

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

While the existing body of knowledge serves to raise public consciousness it is still not robust enough to support comprehensive programmes to address its mul-

ti-ple 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.

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See *Poverty, Gender and Human Trafficking: Rethinking Best Practices in Migration Management* by Than-Dam Truong, UNESCO, 2006: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001432/143227e.pdf>

1. www.iom.org.za/Reports/TraffickingReport3rdEd.pdf