



La Strada International De Wittenstraat 25 1052 AK Amsterdam T 00 31 (0)20 6881414 F 00 31 (0)20 6881013

With this quarterly newsletter, La Strada International wants to inform and update about developments in the field of trafficking in human beings and on the activities of La Strada International and the La Strada member organisations. We welcome reactions to this initiative and contributions for next issues.

The next deadline is **1 September 2008**. If you have news, information about your organisation, a new report or documentary or an outspoken opinion on (inter)national developments, please contact us at info@lastradainternational.org

Inside this issue:

<p>La Strada News 1</p> <p>La Strada staff changes</p> <p>La Strada Czech Republic completes research projects</p> <p>La Strada Ukraine coordinates national alliance</p>	<p>What's going on? 2</p> <p>EU adopts Returns Directive</p> <p>New UN Rapporteur on trafficking in human beings</p> <p>United States TIP report 2008</p>	<p>What's new? 6</p> <p>UNESCO: Migration Without Borders</p> <p>OSCE: Report on compensation</p> <p>ILO: Exploitation in other sectors</p>	<p>Opinion 8</p> <p>Victoria Nwogu: "Human Trafficking from Nigeria and Voodoo - Any Connections?"</p>
--	--	--	---

La Strada News !

La Strada staff changes

La Strada International is sad to announce the departure of two of its coordinators, Maria de Cock, adjunct director of La Strada Netherlands (CoMensha) and Petra Burcikova, director of La Strada Czech Republic. Maria and Petra both contributed with invaluable expertise and commitment to their La Strada member organisations as well as to the La Strada network as a whole and will be greatly missed.

We warmly welcome Irena Konečná into the La Strada network, who will replace Petra as the new director of La Strada Czech Republic. Irena holds a PhD in special pedagogy and she has previously held chair positions in, amongst others, the Czech Administration of Refugee Facilities. From the Prague headquarters of the organisation 'People in Need', Irena also coordinated educational and social projects in Ethiopia, Pakistan and Namibia. From 7 July, Irena can be contacted at irena@strada.cz. Maria de Cock has taken up the position of a senior consultant with the Dutch research and consultancy agency Kwiz. The recruitment procedure for Maria's replacement is still underway. Furthermore, LSI advisory council member Annie Hillar will join Mama Cash as Director of Programmes as of June this year.

La Strada Ukraine coordinates Alliance against Sexual Exploitation of Children

In February, [La Strada Ukraine](http://lastrada@ukrpack.net) was elected to coordinate the All-Ukrainian Alliance against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children for the year 2008. The first steps planned for the Alliance's activity in 2008 are: a training on safe Internet use by children; the development of the Alliance's Code of Conduct, the establishment of effective and regular information exchange to encourage each member's participation in the alliance, and a meeting of the Alliance's Youth Section. More information is available on request from La Strada Ukraine (lastrada@ukrpack.net).

La Strada Czech Republic completes research projects and publishes results

La Strada Czech Republic has completed three major research projects and published a series of reports and manuals as a result. Firstly, the project *Real alternatives - social inclusion for trafficked and commercially exploited persons*, funded by the European Social Fund and the Government of the Czech Republic, focused on long-term cooperation with trafficked and exploited persons with the aim of exploring employment possibilities and gathering information on policy barriers that may prevent successful social inclusion. The project findings were published in form of a [Manual](#), [Recommendations](#), and a [legal analysis](#), all three analysing social inclusion and providing suggestions for improvement.

During the same period (2006-2008) the project *The Prevention of Human Trafficking among at Risk Groups with Special Emphasis on Institutional Care in the Czech Republic and Slovakia*, was implemented with the Slovak branch of the Czech organisation 'People In Need'. The project was funded by the European Commission's Daphne Programme and also resulted in the publication [It's cool... to know more](#), analysing the risks of the commercial sexual exploitation of children in the context of institutional care.



Finally, the research project *Migration from Vietnam to the Czech Republic in the Context of Human Trafficking and Exploitation*, implemented in 2007 and funded by the Czech government, for the first time connected expert knowledge and experience on the life of the Vietnamese community in the Czech Republic with that of the issue of human trafficking and exploitation. It identified and articulated current problems the Vietnamese community faces and suggests solutions that may contribute to suppress trafficking and exploitation within the same. The Czech version of the resulting report can be downloaded [here](#). An English translation will be available soon. All publications can also be ordered from [La Strada Czech Republic](#).

What's going on ?

Strong protest against Parliament passing the EU Returns Directive

On 18 June, 367 Members of the European Parliament (EP) [voted in favour](#) (with 206 votes against and 109 abstentions) of the [EU Returns Directive](#) (see *Statewatch Analyses* from [January](#) and [April](#)), which sets the detention period of undocumented migrants to 18 months and plans to ban them from re-entering EU territory for five years. The EP has thereby bowed to political pressure from the Council, which had repeatedly stated that if there was no agreement at first reading there would not be a directive at all ([ECRE](#)).

The Directive effectively makes detention a regular administrative tool for managing migrants and allows for the detention of children and deportation of unaccompanied minors. Furthermore, the Directive stands in direct opposition to the alleged EU commitment to fighting root causes of migration and a ["genuine partnership with the third countries concerned"](#), by removing migrants to third-countries without evaluating the risks they may have to face there and by forbidding removed persons access to EU territory for five years after their deportation, therefore "condemning them to a double penalty and to live clandestinely" ([AEDH](#)). Not only human rights advocates have expressed their outrage at what is called by the EP Green Group a ["vote of shame that mocks standards of civilisation"](#). Also presidents of the global South have condemned this inhumane treatment of their citizens and announced possible visa sanctions against EU citizens as a response. [Evo Morales](#), president of Bolivia, makes the link between the international economic system imposed by the EU onto third countries and the treatment of citizens of the South in rich countries. [Souhayr Belhassen](#), president of the International Federation for Human Rights, said: "By adopting this text, the European legislator lets us understand that migrants are not human beings like any other, provided with rights and to whom the States owe obligations. They are dehumanised".

Such a policy is especially untimely in the face of [more than 11.105 refugee deaths](#) that have occurred as a result of the EU's restrictive immigration and asylum policy, documented by the European anti-racist organisation UNITED only in May this year. AEDH therefore rightly questions whether the majority of MEPs are aware of the heavy responsibility for the lives of migrants they took on by passing this Directive.

Further reactions to the EP accepting the Council's Directive were published by [Amnesty International – EU Office](#), and [GUE/NGL group](#), amongst others. Source: [Statewatch news](#), June 2008.

Selection procedure GRETA

On 11 June 2008, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a [Resolution](#) establishing the election procedure of the members of the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA). This Resolution is an important first step in creating an effective and independent mechanism to monitor the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. The procedure aims at guaranteeing the election of 10 to 15 experts in the fields covered by the Convention who will be independent and impartial in their evaluation of the implementation of the Convention by the states parties. Moreover, the election procedure aims at guaranteeing multidisciplinary expertise and a gender and geographical balance in GRETA, as well as representation of the main legal systems.



The governments of the states parties to the Convention (currently Albania, Armenia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Georgia, Latvia, Malta, Moldova, Norway, Portugal, Romania and Slovakia) and those ratifying before the selection procedure starts, have the right to nominate candidates for GRETA membership. The governments may submit at least two candidates, in order to help ensure a gender balance among the members of GRETA, this should be one man and one woman. Member states are free to nominate more than two candidates. Each state party shall ensure that the national selection procedure leading to the nomination of candidates for GRETA is in accordance with published national guidelines or otherwise transparent and designed to lead to the nomination of the most qualified candidates. The nomination closes on 1 October 2008. The Committee of the Parties then shall elect the members of GRETA by 1 February 2009 at the latest.

Together with Anti-Slavery International (ASI) and Amnesty International, LSI has been advocating for the ratification of the Convention by European states and the European Union and pushing for a open and transparent election procedure for the GRETA members. We are satisfied with the resolution, which in our view can ensure an open, inclusive transparent and fair process for the attraction and selection of a gender-balanced pool of highly qualified persons, from a range of backgrounds relevant to the work of GRETA. The three above-mentioned NGOs urge member states to include civil society in the entire national nomination processes. They are also encouraging NGOs in those countries that have ratified the Convention to actively get involved in the national nomination procedures by informing them about the procedures and coordinate civil society actions in their countries.

If your organisation has not been in contact with LSI and ASI and you want to get involved in national nomination procedures for GRETA, please contact us at info@lastradainterantional.org

New UN Rapporteur trafficking in persons

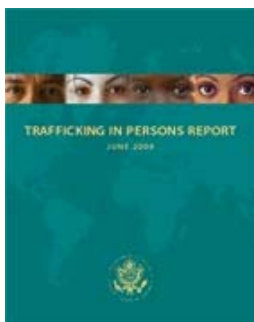
On 18 June 2008, at the 8th session of the UN Human Rights Council, Ms. Joy Ngozi Ezeilo Emekekwe of Nigeria was appointed the new Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children. [On initiative of GAATW](#), La Strada International, together with numerous NGOs, academics and experts in the field of anti-trafficking, had strongly supported Joy Emekekwe's candidacy. Ms. Emekekwe has a strong academic and advocacy background in human rights and a record of grassroots research, as well as experience in working with governments. She has extensive human rights experience in Nigeria, a significant country of origin for women trafficked to Europe, and a destination country for men, women and children trafficked from around West Africa.

The Special Rapporteurship for trafficking in persons was created by the Commission on Human Rights in 2004, to focus on the human rights of trafficked persons. This human rights focus is precisely what is still lacking in the majority of anti-trafficking measures, at both the national and international level. In fact, many human rights violations have occurred as a result of counter-trafficking policies. La Strada International believes that the Special Rapporteur can play a valuable role in identifying the human rights violations that make particular groups, often women and children, vulnerable to trafficking, as well as pinpointing

violations that occur during and after the trafficking process. In addition, the Special Rapporteur can also advise states on how to put the rights of trafficked persons at the centre of anti-trafficking strategies.

La Strada International congratulates Ms. Emekekwe with her appointment and is looking forward to a fruitful cooperation with her, as well as with two other important Rapporteurs, namely, Ms. Gulnara Shahinian, who, since April this year, holds the newly established mandate on contemporary forms of slavery, and with Mr. Jorge Bustamante, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, whose mandate has just been prolonged. See the UNOG [press release](#) for more information on the Council's appointments.

United States TIP report 2008



In early June, Mark Logan, the new ambassador of the US Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, presented the [8th edition of the US TIP report](#) and the first under his directorate. The TIP report was introduced by the Bush administration, which felt the need to evaluate and, if deemed necessary, rebuke other states' domestic policies on trafficking. The 2008 report covers more countries than ever: 170 in total. The report focuses on concrete actions governments have taken to fight trafficking, especially prosecutions, convictions, and prison sentences for traffickers, victim protection measures, and prevention efforts. The report unfortunately does not deal with government efforts that contribute indirectly to reducing trafficking, such as education programmes, support for economic development, or programmes aimed at enhancing gender equality. Countries are divided into three tiers, according to their anti-trafficking efforts, the third tier having negative foreign policy implications for the berated country in its dealings with the US government.

Compared to the first report in 2001, some improvement can be detected. There is an increasing concern for trafficking for forced labour and domestic work and there is recognition that migrant workers can be trafficked even if migrating legally. However, at the same time, the government of Jordan was unfortunately complimented for putting a ban on Filipino women migrating to Jordan with the argument this would prevent their exploitation.

NGOs are worried about the strong focus on prosecutions, convictions and heavy sentences as some countries are now scurrying to improve conviction rates in order to move up the tiers without considering whether the trials are fair and meet international standards. Also, some countries are forcing women to testify because they want to secure convictions.

Even more disturbing are the developments in Cambodia where, in a successful attempt to move one tier up in the ranking, the government has implemented new anti-trafficking legislation that prohibits all forms of prostitution. The police has since conducted a zero-tolerance policy that has resulted in harassment, imprisonment and even to sex workers being gang raped by the police. Bith Kimhong, Anti-Trafficking Chief in the Interior Ministry, said the aim of the sweep was to detain brothel owners and managers for significant periods, with police "re-educating" prostitutes and some male customers. He pledged to investigate the allegations, but also declared he doubted their reliability. The TIP report applauds the government of Cambodia for its new anti-trafficking law, and especially the fact that law enforcement will be much more stringent now. In reaction to this worrying development and in support for Cambodian sex workers, a campaign has been launched by the [Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers](#) to address this issue.

Although there is recognition for trafficking for forced labour, the conflation of trafficking and prostitution remains very much present in this year's TIP report. The report enthusiastically welcomes the closing down of several window brothels in the city of Amsterdam, the Netherlands, and interprets this action as an acknowledgement by the mayor of Amsterdam that the Dutch legalisation of prostitution businesses has failed. However, several [Dutch anti-trafficking organisations have protested](#) against these closures as they fear this will harm both independent sex workers as well as trafficked persons.

Notwithstanding the improvements that have been made, the TIP reports still warrant much criticism. Not only because of the biased standpoints and the sometimes questionable methods of research, but also the concept of one state monitoring, ranking and punishing other states creates a misguided policy context. Several NGOs and Intergovernmental Organisations are openly debating more reliable, transparent and independent global monitoring mechanisms to objectively evaluate both positive and negative effects of anti-trafficking policies.

European Parliament debates trafficking in human beings

In early June, members of the FEMM committee, which focuses on women's rights and gender equality, [debated](#) forced prostitution and trafficking in women for the purpose of sexual exploitation, following oral questions by Ms. Anna Záborská, chair of the committee and a Slovak member of the conservative group 'European People's Party'. The questions concentrated on the implementation by Member States of the European policies against trafficking such as the Action Plan on best practices, standards and procedures for combating and preventing trafficking in human beings and the Directive on short-term residence permits for identified trafficked persons. Commissioner Lazlo Kovács, speaking on behalf of Commissioner Barrot, assured that all Member States bound by the Directive have officially notified the full transposition of the legal instrument to the Commission, with the exception of Spain and Luxembourg. The Commission has decided to refer these two Member States to the European Court of Justice. The implementation of the Action Plan in individual Member States is currently being evaluated and the report is due to be presented by the end of the year.



Several MEPs also expressed the need for the relaunch the European Parliament campaign "Red card to forced prostitution", which was initiated for the FIFA World Cup 2006, for this year's European Football Championship in June in Austria and Switzerland. NGOs in Switzerland are using the UEFA Cup to raise awareness about trafficking, however, concerns have also been [voiced by La Strada](#) and other women's and sex workers' organisations that such campaigns rely on sensationalist images and tend to promote a one-sided victimisation of women and sex workers as a whole.

The parliamentary debate highlighted yet again the [differing viewpoints of MEPs](#) regarding forced prostitution and trafficking. Whereas Ms. Prets from Austria stressed the need for rights for sex workers and the dangers of criminalisation, Ms. Eva-Britt Svensson said the demand side of prostitution should be examined and that clients could be held accountable. But all members stressed the need for better victim protection and prevention and warned against too much focus on migration control. Ms. Hiltrud Breyer from the Green Group was the most outspoken in favour of opening up legal migration channels, arguing these would keep women out of the hands of traffickers.

MEP presents Declaration urging EU to prioritise child trafficking

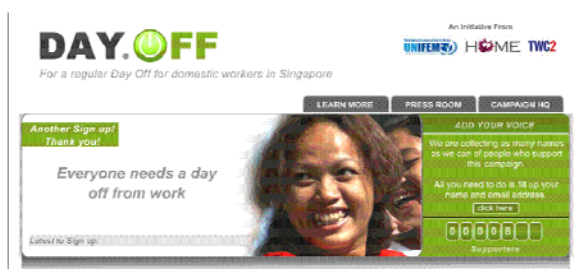
On 4 June, Bulgarian MEP Marusya Lyubcheva presented a [Declaration](#) to European Parliament, urging it to recognise the fight against child trafficking as a priority in national child protection policy; to enhance transnational cooperation; and to support authorities and NGOs to shape adequate responses to prevent, protect and provide adequate treatment to victims. The child rights organisation Terre des Hommes, which is specialised on combating child trafficking, [welcomed the initiative](#) and urged MEPs to sign the declaration, which must get 400 signatures (out of the 785 MEPs) by 9 October 2008 to become official. Currently, 186 MEPs have signed the Declaration. Salvatore Parata from TDHIF Brussels office added that this was the first time the European Parliament is focusing on child trafficking as a priority in the perspective of a future EU strategy on the rights of the child. "This shows that the EU is progressively addressing child trafficking as a specific policy area, and not only as a sub-category of trafficking in persons", he stated.

SIREN (Strategic Information Response Network) welcomes partnerships

SIREN, an information centre delivering data and analysis on issues within the human trafficking sector in the Greater Mekong Sub-region, is now broadening its focus to include counter-trafficking issues beyond this region and has made links with projects in Europe. SIREN is an initiative of [UNIAP](#), which was established in June 2000 to facilitate a stronger and more coordinated response to human trafficking in Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. At a regional level, UNIAP brings together governments, UN agencies and international NGOs. More specifically, [SIREN](#) conveys information to the human counter-trafficking sector in the form of briefing reports, analytical field reports, case studies, maps, and data sheets, which can be downloaded from their website, as well as discussion forums and events.



'One day off' for domestic workers in Singapore

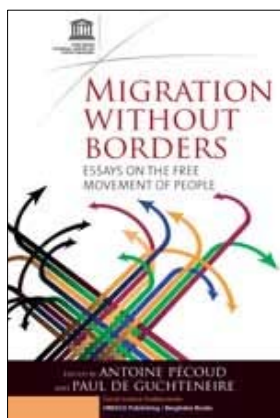


Transient Workers Count Too (TWC2), a Singapore-based member of the *Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW)* - together with UNIFEM Singapore and Humanitarian Organisation for Migration Economics - launched a [DAY.OFF campaign](#) to rally support for a regular day off for domestic workers in Singapore. Already in 2005, news that foreign domestic workers may become entitled to one day off a month created international attention and disbelief of the fact that it is

common for domestic workers not to be allowed out at all, amongst others, for fear that they might become pregnant. Currently, an employer must pay a government fee, in addition to food, housing and medical care - and repatriate any maid who becomes pregnant. Many employers regard these impositions as reason to deprive women workers of basic labour and individual rights. A [2003 newspaper poll](#) showed that 50 percent of domestic workers got no days off, and only 10 percent got one day a week.

What's new ?

Discussing the right to mobility: Migration Without Borders



The right 'to leave' a country, laid down in Article 13 (2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, has no corresponding right 'to enter' a country. This apparent contradiction has produced a publication, edited by Antoine Pécoud and Paul de Guchteneire, two UNESCO programme specialists, on international migration entitled '[Migration Without Borders - Essays on the Free Movement of People](#)'. The book attempts to explore the scenario of a world where migration knows no borders. Given the current context of strict border controls and a heightened social and political awareness of the issue, this scenario of a world where each person would be free to move around from one country to another and settle wherever he or she chooses, may appear somewhat utopian. But today's Utopia could become tomorrow's reality and this publication attempts to analyse the ethical and economic challenges as well as the social consequences of totally free movement all over the world.

Labour migration and trafficking from Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova to the Russian Federation

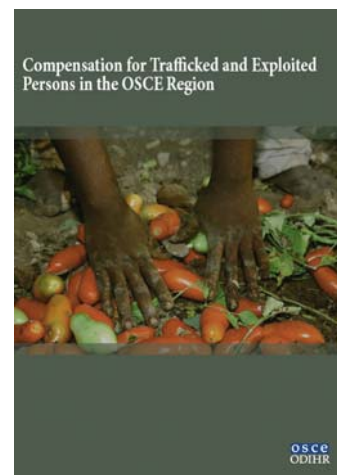
"Labour Migration from Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova to Russian Federation: tendencies and relations with trafficking in human beings", published by La Strada Ukraine, contains results of a research conducted in 2007 in cooperation, with La Strada Belarus and La Strada Moldova. The book indicates trends of labour migration from Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus and its relation to trafficking in human beings, and analyses relevant migration policies and state action against trafficking in human beings. One of the chapters provides results of interviews with successful migrants and migrants who suffered from trafficking in human beings, presents comparative data on the behaviour of labour migrants from Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus and identifies risks. For more information, contact La Strada Ukraine (lastrada@ukrpack.net).

Demand, exploitation and trafficking in sectors other than the sex industry

The Working Paper "[Forced labour and trafficking in Europe: how people are trapped in, live through and come out](#)", written by Beate Andrees, is based on ILO research carried out between 2003 and 2007 and summarises largely qualitative research from ten European source, transit and destination countries. The project aims to close a gap in current research that exists up to today: Most trafficking-related research, in particular primary research, focuses on trafficking of women for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The main purpose of this paper is to shed light on coercive labour practices in these mainstream economic sectors, while not neglecting the particular situation of women and minors in the sex industry. The paper analyses different stages in the trafficking cycle by looking into the pre-migration situation, recruitment practices, means of coercion, and exit strategies for migrants trapped in forced labour.

ODIHR Report on compensation for trafficked persons

The report "[Compensation for trafficked and exploited persons in the OSCE region](#)", by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) analyses the right to compensation for trafficked persons and how it is implemented in eight different OSCE states, namely, Albania, France, Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and the United States. The report looks at compensation options in civil and criminal courts and labour tribunals and presents recommendations to improve compensation mechanisms. It finds that while compensation mechanisms exist in all countries in the study, only a small minority of trafficked persons actually made claims for compensation and been granted awards, and still fewer have actually received the compensation payment. The research identifies a number of barriers which can be removed to improve access. The authors conclude that States can do much to enhance access by ensuring that a variety of methods to secure compensation are available to all types of trafficked persons. By way of future action, States need to review their current compensation mechanisms and determine whether these are delivering justice to trafficked persons.



Sixth national report on human trafficking

The sixth report on human trafficking by the Dutch [National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings in the Netherlands](#) predominantly contains updated statistics up to and including the year 2006, on identified trafficked persons, registered suspected perpetrators and sentenced traffickers. Although the report contains little qualitative data, the Rapporteur, Corinne Dettmeijer-Vermeulen, notes some disappointing results of the first court cases on trafficking outside of the sex industry. Some substantive rights were improved with regard to residency rights of identified victims. Furthermore, a Task Force Human Trafficking was set up, but unfortunately does not involve NGOs. The report is available for [download](#), as yet only in Dutch.

What's happening where ?

- **2-5 September. Berlin, Germany.** LSI and Anti Slavery International consultation on compensation.
- **3-5 September. Paris, France.** 61st Annual United Nations DPI/NGO Conference: "Reaffirming Human Rights For All: The Universal Declaration at 60". [UN DPI NGO Section](#), [NGO/DPI Executive Committee](#).
- **10-11 September. Helsinki, Finland.** OSCE conference on successful prosecution of trafficking in human beings and victims' access to justice, organised by the Finnish OSCE Chairmanship in cooperation with the [OSCE Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings](#).
- **11-13 September. Madrid, Spain.** Third World Social Forum on Migration ([FSMM](#)) "Our voices, our rights".
- **18 October - European anti-trafficking day**
- **8-18 October. Vienna, Austria.** [Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime](#) (TOC). Participation deadline: 31 July 2008.
- **23-24 October. Vienna, Austria.** Celebration of the 10th anniversary of LEFÖ's Intervention Point for Trafficked Women ([LEFÖ-IBF](#)).
- **25-26 October. Vienna, Austria.** Regional [GAATW](#) meeting.
- **27-30 October. Manila, Philippines.** Global Forum on Migration and Development "Protecting and Empowering Migrants for Development", [Government Meeting](#) (28-29), [Civil Society Days](#) (27-28).
- **October (date not published). Vienna, Austria.** [OSCE](#) Technical Seminar on Trafficking for Labour Exploitation Focusing on the Agricultural Sector.
- **October (date not published). Vienna, Austria.** [OSCE](#) Follow-up Technical Seminar to the 6th [Alliance against Trafficking in Persons](#) Conference on National Rapporteurs and Equivalent Mechanisms.
- **14-17 November. Cape Town, South Africa.** [11th AWID International Forum on Women's Rights and Development](#).
- **25-28 November. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.** [World Congress III Against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents](#).

What's on your mind ?



Human Trafficking from Nigeria and Voodoo. Any Connections ?

Victoria Nwogu is a Programme Specialist with UNIFEM in Nigeria where she works on Gender Equality in Governance and Migration in West Africa.

The human trafficking phenomenon has been globally accepted to affect all countries of the world to varying degrees [1]. The differences lie in the mode of operations of traffickers, the sectors into which people are trafficked, the natures of exploitation and the manner in which traffickers exert control over their victims. In Nigeria, the use of spiritual ritual oaths to secure compliance from victims to the terms of a migration arrangement is unique. This involvement of the supernatural never ceases to elicit awe from European service providers, media and government agents alike [2]. Practitioners on the Nigerian end are short of solutions for the supernatural control over victims by their traffickers.

A clear understanding of the supernatural control will never come easy because spiritual beliefs play an important role in the lives of Africans [3]. But it is equally important to understand what kinds of supernatural forces come into play in enslaving victims of trafficking, the effectiveness of such forces in ensuring enslavement and whether anything at all can be done to mitigate the snare of these forces on victims of human trafficking. This kind of discourse is important to prevent the trend of portraying whole religious beliefs as being responsible for trafficking, and that of denying trafficked victims who are under such forces the empathy they deserve.

Ritual oaths as part of the human trafficking process became popular when it was discovered as an integral tool of coercion in Nigeria's Edo and Delta states to increase pressure on young female migrants leaving the country to follow orders (often to earn money in the sex industry) once they arrived in the country of destination. It is important to distinguish between 'voodoo' and 'ritual oaths'. Voodoo is a religion (which includes ritual oaths in its practices) while a ritual oath is a seal placed on an agreement through rituals binding both parties to the terms of the agreement on pain of supernatural retaliation. Oaths as part of traditional religious beliefs are often administered in a ritual ceremony and their potency relies on securing an item of clothing or body part from the person on whom the oath is being administered and placing them in a concoction of other 'magical' items such as the blood of animals, kola nuts, water, palm oil, earth taken from a graveyard, alcohol and herbs. Some favoured body parts include hair, blood, nails and teeth; to make the ritual more ominous, items could be taken from intimate parts of the body.

European media often use the term 'voodoo' to refer to situations where a ritual oath has been used to exert control over a victim of trafficking, with sensationalist headlines such as "Voodoo Child Prostitution Ring Busted ..." [4]. The suggestion of such headlines is that victims are transported abroad under spells (creating a picture of trance-like zombies being herded like cattle without willpower to protest). But practitioners and care providers cannot reconcile the fact that many victims of trafficking, even though they have taken an oath, are not in fact voodoo worshippers [5]. In some cases, migration pacts are sealed with prayer rituals in Pentecostal Churches. In other instances, the ritual oath is also designed to protect the victim from harm as well as make her more desirable to customers. Reports have even found that, whether a ritual oath is involved or not, many victims are willing to follow their traffickers to an unknown destination on the expectation of easy wealth or a better life. This shows an initial willingness on both sides to engage in the migratory transaction. Whatever pact is made, in the long run it is meant to ensure that the 'protégé' does not outsmart their 'benefactor' upon reaching the foreign land [6].

The misuse of the term voodoo by the European media to describe the practice of the ritual oaths that traffickers put their victims through suggests that voodoo in itself is evidence of deviance or crime and ignores the underlying causes of the trafficking problem. This attitude could have the effect of hampering real efforts to find a lasting solution to human trafficking. The issues at stake are the prevalence of poverty and desperation, limited opportunities for legitimate migration and the fact that governments are not doing

enough to address the underlying reasons that impose the need to migrate on the most vulnerable. Perhaps the label 'voodoo' is used because it is more sensationalist and likely to generate more news attention, but the fact remains that its misuse causes more harm to the trafficked persons than good.

In North Western Burkina Faso, rituals for supernatural protection are an essential part of the routine for children migrating away from home. Mike Dottridge [7] proposes, and I fully agree, that in view of the poor protection that European governments afford to African immigrants, one might indeed suggest that people should seek supernatural protection before embarking for Europe.

[1] Amnesty International USA, *Stop Violence Against Women Campaign*, <http://www.amnestyusa.org/violence-against-women/end-human-trafficking/page>

[2] Jørgen Carling, 2005, *Trafficking in Women from Nigeria to Europe*, Migration Information Source, <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm>

[3] Mike Dottridge, 2005, *Preliminary Classification of the types of Forced Labour Occurring in Africa*, published in *Cahiers d'études africaines*, XLV (3-4), 179-180, 2005, pp 689-712 (edited by Roger Botte).

[4] <http://scaredmonkeys.com/2007/10/25/voodoo-child-prostitution-ring-busted-20-arrested-in-netherlands-ny-and-europe/>, news item on the discovery of Nigerian victims of trafficking.

[5] ECPAT UK, 2001, *What the Professionals Know; Trafficking of Children into and Through the UK for Sexual Purposes*. Although this report attempts in an early footnote to clarify the fact that the use of the word 'voodoo' as a generic term to describe ritual ceremonies may not embody what experts in traditional religion mean when they refer to 'voodoo', its continued usage of the term throughout the report suggests an endorsement for this manner of usage.

[6] Jørgen Carling, 2005, *ibid*.

[7] Former Director Anti-Slavery International and expert on child trafficking and the rights of migrant children, email conversation on 10 June 2008.

In 2008, La Strada International receives its main structural financial support from the Dutch Foundations DOEN, ICCO and CORDAID and the Sigrid Rausing Trust. La Strada members are supported by various other donors. We greatly appreciate financial support from private donors for our work. For more information on how you can contribute to La Strada's work see, [please consult our website](#).