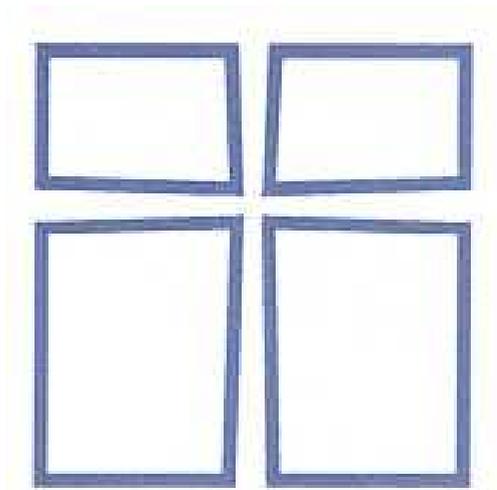

Theodosia



Quarterly
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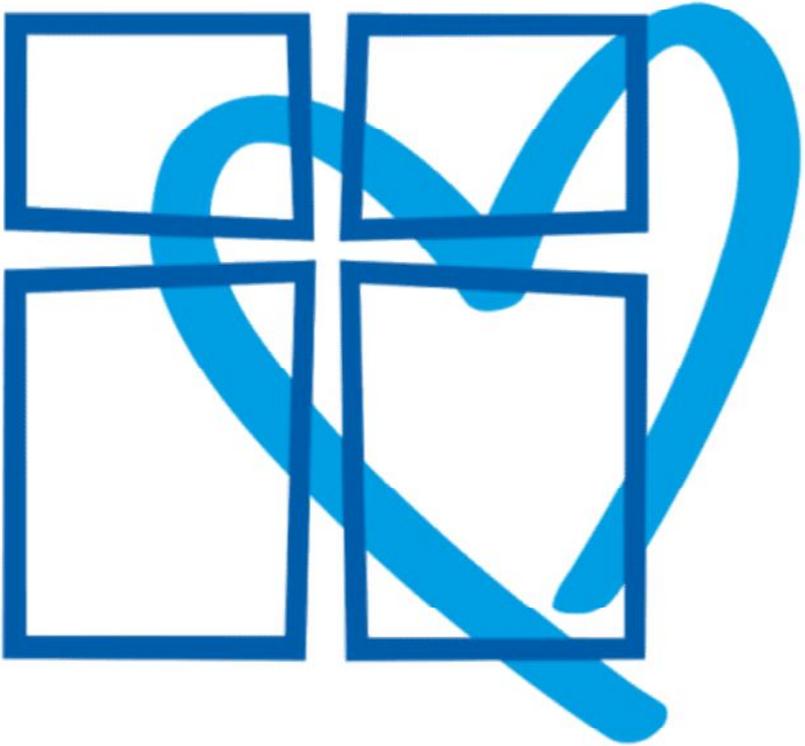
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STANDING FOR
HUMAN DIGNITY

Editorial

In their search for contemporary answers to today's burning questions, the participants of the 2008 General Chapter focused on the care for women, women whose lives and dignity are deeply violated and destroyed by human / women trafficking.

With this theme, a seed has fallen into the hearts of various sisters, from which unimagined blossoms and fruits have come forth. This was shown in many ways during the Conference by the coordinators of each province in September 2017. Our worldwide community is responding to a pressing need of our time by "Standing for Human Dignity". The present Theodosia is composed of contributions from the conference to draw our attention to the many facets and forms of human / women trafficking. It also surprises us with the diversity of our sisters' outreaches.

In order to sensitize all sisters to the subject, the Theodosia has repeatedly made available contributions over the past years:

- 1/2014** **Against Trafficking in Women**
The Working Committee
- A Christian Call to end Human Trafficking**
Sr. Tresa Paul
- 3/2015** **Memorial Day against Women Trafficking**
Sr. Anna Affolter and Sr. Clarens Helfer
- At UNO - Commission on the Status of Women in
New York (CSW 59)**
Sr. Manju Kulapuram
- 3/2016** Efforts against women trafficking, four articles:
You should all know what suffering is taking place
Sr. Clarens Helfer.
- The making of a ministry**
Sr. Celine Goessl

Street social worker in Prague

Sr. Klara Marie Strániková

Inauguration and blessing of the Holy Cross

Convent "Asha Niwas"

Manjhatoli, against human trafficking

Sr. Sunila Xalxo

2/2017

**Book Release Function in Delhi, "No More Silence:
Countering Sexual Harassment and Violence
against Women"**

Sr. Tresa Paul

4/2017

Stand for Human Dignity (Conference Overview)

Sr. Anna Affolter

Solidarity with Women in Distress (talk)

Sr. Lea Ackermann

At the conference from 18th – 26th September, 2017, many sisters, engaged in the work in their homeland in order to sensitize others to the topic. Sr. Anna, in consultation with the authors, has summarized some of the texts from the whole collection of papers and discussions, added recent material, or included questions/answers from the discussions. Each contribution reflects in its own way something of the great commitment of the sisters. Even though different countries are mentioned, some experiences are repeated because the methods in the field of human / women trafficking are the same all over the world. The contributions of the sisters were mostly accompanied by presentations which we cannot include here. In addition, we refrain from using pictures of those affected.

After reading Theodosia, every sister will be surely convinced anew of the meaning of our net prayer.

Sr. Christiane Jungo

Read the signs of the times

Sr. Tresa Paul, common House in Delhi, India North East Province

Sr. Tresa is the Coordinator of India, North East Province. By profession she is a social worker and lawyer. She is currently working as an advocate at the Supreme Court in Delhi and is an employee at the Short Stay Home in Delhi.

Let me begin with a sharing of an intense “baptismal experience” I went through, wherein I felt proud to be a Holy Cross lawyer in my pursuit for making a difference in the society. “It happened on a cold winter morning of 11th December 2013. I joined a protest rally with thousands of people in New Delhi, demanding the scrapping of a Presidential order of 1950.

The Archbishop of Delhi, along with many other Bishops and Christians from across India were part of this peaceful protest. As our cry for justice grew louder and stronger, the cane (lathi) wielding police started lathi charge.

They could not disperse the crowd by their brutal beating up of the protesters; they started using water cannons, firing cold, dirty water at an unbearable force on us. At one moment, I was about to fall at the pressure of the water, but some greater force within protected me from falling. As the dirty, muddy water soaked me fully, and I began to shiver with extreme cold, something strange

happened within me. It was an experience of a second baptism! I felt some stirring deep within my soul inviting me to experience the belovedness from this new baptism for justice for the marginalized and the down-trodden of the Indian society.” Indeed, it was a baptismal experience for me in the waters of injustice, inequality, human rights violations and denial of human dignity in the India of today.

This experience opened my eyes and I realized that until and unless we plunge into the struggles of the ordinary people, we will remain isolated and insulated from the struggles of our people. Then onwards it was a search for finding meaning for me in the ministry I have engaged in.

Having said this, I would like to share with you my dear sisters, some reflections on our relevance and contribution in the justice delivery system of India based on my experience in the legal field as a religious advocate. First of all, I would like to share with you my

inspiration to become an advocate, my personal vision, the challenges that I face my specific involvement towards the protection and promotion of human rights. With specific focus on my book titled "No More Silence – Countering Sexual Harassment and Violence against Women" a major part of my sharing would focus around the issues of women; I would share with you various rights of Indian women and how majority of them are denied of these rights; I would share with you how the culture of silence has led to the oppression and exploitation of women in India. And finally I would conclude by sharing with you the strength for my way. Let me also tell you at the outset that, it's our work, it's our mission that I am sharing with you.

India Today...

It is true that India is making strides in the world as a nation with encouraging developments in scientific, economic and technological fields. But as far as social developments are concerned, India is still one of the lowest ranked countries of the world. The present political landscape of the country, that favors the corporate, communal and casteist forces seems to work on one agenda, namely, to label,

target and persecute those who serve and accompany the poor and the marginalized. Attack on Dalits, adivasis, minorities, women and marginalized communities have increased multi-fold.

The fear among the citizen is palpable. Giving voice to the voiceless is seen with suspicion and condemnation. Individuals, organizations, social movements, trade unions, whistle blowers and human rights defenders who represent the voiceless and marginalized sections of the society are tortured and some are decimated. Space for religious dialogue is shrinking. Above all, many perceive that there is an imminent threat to the Indian Constitutional values of justice, equality, dignity, liberty, and fraternity. The country is witnessing blatant human rights violations and in this scenario, the plight of women is even worse.

Reading the Signs of the Time...

In line with the temper of our country and our call to respond to the needs of the time, North - East Province, Patna ventured into legal ministry with a hope to become beacons of compassion, justice, dignity, equality and mercy to the voiceless and the exploited. Our presence in the legal ministry becomes although more relevant

and significant at a time when our country is facing unprecedented attacks on women, minorities, Dalits, tribals and various marginalized sections of our country. It is our vocation to be committed God seekers who have imbibed the qualities of prophetic critique of unjust structures and principalities; standing for truth and justice, even when no one else does. "Our founders recognized the call of God in the needs of the time. With unbounded confidence in God's mercy, almighty power and fatherly goodness they were open to the needs of the people, courageous and active in responding and persevering in fidelity. Their lives and examples give us inspiration and courage as we strive to follow Christ" (Article 5 from Chapter 1 of our Constitution). I believe that, following the example of our Founders, we are called upon to read the signs of the social situation of the country in the light of God's will and to re-read our charism of 'compassionate love to all especially for the under privileged' through the 'optic of the poor' today.

Seeking God's Will...

As a child, I grew up seeing my parents sharing whatever we had with the needy, especially with

beggars who came in front of our small house. My late father would respectfully talk to beggars like a friend and offer them food and some money. Influenced by my parents, I thought giving respect to the poor and helping them to have their material needs was the greatest things I can do as a social activist. However, as a junior sister, my exposure to the social realities, my experience in one of the rural villages of Bihar, namely "mosquito village" in the West Champaran District of Bihar, changed my perceptions about social work radically.

The story of Madhu Devi, an uneducated, dumb village woman with whom I shared a room in her house for a month as part of my village exposure opened my eyes to many unknown realities of life. *My first day in the village began with a very heart-breaking scene. As I was about to enter the house, I was shocked to see Madhu being beaten up mercilessly by her husband with a thick bamboo stick. I just couldn't believe my eyes but I was helpless. I entered the house disturbed and Madhu was in my room crying loudly. I couldn't communicate, as she was dumb. But I remained with her. I asked the neighbors about her. They told me her story. Madhu, who was dumb by birth, was the second wife of an upper middle*

class man of the village. He married her only for bearing a child for him as his first wife couldn't bear him a child. He got a son in Madhu. However, soon after the birth of the child, she was separated from her son. They treated her like their servant and tortured her for every small thing. They found fault with everything she did. Her own people also left Madhu and so there was no one to stand for Madhu. She liked me and my company was a great consolation and support for her as long as I was there.

A Call within a Call...

The exposure to village life gave me deeper insight about the struggles of the poor to experience equality, human dignity, fraternity (common brotherhood and sisterhood) and unity as assured by the Indian Constitution. What I saw was a divided India - rich and the poor. Majority of Indians belonged to the weaker sections of the society that consists of women, children, scheduled castes, tribals, minorities and unorganized labourers etc. Their dream of an independent and progressive India was never actually realized. Though my village exposure was only for a period of one month, I requested my then provincial Sr. Serena special permission to be in

the village for a full year and it was granted. I was very happy that I got the opportunity to see the rural reality from very close quarters during this period.

The story of Madhu and many other women whom I encountered in the course of my village exposure and grass-root level social action at Sherpur, Patna, Bihar, left many unanswered questions within me.

Over the years, women in India have become increasingly independent and empowered. However, even today, a vast majority of them live a life that does not shield them completely from the daily wrath which in Indian context would mean being touched, groped and harassed at any given point of time in public spaces in India. I realized, I was unable to take up such cases that required legal knowledge. Hence I began to look for other ways of helping women, especially hapless victims of violence. I got a book from the library of READ (Rural Education and Development), a social action unit of Patna Jesuits. The book talked about Indian Constitution which provides equality and dignity to all, and various other laws made for the benefit of women. The mission experience and the struggles of the poor and suffering people

ignited my thoughts and firmed up my mind to become a lawyer.

From Social Activist to Lawyer...

Even though I knew that legal apostolate is challenging and very demanding one, I chose this ministry because I find it very close to the mission mandate of Jesus as revealed in Luke 4:18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed". And this Spirituality of the Gospel is well reflected in the Constitution of India. The Indian Constitutional spirituality calls for ensuring equality, justice and liberty for all citizens. It calls for promoting fraternity, unity and dignity of the individuals. This conviction that the Constitutional spirituality is nothing but the Gospel Spirituality helped me further to take a discerned decision. However, when the entry of religious persons into legal profession was opposed by the Bar Council of India (a registered Body granting license to practice in the Courts), I was confused and discouraged as to whether God really wanted me to serve Him through this ministry. I prayed for the will of God to rule

over my doubts and clear the clouds and I found an answer in Mark 3:13 "I have chosen you to be with me and I will also send you out to preach." This discernment made me more convinced about my specific call as a religious advocate. Let me also mention here a passage from one of the judgments of the Kerala High Court on priests and religious entering into legal profession; "the priests and nuns are likely to take up the causes of the persons seeking justice on nominal fees and some time even gratuitously as they have been trained to live a particular set of life. They would have taken up the causes of the downtrodden and poor people with a humane touch...entry of such persons into the legal profession will only add lustre to the profession."

I am also reminded of the inaugural address of Justice Cyriac Joseph, former justice of Supreme Court of India, to a group of religious women lawyers wherein he said that 'for a lay person, a lawyer is a profession but for you it is a mission. Therefore have a deep commitment to justice and to the knowledge of the law.' Yes, for me it is a mission. I feel proud to be a daughter of Fr. Theodosius, who left behind us not just a dilapidated factory or a huge debt,

but a charisma of extra-ordinary social consciousness. He left behind us a charisma of compassion for the suffering and a readiness to take risks.

Women's Struggle as Source of Inspiration...

The mission as a religious lawyer is an extraordinary calling. However, becoming a lawyer is an enormous undertaking in terms of commitment and dedication to the cause of the people. In this context, I would like to bring to your attention the issues of women particularly. In India, the status of women is not different from the rest of the world. On the one hand, she is worshipped and on the other, she is tortured, raped and murdered. On the one hand, a liberalized economy has offered her better education, jobs, decision-making powers and opportunities for women. On the other hand, women have been targets of a strong backlash with increased violence in and outside the home, acute wage differentials and discrimination and continuing commodification in society. According to the National Crime Records Bureau, a total of 3, 37, 922 cases of crime against women reported in the country during the year 2014 as compared to 3, 09,546 in the year 2013 thus

showing an increase of 9.2% during the year 2014.

Among the many, one incident that had a great impact on me was that of *Radha Devi*. *She was a victim of domestic violence. She came to me at the reference of a friend of mine. During a few meetings that I had with her, she narrated to me her horrifying experience of physical and mental torture at the hands of her alcoholic husband and the nagging in-laws. She was looking for some relief to escape from the brutal physical torture and violence inflicted on her by her husband and in-laws. Understanding that her life was in danger if no legal action is sought immediately, I told her that she could get some relief under the Protection of Women against Domestic Violence Act, 2005. Initially she was willing to approach the Court under this law. After drafting her case, when I asked her to sign it, she hesitated to do so saying, "After all he is my husband. How can I see him being arrested and put in jail?" All my efforts to convince her that, at the first instance under the Act, no one gets arrested and put in jail, yet, she refused to sign saying again "after all he is my husband."* It was an eye opener for me! Her response in spite of the violence

she suffered in the hands of her husband surprised me.

In many regions of the world, especially in India, women are still expected to endure wife battering by the husband. It is ingrained in the social conditioning of the women that a wife is at the mercy of her husband and in-laws. The strength and weight of tradition is so acute that many women silently suffer physical torture and justify it as part of the tradition of the society. This culture of silence has gotten us rape, incest, abuse, institutional discrimination etc. In India, on an average, every hour two women are raped and one is molested and four are sexually harassed. Caste based sexual violence is still worse. Dalit (regarded as the untouchables or is the parallel name for blacks) women's bodies are used as the battle ground for caste-war and to teach a lesson to the larger community. India sank into unprecedented sorrow on the brutal rape and death of a young woman on 16th December 2012. And the image of two teen girls aged 12 and 15 and their lynched bodies hanging off tree in a remote village in the western Uttar Pradesh shook the conscience of the nation for many days. It raised a deep question mark over Indian society and its practices. What was, after all, the fault of the girls

who were hanged? They were attacked as they were relieving themselves in the fields, which is the norm in most of the villages in the country. Their attackers abducted, gang raped and later on hanged them.

There is no simple explanation of what it means to be a woman in India today. It depends on how educated you are, where you live, what you do, your class, your caste. But there is this one thing that is common to every single woman in India. And that is the experience of sexually being harassed. And this is the story of tens and thousands of Indian girls and women who step out of their houses every single day. And also the story of those tens and thousands of women /girls who do not have to step out of their houses, feel mistreated and discriminated, because abuse also happens within the four walls of the house. Why some men tend to think the way they do in India? It is the society at large, the families, and even the school, that knowingly or unknowingly make boys feel that they are more privileged than girls. A Girl child is less likely to go to school than a boy; she is less likely to be fed than a boy. She is more likely to be trafficked than a boy. When she gets married, the shadow of dowry looms over her. After her

marriage, the transactions of dowry are going to haunt her. For procreation, she is just like a child birthing machine. This discrimination within the family breeds violence across society against women. And when it comes to violence against women, she is blamed for provoking the same. If a boy says something it is being smart and if a girl says same thing it is being over smart. If boy goes out smokes and drinks, it is a cool thing to do. If a girl does the same thing, she is dumped cheap and definitely she is not someone whom you can take to your home as your wife, mother or sister. This is male chauvinism we experience in India.

Remaining and Fruit-Bearing...

The above scenario also indicate that majority of women in India, are still very far from enjoying their rights to dignity, equality and social justice as guaranteed to them by the Indian Constitution. The fundamental and the Constitutional rights to equality, freedom, right against exploitation, religion, cultural and educational rights are equally available to women in India, as well. My studies in law as well as practice also have made me aware that there is no dearth of benevolent laws for women in India. The

Indian law provides for the protection of women from womb to tomb. I have explained many of these laws in my book "No More Silence." Some of these laws and rights include;

- *The law prohibits sex-determination during pregnancy and thus protects girl children from abortion and female feticide.*
- *The Law against domestic violence protects women from violence and abuse in their own families and marital homes.*
- *The Equal Remuneration law provides for equal pay for equal work.*
- *The Dowry Prohibition law is meant to prohibit the giving and taking of dowry during marriage.*
- *Child marriage is prohibited through the Child Marriage Prevention law.*
- *The Prevention of Sexual Harassment law asserts the right of women to be protected from sexual harassment and abuse at work place.*
- *The Criminal laws of the country provides for stringent punishment for rape, sexual harassment, acid attack, stalking and other forms of violence against women.*
- *The Factories Act provides for special protective measures for*

working women such as Crèche for children, prohibition of women's employment during night shifts etc.

A cursory look at the rights of women under these laws, one may wonder why on earth the women in India face such atrocities and violence even today? Yes, we have laws. What is lacking is its implementation. Very few women know that such laws exist in our country. Unless and until the women are made aware of their rights and they stand for it, the situation will remain without any change. Women must realize that gender deprivation is inconsistent with their basic human rights. They must realize that they have Constitutional rights to quality health care, economic security, access to education, employment opportunities, equity and political power. Today as never before, women need to become aware of their rights and begin a relentless battle for their emancipation. As noted by an Hon'ble Judge of the Supreme Court of India, "Women in this world, and particularly in India, face various kinds of gender disabilities and discrimination. It is notwithstanding the fact that under the Constitution of India, women enjoy a unique status of equality with men. In reality, however, they

have yet to go a long way to achieve this Constitutional status."

It is here, that the role of a religious lawyer becomes very crucial in India. Being a religious lawyer, women from diverse backgrounds, place their trust in me to open up their problems with me. Let me share with you another true story that happened at one of my legal trainings for the empowerment of women. The one week seminar was over, and everybody was gone. As I was about to leave, one slender and soft-spoken participant approached me. She said, "can I talk to you a minute?" I said "sure. What would you like to talk about?" She literally took my hand and said, "I loved your programme and it has helped me to increase my self-confidence" I saw her eyes welling up with tears. I asked her "are you worried about something?" What came out of her mouth next shocked me; no one has ever narrated such a horrific tragedy to me so far. Crying inconsolably, she told me that "sister, this is hard for me to say, but for four years in my life, I was kidnapped by my own husband's friends, and was raped for four years by his friends with his knowledge." As I stood there thinking of what to say, she continued "your class has given me a new confidence, you have

helped me to recognize my dignity and so I am grateful to you." By the time she left, she really felt she could begin anew and was on her way home to start it with her second husband. The beautiful thing, I thought, was that this woman was changing her whole life, which really took a lot of courage and guts. I give her all credit in the world. Later when I met her after a few months, she shared with me that she is very happy and has started to work for the rights of women.

As a religious lawyer, it is a privilege for me to take these painful stories before the judicial forums to get justice without any payment from those victims.

Amidst the various fears and insecurities, there are also many women who dare to come out of their oppressive states. They face many challenges and oppositions. Yet they don't keep quiet on the face of injustice and violence. Let me tell you the stories of three Indian women who dared to draw power from their pain and lead change in India today;

Sunita Krishnan: She turned the worst thing in her life into something worthwhile. She was gang raped by 8 men at the age of 15. However she refused to be broken and she gave birth to an institution that assists trafficked women and girls in finding shelter.

Irom Sharmila: She showed us that we need to fight back for what is right. She went on a 16- year hunger strike to protest against Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, which provides immunity to India's soldiers for acts committed while on duty. The soldiers who committed violence against women in conflict areas often get away with it by invoking the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act.

Laxmi Agarwal: She showed us how to live life to the fullest. She survived an acid attack at the age of 15. Her petition before the Supreme Court of India led to the regulation of sale of acid in India and the Court ordered the Indian Parliament to make strict laws to protect women from acid attacks.

The stories of these women inspire us to stand for the rights of women and to speak out against violence. *It reminds me how Chandrakanti Devi from West Champaran District of Bihar stood against the odds to stand up for her dignity. She was one of the participants of a workshop on "empowerment of women to lead change" at the Indian Social Institute, New Delhi in the year 2014.*

The workshop was based on various legal provisions relating to the empowerment of women. At

the time when she came for the workshop, she was a victim of constant sexual harassment by a co-worker at her home town in Bihar. He would ask sexual favors from her or make vulgar comments at her. The workshop emboldened her and she went back after the workshop with a determination to confront her harasser. She knew the law now and so got the courage to tell him that she was not comfortable with the way he attempts to make physical contact with her or passing comments at her. She warned him of dire legal consequences if he continued with his behavior towards her. And it worked! A confident Chandrakanti Devi is now actively involved in empowering other women of her village to stand against their oppression and to fight for their rights.

The birthing of "No More Silence..."

The stories of many women I came in contact with had tremendous impact on my life and thoughts. I was moved by their courage to draw power from pain and to move ahead in life making significant contributions in the society. The thoughts and feelings they had entrusted to me left me with a deep sense of responsibility - a responsibility to write a book

and to speak out against violence. Most of all, I hoped that the book would inspire many particularly women to break their culture of silence in the midst of violence. The rape and murder of Jisha in Kerala disturbed me a lot and intensified my thinking to write the book. And so my book begins with a poem, paying tribute to Jisha and many other women who are victims of sexual violence.

And then one day, I got mail from Sr. Pearl-Anne, a college Principal belonging to the Congregation of Apostolic Carmel, informing that she has written an article about my book in their Congregational magazine and thanking me for being an inspiration to her. The following is an excerpt from her article;

"Little did I realize, that when I chose to attend the Seminar on Educational Rights at Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, this October, 2016, that I would be encountering a woman and a nun who is on fire to fight for the cause of women. She is also a social activist and her book deals not only with the various Constitutional and legislative mechanisms that seek to protect and promote the rights of women, but this is interspersed with her life experiences of her involvement in fighting for the cause of women. I was ashamed

of my own ignorance of the Indian Constitution. Being a citizen of India, how much do I know or even aware, of the laws of our land? We wake up, when a nun is raped or a church destroyed, but why have we gone so immune to the sufferings of 1000's of our Indian women who are subjected to all kinds of inhuman torture every single day. As a rightful citizen of India can I claim ignorance of the laws? The awareness shook me, to my very roots. We were even challenged, Are we really following Jesus Christ? If Jesus were to be incarnate today, where would HE be? Would HE be sitting snug in our well established Institutions, (wherein we are still foolish enough to be basking in our past glory) or would HE be out on the streets, fighting for justice, for the marginalized, the downtrodden and the hapless women?"

I was happy at the inspiration she has received from my class and the book and the determination in her words to make a difference in the society. I believe that her response is the impact of Holy Cross Charism which hurries to anywhere where human need calls us to be. Looking forward, it is my hope that the book will inspire many more.

Other Involvement

Through legal ministry, we seek to build just and humane societies based on the Gospel and Constitutional values. I feel privileged to get involved with various legal issues concerning women, families, minority institutions, human trafficking related issues etc and to represent them either before the Courts or Governments authorities. My own journey as a religious lawyer is filled with success, concrete outcomes, fulfillment as well as challenges. As opined by Mr. Cyriac Thomas, former member of National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions, 'the best witness in a court is a sister and our strength is in our credibility.' Yes, our presence in the Court is a matter of great witness. Majority of the other members of the legal fraternity including the judges look at us as persons of God. Probably, this could be one of the main reasons why I was made a panel member of the legal aid committee of the Patna High Court, in Bihar, even when the selection to the panel was complete. For me, as a woman religious advocate, it is both an opportunity and challenge to awaken myself and others to reclaim the identity and worth as human beings, created in the image and likeness of God. Today, it is also a great privilege



for us Holy Cross sisters that we are able to make some difference in the lives of the ordinary people by our presence in the legal system of the country.

Strength for the way...

Needless to say that, my involvement in the legal ministry has influenced my thoughts and conviction about the cost of discipleship. I am convinced that as a religious advocate, using the Constitution of India, I am able to contribute to the building of God's Kingdom and to proclaim the divinity and dignity of every person. Because I believe that God's Kingdom is the kingdom of human rights, justice, equality, dignity, compassion and peace to all. Today as I understand, conversion and transformation is nothing but a participation in HIS

way of seeing. According to St. Francis of Assisi "when you look at a poor person, you are looking at a mirror of the Lord" and the transformation in his life was so much that he wanted to become like Jesus more than anything else; "it's no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." (Gal 2/20) looking back to these experiences, I am reminded of the passage from Isaiah 58:6/9 "the kind of fasting I want is this; remove the chains of oppression and yoke of injustice, and let the oppressed go free."

I believe that 'our mission is to be with the people, responding to their needs with sensitiveness to the presence of God in cultures and other religious traditions and witnessing to the values of God's kingdom through our presence, solidarity, sharing and word.' (Federation of Asian Bishops'

Conference Vth Plenary Assembly). The words of Pope Francis instil in me a deep conviction, "it is true that going out onto the street implies the risk of accidents happening, as they would to any ordinary man or woman. But if the Church stays wrapped up in itself, it will age. And if I had to choose between a wounded Church that goes out

onto the streets and a sick withdrawn Church, I would definitely choose the first one..."

Trusting in the mercy of the Holy Cross, I intend to move forward. In the words of our beloved founder Fr. Theodosius, "Do not worry about the future, it belongs to God."

Faces of Human Trafficking - Worldwide

Sr. Gabriella Légrádi, Budapest, Province Europa Mitte

Sr. Gabriella is a pharmacist by profession, coordinator of the Province Europa Mitte, President of the Association SOLWODI in Hungary (SOLidarity with WOMen in Distress / Solidarity with women in need).

With no claim to completeness, I would like to speak in general about human trafficking worldwide. Various sisters will later present situations in each continent.

Our human nature was created in the image and likeness of God. That is why it is inviolable and sacred. Pope Benedict XVI said, "Everyone is clothed with the same dignity, so one should reverently treat everyone; there is no reason to treat people as if they were objects."

150 years ago, slavery was abolished. Nevertheless, many more people today live in slavery than ever before in our history.

Human Trafficking means taking possession of another person by exploiting their personal or economic predicament or helplessness in order to utilize them for specific purposes. In this way, unauthorized means, such as false promises, deception, coercion, threat or intimidation for the purpose of exploitation are

used. Exploitation takes on many forms, such as sexual exploitation and forced prostitution, exploitation of labor and forced labor, forced marriage, organ trade, child abduction, sale of children, child labor, child soldiers, bonded labor, exploitation of boat refugees...

These forms of exploitation occur all over the world in different ways, regardless of age and gender.

The **routes of trade** permeate the whole world. No continent is exempted, whether as a country of origin, transfer or destination. There are also many intra-continental and inland routes.

Accurate **numbers** to those affected are difficult to be determined. However, it is estimated that there are more than 20 million people worldwide (the number is growing rapidly!), who are affected by human trafficking. Much happens in hiding and the dark, so the dark figure is correspondingly high.

Human Trafficking

Child abduction

Human cage

Forced prostitution

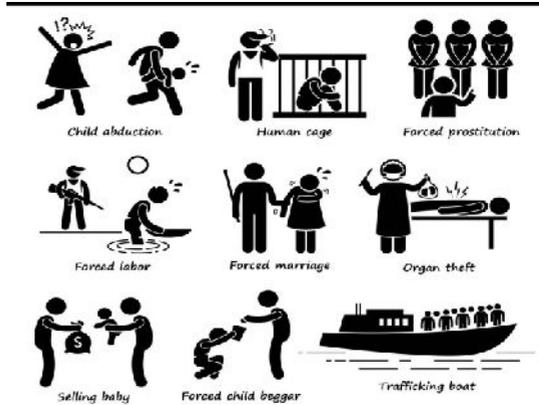
Forced labor

Organ theft

Selling babies

Forced child begging

Trafficking boat



Statistical data shows that about 66% **of those affected** are women, 13% are men, 12% are girls and 9% are boys. So, most of the victims are women and children.

79% of all victims are sexually exploited. 46% know their «intermediaries» / dealers. 22% of those affected are minors, i.e. less than 18 years old.

Human Trafficking is **one of the biggest crimes**, third after drugs and weapons. At the same time it is **one of the most lucrative of businesses!** According to 2015 data, traffickers earn \$ 150 trillion in profits each year. Two-thirds of

this gain (66%) is made in the sex industry and 28.7% in trafficking in people who are victims of forced labour.

When we look at our resources in the Congregation, there are various ways in which we can "stand for human dignity". We will learn more from different sisters. An invisible but effective "weapon" is the prayer net of our Congregation! In our "standing for human dignity," a quote from the apostle Paul may guide us further: "... do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you which you have from God"? (1Cor 6:19)

Faces of Human Trafficking in Western Europe

Sr. Verena Bergmair, Passau, Province Europa Mitte

By profession, Sr. Verena is a nurse, who has been working for the counselling centre and the safe haven SOLWODI Passau for nine years, since February 2018 she has been its Directress.

My personal experience extends primarily to Germany that is to women of different nationalities who arrived in Germany mostly in unbelievable ways.

Germany, like Austria and most Western European countries, is a destination country, but also as a transit country, popular with traffickers and smugglers.

The EU estimates that 800,000 people in Europe fall victim to slavery every year; of which, about 60% are in forced prostitution and about 98% are women and girls.

In Germany, according to a study of 2015, every tenth man regularly goes to the brothel, in Switzerland it is even every fifth man. Prostitution is legal in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. In Germany, since July of this year, we have our own law, which should provide better protection for women.

According to EU statistics, most victims (about 85%) come from Eastern European countries: mainly from Bulgaria, Romania,

Moldova and Ukraine. This is far more lucrative for the smugglers because of the open borders and shorter routes.

About 7-10% come from Africa, the majority from Nigeria (in 2016 alone, more than 9,000 young women were lured to Turin, Italy).

More than half of the victims had known the perpetrators prior to trafficking, and some of them were also related. For the victims, this means that they have a more difficult time to give the names of the perpetrators to the police.

I remember a young woman from Hungary, who was invited by her own cousin into his new car for a drive and landed in Germany in this milieu. After escaping, she was ashamed to say that it was a relative who forced her to work in prostitution.

The procedure of the perpetrators is somewhat similar

In countries without prospects of education and work, offenders have an easy game. The women are recruited with a promise to

train them for work and fair pay, and beautiful housing - and end up in work exploitation, or sexual exploitation.

According to the Federal Criminal Police Office, recruitment via internet advertisements is becoming more and more common: in 2015, every 8th victims of trafficking were recruited via the so-called false modelling agencies, or advertisements for household help. Or the perpetrators play the man in love, who has work and an apartment abroad.

In the case of African victims, adhering to a contract with perpetrators becomes detrimental due to their JUJU beliefs; this ensures that women never betray their pimps or escape routes. These women, if they do escape, are severely traumatized in our counselling centres, cannot sleep, are afraid of going crazy. They had been made to believe that they would become a "zombie" (a dead, soulless, unaware, dead person), or someone from the family would die if they would reveal what had happened to them, or if they would reveal the names of the perpetrators.

It is often asked whether they are individual offenders

When the women report on their entry into Germany, it is usually several people who are involved: a person advertises with promises, another person takes the women out of the country, and if there are several national borders to be crossed, then there usually are also several criminals involved.

There are several networks known to the police that operate globally. There are Nigerian traffickers who work with local madams on the phone, Facebook, twitter or similar forms of communication. There are Lebanese extended families that are engaged in business in many German cities, or Moroccan families that dominate a certain area of the city, and in another part of the city, there are Turkish pimp gangs who communicate through social media, putting pressure on women and families at home when they do not have enough money.

Some women report of very high sums of money being demanded as repayment for travel, home, food, and clothing: € 30'000 - 60'000.

What does the state say?

Forced prostitution is prosecuted in all European countries.

Voluntary and adult prostitution is legal in some European countries.

The distinction between coercion and voluntariness is very difficult for police and courts to ascertain, as the women hardly want to testify.

Personally, it is hard to imagine what the women are saying, as voluntary work.

Cooperation with the police works mostly very well. However, the police in Germany, for example, complain of the liberal legislation. Thus so-called raids could be carried out only after the existence of a criminal offense.

The EU called for various measures to help the victims. A couple of beneficial measures implemented are the state help telephone, and the counselling centres.



There are good organizations that for many years have been active against human trafficking, long before the EU has decided to take these measures.

Other forms of exploitation

Labour exploitation: I would like to talk about a woman who became twice the victim of human trafficking: *A Bulgarian woman came to Germany with a man. She is forced to work in prostitution; experiences a lot of violence, escapes and is taken into our safe home, finds little work because of poor German language skills, finally has her own house. Based on an advertisement of a Bulgarian company, she goes to another city and works for this company; can live there too. However, the pay is so low that after deductions for home and work clothes, barely enough is left for food.*

Organ trade is not current in Western Europe. However, there are reports that refugees in Turkey offer their organs to finance onward journey.

Child trafficking is more likely to be in the form of questionable adoptions or for exploiting them for child pornography.

Neither organ trade, nor child trafficking can I report from my own experience.

Forced marriage and arranged marriage

Another form of human trafficking for me is forced marriage or arranged marriage.

A woman looked after by us briefly put it this way: "Marriage is not a question!"

In the literature, a distinction is made between forced marriage and arranged marriage. In practice, the distinction is not so easy. Neither form gives women a real choice.

But I do not want to go into detail, but we do recognize something in the company of women fleeing from such marriages. Their life experiences make it difficult for these women to step into another life:

Those women who are torn from their usual culture, language, friendships, and come to a country whose language they barely understand, are completely at the mercy of the husband, whom they usually see for the first time at the wedding, and at the mercy of the man's family as well.

I think of a young woman from Afghanistan. Her uncle bought a new birth certificate so that she could enter the country, so she was two years older. Since the woman had studied, the bride price was higher. The man saw

the woman at the engagement for the first time. She was horrified because he was old. When the papers were ready for departure, the wedding was celebrated. After a week of marriage, she was beaten for the first time. She had to finish the obligatory German course after three months at the urging of the man, since she had to look after the household of her mother-in-law, her sister-in-law, as well as the home of her husband and his girlfriend.

The young woman endured two years out of fear because she was threatened to be sent back to Afghanistan if she told anyone. She knew that as a divorced woman she would bring shame on her family in Afghanistan. She was threatened with death by her own family.

And then there are other young women who grow up here in the West, go to school and live to all appearances in a very western way. At a certain age, everything changes: leisure is only spent within the family, going out only in the company of a male family member. Again, the bride price has long been negotiated.

The young women report: We know that it is so; but we think my family does not do that, it's different. Again, the woman has no choice. Mostly it is a cousin, sometimes he comes from the

home country of the parents; sometimes you know each other from an early age.

What is most important to families is the so-called family honour; that is, the head of the family loses prestige in the extended family if the daughter resists what has been agreed. This puts enormous psychological pressure on these

young women, who have been brought up in these ideals of the extended family. Again, the death of a daughter restores the family honour.

Forced marriage and arranged marriage involve many things that are incompatible with basic rights.

About Working in a Safe House

Sr. Verena Bergmair answers to the questions about safe house

What is the concept of a safe house?

We do not have a concept. We try very individually to respond to the women. First, and most important for women: to live in safety; learn to live a free life, and to arrange the day for themselves within the framework of a certain house rules. But it is not an actual concept.

Can psychological help be provided to help women return to life?

Speech problems are the biggest obstacle to psychotherapy. This must be possible in the native language. One must also be very careful in the choice of persons; it always has to be a woman for therapy, not a man. Sometimes the call for psychotherapy comes too quickly. First, the women must calm down. Meals together, cooking together, living together, that's very important.

Do you offer professional support round the clock?

Yes, we offer care around the clock. Being a nurse makes it easier for me, but it's a challenge. There is always someone in the house. Over the nine years we

once had a suicide attempt. The woman was saved; now she is self-employed, and she is doing well. Language problems are a big challenge, also in living together; as a result some misunderstandings arise - here it is important to clarify again and again. Women can learn a certain degree of tolerance from us. Women often cannot read or write, they need a lot of help, for example when operating the devices, when shopping and of course when filling out the many, many forms here in Germany.

What is very important to us in caring for women is that women understand that the past has been terrible and cannot be changed. But one can learn to live with it that means we seek to find existing resources (e.g. how did you manage to so long, what wishes do you have for the future ...?).

What kind of women come to your safe house?

At present, we have more women running away from forced marriages than those from women trafficking. For women who were trafficked, the first interactions are very crucial in care, because the emotional attachment to the

perpetrators (pimps) is still very strong. They are in great need of conversation because they feel guilty of running away and doing something wrong. Therefore we have to be very careful about it even if these feelings of guilt are incomprehensible to us. Many have some sort of washing compulsion, i.e. they take a shower a few times a day, wash their clothes very often ... here, too, it is important to deal with it very carefully. And most people need their lights on at night, otherwise they cannot sleep. The women say that then the nightmares are not so bad.



Old picture

Can you give us an example from your rich experience?

A 17-year-old girl fell in love with a young man. The man always had time for her; sometimes they had a good meal outside, or went to the movies. Then the man's mother became ill and he had no money to pay for the treatment. Finally, he persuaded the young girl to dance in a bar for money, that's all she needed to do. However, she ended up in the brothel and whenever she wanted to leave, he needed more money. After a few months, he sold her to another man. She was beaten by him if she did not bring enough money. She was hospitalized several times with broken nose or lacerations and bruises. In total, she was resold four times until she managed, after seven years, to get out through police help and start a new life at SOLWODI. The pimps were charged and it was only in court that she learned that the mother was never ill and everything was a lie.

This is the life of this young woman in a few sentences which only narrates a fraction of the sufferings, from humiliations, pain and fears. Or from her dependencies on people she had trusted and who ruthlessly exploited her.

Sr. Verena makes us an offer

Sr. Verena Bergmair has set up a free Dropbox, in which various texts, films and pictures in

German and English are available. Those interested contact vb1956@gmx.at. You will then receive the access code.

A Shelter for Body and Soul

Sisters' team of the house for women in need, Allschwil, Motherprovince Switzerland

Sr. Dorothea Jaros was the Manager of the house in September, Sr. Marie Lucie Neuhaus, her Assistant, Sr. Damien Wellig, staff member. They introduced the house on the occasion of the visit of the conference participants.

The house for women in need is an emergency shelter with counselling and accompaniment for women in various difficult life situations. Often women need a shelter for relationship issues, separation or domestic violence. It may be that they temporarily need another accommodation after an apartment fire or water damage. Still others need a place after a stay in hospital or a birth, in order to clarify whether a further, supportive form of housing will be necessary.

It is important for the women that they have a shelter, care and understanding, even for themselves. They need to have a place where they need not be afraid of being put on the street. Above all, some people also need time to think in order to clarify their situation.

The stay in the case of domestic violence, and people with a social welfare permit, is financed by Victim Assistance. This assistance is made available by the disability

insurance (IV), a Swiss compulsory insurance scheme with to secure the livelihood, or rehabilitation measures for those needing it, of the victims; as well as AHV pension, and EL. The disability insurance, along with the old-age and survivor's insurance (AHV), and supplementary benefits (EL), are the three-pillar social security system). Rarely do the women pay for the stay themselves.

There were requests for women affected by women trafficking, but in these cases protection was not given because of the danger from the perpetrators who might know that the women were with us.

There is sometimes a suspicion that women are under massive pressure. It's all about money that they should send to the families left behind but are unable to. They are also ashamed to tell the families that they have no more money.

The residence permit makes a lot of pressure on many women. It is often the reason why women



return to a bad life situation (domestic violence, exploitative situations) because they are afraid of being repatriated.

Some women have no financial support because they have neither victim support (violence abroad or too long ago), nor social assistance (no permit, sans-papier) nor missed registration or deregistration with the authorities (therefore temporarily no one in charge). Through donations we

can co-finance one woman per year.

Women need security, time, a sympathetic ear to their situation, acceptance and encouragement to choose their own future, to take their first steps. They need an atmosphere of welcome and appreciation.

An example:

Ayline had a good job in her home country. She met a Swiss man via Facebook. He is an artist and had a good income. He visited her and

urged her to marry quickly. She hesitated because of the age gap between them. But in the hope of a good future, she gave in. In Switzerland, she found that he was very jealous, and she was not allowed to have any contact with others. His financial situation was not good either. After the birth of their son, he began to beat her. She had to sleep on the floor in the music room, where she did not rest until late because he used the room until after midnight while she waited in the kitchen. He was friendly to her in front of others. She hardly got any money to buy food for herself and the child. There were frequent disputes.

When the child came to the kindergarten, it was so noticeable that the child is from a dysfunctional family, and a family counselling was called in. This was Ayline's first contact person. She advised her to go to the women's shelter. But the man threatened suicide. So she stayed another four months. After another serious incident of domestic violence, she came to the house for women in need. The man then again issued his suicide threat. In addition to the whole difficult situation, Ayline felt guilty. But Ayline has made it. She now has her own house, work and can now communicate in German.

Faces of Human Trafficking in the Czech Republic

Sr. Klára Marie Stráníková, Prague, Czech Republic

Sr. Klára Marie is a pastoral counsellor by profession. As Coordinator of her province, she participates in various organizations against human / women trafficking.

The Czech Republic is a country of origin as well as transit and destination of human trafficking.

The Czech Republic as a transit country

The Czech Republic has become an important component of the migration corridors dominated by international criminal organizations. It is the Balkan and Baltic corridors. The Czech Republic is a key country for the East-to-West routes, which serve to transfer people, mainly from Ukraine, Moldova, Vietnam, China and Mongolia.



Czech Republic as a destination country

In the Czech Republic about 10,000 – 20,000 (according to some data up to 30,000) women are in prostitution. Some of them are foreigners from Slovakia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Russia, Moldova, Romania, Hungary, Vietnam, Nigeria and other countries.

Human Trafficking in the Czech Republic is a very serious problem. The main aim is sexual exploitation. Many foreigners also end up as paid illegal labourers on farms, factories, or as domestic help.

Street prostitution accounts for about 15% of prostitution. The remaining 75% are spread over indoor night clubs, cabarets, massage parlours, escort services and others.

A particularly sophisticated and spreading method of human trafficking takes the form of the so-called "Lover boys". Traffickers emotionally tie up young women. Then they lure them abroad with false promises to force them into prostitution. Many teenagers and young women fall into it.

Legislation

Legally, prostitution in the Czech Republic is "not illegal", but brothels are banned and duping is punishable. Night clubs exist here on a large scale, under "sticky notes" as night bars and pensions. The houses are publicly tolerated. In Parliament, the effort to regulate prostitution appears with some regularity.

For victims of human trafficking the law provides assistance. If a person is identified as a trafficked victim, she can be included in the "Support and Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking Program". She has a 60-day deadline to think about whether she wants to cooperate with the active organs in criminal proceedings or not. After this period, a "non-employee" victim will be offered an option of voluntary return to the country of origin. The "employee" victim is legalized for stay in the territory of the Czech Republic according to the Foreigners Act as required.

In the service of those affected

In our country, various organizations fight against human trafficking. They have set up projects such as Magdala, La Strada, "Rozkošbezrizika" (pleasure without risk). These organizations work more or less together. They receive smaller or larger state subsidies. In these

projects, the victims of human trafficking can receive various forms of assistance, such as direct assistance, protected housing, psychotherapeutic help, legal, social, health and spiritual assistance, re-qualification courses to find a job, assistance in returning to their countries of origin.

We, the Holy Cross Sisters in the Czech Republic are trying in various ways to respond to the situation of human trafficking, firstly through the Sisters' membership in the Congregation's prayer network and then through my apostolate. This includes various activities, such as crisis

relief worker and trainer at Caritas in Blansko, cooperation in the ecumenical street work team Porta-Praha, lectures and workshops on prevention and awareness in schools, parishes and organizations, participation in the project Šance (Chance) and membership in the RENATE network (Network of European Religious).

The project "Šance" is a preventive and humanitarian program for commercial sexually abused children and adolescents, victims of human trafficking, who live in oblivion in the Czech Republic.

Stand for Human Dignity in Street Work

Sr. Klára Marie Stráníková, Prague, Province Czech Republic

Sr. Klára Marie talks about her path and her commitment to street work.

In 2005, three years before the General Chapter, I had a dream that I went to a nightclub to help. I did not pay much attention to this dream, and in time I forgot it.. Then, at the General Chapter 2008 in Ingenbohl, I met Sr. Eugenia Bonetti. With that encounter I knew that my dream was a call!

I talked to the Superiors and tried to get training in Anti Human Trafficking. In 2009, under the direction of Sr. Eugenia, I was able to do a three-month internship in Italy. She put me up in protective housing in various cities. At night or even during the day, I was able to participate in street work activities of local groups.

After returning, I began my testimony by preparing for my presentations, and gave many talks in schools, to youth groups, in the parishes and communities. More and more I felt the strong desire to work for anti-human trafficking especially for women, and this awoke in me a desire to enter into the street work. Since

2012 I have been working in Prague, which is considered a centre for sex tourism. Every Friday from 9:00 p.m., I go, at least with two female companions, to visit the nightclubs. We distribute flyers with information where women can get free legal and social assistance. We also bring along small practical gifts and blessed religious items to the women in prostitution. We talk to them, advise them and pray with them. Normally we are not hindered when entering the nightclubs.

Our Street Work Team is international and ecumenical, founded many years ago by an American woman. We go out into the streets and nightclubs in groups of three, four or five women, depending on who is free. The aim is to give women help and advice, to respect them, and to strengthen their human dignity. If possible, we pray together for and with the women. We do so knowing and trusting that the Lord can find solutions to the painful situations in which women live.

In the encounter with women in prostitution, we learn that most of them hide their nocturnal relationships, even from their own families. The raw realities, such as physical and psychological violence, all too often overshadow their optimistic expectations. Only a tenth of the women interviewed had not experienced any form of violence.

My belief is that women are not voluntarily in prostitution. Personal interviews with them confirm this.

Questions asked to Sr. Klára Maríe

What happens in the night clubs when you distribute the

flyers? Are you alone with the women, or are there pimps too?

It's different in every club. Sometimes pimps are there, but we only go to the women. Some club operators do not want us to come in either.

At the Caritas project in the south of our country, where I also work, the nightclubs offer us a room, such as a kitchen office, a small office, where we do social work and tests to diagnose sexually transmitted diseases.

How often do you visit the nightclubs? What challenges do you face? Are you recognized by the government?



Sr. Klára Maríe with volunteers at the street work

I'm in Prague once a week, every Friday, and with Caritas Blanskoe once a month. We face different challenges. Sometimes we do not get permission to enter. Or there are other religious groups who sing only pious songs. Scarce finances are a problem. The project is at risk due to lack of funds.

Nightclubs are actually not allowed, but the police cannot do much because of the attitude of the government.

What about the danger?

At the Caritas Blansko project, we go in groups of two or three, in the big nightclubs of Prague, three or four. The driver who is with us calls us every ten minutes on the mobile. We tell him that we are still working, there will be two

more women, or that it will be over in five minutes. We have a password. If we say this password or if we do not pick up the driver's call, he knows he has to call the police.

But so far we have had no problems. The people in the clubs do not harm us. Dangerous are the groups of other countries that finance the clubs.

On the way home I always take a pepper spray.

How many women do you gather to pray?

Usually we only pray with a woman, that's personal; but on the street we also pray with groups. It also happens in nightclubs that we hold our hands and pray with some women.

On the way to raising awareness in Croatia

Sr. Viktorija Šimi , Vinkovci, Province Croatia

Sr. Viktorija is a coordinator of the province Croatia, an English teacher by profession

My presentation consists of two parts. In the first part I talk about my work as a coordinator. In the second part I narrate about my work for anti human trafficking.

My work as a coordinator

It seems to me that as a coordinator I haven't done much. Apart from translating the information letters and material for Memorial Day on November 25th and forwarding it to all of our communities, my job looked like this:

To offer and organize a two-hour program for all sisters of the Croatian province. During seven months there were ten different offers so that all the sisters could be involved. The program included a 14-minute film, *Ballerina*, and a 40-minute presentation followed by questions and discussion. After that, I conducted the Adoration in front of the Blessed Sacrament, where we prayed together for the victims, and for the end of human trafficking. The programmes were very well received by the sisters.

The only additional work as coordinator was a letter to all our communities and a collection of material for the 8th of February this year (2017). Some communities used the material during the liturgy of the hours, others offered part of the material to the priests and made the intercessions in the Eucharistic celebration, as I had suggested in the letter. I was really happy with the openness of some of the priests.

My commitment to work for Anti-Human Trafficking in general

I have been involved in this work for 10 years; namely, since October 2007, when I was sent by the Croatian Women's Conference of Religious Women for the first International Meeting of Sisters working for anti-human trafficking. I then introduced the program of this conference in Rome to all the Provincial Superiors, men and women. The response was very positive. A few months later I was asked for an interview by the Catholic Weekly "Glas Koncila".

Three years later, I was appointed to participate in the first General Assembly of RENATE, which took place in Poland in 2011 (RENA TE - is a European network of religious women against women trafficking). Then I started to attend these annual European meetings regularly as a representative of Croatia. The meeting usually lasts one week. My feelings during these meetings were the same: everyone does something against human trafficking, except me. I attend each of these European meetings, come back to Croatia, write a report on the meeting and send it to the Croatian Conference of Religious and to the secretary of our Province. Sometimes I wrote for local newspapers or talked about it on a local radio.

I was also asked to write an article in the monthly edition of "Vjesnik akova ko-osje ke nadbiskupije" of the diocese. The director of this paper said to me, "Sister, this article can be as long as you want; because our priests know practically nothing about human trafficking." Later, a priest commented: "Well done, sister! You have written a great article." I replied, "Surely you have not read the whole seven-page article, that's too long," he said, "Yes, I did. Only now, after reading it, have I understood the full

implications of the problem." I was glad to hear that.

Then came February 2015, the year in which Pope Francis introduced the first day of international prayer and reflection against human trafficking. A week before, Fr. Bože Rados, a spiritual director of young priests and those up to the 10th anniversary of their priesthood, asked me to give a talk. My answer was, "No, I cannot. That day I have to be at school and work. Ask someone else. I do not have time to prepare for it." When I came home from work, I thought, "Well, I'm the only sister from Croatia who's been attending these European meetings for a couple of years. Perhaps I should have said yes. "So I called the headmaster and told him about the request from Fr. Bože and asked him what I should do. The Headmaster knew that I had been involved with it for some years and so he replied, "Well sister, we can easily replace you here at the school for this day, but nobody can replace you there. Apart from that, it makes more sense for society that you give this talk than come to school. "I phoned the spiritual director of the seminary and asked him, "Did you find someone else for the lecture?" He said, "No, because I knew that you would accept it." And I did it; there were about 40

young priests and some deans there.

Later, a priest asked me, "Sister, why do you talk about it only to young priests? We, who are older, do not know more about it either." I thought, "Well, now that I have a prepared talk, I can speak about it in his parish." First, I asked my Provincial Superior and our Provincial Team, and their answer was, "No, you cannot do that. If you do that, the bishop might ask, "Why are you doing this? Who assigned you to do it?" I said: "Well, if I need permission, then I can get it from the Archbishop today!" Then, when the priest asked me to come to his parish, to give a talk on human trafficking and lead the adoration after that, I sent a short email to the archbishop and asked if I could go to this parish, and not only to this parish, but also to others, if a priest would show interest. I got the answer that same day: "Sister, not only are you allowed to go, but I am also very grateful for your commitment." I passed on the archbishop's answer to my Provincial Superior. And so I started to visit the parishes. Sometimes people asked me if I could give them a prayer so they could pray for this intention. But I did not have anything. Then it happened once that after the talk and the adoration in a parish a man gave me a thousand kunas

(Croatian monetary unit). Then I came up with the idea: Maybe I can ask my Provincial Superior if the diocese could publish a small picture of St. Bakhita with a short biography and a prayer. We can suggest to the diocese that we could cover half of the costs. The Provincial Team agreed, and I turned to the Archbishop. His answer was: "No, you will pay nothing. We will pay. Could you just help prepare the necessary material?" I prepared it, and they printed a thousand copies and brought everything to our convent so that I could distribute it when I visited the parishes.

After having visited about ten parishes in my area, I offered to some other priests that I could visit their parishes with the same intention. It happened that three priests, one after the other, replied the same thing: "Yes, maybe you can come, but I have to think it over first." I thought: These priests know me, they know what I do, and yet they answer in this way. So I prayed to God and asked for enlightenment for the next step. And the idea came to me. I asked my Provincial Superior if I could email the Archbishop and ask him to write a letter on human trafficking to all the priests of the diocese, inviting them to organize this talk and prayer in their parish to stop human trafficking. I



received the green light from the Provincial Superior and sent the e-mail. The next morning the Archbishop's reply was: "Yes, sister, do that." A few days later all the priests received the Archbishop's letter. It was a small step but at the same time a big step forward, as it paved the way for me to visit every parish, to make people aware, to inform people and pray together.

When you start something new, you do not know if it's really a good way to do it. That's how I felt. But after visiting some

parishes, I saw it was really good to inform and pray. Mostly people were shocked after the talk and at the same time helpless. But after the Eucharist, as a rule, there is an adoration where we can deepen the theme in prayer. I visited more than 30 parishes in my diocese and five parishes in two other dioceses. I also went to sisters in two cloistered Carmelite convents, and I am really very glad for their prayer. So far, I have given 55 good talks, and I hope to continue visiting the parishes as soon as I get home.

Besides, I wrote several articles on human trafficking for Županjskenovine, gave an interview for the Franciscan monthly Veritas. For two years I wrote also for the Istrian annual edition Istarska Danica and for Kvarnerskivez, the monthly of the island of Krk.

Finally, I can say that I am happy that my colleagues show understanding in the workplace when I go to international or

European meetings. I am grateful to God for the support I receive from the Bishop (including the financial support), from the President of the Croatian Conference of Religious, as well as from the General Superior and the Provincial Superior.

I am especially grateful to God because I can see that He has guided my life and my work, and I believe that He will continue to do so.

Raising Awareness and Counselling in Hungary

Sr. Gabriella Légrádi, Budapest / Hungary, Province Europa Mitte

Sr. Gabriella is a pharmacist by profession. Since autumn 2017 she is president of the association SOLWODI, Hungary, and works there voluntarily

Three years ago, sisters from organisation RENATE (Religious in Europe Networking against Human Trafficking and Exploitation) came to Hungary to give talks. Five sisters from different religious communities in Hungary were touched by the issue on women trafficking and wondered what the church could do for these women. These sisters belong to international communities. I am one of them.

Through a Salvatorian sister we contacted SOLWODI in Vienna (**SOL**idarity with **WO**men in **DI**stress / Solidarity with women in need), went to see the facilities, were thrilled and wanted to establish a safe home immediately.

We collected information and got involved in RENATE network. Besides, we have been taught by psychologists how to deal with people who are affected by



Meeting in the office with the police officer
In the middle: Sr. Gabriella

violence. We also found out what would make sense here in Hungary, and where it would be best for us get started. It turned out that at the moment it would be good to offer a space for discussion, to build a consciousness-raising project from the grass roots up to the bishops and to be alert where women religious are in demand. At the end of June 2017 I was allowed to give up my profession as a pharmacist so that I could become free for this task in the fight against women/human trafficking.

Our association SOLWODI HUNGARY was founded on the 8th February, 2017 and officially registered on 14th June, 2017. The founders are nine nuns from seven different religious orders, and a lay woman. At present three sisters are working there, one of them 15 hours a week, paid by the association. A Salvatorian sister and I work on a voluntary basis. In the Salvatorian sisters' place, we were able to set up a room as an office for our association SOLWODI. Wednesday is our working day at the office.



Already we were able to initiate and achieve a number of things. For example, we developed a two-hour program to sensitize religious communities to the issue of human trafficking. So far we have been able to hold this sensitization event with the Franciscan, Cistercian and Sacre Coeur sisters. The sisters have a different level of knowledge in relation to the topic. The experiences so far are positive everywhere. This encourages us to continue in this direction.

In the spring, we organized a self-help meeting for families of victims of trafficking or domestic violence in Budapest. In autumn, such a programme will take place again.

We are planning to inform and sensitize young adults. We also hope that over time we will be able to win some of them as volunteers for the movement.

We would also like to address male religious communities and parishes and through their

collaboration to carry out our sensitization program. The Lazarists have indicated interest.

On a "spiritual search" we recognized our strengths. Almost all the sisters who are members of the association have an education and work in their apostolate in accompaniment. Some are involved in spiritual guidance, in giving support to them, or in mental health. We are considering providing spiritual help and help possibilities for those who are working with victims.

Next we are also in a process of creating a website. For this purpose we maintain contacts in Germany and abroad.

In April 2018, two sisters of our association participated in a SOLWODI conference in Berlin. It was a good opportunity to expand and strengthen our networking with SOLWODI Germany.

We are alert to the call of God to find the right answers.

Human Trafficking in USA

Sr. Celine Goessl, DePere, Province USA

Sr. Celine is the coordinator of USA province and is fully committed to the anti-human/women trafficking

Our definition of Human Trafficking is the buying and selling of people as though they were store-bought material. Men, women and children are lured, tricked, coerced, threatened and drugged into this crime where they are treated like animals – in fact traffickers call them their “stable” and they are forced to do what the trafficker tells them and what the buyer wants , with the exchange of money going completely to the trafficker.

Standing for human dignity

I have done extensive research since we were told by Sister Eugenia Bonetti at our general chapter in 2008, that this crime is something we must help to eradicate. Since then, I have felt the call of God to make people aware of this horrendous crime, second only to drugs and the misuse of guns. I was appointed by my province to be the USA liaison to this committee in Ingenbohl and since then, I have given 70 talks to people in all walks of life (churches of all denominations, schools, hospitals



and a variety of civic organizations) about the crime of modern-day slavery that is found in every state in the United States.

Backgrounds

A shocking fact is that this crime is symptomatic of a much larger problem: ultimately the problem of brokenness in family life and in many facets of our society. Most

victims of human trafficking are suffering because of damaged relationships, divided families where divorce is prevalent and deferred love that is lacking in so many relationships. American society is broken by addictions, unhealthy and abusive relationships, the loss of an unresolved past, mistakes and regrets. This form of human slavery is looked upon as a market economy where there is a need for supply because of the great demand.

Our mission

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) in the USA has come together to share ideas, resources, and people who will work tirelessly against all forms of Sex and Labor Trafficking. We have three groups of humans to deal with in our work against Human Trafficking: The johns/ the buyers of sex and labor; the pimps/the actual traffickers who sell fellow-humans; and the victims of all ages, ethnic groups, religions, or economic status.

Besides the national group of Sisters throughout our country, we

have state and national government officials who have a great concern for enacting laws that will punish people for this crime as well as keeping victims safe. The laws that have been set down either by the federal government or state legislators are often due to the Catholic Sisters who are working tirelessly to help Pope Francis to realize his concern to eradicate this heinous crime by the year 2022. Sister Eugenia's wise words to us in 2008 came at a time when we were being called by God to carry out the charism of our community and the words of Father Theodosius, who said, "The need of the time is the will of God".

Most of my work and research has taken place in Wisconsin, the state of our provincial headquarters, but I belong to a variety of national groups throughout the USA. The majority of our victims come from within our own country, although there are some who are brought here from other countries. We are known as the "melting pot" of the world with many nationalities living together. No one group is more prominent than another. The face

of johns/buyers of this crime, are wealthy men who have money; pimps/traffickers, who are greedy for money and are unconscionable; and victims/survivors, who can come from great poverty, ordinary middle class or wealthy families.

Sad realities

Human Trafficking is exploding on the internet and through the use of cell phones. Pornography has become a multi-billion dollar

business where adults become addicted to the crime and which generates revenue to fan the use of this media in order to continue to create a business that is out-of-control in our day. Statistics show that men as well as women watch pornography while they are at work. Child pornography generates about \$3 billion dollars annually and the revenue from pornography is more than all professional basketball, football and baseball franchises combined.



“Rose Home”

Let me tell you about our safe house for survivors from ages 18-25. It is the only home in the State of Wisconsin and one of the very few in the USA that is a residence for women where they can live and get rehabilitation services free of charge to them.

Our home called the “Rose Home” – showing God’s beautiful creation of a rose that is a symbol of the beauty of the women who come to us in order to get well in body and in spirit. We have an intense program for them from 9 to 15 months, where they get education, psychiatric care, love from caring people, job skills in order to make a living after they are well, and quiet time to get in relationship with God once again. We have room for 8 women at a time.

The home was given to us by St. Vincent de Paul Society and many of our friends renovated and cleaned the home to make it a welcome safe place with beautiful furnishings that will help them develop a healthy self-concept.



Instead of a blue heart, Sr. Celine has now blue hair

They are given all new clothing, toiletries, bed linens and bathroom towels – all new –to indicate to them how important and beautiful each one has been created by God.

Many of these women tell us that they wish their grandmother were still alive because she was the only one with whom they could share their life. So, I have a new identity as the “grandmother” of this gathered family of survivors.

Our future plan is to build a new house with enough bedrooms for another 18 people. Then our present house will become a "transition" house for the women to move to and live until they are ready to return to normal life, having a place of their own and a job to become self sufficient. I could talk for another hour about this Rose Home, but you may

have questions that you wish to ask about it. It took us three years to develop this house with a thorough program of wellness and a staff to be available 24/7.

I would like to close my presentation with the words of a pimp convicted of children sex trafficking. "With young girls, you promise them heaven, and they will follow you to hell."

Human trafficking on the example of Brazil

Sr. Rosângela Maria Santana da Silva, Salvador / BA, Vicariate Brazil

Sr. Rosangela is a lawyer, coordinator of Vicariate Brazil

Human trafficking is rooted in greed and mercantilism (prevailing economic policy). Perpetrators benefit from tragedies and social emergencies, such as poverty and unemployment.

In 1822, Brazil became independent of Portugal. But only 66 years later, did Brazil abolish slavery - as the last country to do so on the American continent. There is a lot of corruption in the country. There is a habit of not solving the problems as they should. Attempt to solve social and legal issues is hampered by a deceptively structured human trafficking organization and hard-to-prove crime, as victims make few complaints.

Who are the victims?

Mainly women and children are affected, but men as well. There are no reliable figures about the number of victims in Brazil; but the

number is very high and the number of unreported cases is enormous! In Brazil, 241 trafficking routes are known for sexual exploitation. There are 131 international routes, 78 routes between the states and 32 routes between the municipalities. Recent investigations have revealed new routes. The Government of Brazil currently pursues one case each in Romania and Serbia. This human trafficking is for the exploitation of labour. Human trafficking also brings foreigners from Bolivia and Paraguay to Brazil.

Where do the victims get to?

Most of the victims remain in Brazil itself. According to a national report, Surinam, which borders on Brazil in the north and is a transit country to the Netherlands, followed by Switzerland, Spain and Holland, has the highest number of

Brazilian victims,. These are women between the aged 20 to 29 years with little education, partly single mothers. 59% are "colored", 40% are "white".

What is the purpose of human trafficking?

Human trafficking takes place mainly in the areas of illegal adoption, organ removal, sexual exploitation and slave labour. Some so-called employment agencies ultimately serve human trafficking in various forms. With regard to trafficking in children and adolescents, it should be added that they are for example recruited as footballers and then often sexually exploited. They are often prepared in special, secret centers in the country for this.

Who are the traffickers?

Pimps can be men or women. They are characterized by a good education and great persuasiveness. They take advantage of the victims' misery and offer attractive job opportunities. A large proportion

of pimps engage the help of women who are linked to trafficking, and entrust them the task of interacting and attracting other women.

What is the legal position?

Brazilian Penal Code applies to all those involved in human trafficking. According to Article 149 A of the Brazilian legislation, the following are punishable for human trafficking: "enticing, advertising, accommodating, buying, transporting a person employing serious threats, violence, separation, fraud or exploitation with the purpose of organ removal, removal of body parts, submission to slave labour, submission to any service, illegal adoption and sexual exploitation.

Conviction under this criminal offence provision would attract a fine and imprisoned for 4 to 8 years.

How successful are the laws?

Criminal prosecutions are difficult because most victims are very scared and therefore refrain from

reporting. Two examples illustrate the difficult reality and partial successes:

- *Following a report from a father and an investigation by the public prosecutor's office, the parliamentary investigation into a case of organ harvesting took place in the city of Poços de Caldas in the state of Minas Gerais. Only four doctors were convicted, although seven were involved. A lawsuit has been closed due to the statute of limitations of the indictment. Also, the plaintiffs did not have enough evidence.*
- *Simone from Goiás state was trafficked to Spain, where she was sexually exploited. At the beginning she told her parents that everything was fine. Later, she confessed the truth and asked to report her situation to the police and embassy. Simone managed to escape. She stayed on the street, fell ill and died mysteriously in the hospital. The cause of death was pneumonia. The father filed a complaint section 180, which concerns sexual exploitation and abuse of women. As a result a manhunt*

was launched, which led to the rescue of four other young people from Bahia.

What efforts are made in the state and the church against human trafficking?

During major events, the government provides public billboards, leaflets and other material. However, the production of this material is inadequate compared to the demand. Only 3000 fliers were distributed during the Football World Cup.



There are two phone numbers advertised on billboards with the slogan: "To make your dream come true, do not fall into the net. Inform yourself about human trafficking. Call 180 (concerns sexual exploitation) or 100 (concerns human rights)."

For the past four years, the World Day against Victims of Human Trafficking is celebrated in Brazil every day around 30th July. These days, the government is supporting, albeit tentatively, major rallies by various public and private organizations on this topic.

Ten years ago, the Conference of Religious of Brazil founded the network "Un Grito per la Vida - A Cry for Life". It is committed to combating human trafficking and the sexual exploitation of children

and adolescents. About 150 religious are actively involved in this inter-congregational network connection in different places. Our vicariate is also connected to this network. The organization is affiliated to the international program of religious "Talitha Kum".

The National Bishops' Conference of Brazil dedicated Lent to this theme in 2014. The motto was: "For freedom Christ has set us free" Gal. 5:1. All dioceses received documents.

There are also non-governmental organizations working against human trafficking.

The situation of human trafficking in Brazil seems hopeless. But we hope against all hope.

Human Trafficking in Uganda

Sr. Gracy Thadathil, Osia, Vicariate Uganda

Sr. Gracy is a social worker by profession, coordinator of vicariate Uganda

The facts

Men, women and children are trafficked within the country, as well as trafficked to Canada, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia for forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation.

According to govt. records, the following are the forms of human

trafficking: Through **child marriage** children are being forced into early marriage by the exploiters.

In Northern Uganda many children were taken by the rebels and forced into **armed conflicts**. **Street begging** is common in the city of Uganda Kampala where children are being sent to beg or dance for money.



There is also the problem of **organ trade** where human organs are being used for witchcraft and rituals.

Some parents of the victims have been promised money and houses for their families.

Opening of the new avenues for movement where there are porous borders, irregular migrants find it easy to move in and out of the country. There is always free entry and exit to and from Uganda as it is a point of origin, transit and destination.

Vulnerable groups or victims of human trafficking in Uganda:

Karamajong women and children under the age of 18 are sold in cattle markets by intermediaries and are forced into domestic servitude, sexual exploitation and street begging. In central Uganda most of the trafficked women and men are Bagandas. They are taken to United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Canada and forced into labor and commercial sex. Majority of them are young girls and boys between 15 and 30 years old. They include neglected children in orphanages, school drop outs promised sponsorship abroad or even within the country, children from homes with domestic violence, homeless children promised better life, delinquent children who have

escaped from rehabilitation, students promised employment, to participate in youth clubs and games and young women taken for marriage or taken tourism.

Perpetrators of human trafficking: This is just an organized crime by a group of people who want to exploit others for their army. Methods used in human trafficking: False promises, exploitation of one's helplessness, threats and violence.

Uganda's response

Since February 2012, 104 victims of human trafficking and prostitution are reported to the government. Parliament proposed that labor export firms be suspended. The minister of state stated that external labor firms involved in human trafficking will not be given license.

Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act 2009: Articles 1-22 stipulate measures against the crime of human trafficking. However, the Government has not yet fully complied with standard established to eliminate trafficking. Very few criminals are convicted, others escape mysteriously and the crime continues.

National and local level officials particularly district labor committees, supported the efforts

of the IPEC by identifying 2796 children for withdrawal from the worst forms of child labor.

Church's response

In 2004 the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) in collaboration with the office of International Organization of Migration (IOM) in Rome and the US embassy to the Holy See held a conference in Rome. This seminar recommended women religious worldwide to undertake training workshops on human trafficking in order to equip themselves with the knowledge on anti-trafficking strategies and skills.

April 2011, sisters from 80 congregations from Eastern and Central Africa, Zambia and Southern Sudan gathered in Nairobi for the recommended training. From 24-31st Jan 2016 Thalitha Kum Rome conducted a meeting to evaluate and empower members from all over the world dealing with TIP (Trafficking in Person) which was attended by representative from Uganda.

UISG in collaboration with IOM gave a course in trafficking for consecrated women of Eastern Africa in which Uganda was represented by 5 members who later formed "Thalitha Kum Uganda" and its specific name is (URNA TIP) Ugandan Religious Networking Against Trafficking in Person.

These five members of (URN A TIP) are from five regions, each member representing 2-3 dioceses. There was fund to support their activity till 2016. They used to come together for meeting now and then. As there are no more funds they don't come together anymore and each one works independently.

Uganda has 19 dioceses in four ecclesial provinces. There are just five religious members in the church committee and religious involvement is very inadequate. There is great need for expanding and networking to study, raise the awareness and to take adequate step to fight this social evil.

Faces of Human Trafficking in India

Sr. Dhanam Mary, Delhi, India North East Province

Sr. Dhanam is a social worker by profession, representative of India South Province, since last September working in the Short Stay Home in Delhi.

Human Trafficking is an organised crime. There is network between the clientele, the spotter, the recruiter, the buyer, the seller, the transporter, the harbourer, the financier, the brothel keeper and the pimp.

Reasons and facts

The main reasons why people are trafficked in India are for the following: Firstly for Sex slavery, Sex Slavery is slavery for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Secondly, for Prostitution, in prostitution, money is involved in exchange for sexual activity. Next, for forced or bonded labour that is prevalent on a large scale in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. In states such as Punjab, people are primarily trafficked for Forced marriage. India is fast becoming a hot-spot destination for sex-tourism, especially the idyllic beaches of Goa, Puri, Karwar, and Kerala. Mainly prevalent in Rajasthan, where children as young as 2, are trafficked and used as child camel jockeys. These children are sexually and physically abused, most are physically and mentally stunted as

they are deliberately starved to prevent weight gain. Child jockeys face substantial risks as they are seriously injured and several are stampeded to death by the camels. The other reasons for human trafficking are for Entertainment, Drug Peddling, Begging, Organ trade, Purchase and sale of babies for illegal cross country adoption and Bonded Child Labour in Construction/carpet/brick industries.

The main causes of which we would all be aware are poverty, illiteracy and unemployment, poor governance, grievances, gender-based violence, displacement, devotion as a religious sanction, demand for victims, lack of law enforcement and indifference in society.

Tactics

India's Trafficking patterns indicate that 90% of trafficking in persons is domestic (i.e. interstate and intrastate trafficking), with only 10% taking place across international borders. In addition to being a source for trafficking,

India is also a destination and transit country.

The trafficked women in India are mostly from Nepal and the Traffickers prefer metro cities like Mumbai, Delhi and other metros. Local recruiters sell them to brokers for 10 USD. Brokers sell them to brothel owners for 30 USD.

Traffickers employ recruitment tactics such as: False promises of a good job, A better life, Love, Marriage, an opportunity to provide for their family and educational opportunities.

Profile of victims



The profile of the victims is as follows: Women - 54%, men - 2%, girls - 17%, boys - 3%, children - 24%. According to the Indian Ministry for Women and Child Labour, about 2.8 million people are victims of sexual exploitation. According to the 2011 census, India has the highest number of child labourers. It is estimated that 12.66 million children work in dangerous industries that fall under the term of trafficking in human beings.

Five phases

Origin: Recruitment can occur as an act of physical violence by kidnapping the victim, or by threat, or with consent through deception. When a good job possibilities are promised coercion such as debt bondage.

Transit: Transit may also be forced as in the case of kidnapping or travel under threat. Agents and brokers may restrict the women's/girl's freedom of movement, sexual harassment and rape may also occur during or after transportation. Sometimes, the trafficked persons are sold several times before they reach their final destination.

Destination: Trafficked persons are forced or deceived with the aim of exploiting them in abusive, sometimes slavery-like conditions. Many boys and girls find

themselves working against their will in exploitative conditions in a variety of jobs, such as domestic work, farm work or in the sex industry.

Rescue and rehabilitation: In this stage, rescue and recovery operations are conducted by police raids with the support of individual or volunteer organizations which may be planned or unplanned. Many agencies network in carrying out such raids in brothels, factories, and homes to rescue children.

Reintegration: Many trafficked women and children actually want to return home if they have the chance.

Legal instrument

In India, we have various legal instruments at our disposal to combat human trafficking.

Since 1950, Article 23.1 of the Constitution prohibits human trafficking and forced labour. There are also various laws, such as the law to protect children from sexual offences, the Child Labour Prohibition Act, Child Marriage Restraints Act, the prohibition of unjust and indecent representation of women Act in advertising, publications, writings, paintings and figures.

Issues faced in combating women trafficking

In the fight against human trafficking in India, various problems must be taken into account. On the one hand the laws are potent, but their enforcement is weak. The police do not arrest the traffickers. Victims are often treated as offenders. The prosecution and judiciary are not properly sensitized. Important mechanisms and infrastructure are lacking, especially with regard to victims. 90% of the rescued victims have no other option but to get re-trafficked.

On the other hand the society's mindset is aggravating. A large proportion is not prepared to accept victims of human trafficking as equal human beings worth re-integrating with society. Response to stakeholders has been unwelcoming generally with few exceptions.

An **important offer for those affected and their relatives** is a toll free number is being institutionalised by India: the Child Helpline is 1098, and the women Helpline 1091.

Our Mission against Women Trafficking in South India Sr. Dhanam Mary, Delhi, India North East Province

Sr. Dhanam is a social worker by profession, coordinator of India South Province, since last September working in Short Stay Home in Delhi.

"I have come to give you life and Life in its fullness." (John 10:10) - Yes God has given each of us on this earth a life. And God wishes that every human being on earth should have life in fullness and it has to be led with dignity and respect.

Vision Inspired by the love of Christ who offered us all life in fullness the Women Religious of South Province ,have committed ourselves , to protect, to promote and restore human rights of the marginalized people in our mission, And one such group of

people whom we wish to address are the human trafficking victims. We plan to address this challenge in collaboration and solidarity with equally motivated organisations, Institutions and individuals. With this vision, Holy Cross South Province had worked out a strategy to address this challenge. Three sisters are involved in this mission namely Sr. Sudeepa, Sr. Valentine and Sr. Dhanam.

Three-Ways-Strategy

The concept can be described as "Three-Ways-Strategy":



Anti-human trafficking rally in Kalyan
1st row, 2nd from right: Sr. Dhanam Mary

prevention, protection and prosecution.

The first step towards Prevention is awareness. As a part of our preventive measures we give awareness to various sections of the general public like, religious, women groups, youth groups, staff and students and tribal villages.

The rescued victims cannot be left alone in the society. She/he needs to be helped to reintegrate into the fabric of our society. And therefore as part of our protection strategy, we have rescue / Shelter homes for the rescued, where they are given medical help and psychiatric treatment. These victims are also imparted some sort of skill training such as needle work, tailoring etc. Value education classes are also conducted for these victims.

The most important part of our strategy is Prosecution. The guilty should not go unpunished. Justice should be done. Therefore we work in collaboration with IJM (International Justice Mission), a non-profit Christian, internationally active non-governmental organization against human rights violations and AMRAT, the Asian Network of Women Religious against human trafficking.

Highlights

We have conducted awareness programmes for the women groups, school children, Nursing Aid students, Self Help Groups, and the Holy Cross Sisters. As a culmination of these awareness programmes, a mass rally was organized for the people of Kalyan. Around 1215 students, women, youth and many more participated in this rally. Students and youth prepared banners on the topic human trafficking. The event was a great success.

Our NIOS (National Institute of Open Schooling) students put up a street play on the topic of human trafficking which enlightened the public about this social evil.

Around 3500 students and 800 women benefited from the awareness programme. Creating awareness in schools, and women groups are being continued and they are becoming conscious about their rights and duties. Also to spread this message to others and they become agents.

Till date we have succeeded in rescuing about 6 girls and one boy and they have been successfully rehabilitated. One such rescue mission happened on Christmas day 2015. A victim of human

trafficking from Chhattisgarh was rescued when she was just about to be shifted to another hideout. Her family was contacted and the girl was reunited with them after 10 years. This was indeed a beautiful Christmas gift for us and her family.

Being able to live

We visit regularly the shelter homes and spend our time in counseling, entertain programmes in different vocations, conduct

games for laughter, help them to continue their education, finding out their homes to reunite them, providing cloths, sanitary pads, toilet items, medical checkups and provide medicine, teaching them needle work and tailoring and art work.

We make the best efforts to reintegrate these unfortunate victims into our society so that they can lead a normal life and of course, as for wished – “A LIFE IN FULLNESS!”

Holy Cross Asha Niwas, Anti-Human Trafficking Centre in Manjhatoli, India

Sr. Lata Lakra and Sr. Sunila Xalxo, India Central Province

Sr. Lata Lakra was the first coordinator of the centre, now the anti-human trafficking coordinator for India, Mid India Province. Sr. Sunila Xalxo is currently the Coordinator of India, Central Province.

Theodosia reported on the inauguration of the centre in 3/2016. The Centre Asha Niwas (shelter of Hope) began its work on 8th April, 2013, on the Jai Kisan campus in a small rented house. On 2nd August, 2016, an expanded and newly built centre was inaugurated. Three sisters from India Central Province are currently working at the centre: Sr. Sunila Xalxo, as Coordinator, and Srs. Sushila Lakra and Savita Kujur.

What are your main activities?

We run programs and events for awareness building, and prevention, of trafficking in schools, villages and parishes. So far we have organised 96 awareness building and prevention events and programmes. A total number of 25,284 students, men and women took part in these events.



Asha Niwas, refuge of hope in Manjhatoli



Awareness programme with Sr. Sunila in the village

The collection of data is important for our work. We carry out surveys in the villages. According to our research, 1,974 girls and young women from our area have "migrated" to the big cities in recent years.

We are involved in search for, and identification of the victims. At the moment, 49 cases are registered with the Child Welfare Committee, the police and our centre; 14 cases are of missing persons.

We offer protection, accommodation, counselling, crisis intervention and life support

to the victims. In our centre, we offer vocational courses as well, e.g. cooking, sewing and tailoring, cultivating vegetables and gardening.

We also offer coaching classes for school drop-outs and private coaching for examinations. We encourage self-employment.

We also visit and advise families of victims and accompany them. Other activities include representation of interests and advocacy support.

Networking with non-governmental organisations such as AMRAT, the Child Welfare

Committee, the police and the local village leaders is of great importance to us.

We work with the sisters of our province and the other Indian provinces so that we can share resources and information.

Could you tell us something about the results of your research?

We came to know that most trafficked girls have been forced to leave their villages by neighbours or relatives who had already worked in big cities. In most cases there was no parental consent to their migration. The children were handed over 3 to 4 times to unknown persons before they reached the big cities.

Most of them had to live in their "workplace", which meant that they lived for a long periods in the most confined spaces.

In some houses they were employed as domestic workers. They were neither informed about the type of work nor about the working hours.

Some parents deny that they received money from agents for the migration of their children. Most of them say that they were



Sr. Lata

abused by their agents/employers ("uncles & aunts"), and even by their children.

The victims did not get enough food. They had to work overtime and were abused in many ways, physically and mentally.

Most of the victims received no wages for their work.

How do you protect the victims of human trafficking when they have been rescued?

With help from the inhabitants of the village we identify the agent responsible for trafficking, and charge him, to prevent further instances of trafficking. Trafficked children when brought back are given shelter in our centre.

How do the village authorities react to your work? Is there any danger for you?

We feel supported. The villagers cooperate. Most people know that we are doing good for girls and young women. But there are threats and dangers from the agents because they fear that their work is under threat.

What is your experience, Sr. Sunila?

I've only been in this work now for two years. I am happy about the effort. It can save many girls from human trafficking, or be rescued from human trafficking.

Would you tell us one of the many stories of your young women?

Sera (name changed): "When I was four years old, an agent took me from the village school and



Sr. Sunila

brought me to Delhi. I was sent by agents to various workplaces. At the end of the month, the trader took all the money. The sisters visited my house and registered my case with the Child Welfare Commission and the police. They were able to locate me in Delhi. The police helped me to get my eight-year salary of Rs 30,000 (equivalent to CHF 440). Now I am learning tailoring and sewing in the centre run by the sisters. "

Common House –«Short Stay House» against Human Trafficking in Delhi

Sr. Tresa Paul and Sr. Dhanam Mary, Delhi, India North East

Sr. Tresa and Sr. Dhanam work in "Common House" of four Indian Provinces in Delhi and are involved in various ways against human/women trafficking.

We see our common house in Delhi as an answer to the needs of our time.

“Dream” – Origin of an idea

Late Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, the former President of India says, “Dream, dream, dream; dream transform into thoughts and thoughts result in action”. This is true in the case our common house also. It was a dream of some individual sisters; it was a dream of leadership of the four Indian provinces and the coordinators. Today it has become a reality. It is a collaborative venture of all four provinces of India.

From Dream to Reality

In 2013, the coordinators were privileged to have a meeting with the Core Committee members of the anti-human trafficking Sr. Anna Affolter and Sr. Elsit Ampattu at Bangalore. We could think louder about the issue and the sharing and discussion helped

us to think louder for a specific response to the modern slavery of human trafficking. The seed for a common house began to germinate during this meeting.

Followed by the meeting in Bangalore, Sr. Valsa Thoottiyil, the Provincial Superior, set up a seven member committee to think louder and proposed to set up a shelter home for the victims of human trafficking. Thereafter the National Council meeting of all four Provinces held in 2015, appointed two more sisters in each Province as coordinators for anti-human trafficking with Sr. Tresa Paul as the National Coordinator.

During the first national level consultation of the coordinators, all the coordinators felt the need to work together against trafficking. It was proposed to have a common house/shelter home in Delhi. The said proposal along with other action plans was sent to the Provincial Superiors

for their approval. It was taken into consideration. On the basis of a concept discussed by the coordinators, the idea was further developed and concretised. It was also discussed that Delhi being the central place, network will be easier and wider network will be possible. The meeting also discussed to convert our house in Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi as the Common House. Possible activities that could be part of the Common House in the initial stage were also discussed.

Common House, all four Provincial Superiors met in Delhi to discuss and plan further on the Common House. They also had interaction with a few NGOs for possible and active network. They saw the Common House and decided to have some necessary renovation of the common house before the members could stay. At this juncture, we appreciate the genuine concern and active involvement of all the four Provincial Superiors and their team in the establishment of the Common House.

Followed by the approval of the



Four Provincial Superiors at the inauguration
From left to right: Sr. Georgina Nadukudyil, Sr. Rosily Kolencherry, Sr. Flory D'Souza and Sr. Valsa Thottiyil



The house was officially inaugurated this year on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, with a solemn Eucharist celebration presided over by His Grace Anil J. T. Couto the Archbishop of Delhi amidst a gathering of priests and religious from the neighborhood. The presence of our Provincial Superiors Sr. Valsa Thottiyil, Sr. Flory D'souza, Sr. Georgina and Sr. Rosily Kolancherry and a few other sisters from the Provinces marked the significance of the occasion.

Wide range of activities of "Short Stay Home"

Five sisters – Sr. Elisa Toppo (India Central), Sr. Dhanam Mary (India South), Sr. Cyrilla Toppo (India Mid India), Sr. Tresa Paul (India North East) and Sr. Ajita Kujur (India North East) – form a community. We work on the implementation of the objectives. The house offers Victims of human trafficking immediate and low-threshold help and support. In addition we also provide rooms for short-term protective stays at the order. We run a program for Psychological rehabilitation, in which counsellors and psychiatrists for the psychological, spiritual and emotional healing and development of victims of human trafficking as well as their

social integration. Affected are encouraged to develop their skills. We participate in the rescue of victims and participate in their Return and integration into their family and society.

The house is networked with others like-minded groups and the government. Accordingly, we have

a Team of experts who network offer legal and other advice, legal assistance and training workshops. For this purpose we prepare as national Resource Centre to systematically compile basic data on human trafficking, know-how in the fight against and pass it on. The house also acts as a point of contact for the Indian



provinces for advice, practical information and assistance in prevention and liberation operations.

Cooperation is also important with various non-governmental organizations that are involved in measures to against human trafficking. We are currently particularly active in the Kat-Katha network. This network is for commercial sex workers in of a certain area in Delhi. There about 4500 women work in 77 brothels. Although it is risky to visit these brothels, Kat-Katha has managed to win the trust of the pimps and to win over some agents. We can use the meet women, listen to their suffering and desperate stories, sharing their Pain and accompany them with advice and prayer.

It is a special tragedy that the Children of these women in the brothels must grow up and accordingly are exposed. For example, the six-year-old Renu, the daughter of a sex worker is currently living in the shelter home. Her mother lives in that street, that's in the sisters' care area. And it is very important to her that her daughter can attend school. To make this possible is now the task of the sisters.

The assurance of our Lord: "I am with you always until the end of the time" is power and inspiration for us. We are in the fortunate position of always being able to new from Pope Francis and his example eagerly awaited and challenged to become.

We, the sisters of the Indian Provinces, ask for your blessing on our way in this special mission.

Information from the General Leadership

Appointment

On 12th April, 2018, the General Leadership appointed a new Provincial Leadership for the province Baden-Württemberg for the next three years:

Provincial Superior: Sr. Maria Paola Zinniel
Assistant: Sr. Birgit-Maria Krietemeyer
Councillors: Sr. Regina Maria Uhl
Sr. Susanne Bader
Sr. Judith Brendan
Official Start: 28th October, 2018

Our sincere thanks to outgoing Sr. Benedicta-Maria Kramer, the Provincial Superior, Sr. Josefa Maria Harter, the Assistant, and Sr. Therese Maria Wetzel, the Councillor for their sincere commitment to the welfare of the sisters and the province. May God's blessing accompany them on their future path and mission!

We sincerely thank the newly appointed sisters for their willingness to place themselves in this demanding and challenging ministry. We wish them courage, strength and trust for their mission. God bless them in their planning and doing.

Provincial Congress 2018

From September 18 to 28, 2018, the Provincial Congress will take place in Mother House in Ingenbohl under the topic "Living our Vision 2020". At the Provincial Congress 2016, a common vision was formulated on the basis of the priorities of the General Chapter 2014 and the diverse realities of our Provinces and Vicariates. During this year's congress, we want to share the vision and explore how it can shape our everyday life and help us move forward. Prof. P. Dr. Thomas Dienberg OFM Cap will help us with impulses.

The congress will be chaired by Sr. Ingrid Geissler, Missionary Sister of the Precious Blood CPS, from Neuenbeken, Germany. In addition to the main topic, various other topics are discussed. Also a general assembly of the association "Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross, Ingenbohl" will take place, as the statutes of the association require. The planning and preparation as well as the implementation, we recommend the light-filled accompaniment and action of the Holy Spirit.

General Visitation

The General Visitation will be held in India South Province from 24th October to 30th November, 2018. Sr. Marija Brizar, Sr. Elsit Ampattu, Sr. Anna Affolter, Sr. Sheeja Kolacherril and Sr. Dorothee Halbach will conduct the Visitation and visit the sisters

where they as individuals and as community try to concretely implement the charism of our Congregation. May God's good Spirit accompany them and all parties concerned during the weeks of Visitation and support them in their meetings, discussions and consultations.

Quarterly
of the Sisters of Mercy
of the Holy Cross
Institute Ingenbohl
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