

## Trafficking gets a red card

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Advocacy is being ramped up prior to the Fifa World Cup, writes Lerato Matsaneng

ALONG with the excitement, festivity and influx of tourists from around the globe to the 2010 Fifa World Cup next year, there is expected to be a rise in the number of women- and child-trafficking cases.

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During the 2006 World Cup, in Germany, civil society groups there estimated that an additional 40000 young women would be trafficked into Germany to be exploited for commercial sex during the soccer spectacular.

"We can't put out an exact figure. What we can say, however, is that up to 200,000 women are trafficked to Europe annually for sexual exploitation.

"They are predominantly from central and eastern Europe, and the Commonwealth of Independent States," said Jean Philippe Chauzy, spokesman for the International Organisation for Migration in Germany.

South Africa is similarly at risk. Women and children will be lured by offers of jobs during the World Cup, only to be sexually exploited or used for cheap labour. At the helm of the fight against trafficking in southern Africa is a woman who is making people stop and take note of this rather overlooked issue.

The assistant director of Johannesburg Child Welfare, Carol Bews, has been working for the organisation for the past 17 years. A non-profit organisation, Johannesburg Child Welfare has, since it opened its doors in 1909, worked to ensure that children are well looked after in the city's CBD.

Bews, a former social worker, has spent her life working and caring for children.

She is soft-spoken and calm, but her eyes become stern and her voice firm when she talks about child trafficking.

"The worst part about trafficking is that your freedom is taken away from you," she says.

Her interest in the issue of the trafficking of children was sparked when she was invited to be part of a gathering hosted by the Southern African Network Against Trafficking and the Abuse of Children .

Patroned by Graca Machel and Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, the organisation's mission



STOPPING TRAFFIC: Child Welfare assistant director Carol Bews says trafficking is a modern form of slavery Picture: MOEKETSI MOTICOE

“It is at these times that children will fall prey to abduction”

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is to build synergies among southern African institutions and individuals to fight against all manifestations of child abuse, in particular sexual and commercial exploitation, child labour and the trafficking of children for any purpose, by lobbying, protection, law reform, rehabilitation and care for the victims. Bews is treasurer of the organisation and a member of its board.

She describes human trafficking as a form of modern-day slavery. "The sad reality is that children are trafficked for a number of reasons, such as commercial sex, cheap labour, body parts and adoption," she says.

Santac has established a "Red Light 2010" campaign, together with Women in Law SA. The objective of the initiative is to raise awareness and increase advocacy work related to commercial sex during the World Cup.

Bews believes that an increase in tourism will result in an increase in commercial sex and child-sex tourism.

"We are concerned that children will be vulnerable at this time as schools will be closed for long periods, there will be increased movement between various parts of the country and it is at these times that children will fall prey to abduction," she says.

The Red Light campaign has come in the wake of the 2009 "Trafficking in Persons Report", which recommends that South Africa address the demand for commercial sex and protect children from commercial sexual exploitation in advance of the Cup.

Bews says she would like to see a specialised police unit dedicated to dealing with human trafficking.

"If that was the case, critical training would be given to the police so that they could deal with victims of this crime."

She says the exact figures for South Africa are not known, but it is estimated that 1.2million people are trafficked throughout the world annually.

"Human trafficking is the most lucrative form of trafficking after arms and drugs. The industry is estimated to be worth between \$7-billion (R55.7-billion) and \$10-billion," she says.

In South Africa, unlike in Mozambique, it is difficult to calculate the value of the industry, or the number of people involved, because there is no legislation against human trafficking.

The sole law that vaguely addresses the matter is the law regarding sexual exploitation in the Children's Act.

"It's difficult to locate the culprits because, in South Africa, trafficking doesn't cross borders, it occurs within the country as people are taken from one part of the country to another," says Bews.

She says people often fall prey to trafficking as a result of poverty, social instability and war. Most perpetrators of this heinous crime lure their victims with the promise of a job and better living conditions. They are transported in bulk or individually.

Bews says that Santac is advocating for the existence of a phone number valid throughout the Southern African Development Community, or even for the entire continent, that people can call if they find themselves caught up in any aspect of human trafficking .

With a passion for what she does and a desire for a safer environment for children , Bews is a woman on a mission.

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