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## **CCME's Cristian Action and Networking Against Trafficking (CAT) Project and Other Work (2002-2008)**

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In the frame of its mission in relation to migration and the upholding dignity of migrants, during the last years, CCME has been active against trafficking in Human Beings. Its interest was first oriented towards trafficking in women for sexual exploitation and in the following has expanded to include trafficking for labour.

CCME has been sensitive to the phenomenon, already earlier, but it is since 2002 that it actually started its European network against trafficking.

CCME has been implicated on the issue of trafficking at the following levels:

1. An important instrument used by CCME, and probably the activity most known, is the implementation of projects. In 2002 was initiated the 'Christian Action and Networking against Trafficking' project - better known under the acronym CAT-, co-financed by the European Commission. The CAT project has been a transnational project implemented by CCME in collaboration with Caritas Europe and the participating member organizations. The CAT project is composed of three successive projects [CAT I (2002-2003) CAT II (2003-2005) CAT III (2005-2007)]. Each one had its own focus, building on the experience and expanding the work of the previous one, and at the same time responding to the new challenges that emerged. Despite the fact that CAT has officially terminated in 2007, many churches and secular partners still use the abbreviation 'CAT' as identical with Christian anti-trafficking work in Europe.

I will try to give a global picture of the overall project and present the accumulated or combined effects.

The CAT project was established as a network that brought together more than ten organizations from various countries, including assistance organizations - Christian and secular- and public institutions, aiming to promote the exchange and cooperation between these organizations, with final goal the improvement of the condition of the those affected, or liable to be affected by trafficking. [At the start the emphasis was on trafficking in women for sexual exploitation, while consideration was also taken of other victims of sexual exploitation and progressively started to include in its agenda the trafficking for labour.]

Action undertaken in the frame of the overall project included the following:

- Building operational capacity among organizations, active in the assistance and protection of victims of trafficking, or desiring to become active, through exchange and transfer of expertise. In the project participated more and less experienced organizations, the latter profiting from the experience of the former. One of the means used was the visits to the participating countries that provided the opportunity of direct contact with the work of the local partners. Further, during meetings exchange took place of best practices, of strategies used and problems were discussed. A strong dynamic developed which also resulted to the development of bilateral co-operations between organizations as well as to the emergence of new projects for combating trafficking, among participating organizations.

- Achieving a comprehensive understanding of the situation of girls and of the need for assistance at the different stages involved in the process of trafficking and rehabilitation. The project brought together organizations from Western Europe, Central Europe and Eastern Europe, that is, organizations from both countries of destination, countries of origin and transit. This is of particular importance because:

- a) It led to information-rich exchanges, each party acquiring a global and comprehensive understanding of the situation, as the initial conditions were discussed, the situation in the destination country [the situation of the girl as trafficked, the legal framework, the foreseeable measures of assistance and their limitation], as well as how the situation is formed after return of the girl to its place of origin.
- b) The organizations from the source countries had the opportunity to put forward the needs and problems that are linked with the return of the girls and the difficulties and lack of resources that these organizations face in their effort to assist the girls and achieve re-integration.
- c) In the case of those working in the destination countries it triggered reflection on the anti-trafficking policies and the consequences of their own action, as, given the legal framework in effect at a European level, a 'saved victim' is one that will inevitably, sooner or later, be returned. The implication is that what happens back in the home country becomes the measure with which we have to judge or evaluate our own policies.

- Achieving a cross-sectoral cooperation. In the network were represented all actors involved in combating trafficking, protecting and assisting the victims. Beyond NGO's and Church organizations, public institutions, all particularly law enforcement, were partners of the project. In the various workshops organized participated further representatives of state institutions, for example from the Ministries, representatives of the judiciary, representatives of International organizations and so on. This was strategic for the CAT project, that considered that it is only through the understanding and good collaboration between all parties involved that an effective solution to the problems can be achieved. This evidently has been a very challenging and difficult to monitor situation. Collaboration between the non-governmental and the public sector is not a common practice in most countries, and experience is missing. The CAT

project endeavoured to bring them together, get them to know better one another, deconstruct prejudices, and build confidence and initiate co-operations. Further CAT, on the basis of examples of good practices, developed a model of how such a co-operation can be achieved. In fact it was the successful German model that has been used. For a viable and effective collaboration this has to become formal, some kind of memorandum of co-operation or piece of legislation should be produced.

- The interest for trafficking in labour appeared mainly in the frame of CAT III. Trafficking for labour constitutes paradoxically the old-new issue. Many organizations offering assistance to migrants -and among them partners of the CAT network- had long been working with cases of 'extreme exploitation', or forced labour, and this already before the issue of sexual exploitation became an object of intervention. However, at that time these cases were not characterized as trafficking. Bringing extreme labour exploitation under the rubric of trafficking is very important, because it renders possible to make use of the established relative legal framework for the protection of victims. Though an old problem, trafficking for labour has recently expanded very much and appears under new patterns that are frequently much harsher, than those of the past. In the frame of CAT III, discussions took place concerning new forms of exploitation and trafficking and all particularly trafficking for labour. For this purpose new partnerships had to be created and further organizations, specialized on the issue, were asked to participate in thematic workshops (trade unions, ILO). The challenges, the difficulties and the questions linked to working on the issue of trafficking for labour are important: For the moment very rarely use is made of the anti-trafficking legislation for the protection of the victims of trafficking in labour; It is not clear to governmental actors how to implement legislation on trafficking and on the rights of trafficked person in the cases of labour migration; It is difficult for an assisting organization to report to the authorities cases of trafficking for labour, because victims are not protected against deportation in the way of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation are. If there is unclarity concerning whether a woman is a victim of trafficking for sexual exploitation, the confusion is much greater when we come to trafficking for labour. In the frame of CAT the attention has been brought to the need of criteria and indicators for trafficking for labour and a discussion has been initiated, in which the indicators prepared by ILO have been examined.

CCME intends, in the frame of a new project to deepen further on the issue of trafficking for labour, examine, the current state of affairs in the different countries, encourage organizations to get involved with work with trafficking for labour, promote the implementation of anti-trafficking legislation in the case of trafficking for labour.

In the methodology used by the CAT project to promote exchange were included visits, meetings, contact via e-mail and communication through the COATNET platform. The COATNET (Christian Organisations against trafficking-Net) is an internet-based platform consisting of a public website and password-secured extranet for the CAT partners. The COATNET provided the possibility for an ongoing communication among the CAT partners and in addition made available information from other sources about policy

developments, events, practical work etc. CCME and partners continue the exchange with CATNET. CAT has also offered support to the local organizations in their advocacy work with their churches and their governments and as a network has promoted issues to the European institutions.

For the improvement of anti-trafficking projects and the support of these projects CAT implemented a small study through questionnaire. The questionnaire was filled in by organizations that profited from EU funding to develop anti-trafficking activities. The aim was to give an overview of recent practices, to locate the strong points of these projects, the examples of good practice, the weak points, the difficulties met as well as to investigate how successful is the EU funding has been, what problems are linked with it and make proposals concerning how it can be improved.

The CAT project has resulted in the compilation of three brochures, the first as outcome of the work in the frame of CAT I, and the second as outcome of CAT II. Both these brochures constitute guides for awareness-raising and social assistance addressed mainly to NGO's and Churches. Each one elaborates more on the issues on which the CAT project focused each time. A third brochure has been prepared in the frame of CAT III, dealing this time with all expressions of trafficking with special focus on trafficking for labour. This brochure constitutes a tool for those wanting to undertake anti-trafficking work, both on practical level and the level of communication and sensitization.

CCME has been further interested in another aspect of trafficking in women, that of the demand side. The demand side and the role of the client or customer is the most controversial issue in relation to trafficking. For long the debates about trafficking focused on two issues, the girls that were considered as the source of their troubles, being either naïve enough to «trust everyone too much», of «loose morals»<sup>1</sup> and the criminal networks. The client remained for long invisible and faceless; it was only recently, mainly under the pressure of feminist movements, that the interest turned to the client, as one component of the trafficking business. However, again the approach was ideologically loaded and one sided. The tendency emerged to charge the client with the largest share of responsibility, putting forward that it is the clients that finance the entire business and sustain the trafficking in women and girls<sup>2</sup>. A reaction that prevailed was that of penalization of clients, this in the frame of a general tendency of our society to solve problems through the discipline-and-punishment model.

What is, however, needed is a balanced approach to the situation, based on real knowledge concerning how the situation is formed. Further, what is of crucial

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<sup>1</sup> *Marttila, Anne-Maria.* (2003) "Consuming Sex - Finnish Male Clients and Russian and Baltic Prostitution", Gender and Power in the New Europe, the 5th European Feminist Research Conference. Lund: Lund University.

<sup>2</sup> *Hughes, Donna M.* (2000) "Man create the demands; Women are the supply: Lecture on sexual exploitation". Valencia, Spain: Queen Sophia Center Against Violence, *Marttila, Anne-Maria.* (2003) "Consuming Sex - Finnish Male Clients and Russian and Baltic Prostitution", Gender and Power in the New Europe, the 5th European Feminist Research Conference. Lund: Lund University.

importance in order to achieve a viable and effective solution, is not the issue of how to attribute responsibilities, but how it can be made possible to work with people to change attitudes and behaviours and destructive practices: as Laura Augustin<sup>3</sup> puts it: «to include ‘the other half’ of the problem in projects of change». Bearing in mind that, among all the parties involved in trafficking, it is all-particular the clients who are in their majority Christians and members of Churches and congregations, the role of the Church emerges as pivotal.

In this frame the CCME has joint the KSPM in a transnational research project co-financed by the European Communities that investigated the perception, understandings, subjective meanings of the clients concerning purchased sex, and their relation with the woman offering sexual services and the trafficked girl. The aim was to understand better this, until recently, unknown factor of trafficking, who is the client and reflect about what is to be done. CCME took over to disseminate the results of the research, both towards policy makers, Churches and NGO's and International Organisations expecting this to contribute towards a better understanding, a better approach to the problem and the elaboration of more pertinent solutions.

2. Advocacy work towards the European institutions. During the years under review, CCME, together with the other civil society members of the Brussels-based anti-trafficking group of the NGO network on Human rights and Democracy have remained in continuous advocacy efforts with the European Institutions. This included: advocacy on EU framework legislation on trafficking in the years 2001-2004, relation with the experts group of the European Commission as well as input to and follow-up regarding the EU action plan against trafficking. Currently CCME is giving input to the Commissions' review of existing legislation. CCME participates in policy debates and further, through the projects it implements, it has raised specific issues concerning trafficking and the combating of trafficking and has communicated them to the Commission.

The CCME has been advocating for the Council's of Europe anti-trafficking convention, for its ratification by the EU and in collaboration with member churches for its ratifications in countries that had not ratified it.

It should also be noted that the lobbying that CCME undertakes, concerning current migration policies and the rights of migrants is of direct or indirect importance for the issue of trafficking, given that an improvement of the conditions of migration, of the possibilities open to migrants and of the rights of migrants counteracts trafficking and renders migrants and potential migrants less vulnerable to exploitation by traffickers. For example, CCME believes that the opening of legal channels of migration will lead in a decrease of trafficking.

3. Networking with Church related organizations, International organizations, European Networks and participation to church based platforms, to discuss issues relative to trafficking and promote solutions.

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<sup>3</sup> *Agustin, Laura*. "2001", *Development, Society for International Development* 44(3): 107-110.

4. Raising the issue among the Churches in countries of origin, transit and destination with the aim: a) To inform, sensitize, raise awareness on the phenomenon of trafficking and induce for action; b) To provide information and technical knowledge for organizing prevention and assistance, particularly towards girls and women trafficked for sexual exploitation or in danger to be trafficked; c) To challenge the moralizing approach that still prevails in many cases and leads to resignation from action, the approach according to which trafficked girls are very few and that victims fall only those of 'dubious morally', the approach of viewing girls merely as 'victims', with no agency and consequently what is needed is just redress of the harm being done, without consideration of their desires, hopes and expectations from migration that have been frustrated; d) To promote alternatively an approach in the frame of which the victims of trafficking are to be understood as subjects of rights, as individuals whose choices are to be respected and the assistance to whom must target in the first place at their empowerment and the creation of the conditions that would allow them to take autonomous, unpressurised and informed decisions.

For promoting the above CCME uses the occasion of seminars and conferences, organized in collaboration with local Churches, particularly in the countries of origin. Among them: a workshop at the 3<sup>rd</sup> European ecumenical assembly in Sibiu last year; the international workshop against trafficking organized in Ukraine together with the World Council of Churches and the Ukrainian Foundation "Faith, Hope, love" in 2007. This has been followed in the next year by a meeting with the Informal network of Eastern European partners of WCC on trafficking in FYROM; The Finnish-Estonian even 'What is the price of a human life' in 2008; Advocacy training in Moldova 2008; The International Seminar 'trafficking in human beings and HIV/AIDS 2008.

5. CCME provided local Churches and their partners (governmental and non governmental) with assistance in their efforts to promote institutional solutions at the national level.

6. CCME is implicated in and undertakes activities of dissemination (of projects outcomes, good practices etc.) and communication addressed to various audiences and interlocutors. It can take place in more informal ways as for example in its contacts with Parliamentarians, politicians, Church representatives, representatives of International organizations etc. Or in more formal ways, as in the case of the campaign to prevent trafficking on the occasion to the Football World Cup in Germany and in the current year through its participation for example in the conference in Dublin on 'the European slave trade', organized by the Irish school of Ecumenics.

7. Preparation of information, sensitization and practice oriented material, mainly in the frame of projects