



Christian Organisations Against
Trafficking in Human Beings

ADVOCACY STATEMENT for COATNET affiliates

***“Created in the image of God,
treated like slaves”***

Introduction

COATNET is an ecumenical network of organisations working with Christian Churches (Catholic, Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox) which share a joint commitment to working together internationally, at a regional and national level in combating human trafficking and in assisting people who are or have been trafficked. In respect of this common identity, the organisations affiliated to COATNET are themselves organisations with a Christian identity. It consists of 50 affiliates from Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox and Anglican organizations and religious congregations¹.

This paper outlines global issues of concern for the affiliates of COATNET and the persons they serve. It is complementary to the national advocacy efforts of every organization: messages contained in this document can be adapted to the specific national context or for a specific campaign.

Summary of the recommendations

- Trafficking in human beings **embraces many facets and is a crime**, no matter if it happens across borders or within countries and whether a criminal organisation is involved or many interlinked individuals or other actors.
- **Victims of trafficking should be treated as** human beings and actors; s/he makes her/his own choices and reflects about her/his actions.
- This approach should hold out the **option of a long-term residence permit for victims of trafficking outside their country of origin.**
- **Children** should be specifically protected and they should be heard in the process of decision making for their protection. The interests of the child prevail.
- **Peer-groups/self-organisation** of trafficked persons should be promoted to empower them.
- **Return of trafficked persons is possible only on a voluntary basis and should be determined safe and feasible only after a thorough assessment of the needs and wishes of the trafficked person and of the environment to which she/he will return.**
- **Governments should ratify and implement relevant International Conventions** that underline the commitment of governments to combat trafficking in human beings.
- **Enforcement of existing legislation and effective punishment of criminals are cornerstones** for combating trafficking in human beings.
- **Well-informed, sensitised and equipped authorities** guarantee an early identification and fair treatment of trafficked persons.
- States should show **their concrete commitment by allocating appropriate and sufficient resources to** counter trafficking activities carried out by civil society organisations and other relevant actors.
- **Education on human rights and measures which promote the equal treatment of men and women** strengthen people at risk and thus support prevention and awareness raising with risk groups.
- **Churches must take action to sensitise the public and those engaged in church structures.**
- Safe migration and the development of legal migration channels for both skilled and unskilled labour force should be promoted, as a means to prevent trafficking. Assistance and prevention measures should be developed and implemented according to the internationally acknowledged and recommended standards and guidelines.

¹ See also “COATNET in detail” at the end of the document

Issues of global concern and recommendations

Trafficking in human beings has many facets

1. Trafficking in human beings (THB) is frequently perceived as a problem linked to the sex industry and prostitution. Evidence shows that, this is only one aspect of the problem. People are also trafficked to work in sweatshops, domestic services, agricultural and other sectors and are often enslaved in exploitative working conditions. It is therefore important to look at THB from the **perspective of forced labour**. This avoids the stigmatisation of trafficked persons.
2. THB is a **crime**. It can happen within the borders of a given country or across borders. It does not always involve criminal organisations, but rather a chain of people who make profit out of the hopes and vulnerability of people.

COATNET affiliates in action:

Caritas India

The Parliament of India in December 2008 passed the Unorganised Worker's Social Security Bill that seeks to provide welfare measures for the unorganised workers. The benefit includes health care, life and disability insurance, old age pension and the group accident scheme. However, the bill has many limitations. Most of the areas covered in it are already stipulated under Below Poverty Line Scheme, where the domestic workers are also only for namesake. Hence, Caritas India, along with its partners in Delhi, has developed a campaign "Regulating Domestic work and stop trafficking for domestic labour" to advocate for a separate bill for Domestic workers. Also, Caritas India, in collaboration with Solidarity Centre, Ahmedabad, had initiated a National Consultation on "Domestic Workers Bill" in Delhi, February 2009.

Trafficked persons are subjects of rights

3. Any action against human trafficking should endeavour to uphold human dignity and to respect Human Rights. Respecting human dignity means that the trafficked person is treated as a **subject of rights**, who makes his/her own choices and reflects about his/her actions. Those who are in contact with the trafficked person must consequently accept these choices and reflections if those choices do not harm the trafficked person.
4. Respect for **Human Rights** is of primary importance while assisting trafficked persons. Trafficked persons have the right to appropriate remedies, protection, social and legal assistance and to protection of their data. At the minimum, this should include a secure residence status, safe and adequate accommodation, means for subsistence, health care, free legal assistance, education, and training and employment opportunities.
5. Trafficked persons, when identified should be issued with a temporary **residence permit** if they wish so. This residence permit should be renewable

and should include the option to be converted into a long-term permit. Its issuance should also be independent of the willingness of the person to cooperate with the authorities in investigations and prosecution. In this way the trafficked person, who may have been subject to a profound physical or mental trauma, can begin to recover and build a relationship of trust with the authorities, which may at a later stage result in some degree of cooperation.

6. Trafficking in children is a phenomenon with which we are increasingly confronted. As children are particularly vulnerable, they should be entitled to special measures that are targeted to their particular needs. The **best interests of the child** should always be paramount when taking decisions which affect their future. Such decisions should always defend the Human Rights of the child as well as taking into account the child's view with due regard to his/her age and maturity. Appointment of a legal guardian should also be a standard procedure for the protection of trafficked children. Various forms of accommodation for children should be available, so that they may grow up and be cared for in adequate surroundings such as special shelters but also with foster families, which would cater to the overall well being of the child.
7. Trafficked persons as other people facing exclusion should be **empowered** to be the agents of their own lives. To this end, our organisations support trafficked persons in either joining or creating organisations through which they can advance their own interests and express their concerns to the public. Such organisations would help to minimise feelings of isolation among trafficked persons, empower them in rebuilding their lives and provide them with the strength to inform persons at risk or support other trafficked people.
8. Return of trafficked persons to their countries of origin and reintegration should only be voluntary and carefully prepared because, upon returning to their country of origin, trafficked persons could face social rejection, discrimination, and humiliation. It is therefore of the utmost importance that prior to their **voluntary return and reintegration**, a thorough assessment should be made of the potential risks involved, taking into account the needs and the wishes of the trafficked persons. There is an urgent need to provide trafficked persons with various forms of assistance/social programmes upon return, including (first) shelter, food, health care, occupational and emotional support. All measures should aim at facilitating the rehabilitation of the trafficked persons, enabling them to rebuild their self-confidence and to live a self-determined life.

COATNET affiliates in action:

Caritas France

The fight against human trafficking is a priority action of the Europe department of Secours Catholique since 2001, when the organisation started supporting assistance, advocacy, prevention and awareness raising projects in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in Central Asia. For example, Secours Catholique with Caritas organisations in Bulgaria and Romania, conducts a cross-border project with the goal of creation of 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 promote and develop best practices for the protection of crime victims.

In 2008 COATNET joined forces with the French Collective Against Trafficking in Human Beings, led by Caritas France, to organise on 16th October an international symposium entitled: "Fighting trafficking in children: What is to be done in the European Union?". Set up under the auspices of the French EU Presidency, the advocacy event took place at the Cour de Cassation, Palais de Justice, on the occasion of the 2nd European Day Against Trafficking in Human Beings, and offered an opportunity for the representatives of the clerical, political and civil society communities to provide recommendations for more effective fight against trafficking and better respect of Human Rights of children.

States must take action

9. States should **ratify** the following relevant conventions and implement the provisions contained in them:
 - a. UN Convention Against Trans-national Organised Crime
 - b. UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons
 - c. UN Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Air, Land and Sea Protocol
 - d. International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
 - e. UN Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery
 - f. ILO Convention 182, Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labour
 - g. UN Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Pornography
 - h. Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

The ratification of these Conventions underlines states' commitment to respect Human Rights and combat trafficking in human beings.

10. Legislative efforts should be accompanied by a strong governmental will to enforce legal provisions providing for **prosecution and effective criminal punishment** of traffickers as well as regulations facilitating victims' assistance. States should also work to establish lasting prevention mechanisms by addressing the root causes of the phenomenon.
11. The first step for providing trafficked persons with assistance and protection is **identifying** persons as victims of trafficking. Trafficked persons often cross borders as irregular migrants and only then become (aware that they are) trafficked. There is a risk that they are repatriated as irregular migrants and not identified as trafficked persons and are therefore unable to access the necessary assistance. Authorities should work towards quick, fair and transparent mechanisms allowing for the identification and referral of trafficked persons to relevant actors providing support and protection.
12. Governments should work strongly towards **institutional capacity building**, with police forces, the judiciary, pedagogical experts, and social workers - at national and international levels - aiming at a uniform application of a definition and the implementation of Human Rights standards, specifically the "Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking"². Education and training should be based on the right to victims' assistance; on methodologies for conducting prevention and awareness campaigns; on social counselling and other social services for victims.
13. Governmental counter-trafficking efforts should be **coordinated** in a transparent manner allowing for public participation and encouraging national and international cooperation. Funding counter trafficking activities/projects shows the commitment of states. Therefore national governments should allocate sufficient financial and human resources to address the trafficking phenomenon in an effective manner, including funding a diversity of different actors (NGO's as well as law enforcement and judicial system), and thus

²[http://www.unhcr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/e06a5300f90fa0238025668700518ca4/caf3deb2b05d4f35c1256bf30051a003/\\$FILE/N0240168.pdf](http://www.unhcr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/e06a5300f90fa0238025668700518ca4/caf3deb2b05d4f35c1256bf30051a003/$FILE/N0240168.pdf)

thereby allowing a multidisciplinary approach. Financial support should be given to the relevant actors at national level. At the same time funding for development in the countries of origin has to be allocated in order to improve the living conditions and options for groups at risk of being trafficked.

Allocation decisions should invite input from citizen groups, activists, and institutions that represent those that are most affected.

14. **Monitoring mechanisms** should be put in place to evaluate the impact of policies. These mechanisms would include round – tables at local, regional and national levels and the function of a national rapporteur on trafficking. Civil society – which often works the closest with trafficked people - should have access to these mechanisms.

COATNET affiliates in action:

Caritas Lebanon Migrant Centre (CLMC)

In 2005, during the Commission on Human rights Session, a CLMC staff member submitted a written statement on the exploitation of migrant workers and lack of implementation of minimum accepted standards in relation to this vulnerable group. She also gave testimony of the work undertaken at grassroots level during the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery meeting. In September 2005, during the fact-finding visit to Lebanon of the Special Rapporteur, Mrs. Sigma Huda, CLMC discussed and shared with her crucial information on the trafficking situation in Lebanon.

In January-February 2008, Lebanon was scheduled to submit its third period report to be reviewed by the Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women during its 40th Session. End of 2007, in preparing the third shadow report, CLMC was solicited by the Committee for the Follow-Up on Women's Issues to provide its input regarding the situation of migrant domestic workers under Article 6. CLMC shared its concern regarding the exclusion of migrant domestic workers from the protection of the Labour Laws, and their subjection to a set of administrative directives of the General Security Department at the Ministry of Interior. Another expressed concern was the lack of monitoring system to follow-up the work conditions of these migrant workers, chiefly women. On 18 September 2009, CLMC intervened on Migrant workers' situation in Lebanon and MENA Region at a Side event during the 12th Human Rights Session, whereby it gave an insight of slavery-like conditions faced and endured by migrant workers.

On 12 October 2009, CLMC contributed with a statement on the situation of Sri Lankan migrant workers in Lebanon during the UPR of Sri Lanka at the 11th Session of the Committee of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

Trafficking in Human Beings an issue for education on a large scale

15. **Prevention** is one of the main tools in the fight against trafficking in human beings. We emphasise the importance of developing education policies, which constitute a way to sensitise society and persons at risks, and also the professionals working against trafficking and other professionals such as journalists, lawyers, judges or medical doctors, etc. who may meet persons at risk or victims of trafficking.

16. Trafficking in human beings should therefore be dealt with via:

- education programmes on human rights;
- sexual education programmes;
- education programmes, which particularly insist on equality between women and men in society;
- the promotion of education programmes on children's rights³;
- awareness raising campaigns for risk groups and
- awareness raising for journalists, doctors and other professions potentially in contact with victims of trafficking.

17. To be efficient, these preventive actions require curricula development, training of teachers and the implementation, at national level, of a **concrete prevention policy**, including education, in association with Human Rights associations and other non-governmental organisations.

COATNET affiliates in action:

SRTV (Dutch Foundation of religious against Trafficking in Women)

The SRTV is for already 20 years active in prevention with a leaflet campaign. Religious and lay people inform vulnerable young people in schools, health centres or community centres in countries of origin about the possible dangers of being trafficked.

Caritas Romania and Aidrom

Several interrelated programmatic interventions have been initiated 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.

Caritas Pakistan

Caritas Pakistan conducted 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.

International networking and cooperation

18. Due to its global dimension and its complexity, combating trafficking in human beings needs strong cross-border and **multidisciplinary cooperation** of all actors. This cooperation can foster mutual learning to improve the protection for trafficked persons, facilitate mutual help in individual cases and support the difficult work at the national level. As a network of Christian Organisations we focus our efforts on involving actors from the local Church as well as from the Church hierarchy in the fight against this crime. COATNET seeks cooperation with other like-minded organisations at international level. COATNET affiliates

³ Referring in particular to **principle number 9 of the Declaration of 1959 on children's rights** " *The child must be protected against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation. He shall not be the subject of traffic, in any form* » and **to article 19 of the Convention on children's rights** « *States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child*».

engage themselves in national round tables or platforms and seek cooperation with other actors on the basis of cooperation agreements.

19. **Churches** must take action against Trafficking in Human Beings. Churches and faith communities are often the first places, where trafficked persons seek consolation and compassion. Moreover with their capillary network churches can reach out to inform the public, but also to get to know about situations of trafficking. In line with the prophet Isaias they must "...loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free..."⁴.

COATNET affiliates in action:

A pastoral letter of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India, 2002

The letter was sent to many dioceses in India to which belongs the responsibility for the pastoral care of migrants and trafficked persons. The letter requested tribal families decently settled in the big cities to help immigrants from their home area, requested to every parish to inquire into the matter of trafficking, collect facts and figures, names and addresses, and appealed especially to Women Religious congregation to come forward with new initiative so as to provide for migrant and trafficked women/girls welcome, accommodation, needs, concerns, faith, formation and pastoral centre.

Caritas Pakistan

Caritas Pakistan organized a Day of prayer in Press Club Rahim Yar Khan involving people from different faiths/religions with the aim of promoting interfaith harmony, showing solidarity and praying for the victims. Also, Caritas Pakistan organized sessions with religious and civic leaders in different dioceses in order to sensitize the leaders on this issue and promote inter-faith harmony.

Members of Civil society as primary agents providing services for prevention, assistance and reintegration for trafficked persons

20. **NGOs and civil society** at large, including religious congregations and churches in many ways are the primary and often the best-qualified service providers in the fields of prevention, victim assistance, and reintegration. Therefore, they play a crucial role in the process of assisting and protecting trafficked persons. Professionals and volunteers working in NGO's often can establish a relationship of trust with trafficked persons, which is crucial for the process trafficked persons must go through in dealing with the judicial, law enforcement and social system of the country. NGOs are and plan to remain the primary leaders of prevention campaigns and initiators of advocacy efforts for combating trafficking globally. There should be recognition of the influence that NGO coalitions can have on governmental counter-trafficking policies and their implementation. NGOs around the world provide monitoring of public policy decision-making processes, promoting transparency in decisions related to this global phenomenon and trust in society for the responsible implementation of counter trafficking policies.

⁴ Is 58:6-7

COATNET affiliates in action:

CARE (Christian Action Research & Education)

CARE, jointly with the European Freedom Network, provided training to church leaders from across Ukraine and facilitated training for them to go into schools and raise awareness of the dangers of human trafficking. The organisation also facilitated training on how to set up grassroots projects in Ukraine.

Caritas Italiana (Caritas Rome)

The Migration Area of Caritas Rome manages a Protected Shelter for victims of trafficking. The House is co-financed by the Roxanne project of the Municipality of Rome and provides accommodation, assistance and reintegration to victims of trafficking for sexual purpose. In the latter years it has hosted mainly women coming from Nigeria and Eastern Europe.

The assisted trafficked women have the opportunity to attend Italian and computers courses, they are supported with legal advice and job counseling, and are steered into the network of social and health services.

The final aim is to set them free from trafficking circuit and to allow them to reach psychological, social and economic balance. Usually this happens after maximum one year and half, also thanks to the Italian legislation that issue trafficked persons with a residence permit (art. 18 Decree n. 286/1998). The latter is renewable for one year and can be converted in a study or work residence permit. The issuance is independent from the willingness of the person to cooperate with the authorities in investigation and prosecution.

An alternative: safe and legal migration

21. Movement of people in search for a better life has to be acknowledged as a fact. It is a dimension of human nature and over centuries people moved from one place to another to seek a better life.
22. Trafficking in human beings is essentially linked to the lack of democratic development in some countries, social inequalities in and between societies, inequalities between men and women as well as the **lack of opportunities** for safe migration.
23. Thus, our organisations promote the development and implementation of **legal channels of migration** that allow people to migrate without risking their lives. These channels should be open to both highly and low qualified workers.
24. The provision of accurate, clear and complete **information** is an important measure for reducing risks in the migration process. This information should be easily accessible (via embassies, border crossing points, public authorities, schools...) for all potential migrants and for people already on the move.

COATNET affiliates in action:

Caritas Europa and CCME

Caritas Europa and CCME, as Christian organizations, for many years have been advocating for the inviolable dignity of the human person created in the image of God, as well as for the promotion of a society that welcomes strangers. Thus, in their joint recommendations for the Migration and Asylum Policies in the EU “Stockholm Programme” 2010-2015, that were supported by other Christian agencies throughout Europe, it is argued that a truly pro-active and common immigration policy, among others (e.g. family policies), can be a key element in the context of the demographic challenge and it can also offer viable alternatives to irregular migration. Such a policy would develop clear and transparent common channels to enter into the EU as a labour migrant. This would apply to persons with varying qualifications. In order to combat trafficking and exploitation, a common set of rights needs to be granted to all labour migrants. The interests of the “sending countries” should be taken into consideration by developing guidelines for ethical recruitment especially in professions where qualified employees are scarce (e.g. medical doctors). Agreements with countries of origin should also enable the free movement of workers between the EU and their country of origin. Policies and instruments concerning for the legal migration of low qualified migrants should also be devised.

The European provisions on family reunification must be revised so that they effectively guarantee the right to family life and are not used as an immigration management tool. Family unity should be regarded as one of the guiding principles of migration and asylum policies.

COATNET in detail

COATNET identity

COATNET is an expression of solidarity and a platform of cooperation between Christian organisations and churches from around the world in their joint fight against human trafficking⁵, based on commonly shared Christian values and principles, such as the love to God and our fellow human beings, the equality before God, the inviolability of the human dignity, solidarity with the poor and needy, non-violence, forgiveness. COATNET is an ecumenical project currently integrated in the Caritas Internationalis structures. COATNET aims to help its affiliates to deliver on their commitment for combating trafficking in human beings⁶.

COATNET affiliates are Christian organisations or individuals engaged in the fight against Human Trafficking. Together with their partners they commit themselves

- to freely exchange information and expertise about their action with one another,
- to foster international cooperation in assistance to trafficked persons, to raise public awareness about human trafficking,
- to prevent human trafficking,
- to advocate for effective anti-trafficking policies that place the trafficked person at the heart of the policy making.

COATNET is open for dialogue and cooperation with organisations from other faiths and backgrounds that are fighting for the same cause and share similar values.

COATNET vision

The vision of COATNET is a world in which:

- Human trafficking and related forms of slavery and bondage are publicly and politically acknowledged and denounced as an unacceptable crime and a violation of human dignity and human rights and are effectively combated and ultimately eradicated.
- Injustice, poverty and inequality that enable human trafficking are successfully addressed.
- Attitudes and practices that foster discrimination, vulnerability and exploitation of women and children are consistently exposed and challenged.
- Trafficked persons are not regarded as criminals but as victims of a crime who have an inalienable right to legal protection, dignified and humane treatment and adequate assistance in their process of rehabilitation. Those who assist trafficked persons are not criminalised and stigmatised.

COATNET mission statement

COATNET aims to add value to the individual action of its affiliates in combating human trafficking and to mobilise the potential and the resources of churches and their organisations.

18.05.2010

⁵ According to the Protocol To Prevent, Suppress And Punish Trafficking In Persons, Especially Women And Children, Supplementing The United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, "Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

⁶ <http://www.caritas.org/includes/pdf/ENCommitTrafficking.pdf>