

Human trafficking

Human trafficking is the fastest-growing criminal industry in the world, and also one of the main concerns in South Africa right now, especially with the upcoming event of the *Soccer World Cup*. What is all the commotion about? **Human trafficking** is the practice of people being tricked, lured, coerced or otherwise removed from their home or country, and then compelled to work with no or low payment. (Their passports are often taken from them). Victims of human trafficking are used in a variety of situations, including prostitution, bonded labour or debt bondage and other forms of involuntary servitude. The trade and sale of babies and children for adoption or other purposes is also considered to be trafficking in children.

Human trafficking and the *Soccer World Cup*

The most common form of human trafficking in South Africa will be prostitution and the activities of 'sex workers' in the following months. Girls as young as 10-11 and older, are usually used as sex workers, and can have anything from 10-20 clients every 24 hours. Many of them are made drug addicts by force so that their owners can control them. Often young girls and even boys are sold by their family for a small amount of money. It is estimated that during the *Soccer World Cup* in 2006 in Germany, 40,000 sex workers were imported from other nations. We are facing the same giant this year. Already young girls of 2-4 years are sold for very little for the coming soccer event. Many young ladies are being contracted by syndicates for the World Cup to serve as sex workers.

This type of human trafficking destroys millions of lives every year. One reporter said: *During a three-week investigation into human-trafficking syndicates operating near two stadiums, I found a lucrative trade in child sex. The children, sold for as little as \$45, can earn more than \$600 per night for their captors. "I'm really looking forward to doing more business during the World Cup," said a trafficker. We were speaking at his base overlooking Port Elizabeth's new Nelson Mandela Bay Stadium. Already, he had done brisk business among the stadium's construction workers.* Despite more than a dozen international conventions banning slavery in the past 150 years, there are more slaves today than at any point in human history. Slaves are those forced to perform services for no pay beyond subsistence and for the profit of others who hold them captive through fraud and violence. While South Africa invests billions to prepare its infrastructure for the half-million visitors expected to attend, tens of thousands of children have become ensnared in sexual slavery, and those who profit from their abuse are also preparing for the tournament.

Will prayer change anything?

One feels sick after reading these things, but we can pray. God can and wants to intervene!

- ✎ There are some encouraging testimonies. In Athens, Georgia, USA, God moved as this community prayed 24/7. An Asian massage parlour, which was believed to be a front for human trafficking closed down unexpectedly and a Mexican man was indicted and pled guilty to trafficking young girls from Mexico to Atlanta for prostitution.
- ✎ In Kansas City, Missouri, USA, for five years, a bright red brick building right next door to the Kansas City Boiler Room housed a porn shop called 'Naughty But Nice'. While it has been out of business for some time, the building itself was razed to the ground the week after they prayed. To them this destruction felt symbolic of God's heart.
- ✎ Another story comes from a prayer network in the USA. The week after these communities prayed, national news reported that 52 children were rescued in a nationwide Sex Trafficking raid.
- ✎ Whilst the 24/7 Reading community prayed in Reading, UK, a man from their area was arrested on suspicion of human trafficking, for sexual exploitation and controlling prostitution for gain. The headlines read: Arrests follow sex trafficking probe. God answered their prayers.
- ✎ Last year in one of the townships in South Africa, the police reported an upsurge in prostitution, domestic violence and other types of sex-related violence against young girls and women (in the specific township). A

bishop in the community guided some 2,000 kids to pray for a week, 2 hours a day for 5 days. By the beginning of the next week, the police reported a 70% drop in cases being reported.

How do I pray?

- ✚ Pray for more people to join in prayer and if possible, to reach out to those involved in human trafficking, both the sex workers and syndicate leaders.
- ✚ Pray for detailed legislation that will give the police a legal right to deal with this type of violence against women and also against young boys.
- ✚ Pray for human trafficking to be exposed so that it is brought to the attention of the public and public awareness of what is happening is increased. Pray that people will raise a standard of prayer about this issue in our country.
- ✚ Pray for the church to reach out to victims of human trafficking with sensitivity and great compassion.
- ✚ Pray for community-based projects to address the problem of human trafficking in areas where there is a lot of activity – especially in the vicinity of the ten *Soccer World Cup* stadiums.
- ✚ Resource materials for the local churches are available and major projects of churches, in cooperation with taskforce members facilitating, are currently taking place in Eastern Europe, India, Canada, and Australia. Pray for a wider awareness in churches about this matter and for the distribution of these materials.
- ✚ Human trafficking across international borders requires cooperation and collaboration between countries if it is to be tackled effectively. Pray for such structures to be raised to combat crime.
- ✚ Let us pray according to **Lam.2:18-19**: *Their heart cried out to the Lord, "O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night; give yourself no relief; give your eyes no rest. Arise, cry out in the night at the beginning of the watches; pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord. Lift your hands toward Him for the life of your young children, who faint from hunger at the head of every street."*

How can you become involved or help?

Start praying, with others if possible. Make a point of finding out what is happening in our country and do the necessary research before submitting your children to organisations, e.g. modelling agencies, au pair agencies etc. Become involved in projects at your church and 'donate' some of your time and expertise to those in need. Visit these websites for more information: www.justiceacts.org / www.anexcdw.org.za / www.straatwerk.org.za / www.avoiceforthevoiceless.co.za

(Conclusions and prayer pointers in this article displays the opinion of the writer and not necessarily that of the resource companies. Resource websites: (<http://www.reuters.com/article/pressRelease/idUS265569+29-Oct-2009+PRN20091029> and http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-child-prostitution27-2009oct27_0,2692854.story and <http://www.readingchronicle.co.uk/news/roundup/articles/2009/10/29/42564-arrests-follow-sex-trafficking-probe/>).