

## SHOUTING FOR LIFE Builds Networks

By Sister Betsy Mary Flynn, SNDdeN

Brazil will host the World Cup in June-July 2014 and the Olympics in 2016. Mega sports events increase the market for human trafficking. On January 9, 2014, *The Guardian* predicted increased child sex trade: *Brazil's Child Sex Trade Soars as 2014 World Cup Nears*. The Church in Brazil has chosen human trafficking for the theme of the

Lenten Campaign. Catholics throughout the country will study, pray and take action against human trafficking during this season.

Since 2009, religious Congregations from different countries have organized in small groups globally for education awareness, prevention,



Sisters Josineide Maria da Silva and Maria Tecla da Silva Gaia, SNDdeN join with other Religious Congregations to distribute anti-trafficking literature in the public plaza in Belém.

denouncement of human trafficking, and the protection of actual and potential victims. In Brazil, Sisters of Notre Dame serve with an anti-trafficking group, called **SHOUTING FOR LIFE**, known in Portuguese as *Grupo Grito pela Vida*. This movement:

- **ORGANIZES** reflection groups which study causes and situations of human trafficking;
- **EDUCATES** others about its factual reality to increase the network of those combating trafficking;
- **PARTICIPATES** in social and political mobilizations against trafficking.

The word “grito” reminds Brazilians of the cries of the people in the Book of Exodus in their long walk from slavery to freedom.

## HUMAN TRAFFICKING A Long History

Today, human beings are still bought and sold like merchandise. With false promises, big promotions in so-called “supermarkets” draw young women on weekends to be transported to male work areas and sold for moments of sexual pleasure, at bargain sales with differing prices for specific beauty criteria. A highly organized, deceptive and almost invisible criminal network uses mostly women and children, and men also, in generating an annual profit of 32 billion US dollars. Traffickers exploit individuals living in poverty who dream of a better life. Traffickers pay airfare, promise work in another country, create a system of debts, confiscate passports limiting an individual’s freedom and tragically sell human beings for sexual pleasure, night after night. When individuals are no longer useful as sex objects, this coercive network sells their body organs.



Fortaleza group of Grito joins with nucleus to combat trafficking and together they disseminate leaflets.

## ACTION Through Networks

Women and men religious form networks to share experiences and understandings of trafficking. Often we are surprised by the following experiences of trafficking:

- ⊘ a mother approached in a shopping mall by a man who offered to buy her daughter;
- ⊘ a teacher whose adolescent students sent provocative photos to Facebook;
- ⊘ a young man from the interior brought to the city to do construction for the World Cup and offered by his supervisor a weekend of imported sexual entertainment;
- ⊘ a young woman whose sister, leaving everything to marry the prince of her dreams, found herself alone in a brothel in Spain.

We realize gradually that trafficking is not far from our life experience. The buying and selling of human persons, especially women and children is a growing reality in our world. Our group sharing builds on what we already know, and challenges us to do something about trafficking. Building support systems through networking is a necessary strategy!

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# DENOUNCE HUMAN TRAFFICKING

## BRAZILIAN SISTERS Speak and Act

Sr. Josineide Maria da Silva, SNDdeN is a member of the *Group Grito pela Vida* in Belém, State of Para. When asked about the existence of trafficking there, Sr. Josi replied, *“Most certainly... Belém is a city with many vulnerable communities on the outskirts, in low-income areas where vulnerability is a strong factor making trafficking a reality in our midst.”* Sr. Josi added: *“We do work at prevention; we go to the public plazas to alert the population about the existence of trafficking in our state. We also inform them of hotlines to denounce cases of trafficking.”* Sr. Maria Tecla da Silva Gaia, SNDdeN contributes also by preparing audio visual presentations to educate youth in Belém about trafficking.

### NETWORK DYNAMIC



Using a ball of string, we form a circle. A person holding the ball of string, gives her/his name, shares a concern or experience related to trafficking and throws the ball to another person who repeats a similar sharing. The process continues. Some add reasons for participating. Together, we create a visual network in which we learn each person's experience with trafficking. Communicating through tugging the string; the group moves forward together by securing, loosening or tightening the string. We learn how the network changes when a person drops her piece. If we do not have enough string, we tie a knot. We experience strength in personal sharing and value in networking together against human trafficking.

These young people accompanying the members of the Group distribute materials which provide information on strategies of trafficking. Fortaleza, Ceará, a site city for world cup games, is considered Brazil's child prostitution capital and a magnet for sex tourism. Fortaleza also has the highest record for calls to the hotline for child sexual exploitation than any other city. Operators suspect involvement of taxi drivers, bars and some hotels in the beach area. The Human Rights Secretariat coordinates a national program against the sexual exploitation of children. Joseleno Viera dos Santos says: *“We're worried sexual exploitation will increase in the host cities and around them...with the actions for the World Cup...we hope to...implement long-lasting programs in the future.”*

**Sisters of Notre Dame in Brazil are collaborating with others to build networks, nurture existing ones, organize and share our gifts as educators in counteracting the evils of trafficking.** In networking with our Sisters in Africa, we learned that a nationally organized campaign and community prayer were significant preparation for the World Cup in South Africa. Religious congregations organized groups to distribute materials in various languages denouncing trafficking for fans arriving at the airport for the World Cup in South Africa. In Brazil, we hear the cries of the most vulnerable in the most unexpected places. We take courage and have confidence that God is with us in these complicated times.



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