

CONCEPT NOTE

Trafficking, Exploitation, Services, COVID19: What Now?

ROMA: 26 October 2020

Human trafficking is always more widespread and involves persons, states, Organizations **associations**, communities and has extended, especially in the last decade, its field of action to include trafficking to for sexual exploitation, work exploitation, also moving from trafficking of removal of organs to trafficking organs itself. Also includes trafficking of tissues, cells and ova.

The methods of contrast, legislative, administrative, judicial, involving local and international police forces, prevention and assistance have also increased at the same time.

In the past 20 years that separate us from the approval of the Protocol of Palermo, wanted by the United Nations in order to combat Human trafficking, 93 % of the countries have in place some form of legislation against trafficking which include measures to face up to and fight such practices.

However, Human trafficking not only does not stop but is on the increase. Maybe these laws are no longer sufficient, lacking or even applied rarely. It is also true that criminal organizations invest heavily, especially in technology spying capacity of relocating. This is not always the case as far as Governments are concerned.

Out of 40 million victims in the world 10 million are women below the age of 18. In 2019 there were only 2154 judicial proceedings against the exploiters. The conviction rate is very low and the sentences, in any cases, are never respected. On the other hand, the victims have carried on bearing the stigma of a crime of which they have been victims. It is really evident that the diversity of the various judicial systems which create difficulties in the judiciary investigations and, consequently, the pursuit of the crimes. Unfortunately At times language differences create a barrier to correspond to the standards .There still a shortage of specialized Police in the investigation and pursuit of traffickers There still exists a deep-rooted culture of impunity which tolerates sexual exploitation of women of young age and, to a lesser extent, of men and boys even when they are minors (72% of the victims , on an international level, are women and of see 87 % are very young , the male victims in

the majority of cases are young boys). Unfortunately, there is a limited awareness to the phenomenon of human trafficking.

Often there is a lot of confusion between trafficking and clandestine immigration. Many victims are considered clandestine and are confined to specific centers for repatriation.

There's a lack of authentic political determination. Politicians are usually reluctant to face such a complex issue which has international implications, financial issues, social, ethical and human issues.

AND THEN THERE IS COVID-19

This pandemic has witnessed both the change in the trafficking as well as the lowering of defenses against the phenomenon, also because of the lockdown in many countries. The pandemic has enabled the criminals to transform human trafficking into a business via Internet (criminal organizations, because of their huge financial possibilities, profit from technological innovations to recruit, exploit, and control the victims, thus expanding their businesses).

60 % of the students in the world have been or are still away from the school class rooms. This has facilitated the involvement of many of them in illegal activities.

There has been an incentive for trafficking in pornography, child pornography and paid virtual sex. The exchange of money has been very high and always made through encrypted methods.

The covid-19 Emergency as caused an increase in calls to the various help lines. Very often calls were related to food problems because the women who were abandoned risk of suffering from hunger, To these material requests for help, there calls for psychological help (at times it turned out to be psychiatric), health related and help to combat the violence that continued to be perpetrated ..

In time like this, the pandemic has shown that one tends to be more vulnerable and therefore we need to be on the ALERT.

IN ITALY During the MOMENTS of MAJOR COVID-19 CRISIS

Many victims, mainly women, often minors, found themselves left alone. Some moved into the field of pornography and sex via Internet or were forced to prostitute

themselves in apartments. Unfortunately, as always with hardly any security. Other women remained with serious economical, material, assistance and human problems.

Men, exploited at work, have represented even more that segment of the “hidden “population that received little or no information on the prevention measures. Despite this, they were forced to work especially in agriculture, and to live in extremely precarious conditions without water or detergents.

The Hospitality systems for the victims Italy, as in many other countries, because of the initiatives the Institutions but above all the associations, represent an advanced stage in the fight against trafficking. Through the Associations it has been possible to develop a network of professionals with skills that enables them, not only to meet the needs of the victims, but to contribute to an effective means of contrast. Also, the hospitality helps to get know the victims, their stories, the incidents of violence and exploitation. Such information valuable to identify channels the criminals utilize for their businesses.

Many systems (social, investigative, judicial) have helped to research this phenomenon and has produced studies and experiments of high quality which have enabled to raise the level of the standards of contract and, also, to meet the Rights of the individuals. In particular, the very definition of the victim is always improving, enabling to identify the persons exploited, enslaved, violated. A subject with certain rights whose dignity could be recognized through compensation.

These protective systems of the victims during the months Of lockdown have been negatively impacted by the virus. It has led to scale down the hospitality, redefine those already active, reconsider the expenses due to the uncertainty of whether funding by certain Institutions would be renewed, consider the loss of contact with the victims already present on our territory but still not in the hospitality status.

Today, although the spread of the pandemic continues to cause concern, activities begin to start again and we realize what has happened. Some hospitality communities had to close down, not only because of lack of funds but for lack of personnel, volunteers and professionals. They had to deal with precarious economic situation but also in certain circumstances with the consequences of the virus. In several areas, for example, many people belonging to religious orders died and their congregations are regaining their internal structures in managing their activities and also the work force on which they have to depend.

The Association Slaves No More has received several requests not only during the lockdown but also in this period. These requests have come from Religious communities and associations that offer hospitality for victims of trafficking not only for economic help but also assistance for voluntary return of the girls who are often prey of depression with symptoms of psychiatric nature.

Requests arrive from abroad, especially from Nigeria with which the Association Slaves No More has historical ties in collaborating with the Nigerian Religious orders who run Shelter centers in Lagos, Benin City, Delta State and Ijebu State. Help is requested from Haiti and some Eastern European countries.

Only at this stage one is trying to estimate the collateral damage caused by Covid-19 and the evaluation of the work to be done. To decide on which Hospitality to relaunch, with what type of methods, the professionals required and the instruments needed.

The Seminar that Slaves No More promotes indicates the direction to be taken: after taking note of what has happened, identifies new ways of protecting the victims, preventing the crime, and pursuing the criminals. It is a good policy to work with the Institutions, Politicians, Associations, Hospitality Groups and the Police force.

The national anti-trafficking plan has to find a means to start again from the ruins left by the Virus. It needs to involve, although with great difficulty, those who resuming or have never stopped working: the local institution that continued to monitor the phenomenon, the initiatives taken by many minor organizations spread out on the Italian territory that were blocked by the virus, taking into consideration the work of various volunteers. The national anti-trafficking plan must encourage, above all, the culture, culture of Rights, culture of nondiscrimination, culture of gender respect, culture of hospitality, culture of non-violence, culture of the language of peace. It needs to remind the Politicians not to turn a blind eye even though they are involved in other issues.

THE SEMINAR SHOULD BE A NEW BEGINNING TOGETHER

The Situation in Italy

According to the data published by SAVE THE CHILDREN on the occasion of the International day to fight Human Trafficking, in Italy 2033 persons were offered hospitality in 2019. The most

Widespread form of exploitation is sexual (84.5 %) which is mainly made up of women and girls (86%). Despite the fact that identification is very difficult in case of minors, one in every 12 cases is less than 18 years of age, 5% is aged less than 14.

The victims originate mainly from Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Tunisia, Eastern European countries and Balkan States.

The route used by those who come from Africa remains the one through Libya where they are subject to all forms of violence and exploitation, then by boats they cross the Mediterranean and arrive mainly in Sicily. They then escape from the Police controls and are distributed by the local criminals to various areas of Italy and Europe.

As far as the trafficking from Eastern Europe is concerned, the recruitment of the victims takes place in Romania through agents of the traffickers who identify at an earlier stage the girls who are about to leave the orphanage once they have come of age. From there they are enticed with false promises and are exploited and violated in the streets or in apartments until they reach Italy.

Even in Italy the explosion of the pandemic has had a serious impact on the conditions of lives of the victims of trafficking and exploitation. The victims were exposed to major pressure and violence on the part of those who control them, they were often forced to accept more dangerous requests from their clients at lower rates. Clients however continued to add fuel to the phenomenon, both on the streets and also in their homes and other places. In many cases the encounters occurred with absolutely no measures of personal protection in respect to the virus. Several girls were forced to start new activities of indoor prostitution, sharing apartments previously used by 2 girls and were forced to receive at the same time 4 or 5 clients. They were also forced to offer services in video-chat or even take part in the production pornographic material.

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