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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

## **Written statement\* submitted by Associazione Comunita Papa Giovanni XXIII, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[03 June 2019]

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\* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



## The importance of social inclusion for survivors of trafficking

Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII (APG23) welcomes the thematic report A/HRC/41/46 of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, Ms Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, prepared pursuant to Council resolution 35/5, and we thank the Special Rapporteur for all the efforts made for this report.

### The Special Rapporteur states that:

“Commonly, trafficked persons who have been subjected to sexual, labour or any other form of exploitation face loss of self-esteem, marginalization and humiliation, which further isolates them from families and communities and increases their vulnerability, exposing them to the risk of being re-victimized or re-trafficked or falling prey to other criminal activities.”<sup>1</sup>

“Assistance provided to trafficked persons should therefore not only be aimed at removing them from their trafficking situations, but should also ensure their personal safety, agency, empowerment and independence in the long run. (omissis) States have the duty to adopt and implement long-term solutions to ensure the social inclusion of survivors into society. In the absence of viable long-term social inclusion options, it will be more difficult to break the cycle of trafficking and re-trafficking”.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, APG23 totally agrees on this. Our Association, whose activities and initiatives involve direct sharing with the poorest and most vulnerable people, with the intent to alleviate their suffering in the short term but also to remove the causes of marginalisation and injustice, has gained a lot of experience with victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. We can testify that trafficked women have deep “psychological scars” that should be addressed to. The first step for social inclusion is to empower these women starting with the recognition of their inherent dignity developing with them a relationship of trust and offering a chance to rebuild a new future.

It was with the desire to empower and give freedom to women, slaves into prostitution, that APG23 started its work in the '80s, through different street units in all regions of Italy. By meeting women in the streets, we discovered that all of them are slaves and victims of trafficking; forced into prostitution for exploitation or other economic reasons.

APG23 started to welcome them in their family homes, in protected structures, in order to support them, to help them to rebuild themselves and to plan a better future. During all these years APG23 has implemented a lot of specific projects and initiatives of social inclusion for survivors of prostitution, sexual exploitation and trafficking. In all these projects it is always crucial the recognition of the dignity of the women and the necessity to ensure the fulfilment of all their human rights through their integration and also by addressing the root causes that prevent their achievement.

APG23 is supporter of the so called “Nordic Model”; a political and cultural approach that claims to defend gender equality rejecting the idea that woman and children, mostly girls, are commodities that can be bought, sold and sexually exploited by men. Addressing the root causes means to stop the demand, punishing the clients that support trafficking and sexual exploitation buying sex on the streets.

In the struggle against human trafficking and slavery, on the 17th January 2019, the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development of the Holy See presented the "Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking".<sup>3</sup> This document - inspired by the thought and teachings of Pope Francis - has the aim to raise awareness about the causes of the exploitation of human beings; it recalls

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<sup>1</sup> A/HRC/41/46 p.3.

<sup>2</sup> A/HRC/41/46 p.4.

<sup>3</sup> <https://migrants-refugees.va/documents/en/email/pastoral-orientations-on-human-trafficking.pdf>.

also the responsibility of each person and raises questions about a market that feeds on a diverse demand.

In this important document it is clearly stated that: “People who generate the demand share real responsibility for the destructive impact of their behaviour on other human persons, and for the moral values violated in the process. To reduce the demand that drives human trafficking, accountability, prosecution and punishment are needed along the entire chain of exploitation, from the recruiters and traffickers to the consumers. We cannot become distracted: we are all called to leave behind any form of hypocrisy, facing the reality that we are part of the problem.”<sup>4</sup>

All women we met on the streets are trekked with the promise of a better future. Once they leave their country of origin, they are caught in the trap of trafficking and sexual exploitation. Not only they lose their hope for a better future but they also are mentally and physically destroyed by outdoor and indoor prostitution.

To help victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation, they must be free and also they have to take part in social inclusion programmes that allow them to rebuild their life. Women empowerment can't be achieved in a culture that allows the violation of the woman's dignity as if she and her body were objects.

In our experience girls and women forced into prostitution come from geographical areas where gender inequality and violence are spread at both familiar and social level. Even education is interrupted due to the lack of economic resources, the promise of easy money from exploiters or social media. Therefore a real social inclusion will be achieved only by changing this kind of culture. We need a change of paradigm from a culture of machismo to a gender equality society.

As stated by the Special Rapporteur: “Social inclusion of trafficked persons requires the provision of long-term measures aimed at restoring their physical and psychological well-being and concurrently promoting their participation in the economic, social, cultural and political life of society, in line with every individual's aspirations. Sensitizing families and societies to the importance of social inclusion is imperative in order for trafficked persons to be able to build renewed social relations with intimate partners, families and communities.”<sup>5</sup>

As reiterated into the document “Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking”<sup>6</sup>: “Much more needs to be done on the level of raising public consciousness and effecting a better coordination of efforts by governments, the judiciary, law enforcement officials and social workers”.<sup>7</sup>

In her report, Ms Giammarinaro describes a lot of good practices and programmes for a successful and sustainable social inclusion of survivors. Empowerment and meaningful participation are key elements of all these practice and programmes.

We need to put into effect a strategy for ensuring greater awareness on the subject, breaking the veil of indifference that seems to cover the destiny of this portion of humanity. States should establish or improve long term programmes and mechanisms for protecting, rehabilitating and reintegrating survivors with a real social inclusion.

Promoting social inclusion of trafficked persons is the way to promote full participation in society for all these persons, for their own wellness, but also for the common good and the future of our societies.

Finally, APG23 would like to thank the Special Rapporteur for her country visit in Nigeria and for her report A/HRC/41/46/Add. 1, presented during this 41 session of the Human Rights Council.

<sup>4</sup> Holy See Document “Pastoral Orientation on Human Trafficking” 2019, p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> A/HRC/41/46 p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> <https://migrants-refugees.va/documents/en/email/pastoral-orientations-on-human-trafficking.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Pope Francis, Greeting of to the Second European Assembly of RENATE, 7 November 2016.

We would like to thank especially the Special Rapporteur for the references made to the use by traffickers of threats of “voodoo curses” (juju) to manipulate victims, especially women and girls, and force them into exploitative situations. We underline the importance of recommendation n. 89 b) where the Special Rapporteur recommends that the Government: “Continue to engage with traditional and religious leaders to halt the practice of juju and the oath of secrecy and any other form of collusion with traffickers, following the successful initiative of Oba Ewuare II of Benin.”<sup>8</sup>

The initiative of Oba Ewuare II of Benin, who released victims of trafficking from their oath of secrecy and placed a curse on traffickers, has produced unprecedented results and proven to have a great impact on the lives of thousands of women and girls in Nigeria and abroad. It is indeed important that the Government continue to engage with traditional and religious leaders and make use of their positive influence by replicating such initiatives across all regions affected by trafficking in persons.

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<sup>8</sup> A/HRC/41/46/Add. 1, p. 18.