

**COATNET statement**  
**for “A Human Rights Approach to Combating Human Trafficking: Challenges and Opportunities. Implementing the Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking”, Geneva, 27-28 May, 2010**

COATNET is an ecumenical network of Christian Organisations (Catholic, Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox) which share a joint commitment to working together internationally, at regional and national level in combating human trafficking and in assisting people who are or have been trafficked. It is a project integrated in the working structures of Caritas Internationalis, a global Confederation of 164 members. COATNET affiliates, present in over 30 countries around the world, have committed themselves to adopt and apply a human rights approach to combating human trafficking and share the following experiences, good practices and challenges emerging in the process of the development of rights-based responses.

*Good practices on:*

*Identification of trafficked persons and traffickers*  
*Ensuring an adequate law enforcement response*

Ensuring cooperation with relevant authorities and officials to facilitate the identification and provision of assistance to trafficked persons

A Memorandum of Understanding between the Caritas Lebanon Migrant Centre (CLMC) and the General Security ensured a good collaboration with this agency for trafficking cases. Investigators and guards have been very cooperative with CLMC staff to ensure justice for cases in question. Coordination meetings with General Security officials were held on a weekly basis, whereby all issues encountered were raised, and among them were the discriminatory interrogation techniques and inappropriate handling of sexual abuse cases. General Security has acknowledged the efforts towards assisting the victims of trafficking, and gaps their personnel have in handling and serving victims of trafficking in a sensitive way. Consequently, they agreed upon CLMC offer to conduct a training for their staff.

The launch of the campaign by Caritas Lebanon Migrant Centre and the film Maid in Lebanon has contributed to changing the attitudes of Lebanese employers who had racist and discriminatory tendencies towards foreign domestic workers. Some cases were referred by Lebanese people (neighbours, employers themselves...) to CLMC, and also to General Security, the police and Public Prosecutor. Many schools and universities adopted the cause and included this project within their courses.

Providing appropriate training to relevant State authorities and officials in the identification of trafficked persons and in the investigation and prosecution of cases of trafficking

**Caritas Ukraine** has conducted a number of trainings aimed at sensitizing law enforcement authorities to their primary responsibility to ensure the safety and immediate well-being of trafficked persons. The trainings were designed to ensure the sensitivity to the needs of trafficked persons, particularly those of women and children, the acknowledgment of the practical value of providing incentives for trafficked persons and others to come forward to report traffickers, and to ensure that “rescue” operations do not further harm the rights and dignity of trafficked persons.

### *Preventing trafficking*

Identifying appropriate points of intervention to ensure that migrants and potential migrants are warned about possible dangers and consequences of trafficking

**Secours Catholique/Caritas France with Caritas organisations in Bulgaria and Romania**, conducts a cross-border project with the goal of creating a safer environment on both sides of the Danube River in the new context of integration of Bulgaria and Romania in the European Union. Among other objectives, the project aims to prevent human trafficking and develop best practices for the protection of crime victims.

**Caritas Bucharest and Aidrom** have initiated several interrelated programmatic interventions with the aim of reducing the risk of youth becoming victims of trafficking. The primary objectives of the project were to help create an enabling and supportive atmosphere within the school communities allowing youth to make informed decisions about the risk of trafficking.

Ensuring that potential migrants, especially women, are properly informed about the risks of migration, as well as avenues available for legal, non-exploitative migration

**Caritas Sri Lanka** has produced and launched various materials (books, TV docudramas, etc.) aimed at promoting safe migration. One of them is a basic handbook detailing what a prospective Migrant Worker should do before migration. It gives information on training facilities especially for housemaids. Employment contracts, laws pertaining to employment in the different Middle Eastern countries, registration before migration, challenges facing migrants in migrant countries are some of the topics which are elaborated in detail. Also given in this handbook are instructions on what to do after migration and how to face problems arising out of migrant employment.

Developing information campaigns for the general public aimed at promoting awareness of the dangers associated with trafficking:

Addressing demand as a root cause of trafficking

**SRTV, the Dutch Foundation of Religious against Trafficking in Women**, has been working for almost 20 years on prevention and awareness raising on trafficking in women. For example, in one of the many campaigns that SRTV has implemented, a warning leaflet has been produced and translated into 52 languages and distributed in over 80 countries. Religious, women's groups and others use the leaflet to give face-to-face information about the dangers of trafficking, the rights of women (eg. your passport is yours, don't give it to anyone!) and the things women have to consider if they decide to take the opportunity of migrating (get informed before you travel if the organisation you will be working for is legal, inform your family where you are going, etc). The leaflet is used in many different ways: in schools as information for girls before they graduate; for women groups to discuss, for religious groups to inform them that many people have little idea about the dangers of migration.

**Medical Missionaries of Mary** with headquarters in Ireland has a network of Sisters in 11 developing countries. Awareness raising is a priority for the network. In Benin City, Nigeria, a centre for prevention has been established, providing vocational training. In Ireland, religious men and women are networked through APT (Act to Prevent Trafficking) and engaged in awareness raising, lobbying, supporting survivors and international networking. These religious are represented at AHTU (Anti Human Trafficking Unit in

the Ministry of Justice) and are also active in an inter-agency campaign to address the issue of demand for purchased sex.

#### Investigating factors that increase vulnerability to trafficking, including inequality, poverty and all forms of discrimination and prejudice

##### Empowering the vulnerable groups

In the framework of the project "A Women's rights in Albania for Freedom, Justice and to speak their Truth", co- founded and financed by the **IBVM (Loreto) Congregation**, a survey regarding the women's situation was conducted in 17 rural regions and informal areas of Albania. All of the women that participated in the survey live in great poverty. The three Roma groups of women live in dire circumstances and have as their work begging with their children on the streets, sifting the waste garbage for tin cans and cleaning car windows. Other women's groups in the informal areas are migrant women who live on illegal land in 'Barracks', (Sheds). Their men have often left to work illegally elsewhere and these women have no land, nowhere to grow food and they are often desperate and without water or electricity. In the rural areas in the mountainous regions of Albania the women desire more than anything economic independence because again, their men are often away looking for work and the women are left carrying the burdens of the family with little finance to sustain them. All of these situations mean that these women are vulnerable and ready to make imprudent decisions when the offer is a good marriage with money attached, a better life elsewhere, etc. It is always from these groups in Albania that women are trafficked by the trafficker who takes advantage of their vulnerability. The above mentioned project looks at best practice and reflects the way in which these women may be empowered. One of such ways will be to develop a network of women's groups throughout Albania and the Balkans. It will also look at the inclusion of men's voices and the different forms of communication networks which will be set up in keeping with modern media techniques and tools of communication.

**Caritas Pakistan conducted a Research Study** on camel jockeys to find out the root causes and assess the future vulnerability of children to trafficking. Their next steps are to involve the camel jockey children and their parents in the non-formal education and livelihood programs to minimize their vulnerability to human trafficking.

#### Examining ways of increasing opportunities for legal, gainful and non-exploitative labour migration

**Caritas Internationalis** as a global Confederation has repeatedly advocated for more legal channels for labour migration. Specifically Caritas Internationalis launched a Campaign for the rights of migrant domestic workers "Under the same roof – Under the same law. Equal rights for migrant domestic workers". Migrant domestic workers in many parts of the world are victims of trafficking. This is because domestic work in many parts of the world is not recognized as work and thus the sector unregulated. People working in this sector- to a large extent female migrants – are often invisible, as they are working in the private sphere, many living in the family where they work. Caritas asks for respect of the rights of migrant domestic workers, the recognition of domestic work as work, regulation and control of the sector by the state and a convention setting labour standards for domestic workers, taking the issue of migrant domestic workers into account.

#### *Challenges*

One of the biggest challenges is an inadequate protection of the right of all persons to freedom of movement. There is evidence that a lack of legal channels of migration that allow people to migrate without risking their lives combined with restrictive migration policies continue fuelling trafficking. Secondly, a lack of funding for agencies is an obstacle to ensuring that trafficked persons who return to their country of origin are provided with the support necessary to ensure their well-being, facilitate their social integration and prevent re-trafficking, Thirdly, cooperation among relevant agencies/authorities responsible for

combating trafficking needs to be improved in order to keep up with the ever changing dynamics of the phenomenon and the sophisticated methods of traffickers. Fourthly, assistance to trafficked persons is still conditional on their agreeing to cooperate with law enforcement officials – a practice which violates the right to appropriate protection and support that should be extended to all trafficked persons without discrimination. And finally, in many countries a lack of high quality integrated services and personnel for child victims is observed and the legal system for child protection is still very weak or not applied. Inadequate legislation and weak law enforcement are among the facilitators of child trafficking.

For more information please contact Martina Liebsch, Caritas Internationalis, at [liebsch@caritas.va](mailto:liebsch@caritas.va)

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