options are considered when processing applications to remain.

Bonded Labour in the Netherlands (BLinN), a joint initiative of Humanitas and Oxfam Novib, supports and empowers victims of trafficking, regardless of their status, in a variety of ways:

- capacity building: facilitating ‘buddy contacts’, a peer group for psychosocial counselling, temporary financial support and information dissemination
- individual support: finding appropriate alternatives for women through education and training
- advocacy at policy level for a human rights-based approach
- building alliances with other NGOs and establishing international networks to ensure successful return and a better future for the victims in their country of origin.

It is important that:

- repatriation should preferably be voluntary and only after an assessment of needs and risks has been done – to date, the Dutch government has not done this.
- trafficked women should not be regarded simply as ‘illegal migrants’: failure to acknowledge them as trafficked and exploited is a continued violation of their human rights.
- if victims return, NGOs should make contact with them prior to return and they should receive long-term assistance in the country of origin: currently, if help is provided, it is only for a few months.

In cooperation with NGOs such as the La Strada network and international organisations such as the International Organization for Migration, BLinN assists many women from Eastern Europe and South Africa and external trafficking from Mozambique, Angola and the Great Lakes with covering the needs of the highly sophisticated regional sex industry.1

While the existing body of knowledge serves to raise public consciousness it is still not robust enough to support comprehensive programmes to address its multiple dimensions. Limited understanding about the relationship between migration and trafficking has not yet brought about any consensus on the underlying forces and their impact on the wellbeing of children and women. Without adequate explanation, policies tend to shift stance and direction. It is vital that the struggle against human trafficking adopts a different approach from that of trafficked goods – such as drugs and small arms.

Best practices to fight human trafficking require a holistic approach sensitive to issues of poverty, vulnerability, livelihoods, gender, class and ethnicity. UNESCO hopes to encourage a more results-oriented approach and promote dialogue between policymakers, grassroots organisations and scholars. Trafficked persons, returnees and their families must be involved in initiatives to protect their human rights. Reports on research to understand the socio-cultural, economic and legal factors leading to human trafficking in Lesotho, Mozambique and South Africa will be published in 2007.

Saori Terada (s.terada@unesco.org) is the UNESCO focal point on human trafficking and coordinates the Fight Human Trafficking in Africa project (www.unesco.org/shs/humantrafficking).

Paul de Guchteneire (p.deguchteneire@unesco.org) is Chief of the UNESCO International Migration Section (www.unesco.org/shs/migration) which aims to promote respect for migrants’ rights and to contribute to the peaceful integration of migrants in society.


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Fighting human trafficking in southern Africa

by Saori Terada and Paul de Guchteneire

In southern Africa, trafficking of persons is a sensitive topic, frequently associated with irregular migration, prostitution or child labour. It is often approached in an ideological way without tackling its roots.

Little is known about the root causes and magnitude of the trafficking phenomenon in southern Africa. Available information suggests that both internal and cross-border forms of trafficking are prevalent. Children are predominantly trafficked within their country of origin. The International Organization for Migration has documented internal trafficking of children in South Africa and external trafficking from Mozambique, Angola and the Great Lakes region to South Africa, primarily to serve the needs of the highly sophisticated regional sex industry.1

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