

# SLAVERY AND THE FAMILY: PAST AND PRESENT

## EDITORIAL

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me  
Because he has anointed me  
To bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the  
captives  
And recovery of sight to the blind  
To let the oppressed go free.”

This was the text Jesus proclaimed, quoting from Isaiah (Luke 4: 18-19) when he preached, early in his ministry, in his familiar synagogue in Nazareth. It was his study of the Bible and Christ’s teaching which led William Wilberforce to campaign against the slave trade in the 19th century, when most of his fellows – and society in general – regarded such slavery as both necessary and acceptable. Christians today should be careful about condemning their blindness, for, as this

newsletter shows only too clearly, we too are blind to the many forms of oppression which constitute modern slavery. The 200th anniversary of Wilberforce’s achievement in securing legislation to abolish the slave trade in UK should be a spur for our recognition of the continuing exploitation and oppression of women, men and children whom Christ died to set free. And, as with William Wilberforce, action must follow recognition.

## SLAVERY: PAST AND PRESENT

2007 marks 200 years since Britain abolished the Slave Trade, an important step on the way to ending one of the most brutal chapters in human history. But the achievements of 1807 did not mark the end of slavery as a practice or system.

The Transatlantic Slave Trade itself stands apart from both past and present forms of slavery in terms of its scale and brutality, the legal framework that supported it and the long-term repercussions it would have on three continents.

Approximately 24 million people were violently abducted, taken from Africa and

enslaved. Only some 10 million managed to survive long enough to reach the Americas and the Caribbean. They were removed permanently from their homelands and had little chance of freedom. They were wholly owned and, in law, had no rights and were equal to property.

Today, the legacy of the Slave Trade continues to have consequences and remains at the root of some acts of racism, discrimination and intolerance against the black community as well as the underdevelopment of countries and communities from which people were abducted.

The bicentenary provides an important opportunity not only to draw attention to the realities of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and its legacies, but also to focus attention on the fact that slavery is still a reality for millions of people worldwide.

Today at least 12 million men, women and children are in slavery. They are forced to work through the threat or use of violence. They are denied freedom, dehumanised and treated as property or bought and sold.

Slavery today takes many different forms. In Ghana, for example, girls as young as five years old are used as domestic slaves; young

boys are used as bonded labour in India's brick kilns; in Brazil men are used as forced labour to clear the Amazon; and men and women are trafficked to the UK and forced to work in agriculture.

Even though slavery is illegal under international law, no region is free from this abuse and slavery is found in most countries.

One of the most extensive forms of slavery today is bonded labour, which alone affects millions of people across South Asia.

People become bonded when their labour is demanded as repayment for a loan, often taken to pay for such necessities as food and medicine. Entire families can be enslaved in this way, with the debt passed from generation to generation because of high interest charges. Bonded labourers work long hours, often up to seven days a week.

In India, Tyaiya Lal Shetha was 12 when he became a bonded labourer. His father had already worked as a bonded labourer for 10 years after borrowing 3,000 rupees (£34) from his landlord. But when he became too old to work, the landlord demanded that Tyaiya work instead. He has to work from

early in the morning, ploughing, planting, harvesting and doing any other work demanded, regardless of the hour. In return, he gets just 1.5 kilograms of rice. But Tyaiya may not collect the rice himself. The landlord requires Tyaiya's mother to collect it instead. But first she has to clean his house.

One of the fastest growing forms of slavery is human trafficking, enslaving at least 2.4 million people throughout the world. Traffickers promise well-paid work or education. Desperate to improve their lives, people are tricked or coerced away from their homes into conditions they have not agreed to.

Leila (not her real name), was trafficked from Sri Lanka to the UK as a domestic worker. She had to work 16-18 hours every day and was not allowed any day off for the first two years. She was not allowed to eat with the family and was given only leftovers to eat. When any food went missing, she was automatically blamed.

She was treated with brutality and had no privacy, no room of her own. She had to sleep on a sofa bed in the sitting room, where she was disturbed by anybody who would come in late and whenever they

wanted to use the room. Her employers deliberately kept her without a visa, so that she could not run away. The only time she was allowed out of the house was to do the shopping in the local supermarket.

However large the problem of slavery is, solutions are possible. Two hundred years ago, hundreds of thousands of people across Britain demanded an end to the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Today, Anti-Slavery International is calling on everyone to harness the abolitionist spirit and demand action is taken to eliminate slavery once and for all.

*Anti-Slavery International was founded in 1839 by the same abolitionists who led the campaign against the slave trade in 1807 and fought for the abolition of slavery in 1833. The charity continues to work for an end to all forms of slavery throughout the world and is the leading organisation in this field. To find out more about slavery today and to take action, see [www.antislavery.org](http://www.antislavery.org)*

## TANZANIA

### Short History of Slavery

The slave trade flourished on the East Coast of Africa during the 19th century. The main players were Arabs and Europeans. Slaves were taken from the hinterland and travelled in caravans, covering thousands of kilometres in the woodlands to the receiving port of Bagamoyo. From Bagamoyo the slaves were shipped in dhows to the final destination, the slave market in Zanzibar.

Christ Church, the Anglican Cathedral in Zanzibar Mkunazini, was built on the exact site of the slave market. Recently, the Archbishop of Canterbury officiated at a Eucharist at Mkunazini during the Anglican Archbishops' Conference in Tanzania. This was a moving and memorable occasion.

From Zanzibar the slaves were shipped overseas to different countries of the world. However, as the years passed by, some missionaries from Europe began to question the concept of slavery. Among them was Dr David Livingstone who travelled along the slave trade route from Bagamoyo to Tabora, finally to Kigoma his workstation.

When Dr Livingstone died, his porters Tuss, and Chuma carried his body, dried in smoke, through the same route from Kigoma, Tabora, to Bagamoyo Port.

There was a vision among the missionaries that the trade was wrong and unfair. They realised that trading fellow human beings as general merchandise was immoral and

unacceptable. Therefore they began to convince their governments to seriously consider the trade and declare slavery as illegal. Fortunately governments in Europe responded positively to the request and made a declaration to abolish the trade. The declaration was met with resistance, for it was opposed by slave masters who viewed the trade as a source of cheap labour for their empires and plantations.

Nevertheless, European governments took the declaration seriously and started taking steps to abolish the trade. It was not an easy task, as opposition grew from the masters and lords who saw the end of their

fortunes. However, congratulations must go to the British, French and German governments who deployed warships across the Atlantic and Indian Oceans to patrol and stop the culprits in the high seas. Whenever they spotted a dhow carrying slaves, they forced the masters to set them free. In spite of all the odds, finally, in 1890, legal forms of slavery were abolished.

## ENGLAND

In February 2006, the General Synod of the Church of England unanimously agreed that the commemoration of the bicentenary of the Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 2007 would provide “unprecedented opportunities to acknowledge the Church’s complicity in the Slave Trade and tell anew the Christian story of creation and redemption”. The Synod also recognised the damage done to those who are the heirs of those who were enslaved, and apologised to them.

The Walk of Witness, organised by the Church of England’s Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns (CMEAC), aimed to give ‘body’ to the apology and provide an opportunity for the Church to recognise its role in the transatlantic slave trade, and to move forward with a renewed thirst for justice. The Walk took place on Saturday 24th March 2007. An Act of Worship – including prayer, drama, dance, music and reflections – gave the gathered walkers an opportunity to acknowledge the legacies of the slave trade and to commit themselves to the ongoing fight against modern-day forms of slavery.

Whilst the vital role of the abolitionists was recognised, with a smaller group of walkers coming to Kennington Park from William Wilberforce’s church of Holy Trinity, Clapham, the focus of the event was deliberately on those who had been enslaved. The three strands of **remembrance, repentance and restoration** acknowledged the past and its continuing legacy, considered what God requires of us and how we and others before us have fallen short, and encouraged us to continue to work towards justice, forgiveness, reconciliation and healing.

The day itself was rather cold, but most participants stayed to the end, remembering the incomparably worse conditions that the slaves had had to endure. Many of them testified to how moving they had found the event. The Walk of Witness was a ‘cause’ which brought Christians of differing theological persuasions together. There were evangelicals inspired by the fact it was Wilberforce’s conversion which enabled him to persevere for so long; there were human rights activists who would support modern efforts to end slavery; there were large numbers of black people anxious that the disadvantages of some ethnic groups should be addressed; and there were many white people who just wanted to apologise for the unspeakable treatment of Africans by their forefathers, and for the fact that it has taken so long to wake up to the enormity of the slave trade.

As another part of the response to the call from General Synod, regional ‘hearings’ were held, organised by different dioceses to help explore sensitive issues around the legacy of the Slave Trade. These hearings provided an opportunity for listening to the experiences of each other – both for the participants (one from the black community and one from the white) and for the small invited audience, as each participant outlined how the legacy of the slave trade impacts on their life. Each discussion was chaired by the local bishop or his representative, who offered some concluding reflections.

Some participants spoke openly of the continued racism and disadvantage they continue to experience, whilst others spoke of the privileges that they now realise they had received. One said: “In the past, I have been on protest marches with some black friends, but after the march the white people would go on a bus back home. Once after the official march buses had left, some of the remaining black people were beaten by the British National Party or singled out by police.”

The key thing that emerged from most of the stories was that racism, institutional racism and discrimination are still very much part of everyday life for many black people. One participant in Liverpool, a descendant of a slave from Ghana, spoke of his experience in school where very young children expressed their

preconceptions and bias against black people. “Some children today,” he said, “still don’t see black people as their equals. That kind of thing happened when I was young and I thought things had changed – we need to educate children to understand that people of all ethnicities have value.”

The legacies of slavery for both black and white still remain – fear of the unknown and a lack of understanding of their culture cause many white people to continue to stereotype black people. The disadvantage and discrimination experienced by many black people makes life a struggle. But the positive things that came out of the story telling and listening process is the fact that both black and white gained a different perspective – one bishop said that he would never be the same after listening to one moving story, told by a black woman.

**THE NEXT FAMILY  
NETWORK NEWSLETTER  
is to be on the theme of  
URBAN FAMILIES**

## CHURCH MISSION SOCIETY (CMS)

The play *African Snow* was commissioned by CMS to mark the bicentenary of the parliamentary act abolishing the British slave trade. The Society was founded by Abolitionists and included William Wilberforce as its first vice-president.

*African Snow* revolves around a meeting between John Newton, the converted slave-trader who wrote the hymn *Amazing Grace*, and Olaudah Equiano, a freed slave who became the toast of high society after writing a book of his experiences. They meet at the height of the abolition campaign in the 19th century. The entire cast of *African Snow* is black, with the exception of the Newton character.

The son of an African chief, Olaudah was abducted as a boy, aged about 11, with his sister from their home in Benin, in what is now present-day Nigeria and sold into slavery. This sea passage is enacted on a small stage, using a trellis-work of partitioned iron grilles and rope pulleys to render the claustrophobic sense of curtailed space.

General Secretary Tim Dakin said, “CMS commissioned the play to bring home the difficult issues surrounding the evils of the slave trade in a dramatic, accessible and thought-provoking way: we have raised

the curtain on Gospel issues of forgiveness and reconciliation.”

A major spin-off from *African Snow* has been the Free For All Tour, which has been touring 30 cathedral cities throughout the UK in 2007. A partnership between CMS and Big Intent Theatre Company, Free For All immerses schoolchildren in the story of slavery through drama workshops, culminating in a public performance which ends with a specially-made video challenging people to get involved in the fight against modern forms of slavery.

Children have been absorbed: “It was amazing! Utterly fabulous!” said Harry from Avening Primary. Teachers too have been delighted by this interactive approach to learning about slavery. There were other positive spin-offs: “I am thrilled to see students enjoy a positive experience in a church,” said one teacher. Free For All has reached thousands more people as it generates coverage on local TV and radio wherever it goes.

## UNITED SOCIETY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL

The Anglican mission agency USPG has a chequered history when it comes to slavery: we helped to fight the slave trade, but we also once owned slaves.

The Society's involvement with the slave trade came about in 1710 when Christopher Codrington, a former Governor-General in the West Indies, died and bequeathed to the Society his large mansion and its grounds in Barbados, with instruction to build the first-ever college to train priests and missionaries in the West Indies.

The work was to be financed with income from the surrounding sugar plantations, on which manual labour was done by enslaved West Africans. Codrington's will required the Society to maintain the plantations and keep its slaves. As a consequence, the estate was run using slave-labour until emancipation in 1834. Profits from the plantations were also used to provide education and healthcare for the slaves.

USPG's current General Secretary, Bishop Michael Doe, said: “It is incredible to think that 300 years ago the prevalent view in British society, and among some church leaders, was that slave trade was perfectly acceptable or at least a regrettable necessity. They even used the Bible to support this position. Thankfully, Christians saw their error and repented, then put themselves in the forefront of the campaign to end all slavery around the world. This is a fight that we are still engaged in today.”

USPG's history bears witness to the zeal that gripped Christian reformers. In the years that followed emancipation, the Society launched numerous initiatives to improve the welfare of former slave communities, as well as those oppressed by other kinds of slavery, such as apartheid in South Africa.

In more recent years, USPG has been involved in tackling all forms of human injustice, including modern forms of slavery such as sex trafficking in Bangladesh and child trafficking in Ghana.

And, as a fitting postscript, Codrington College and Codrington Estate were formally transferred into the ownership of the Church of the Province of the West Indies in 1983 (although the management of the college and estate had been in West Indies' hands for many years before that). Codrington is currently considered to be one of the leading theological institutions in the Caribbean.

Although Britain abolished its slave trade to the Americas in 1808, the black people in the Caribbean were not freed from slavery until the period 1834 to 1838, when Britain abolished slavery in its colonies.

During and immediately after slavery, family life among the slaves was almost non-existent, as Africans transported to the West Indies were rarely brought on the same ship as their kin and even when they were, upon arrival into the New World, family members were sold off to separate bidders. In many cases, families were broken up even before setting foot on the slave ships, as some members were kidnapped and brought to the New World, while others were able to escape or were just not considered slave material. Further, the slave's effort to establish a stable family on the plantation, even after losing his original one, was often hindered by further sales and transfers. Added to that, the intervention of the white male into the sexual life of the slave woman further undermined the black family.

Family life for the slave then took a variety of forms: the most popular one seemed to be the mother/child household. On large estates, slaves made attempts to form nuclear families headed by a male and a female, though, as already mentioned, such families were very vulnerable and could be broken up at any

time through sale or transfers. Some slave women, mainly the light-skinned ones, lived in open relationships with the white males, most of whom had their legal white families as well. Children of such unions were often confused as to their status in the society as they seemed to belong to neither side.

It would be fair to say therefore, that during slavery, the black man was robbed of his responsibility of being a husband and a father, a responsibility which would have been taken seriously at home in Africa, and the black woman was left with the responsibility of ensuring her own survival along with that of her numerous children whom she may have conceived through a variety of partners both black and white. In my view, what came out of such a system was a man who did not know what it was to take responsibility for a family and a woman who was forced to be strong and independent in order to survive and who learned to survive on her own, often just by using her wits.

It is short-sighted to see slavery as undermining only the black family. The association which the white male established with the black slave woman would have adversely affected the white family also. It has been pointed out that in the slave society and even after abolition, the white woman was almost invisible. Outnumbered by the white male on whom she was entirely dependent, her

only role in society was to produce pure-blooded white sons who would perpetuate the system. The fear of contamination of the white race caused any association of the white female with a black male to be viewed as most reprehensible. Thus, outnumbered by white men, intimidated by their slaves and their responsibility in a society that did not recognise them as full participants, reduced to sexual and economic impotence, white women were anomalies in a society that was divided on strict racial and gender lines<sup>1</sup>.

Family life in the Caribbean immediately after slavery – and even today – still is influenced to some extent by what was practised during slavery. Apart from marriages which are recognised by law, there are common law unions where the couple live together as man and wife without the formality of a wedding. Children from such a union are regarded as legitimate; only children born out of casual relationships or whose fathers do not recognise them are considered illegitimate. On the whole, no matter what their status, children, during slavery and now, are well loved and cared for. Women who have no children often unofficially adopt children of family members or children whose parents cannot care for them. In the early days of slavery, children grew up quickly and by four years old they were expected to carry out certain duties in the household. In the early days after slavery, children attended school, though they did this irregularly<sup>2</sup>. In the Caribbean today, laws are now in place prohibiting child labour and making it an offence to keep a child away from school.

Today New World slavery is something of the past. But there are other forms of slavery that may be linked to it. Although Caribbean people are no longer physically enslaved, for 300 years they had been taught that they were inferior beings. A slave owned nothing, not even his own person. How ready was the ex-slave emotionally and economically to enter the free world of his former slave master and carve out a life for himself and his family?

As a carry-over from slavery, we still have black men who run away from their responsibilities of fatherhood and marriage. We still have too many young women who produce children for men who are not committed.

Thus in the Caribbean, the number of children born out of wedlock and to teenage girls is staggering. In Jamaica, the figures for 2004 show that 83.9% of all

<sup>1</sup> Verene Shepherd, *Working Slavery, Pricing Freedom*,

<sup>2</sup> Bridget Brerton *Social Life in the Caribbean 1838 – 1938*.

live births were children born out of wedlock and 19.4% of children born in 2004 were to mothers under 20 years of age. These figures, given at a recent training seminar for Mothers' Union members in Eastern Jamaica, would not vary much in the other dioceses where the population is made up mainly of descendants of those Africans who were forced into slavery.

Women, many single-handed, still work hard to give their children a good life and many great men and women of the Caribbean have come out of families where it was their mothers who fathered them.

In my view, today in the Caribbean, many young men and women have given up the thought of making money the old fashioned way – by hard work. There is now the "get rich quick syndrome" which causes them to become involved in the illicit drug trade, another form of slavery from which there seems to be no emancipation, except through death. Then there are the young women who

allow their almost naked bodies to be used in advertisements. The careless use of the body then leads to the spread of the deadly disease HIV/AIDS. It is sad that the Caribbean is second only to Africa in the number of persons affected by this disease.

It is in such a vineyard that God has called the Mothers' Union (MU) in the Province of the West Indies to carry out its mission. What are we doing to help our societies face these challenges?

The Mothers' Union in Jamaica works with the Female Prisoners Welfare Project through what is called the Hibiscus Jamaica Programme. Through this joint operation between the Jamaican Government and the British Law Enforcement, fewer Jamaican women are ingesting cocaine to take to the UK.

In the West Indies, the Worldwide Mothers' Union Parenting Programme is having a positive impact on families in three of the dioceses. The programme is playing an important role in supporting and encouraging those who are parenting

alone – both male and female. It is also helping parents to see the importance of marriage in providing a stable family life for children. In Guyana, the Parenting Trainer says that the satisfaction of hearing about the changed behaviour of parents/carers and the renewed and improved relationships in the family stimulates her passion for the programme. She is about to take it into the Amerindian communities in the remote areas of the country where the indigenous people live.

MU in many parts of the province offers Family Life Counselling, Day Care Services, School Feeding, Meals on Wheels and school bursaries. There is also a Library and Skills Training Centre managed by the MU in Guyana where people are trained in life-skills which help them to become self-employed and independent. Such a programme frees women and young girls from exploitation and abuse by men on whom they would have to depend if they cannot earn for themselves – another form of slavery.

The time has come for us to stop blaming slavery for the situation in which numerous descendants of Africans in the Caribbean find themselves. It is amazing that after 300 years of being robbed of family, religion, culture and of homeland, and of being treated as sub-humans, the descendants of Africans in the Caribbean have been able, like the proverbial phoenix, to rise from the ashes of the past and carve out a space for themselves in a land which they now call their homeland and which they govern as independently as the superpowers allow them.

## INDIA

March 8th is International Women's Day. Women in the world have reached dizzy heights. In India the progress women have made is unparalleled. In the cities, it is very obvious and in the villages women have brought in phenomenal changes.

However as I write this article, it is strange that I talk about slavery. In the last two decades slavery in India has changed its face.

In the past, the state of widows was appalling. My own aunt was widowed at a very young age. She lived in her father's house. My grandfather, grandmother and my uncle with his family lived on the third floor. In the middle was my aunt with her three children. The ground floor was

reserved for business guests. There was only one staircase. If anyone from the top floor had to come down before sunrise, they would ask the kids to see that their mother (the widow, their own flesh and blood) should go into the room till they left the house. Reason? – So that they should not see the face of a widow before going to work for it would bring bad luck. A widow couldn't attend any special functions of the family, even her own son's marriage.

Widows from some communities would be sent to religious centres like Varanasi, Haridwar or Allahabad where they would be left to die without any support. Many of them, turning to prostitution, died of

multiple sexually transmitted infections or other diseases. Remarriage was very uncommon. Any man marrying a widow was promptly ex-communicated from the society.

Now the prison walls of widowhood have largely broken down. Many widows get married and, amazingly, sometimes the husband's family arranges the match. However, widows from some communities are still sent off to the 'holy cities' where they are exploited and die in terrible conditions.

This is not the only slavery prison women have to live in.

Poverty in itself is prison, but when poverty is topped with cultural and

religious beliefs, the result is nothing but catastrophic. Here are a few stories to help you understand the situation.

The Dowry system still is a cultural truth in India. I met Archana in the red light area three years back. Archana is quite attractive. She was 16 years old and in school when her parents started looking for a suitable match for her. Almost everything was settled and she was engaged, but just a week before the marriage there arose the big issue of dowry and her marriage was called off. This happened twice. Archana lost her friends, had to give up her education and spent most of her time at home. After a couple of months, her elder brother came up with a suggestion. He said that he would take her to a bigger city, get her employment and then look for a good match. This pleased her parents. He brought her to a suburb of Pune,

leased out a small room and kept her there. A few days later he brought two of his friends along and a big stock of alcohol. That night and the following three days were a nightmare for Archana. Her brother not just raped her himself, but raped her with his friends looking on and they did the same. When the three went to get more drink, Archana ran away and came straight to the red light area in the city of Pune. She hates what she does but more than that she hates men. Bijli's father was a farmer and a poor one at that. With mounting debt and many mouths to feed, he committed suicide. Bijli is the eldest child and was sent to earn a livelihood for the rest of the family, as her mother had to stay back to look after the land, the younger children and her husband's old parents. Bijli and her uncle travelled to Pune and she was placed

in a home to work as a house maid. This 12-year-old never had enough to eat and worked almost 12-13 hours a day. Moreover, she was beaten if she so much as dropped a utensil and if by chance she broke one, then not just her salary was deducted but even her sparse meal was taken away.

Religion is good and essential to live a fruitful life. But when it weaves a prison for those who follow it it is nothing short of a curse. Here is the story of a boy, a patient of mine, who lives in a religion-made prison.

"I was born in a very poor family of Tamil Nadu in South of India," said Sudha, a 24-year-old. "It was fate that I was the fourth son. I was named Sunder [beautiful]. Poverty and a religious tradition prompted my parents to marry me to a goddess, with great pomp and show. Many other boys of the area also were married that day to the goddess. I was about 10 years old then. I was not allowed to go home after that but stayed in the temple till the age of 15. We had to work very hard there and never had enough to eat. At the age of 15, I ran away from the temple and went to Mumbai, the city of prosperity. A very kind person took care of me for three years. Now somehow the kind person was not quite like others. One day this kind person arranged a meeting with someone special. The special someone had changed lives of many people. My life changed also. A big pooja [worship ceremony] was in progress and many people were there. I was made to sit on a flower-bedecked stool. My hands were tied at the back and a bamboo placed between them. I was stripped and boiling oil was poured on my genitals."

To cut the story short, this boy was turned into a sex worker for men having sex with men and was placed in a community of eunuchs. Now he is infected with HIV virus and lives in a prison of a different kind. My patient's story left me numb. How can human beings become so callous and cruel? The most gruesome violence against a fellow being is to take away the gift of God, sexuality.

Many of my contacts in the red light area have been sold on the pretext of employment. They can never get out of the debt of the money they were purchased for. The interest on the money is 20% per month. If a girl was sold for 20,000 rupees, in one month it becomes 20,000 + 4000, and so on.

These are just some of the prisons people live in – the modern forms of slavery.

# TRAFFICKING – SEXUAL SLAVERY

## BANGLADESH

The work of the Church of Bangladesh Social Development Programme's (CBSDP) 'Women and Child Trafficking Project' began after one of its Regional Manager's attention was drawn to the nightly movement of smugglers across Meherpur District's long border with India. For not only were consumer goods, illicit arms and drugs flowing nightly in and out of Bangladesh, but even more profitable was the trade in human flesh – mostly young women between the ages of 12 and 25.

A senior officer from the Bangladesh Rifles, who police the border, acknowledged that there was a problem, but pointed out that it was difficult to apprehend the older women or men with young girls in tow, as they would claim legitimate reasons for travel such as hospital visits and the girls would assure them that the trafficker was in fact a relative.

In fact very few women or children are actually kidnapped, the stereotypical view of trafficking. They go very willingly, even paying for the service. However, the bright future and good jobs they are all promised never materialise, for they have been lied to, manipulated and deceived.

Usually the first in a chain of traffickers will be a relative or neighbour. He or she then lures the girl across the border with false promises; money changes hands; she is passed on to an 'uncle/aunt'; soon she finds herself in place where the language is strange, food different and the location totally unknown. An unmarried girl from the traditional conservative villages of rural Bangladesh would normally never have kissed, held hands or even talked to an unrelated man. She is also proud and would fiercely defend her honour and her virginity, so adaptation to life as a full or part-time sex worker (the fate of up to 300,000 previously trafficked young Bengali women) does not come easily.

Traffickers know this, so to break their victim's spirit, reduce her sense of self-worth, and make her too fearful to say 'no,' they typically lock her in a small room for around a week and a gang of men repeatedly rape her, starve her and – if she objects to the unspeakable ways in which they are sexually abusing her – beat her till she bleeds or torture her: for example, by forcing her head into a bucket of water until she begins to drown.

By the time she is sold into a brothel in India or a nightclub in the Middle East, she

has no strength to resist and she is worked like a machine. In fact, in some places girls are forcibly given injections of drugs to enable them to service the sexual needs of more clients, up to 15 nightly.

Some are free to leave after a period of time but many are forcibly held and, unless they escape, only released if they lose their looks or their health through contracting an infection such as AIDS. Arriving back, they are viewed not as victims but as immoral despicable women, who might corrupt society. So they are alienated, insulted and often driven from their communities. Some of these girls may have been lucky enough to earn up to US\$600 per month, which seems a fortune to Bangladeshis, but this is frequently squandered by the relatives that it is sent to, so most girls return to the poverty they have left.

The CBSDP, through funding from Church Mission Society's Setting Captives Free campaign, has tried to follow in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ by: healing the brokenhearted through counselling; enabling deliverance through skills-training; recovering sight for the community through awareness-raising; and setting trafficked women at liberty through advocacy work with local authorities. All this work has been undergirded with prayer from within Bangladesh and around the world.

Raising awareness through colourful posters, leaflets and talks in schools, madrassas, community groups and churches means that it will be harder to trick young women with false promises. Men and older women in their

communities will also look out for traffickers and prevent them taking vulnerable young women away.

Skills-training rebuilds the self-confidence, self-value and community status of the young women, as well as tackling the poverty that made them vulnerable to traffickers in the first place. Already, in the last one and a half years, CBSDP has trained around 100 formerly trafficked or vulnerable women through its three-month tailoring and embroidery course, then assisted them in setting up businesses. Counselling will help them to overcome the trauma they have faced.

Meanwhile advocacy through seminars has been used with local government officials, border guard officers, local community leaders and senior police officers. One of the seminars sparked the first arrest of traffickers recorded in the district concerned: a few days after the seminar, a couple were arrested who had already allegedly trafficked 25 young girls across the border.

The local community has also been very active, with leaders from the development groups that have been set up by CBSDP taking an active role in spreading awareness messages. Perhaps most effective of all has been the entertaining but serious dramas, in which volunteers go from village to village and act out the story of a trafficked girl. This not only warns people of the dangers of trafficking but challenges societal attitudes to its victims.

## UNITED KINGDOM

The abolition of slavery in the UK in 1807 was a step on the journey to freedom and respect for all, but that journey is still unfinished business. Human trafficking continues across Europe and the globe, and a new enslavement in trafficked women and girls for sexual exploitation in massage parlours, brothels and 'secured' houses is present in the cities and market towns of the UK today.

The trafficking business is now worth an estimated £12 billion globally. That is a staggering sum, just below the annual trade in armaments. The United States State Department estimates that over 800,000 people are trafficked over international borders each year. Of these, an estimated 80% will be sexually exploited in one way or another, and the majority will be women and female children. It is thought that over 4,000 women are trafficked for prostituted sex into the UK each year. Meanwhile over 80,000 women are caught in prostitution in the UK, many of whom are foreign nationals. Each year thousands of businessmen and holiday makers go abroad to purchase sex.

We need to address issues of prevention, tackle demand, encourage local initiatives to help with routes out and safety for victims of exploitation, ensure justice is resourced and survivors protected. Larger budgets for enforcement, more legislation, culture change and more resources for survivors are essential if this trade is to be halted. The bicentenary of the Act to abolish the slave trade deserves nothing less from us.

*Not for Sale Sunday – 20th May 2007* – was a unique opportunity to reflect, respond and engage with the multiple issues of sexual exploitation today. *Not for*

*Publicity leaflet for Not for Sale Sunday.*

*Photo: CHASTE.*

*Sale Sunday* is a special initiative of Churches Alert to Sex Trafficking across Europe (CHASTE). CHASTE is the ecumenical charity in the UK engaging the issues of sex trafficking in the churches and liaising with government, all church denominations and other NGOs in the UK and across Europe. A special anthology is now in the process of being published, which will provide the churches across denominations with resources to start thinking through the responses to sexual abuse in "pay as you go" sex, as well as the most outrageous excesses of human rights abuses in sex trafficking. This anthology, bringing together fresh contributions in hymns, prayers, liturgies, Bible studies and essays, will be an important resource for any individual or congregation wanting to effect change.

The new United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre based in Sheffield, equips the police with co-ordinated responses to trafficking in all its forms, labour, domestic servitude, sexual exploitation, fostering for social security fraud and trade in human organs. *Not for Sale Sunday* will equip the churches to confront the multiple degradation of sexual exploitation and learn what is required to overcome it.

For further information or to develop a *Not for Sale Sunday* service later in the year for your church, log onto [www.notforsalesunday.org](http://www.notforsalesunday.org) or contact [Richard@chaste.org.uk](mailto:Richard@chaste.org.uk).

## FORCED LABOUR – CHILDREN

### GHANA

Philip Otoo was nine years old when his parents sent him to live with his older sister and her husband in the fishing village of Akosombo. The boy had been promised a place in school and a chance to better his life. Instead, he was forced to work for eight years, first as a houseboy and then as a fisherman. He recalled: 'I was very young then and I didn't know what was happening.' When Philip returned without a catch, he was beaten and refused food for the rest of the day.

The fishing nets were often torn. Philip said: 'It is very difficult to go fishing with a torn net because, when it gets stuck

under the sea, you have to dive deeper to remove it.' Philip said some of his friends died trying to remove nets from the seabed.

Philip's parents had trusted that their son would be in safe hands. But on hearing stories about the plight of Ghana's child fishermen, they eventually paid their son a visit. They were shocked by what they saw and managed to secure Philip's release.

Rescued and living with his parents, Philip, now aged 17, finally started his primary education.

This story is typical of thousands of children in Ghana today who are being forced to work under brutal conditions as labourers, miners, domestic servants and sex workers.

Many of the children are mistreated by their employers. Girls are often sexually abused or forced into prostitution. Some children are shipped overseas and never seen again.

Attempting to tackle this horrific industry is the Centre for Initiative Against Human Trafficking (CIAHT), which has set up a project called 'Stop Child Trafficking: It is a Crime' The project, which is supported by USPG, alerts rural families to the dangers of trafficking and helps to rehabilitate children who have escaped from their abusive employers.

Giving the project its full backing is the Anglican Church in the Ghanaian diocese of Tamale. The Bishop explained: 'Human trafficking, especially child trafficking, is now a common practice in northern

Ghana. This is due to poor education, a lack of employment opportunities and the annual cycle of hunger, commonly called the 'lean' season. These factors force the youth to migrate to unknown places looking for non-existent jobs. In doing so, some of them get trapped and fall into bad hands.'

Abdulai Danaah, of CIAHT, said: 'Child trafficking is an age-old phenomenon – now operating in over 80 countries – yet structures put in place to combat it are woefully inadequate. However, we can break the chain by intercepting the vulnerable before they get caught.'

## UNITED KINGDOM

Due to the covert and illegal nature of trafficking, statistics are scarce. But an International Labour Organisation (2005) report estimates that a minimum of 2.45 million people are victims of trafficking annually and that children represent some 50% of this highly lucrative (US\$ 32 billion annually) human rights abuse.

Children in particular are highly vulnerable to being trafficked. This is especially true for those from backgrounds of often violent and dysfunctional families, poverty, lack of educational opportunities, gender inequality and living in regions of conflict. Traffickers understand these vulnerabilities and are ready to exploit them by luring children or their families by false promises of a better future abroad. These children have no realisation of the abuse that is awaiting them.

Although media stories focus on trafficking of children for sexual purposes, ECPAT UK considers that trafficking of children for labour exploitation is more frequent but less documented. However, even children trafficked for other purposes than sexual exploitation are still highly vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse.

There are still no clear or constant trends demonstrating a pattern on the routes taken or the nationalities involved. ECPAT UK's 2004 and 2007 research on child trafficking into the UK shows Eastern European girls often come into the UK accompanied by the trafficker, or are met by the trafficker soon after arriving. They invariably have a prior relationship with the trafficker who uses coercive tactics,

including deception, threats, the use of physical or sexual violence and debt bondage to control the girls.

African children, on the other hand, are found to enter the UK as separated children (unaccompanied minors), or with adults purporting to be relatives. These children enter alone at a port of entry and claim asylum. Due to their age, they are taken into care by social services. But, once in care, they follow pre-arranged plans to contact their trafficker and at some point after that – it could be straight away or six months later – go missing.

A key issue ranging across all nationalities is that of trafficked children going missing. ECPAT UK's 2007 research found that out of 80 cases of known or suspected child victims of trafficking, 48 (60%) have gone missing from social services care and have never been found. Often, local authorities struggle with limited resources, expertise and the uncertain immigration status of trafficked children.

These children and young people often suffer mental, physical and/or sexual abuse. The consequences are devastating, and affect all aspects of their lives. Many of these children lose their trust in adults, become anti-social, fearful and nervous. This fear is very real because they are threatened with violence should they try to escape or seek help.

## HAITI

**Restavek: Haiti's modern day slavery**

As a result of unfair trade rules, international debt and a succession of corrupt leaders, Haiti is one of the poorest countries in the world. These desperate times are seeing a return to the barbaric practice of slavery, albeit under a different name.

While slavery does not exist in the same systematic, legally-sanctioned way it did in the 18th century, millions must work without pay, in unhealthy, dangerous – even life-threatening – conditions, simply because they have no other means of survival.

Wherever there is extreme poverty, there is economic enslavement. Haiti, the poorest country in the western hemisphere, is a particularly stark example. On the United Nations human development index it rates 153 out of 177. Even war-ravaged Sudan has a higher ranking at 142.

It is often children who suffer the most. The UN estimates that as many as 300,000 Haitian children are separated from their families and live in unpaid domestic servitude. This means that nearly one in ten of Haiti's children are effectively living as slaves.

Haiti has a long-standing tradition of families in rural areas sending their children to live with more prosperous host families in the cities, so that they can get an education. These children were known as Restavek, which comes from the French 'rester avec' or 'stay with'. In return for room, board and school fees, these children were expected to help with household chores.

But in recent decades, this tradition has

been distorted by the extreme poverty in which many rural families live. Instead of sending a nine-year-old child to the city for a couple of years, many families are forced to pack off children as young as five. They simply cannot afford to feed them at home. Because the parents are so desperate to find someone to look after their children, they can't be careful about where they send them.

Hundreds of children end up being exploited and made to work 18-hour days selling goods in street markets or looking after other children almost the same age as themselves.

It has been pointed out that this practice has degenerated over the years to a form of internal slavery because the family situation has broken down. You have a situation now where very poor people in the cities need these slaves to look after their children, while they're out making, say, two dollars a day.

One 15-year-old girl living in Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, described how she is abused by the woman she works for: "She bites me, she burns me, she beats me. One time her baby son spat in my face, so I smacked him lightly on the hand. She went crazy. She grabbed the spoon she was cooking with and thrashed me with it. The spoon was burning hot and now I have these scars on my legs. Living with her is like living in hell."

The widespread abuse of *Restavek* has led the charity Anti-Slavery International to condemn the practice as "one of the most severe examples of child domestic work, both in terms of the children's young age and the abuses they suffer. These children are hidden from view, making them particularly vulnerable to physical, mental and sexual abuse."

Poverty in the cities also plays a role in encouraging child exploitation. In the past, richer families would have used *Restavek* almost like au pairs. Today *Restavek* are much more likely to live with poor families who cannot afford to pay an adult to look after their own children while they are out trying to scrape a living.

About 20 years ago, Haiti came under tremendous international pressure to allow tax-free imports of basic food items. This made it impossible for local farmers to compete with cheap, subsidised food that was dumped onto the Haitian market by richer countries, mainly the US. Local rice production has fallen by half and sugar cane saw a similar steep decline. As a result, 82% of families in the countryside live below the poverty line.

The Christian Aid country representative in Haiti explained that the only way to overcome the abuse of the *Restavek* system was to tackle rural poverty. "The *Restavek* system is an odious system which deserves to be banished," he said. "But it will only be overcome if the international trade rules that keep people poor are reformed."

#### **Freedom! Sculpture by Haitian artists**

As the UK commemorates the end of the slave trade, a group of Haitian artists have

created a unique sculpture to represent their continuing struggle for freedom and human rights. The Freedom! Sculpture, made out of recycled objects such as metal car parts and raw junk found in the dangerous slums of the capital, Port-au-Prince, was created by young Haitians and sculptors in collaboration with Mario Benjamin, an internationally renowned Haitian artist.

To incorporate a sense of what freedom and slavery mean to people in Haiti today, the artists held workshops with young people. One of the young collaborators said: "People don't have chains on their arms and legs now, but people still have chains in their minds. When you have problems getting enough food, housing and education, you are not living in a free country." But, he said, working on this project made him see there was hope and "strength in being united".

## **EXPLOITATION OF MIGRANT LABOUR**

### **HONG KONG**

Bethune House has become a safe haven away from home and a source of hope and strength to many women migrants and their children. It has become a place for women of different nationalities to meet, share and learn from each other's cases, cultures and traditions. Moreover, it has become a stepping stone for the residents to gather and act together not only in response to their situation in

Hong Kong, but to think and respond as well to issues and concerns back home.

Most of the residents in Bethune House are women migrants who were made vulnerable due to their traumatic experiences of working in a foreign land. They have been victimised because they were not aware of their rights and have little or no knowledge as to what action they can take to remedy their situation.

In civilised societies, domestic helpers are not slaves, but many of these women are treated as such. This explains the rise of

complaints and the cases being filed by the hundreds. There may be no existing studies to assess their impact or their contribution to Hong Kong society and its economy, but clearly these are the people who enable their employers to work by taking care of their children and doing a myriad of domestic chores to keep their households running smoothly. 485 clients came to our shelter in 2006. This is more than one distressed woman per day. More than 70% of them were Indonesians. A significant portion of these

## INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION

women run away from their employers because of inhumane conditions of work, gross violations of their contract and physical and sexual assault. Non-payment of wages, illegal salary deductions and no rest days remain the top reasons for labour cases. However, compared to 2003, the percentage of police-related cases rose by 6%. The most common are physical and sexual abuse cases, followed by the increased incidence of domestic workers being accused of theft by their employers.

Here are some of the cases: -

- **IKA**, an Indonesian, was black and blue when she was rescued by a fellow domestic helper. Some of the police who responded brought her to the hospital and then later to the shelter. She was not physically assaulted but because of long working hours, only two hours sleep, she often fell to the ground and hit her legs, arms or face. She was not allowed to take a bath for two months.
- **DJIMI**, an Indonesian domestic helper, was slashed with a very sharp knife three times in the left arm by the father of her employer. She was bleeding when she escaped from her employer's flat.
- **VINU**, a Nepali domestic helper, was raped by her Nepali employer. After more than a year of gruelling case work, the police case was dismissed due to insufficient evidence.

Most of these women have left their families back home and therefore they are alone and have neither economic nor emotional support. Simply, they have no one to turn to and have no means to fend for themselves.

The government system in dealing with the responsibilities of employers is long and complicated and in those cases where migrant women are involved, where they do not have any accommodation or any means to support themselves, the help of charity is needed.

At the moment, shelters and crisis centres for women migrants and their children, with corresponding psycho-social and labour-related assistance programmes, are very few in Hong Kong. The gap between the growing need of distressed migrant women and public and private welfare service provision is huge. We believe our work will help significantly to ensure welfare provision and empowerment for these women migrants.

International Justice Mission (IJM) is a collection of lawyers, criminal investigators and trauma social workers who take on individual cases of abuse and oppression referred by ministries and relief and development workers serving amongst the poor. They bring to IJM cases of violence, slavery, sexual exploitation and other forms of oppression. IJM then investigates these cases to bring about four things: rescue and relief for the victims; provision of aftercare to meet their broad and complicated needs; pursuit of justice for the perpetrators; and finally, structural prevention to keep the abuses from happening again.

The IJM mission is driven by a massive need in the world. The massive need is manifest in the suffering of those who are hurting not because they lack food, medicine, clothing or shelter – but because they have oppressors who abuse their power to take from the weak and the vulnerable the things that are rightfully theirs; namely their life, liberty, dignity or the fruits of their love and labour.

IJM takes on various types of casework around the world. One area of focus is that of combating sex trafficking. Traffickers sell the individuals to make a profit in what has become a multi-billion dollar enterprise. Sex trafficking often consists of the movement of persons across or within borders, but may not entail actual physical displacement. Trafficked women and girls are often tricked with the promise of a good job. Some are kidnapped and drugged, only to find upon waking that they are trapped in a brothel and forced to provide sex to customers. In some instances, these victims are sold by family members in order to pay medical bills or family debts. Though these abuses are against the local laws, corruption and lack of resources often leave these girls with nowhere to turn to for help.

IJM began operations in 1997 and has since established 14 operational field offices located in Bolivia, Cambodia, Guatemala, Kenya, the Philippines, Rwanda, South Asia, Thailand, Uganda and Zambia. The incredible suffering of those for whom the law is not enforced is often prevalent in poorer regions, where the lack of resources heightens the occurrence of injustice.

You can join IJM in the fight against

injustice by being an agent of change. There are many outlets for people to make significant contributions to the fight against injustice. IJM recognises the potential of all people to be effective leaders in the fight for international human rights and aims to build a justice generation.

*A Prayer for the enslaved and for their families*

GOD of freedom and concern for the oppressed:

Hear our prayer for all tricked or taken from their families and heartlessly enslaved;

Hear our prayer for those, owned by others, who are denied the dignity of personhood;

Hear our prayer for those enslaved and forced to work without benefit to themselves or to their families;

Hear our prayer for those prevented from forming true relationships and denied hope of family life;

Hear our prayer for those ruthlessly exploited, traded, abused, robbed of family identity, and forgotten;

Hear our prayer for those controlled in servitude to be delivered, afforded justice, and restored to family life;

Hear our prayer for us all to be one in your household, and freed from the shadow of human ills by the light of your Divine Love:

through our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

**Amen**

*Revd John Bradford*

**IAFN** International Anglican Family Network

### **IAFN HAS MOVED Change of postal address**

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**Visit the Family Network website: [www.iafn.net](http://www.iafn.net)**

The views of individual contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the International Anglican Family Network.