

ISSUES AND ACTIONS

February, 2008



UN Millennium Goals

1. Eradicate extreme poverty & hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

HUMAN TRAFFICKING THE MODERN DAY SLAVERY

Many of us think of slavery as something that was part of our country's history, mostly in the Southern states, but today is nonexistent. Yet in 2008, HUMAN TRAFFICKING does exist and is defined as "a form of modern day slavery." We may be unaware of the thousands of men, women, and children, worldwide, who are kidnapped, sold, tricked, forced or otherwise coerced into situations from which they cannot escape. Hopefully, a better understanding of this modern day tragedy will, over the ensuing months, broaden and enlighten us. The following is an attempt to provide some information that will whet your appetite until more follows.

WE HEAR SO LITTLE ABOUT HUMAN TRAFFICKING, WHY?

There is no way to know the exact number of people who are brought into modern day bondage, but 800,000 is the annual estimate of victims that cross international borders. Of these, the U.S. State Department believes that somewhere between 14,500 and 17,500 victims are moved into the United States. But no one knows for sure. The human trafficking problem remains obscure because the victims are hidden or unidentified. They are faceless, nameless, and voiceless and several factors insure they remain unseen, unknown and unheard:

- **ISOLATION**- the trafficked have no access to others outside or to family.
- **FEAR**- the people who live the trafficked life of servitude experience violence, cruelty, threats of deportation, and the elimination of family members, to mention a few.
- **SHAME**- the threat to expose their circumstances to family members who are unaware of truth
- **DEBT**- the trafficked person is told that once the cost of transport, food, and housing are repaid all financial responsibility to their 'sponsor' is met and they will be released. But that debt is never satisfied

- **CULTURAL DIFFERENCES-** many victims have no idea of human rights and no understanding of their LAWFUL rights.

Recently the account of a young trafficked Hispanic woman was presented on TV. Like so many she was lured away with false promises; a Green Card and salaried employment substantial enough to send money home. The reality: Forced prostitution, beatings, humiliations, degradation and no money. One night she ran for her life. A passing motorist stopped and took her to the authorities who started the reintegration process. Her participation in exposing her plight brought deep anguish to her and her family but it had to be done she said "so that others would not have to endure what she did."

REINTEGRATION

This young woman faced and is still dealing with the problem of reintegration - to her home community, her family and herself. Her own emotional scars have yet to heal. In many countries reintegration resources are nonexistent. The victims are not in work-training or educational programs. Financial support is lacking, shelters are scarce and self-support centers are just conceptual. The trafficked person struggles daily facing fear, shame, guilt, and self-blame. They live through their flashbacks and nightmares devoid of support systems. The process is a long and arduous journey and in many instances, reintegration is not possible. *"Trafficking in persons - inherently rejects the dignity of the human person and exploits conditions of global poverty."* -*Strangers no Longer: Together on the Journey Hope*

ACTION STEPS:

- Go to the internet and search the Web for human trafficking. US Conference of Catholic Bishops is one source. Catholic Charities Trafficking is another.

ONGOING COMMUNITY ACTION STEPS

Shalom and Lazarus communities addressed Millennium Goal 6 in the fall. They committed to making personal sacrifices to buy mosquito nets for people in Africa. Meanwhile, Sister Elizabeth shared weekly e-mails from her former Maryknoll pastor, now in Cambodia, relating that street fights erupted when the distribution of mosquito nets was deficient. When Shalom Community heard of this they immediately extended their commitment to assist Father Bob and Lazarus Community did likewise. The two communities have collected over \$700 so far for their Mosquito Nets Project. They state that in some way they have addressed three of the Millennium Goals: #6, #4, and #8, and "know that our contributions will make a big difference in many people's lives."

- If you wish to join the Shalom and Lazarus communities and provide mosquito nets for those in need, send your contributions to Sister Caritas.
- Why not e-mail or talk with Sister Elizabeth about Father Bob's experience with his Cambodian people and then pass that on to others?

Submitted by the Peace and Justice Committee