



# MODERN DAY SLAVERY

By Sister Bibiana Bunuan, MM

*“Sara is an 18 year old woman from Lusaka, Zambia. Her uncle David, lives in Cape Town, South Africa, but occasionally comes home. On one of his visits, Uncle David tells Sara that there are good restaurant jobs in Cape Town for young women. He says that if she come to Cape Town with him, he will help her find a good job so that she can earn money to send home to her family. Sara agrees to South Africa, but when they arrive in Cape Town, he takes away her ID documents, including her passport. Uncle David tells Sara that she must pay for all of their living expenses by working as a prostitute. Sara is very afraid, but when she refuses, he threatens to turn her over to the police as an illegal immigrant. Eventually, after being threatened and beaten, Sara agrees to work as a prostitute for her uncle.”*

*- IOM-International Organization for Migration*

**2**00 years ago the transatlantic slave trade was abolished but today in the third millennium, the world is caught up in another form of slavery – Trafficking in Persons (TIP). Political and historical events have brought about this phenomenon. In an age of globalization people started to look to other countries to better their lives and borders were crossed which led to an increase in trans-border migration. Poverty is often a factor that encourages migration of people to what they perceive to be richer countries.

The increased migration in search for employment caused panic to richer countries which led to the institution of barriers such as visas and official work permits that are required to ensure that people entering a country are legally resident. This triggered an increase trafficking and the lack of effective legislation against trafficking makes it easy for traffickers to obtain fast documents for victims.

Trafficking in persons occurs when persons are recruited, transported, transferred, harboured within their country or to another country from their place of origin. This is done by means of threat or use of force, coercion, deception or they are abducted and exploited either for sexual purposes or for labour. The recruiter could be someone familiar like a friend, a relative, neighbour, a travel agency or even a stranger. The people are promised good jobs, the opportunity to study, or even marriage. The traffickers guarantee that once you reach the promised destination, you are free to go.

This is mostly an empty promise and the person is held against their will and forced to work to pay off the ‘debt’ that the trafficker has incurred. More young women and girls are trafficked than boys and men, although anyone, whether a woman or a man can be trafficked. Women too are involved in this business as traffickers.

According to the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, “It is suspected that the largest percentage of trafficking victims are children engaged in prostitution....There is evidence that a small number of Namibian children are trafficked within the country for domestic servitude, as well as forced agricultural labour, cattle herding and, possibly, vending. There have been a few reported cases of Zambian and Angolan children trafficked into Namibia for domestic servitude, agricultural labour, and livestock herding.”

Trafficking in persons is a growing concern globally. There is a need to be aware of this phenomenon. It is a fifty seven billion dollar industry according to *Contact* a publication of the World Council of Churches, May 2007. Namibia is a destination or transit for trafficking. In 2004 of Act no. 29 The Prevention of Organized Crime (POCA) was enacted that criminalizes Trafficking in Persons. Offenders maybe imprisoned for up to 50 years and fined nearly one million Namibian dollars. No one has yet been prosecuted or convicted under POCA.

*For more information on human trafficking please go to their website at [www.iom.int](http://www.iom.int).*