a national project against the trafficking of women from 2004 till 2008. This project receives subsidies from the Latvian government.

We visited two convents. The Dominican Sisters have looked after victims over the last few years. The Sisters of the Poor Child Jesus support all attempts to eradicate the trafficking of women.

The next day we spoke with the head teacher of the secondary school where Father Edgar teaches religious studies. This woman is a social worker who is going to lead one of the Caritas projects against the trafficking of women. She knows many touching stories concerning victims of women traffickers.

On the last day of our trip, we had no more obligations. We had time to quietly pack our bags and visit a beautiful Russian orthodox church. Once we were home we could look back at a very satisfying and at times demanding trip.

*Mr. Gijs Loeffering  
SRTV member*

### The R in the name

An initial hasty response to the term 'trading in women' could be: 'tricked' If you continue talking about this lucrative criminal business other words spring to mind, such as seduction, fraud, slavery hopelessness. Whoever takes the time to immerse themselves in the subject doesn't easily say "The trafficking of women is a problem that has to be eradicated." Of course we want to eradicate it, and it has to be eradicated. However when everything is taken into consideration it soon becomes painfully obvious that it is a very very long term project. It even raises the question: "Will the problem ever be resolved?"

Were the religious people who put this problem on the agenda 15 years ago idealists and dreamers? Of course not; they saw the reality. Women become victims of the traffickers. They have to be helped to liberate themselves. They also need a safe refuge and structure in their lives to help them return to a normal life.

'Normal' is a difficult word. It also has negative connotations. Prostitution was legalised to create certainty for the women involved, and to help the authorities keep track of things.

What is officially permitted cannot be bad, so visiting prostitutes is normal, is what men can now say.

Moslem youths admit that according to their belief and culture both the bride and the groom have to be virgins on their wedding day. But at the same time they say: "But we men have our requirements, and that is normal".

Women don't understand that men have different needs. This discussion will always remain. As will the discussion

about (marriage) loyalty – including or excluding sexuality. Annemarie Jorritsma, former politician and chairwoman of the task force 'Women', recently suggested that maybe Dutch soldiers should be accompanied by prostitutes if they are serving on foreign missions. "If there are no women in the vicinity soldiers may be inclined to approach local women which can lead to problems." This issue raises many questions. Do the wives who stay behind on the home front receive a Christmas gigolo wrapped in a red ribbon?

Even though prostitution is acceptable, treating women as merchandise is unacceptable. This form of slavery has to be eradicated and the SRTV is doing all it can to achieve this. I must say, however sometimes, when I am explaining the meaning of the abbreviation SRTV, I ignore the R. I do this to avoid the following reactions: "Oh nuns, they just want to win some souls or what about your mad Pope with his condoms, what does he do?" But then my niece goes to Thailand for a training period, my neighbours go trekking through China Malaysia and Vietnam and a friend travels through Africa. They all have brochures in their rucksacks and suitcases with warning words for the local women and girls: "Watch out, don't let them trick you". And more importantly the folders are in the language which is spoken in that particular country. The SRTV doesn't only have a world wide network, it also prints its material in 49 different languages.

A fantastic achievement for the nuns (the embarrassment disappears!) The background is dismal, but I proudly say: The SRTV must remain.

*Coks van Eysden*

## In the News

### Suspected human trafficking gang leader nabbed in Poland

*Warsaw* – A Pole suspected of leading a gang that sold Poles into virtual slavery on plantations in southern Italy was nabbed by police in Poland Wednesday, a spokesman for Poland's Police Headquarters confirmed. Identified only as Lukasz Z., the man was taken into police custody in Lublin, eastern Poland, along with two female suspects in the human trafficking ring.

In July, a joint operation saw Italian and Polish police free more than a hundred Polish citizens that were being held in Nazi-style labour camps in Italy's Apulia region, close to the cities of Bari and Foggia. Polish prosecutors investigating the Italian slave labour camps using Polish nationals began questioning victims in the case in mid-October. Polish justice officials believe that up to 1,000

Poles may have been used as slaves in Nazi-style agricultural labour camps in the Apulia region that forms the heel of Italy's boot.

Warsaw has also urged Rome to help track down dozens of Polish citizens that have gone missing over the past six years after working as slave labourers in southern Italy's tomato fields.

Polish police have published an internet list of more than a hundred missing persons, some of whom could have been murdered by the slave labour gangs.

Justice officials in Poland have already indicted nearly 30 people on human trafficking charges in connection with the case. Investigators said the Poles were lured to Italy by unscrupulous individuals on the false promise of a decently-paid job.

Once in Apulia, they were forced to work the fields picking tomatoes or artichokes under scorching hot summer temperatures of more than 40 degrees Celsius for up to 15 hours non-stop.

They were paid pitiful wages – often between 15 and 20 euros (20 to 25 dollars) per day. The money was often taken back through extortion.

The Poles were confined to dirty camps with no sanitation or running water. They were given only bread and water to eat and forced to sleep on floors.

Those who tried to rebel were tortured and beaten by armed guards calling themselves 'kapo', a term used to describe Nazi concentration camp overseers.

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