



# ACTIVITY REPORT 2007

## *Networking and cooperation*

Aiming to develop global dimension of the Network, significant efforts over the year were put to enhance networking with anti-trafficking actors worldwide.

### **Asia Pacific**

Meetings were held with Australian partners that joined COATNET in 2006: NCCA/CWS (National Council of Churches in Australia/Christian World Service), Sisters of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart and Sisters of the Good Samaritans. The situation with regard to human trafficking and strategies used to combat it in Europe and Australia, as well as COATNET activities, were discussed during meetings with representatives of the New South Wales Ecumenical Council (NSWEC), Australian Catholic Social Justice Council (ACSJC), Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office, Anti-Slavery Project, Salvation Army, Asylum Seekers Network Australia Inc., Project Respect and members of Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans (ACRATH). This valuable exchange assisted easier communication with Australian partners in future.

COATNET established regular exchange of information and publications with the Asia Partnership for Human Development (APHD), an association of Catholic development agencies from Asia, Europe, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. In addition, contact was made with the Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism (ECOT), a Thailand based coalition of Regional Ecumenical Organisations around the world, including the Christian Conference of Asia, Pacific Conference of Churches, Middle East Council of Churches and All Africa Conference of Churches.

The Network welcomed three new users with a vast anti-trafficking expertise, two of which are Asian: a Thai Sister of the Good Shepherd Congregation, managing Fountain of Life Women' Centre, Caritas Sri Lanka and Caritas Italiana.

### **Africa**

Discussions were conducted regarding the ways of COATNET participation and assistance in the organization of the West Africa Regional Awareness Workshop on Child Trafficking scheduled to take place in April 2008 in Ghana.

### **Latin America**

COATNET was introduced to Movimiento El Pozo (Peru) and Projeto Trama (Brazil) that work to prevent human trafficking and assist trafficked persons in Latin America.

### **Cooperation with the Religious**

COATNET shared its experience of networking between faith-based organisations and on networking online at a five-day Training Seminar: "The Prophetic Role of Women Religious in the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons" that took place on 15-20 October in Rome, Italy, and brought together 33 nuns already active in the field of human trafficking from 26 different congregations operating in the countries of 6 regions (Asia-Pacific, Africa, North America, South America, Western and Eastern Europe).

The seminar was organised by the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See and the Italian Union of Major Superiors (USMI) with the aim of launching an international, inter-congregational religious anti-trafficking network and strengthening networking mechanisms and communications skills among nuns addressing trafficking in persons in countries of origin, transit and destination.



*Participants of the Training Seminar "The Prophetic Role of Women Religious in the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons"*

COATNET will actively cooperate with the newly established International Network of Religious Against Trafficking In Persons (INRATIP), as well as with the Union of the European Conferences of the Major Superiors (UCESM) and UNANIMA - a coalition of congregations of women religious and their partners supporting the work of the United Nations in their home countries.

COATNET also contributed theological resources and materials on migration and trafficking to the *World Council of Churches'* new Global Platform: "Finding Sanctuary: migration, community and the churches" for theological reflection and analysis.

In November, *the Union of Superiors General and Caritas Internationalis* declared their commitment to work together and called on their members around the world to consolidate their collaboration in countering trafficking in human beings. USG/UISG and Caritas believe that an alliance between religious congregations and church based organisations will further strengthen advocacy work in favour of trafficked persons and will broaden the range of resources for people engaged at the practical level in ministry to them. The alliance would work for the benefit of the victims of trafficking by enhancing the transnational channels of prevention and assistance accessible to them.

## *Communications*

### **COATNET online**

COATNET internal communication portal - *extranet* - has been updated by 180 inputs with information about COATNET events, activities and internal documents (Users' Directory, draft database of prevention practices, updated database of Christian organizations that provide assistance

to trafficked person and a questionnaire designed to evaluate its usage), information about Network's users and their ongoing work, updates from other anti-trafficking networks, such as La Strada, International Organisation for Migration, Anti-Slavery International, Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women, developments in anti-trafficking field at the level of CoE and EC, country news and other various reports, publications and articles.

COATNET *website* [www.coatnet.org](http://www.coatnet.org) was further improved by creating a new subpage on trafficking situation in the Netherlands and new section containing Pastoral letters on the issue of human trafficking. The website was also updated with press releases and articles about COATNET events and activities (e.g., statement published on the first EU Anti-Trafficking Day, COATNET Annual Users' Meeting and a workshop on transnational cooperation in assistance provision, etc.). And finally, information on the Ukrainian subpage, sections "COATNET in the world" and "Trafficking in human beings" were brought up to date.

### **Public profile**

The public profile of COATNET was increased through the presentation of its activities and dissemination at various events and meetings of newly published COATNET flyers and annual report for 2006 to various external stakeholders, among which were international anti-trafficking networks, research institutions, national organisations, EU institutions, as well as, newspaper and radio journalists.

COATNET users also actively contributed to an increase of the Network's public profile. As several examples, COATNET was mentioned by:

- Caritas Lebanon Migrants' Centre in the article about COATNET Annual Users' Meeting 2007, published in Caritas Lebanon's internal journal; in the final report of one of EC- funded projects entitled: "Protection for the Human Rights of Asylum-seekers and Migrant Workers in Lebanon"; in an interview on Radio 1812 on the occasion of the First European Day for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings; in an intervention on the occasion of a reflection on "Migration and Development", organized by Caritas Europa in May 2007 in Brussels; during the Civil Society Day of the Global Forum on Migration and Development, organized by the King Baudouin Foundation in July 2007 in Brussels;

- Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) at the Conference "The European Slave Trade", Irish School of Ecumenics, July 2007, Dublin; annual meeting of Council of European Bishops' Conferences' (CCEE) national directors on migration, September 2007, Sibiu; Anti-trafficking workshop at the 3<sup>rd</sup> European Ecumenical Assembly, September 2007; Regional Anti-trafficking workshop organized by CCME and foundation "Faith, hope, love", October 2007, Kiev;

- Caritas India included in the PAN Asia Anti Human Trafficking Programme of Asia Partnership for Human Development how COATNET has brought many partners addressing the issue, operating in different parts of the world and how it enriches its members through information and experience sharing. COATNET is a priority international network for collaboration for PAN Asia Anti Human Trafficking Programme;

- Good Shepherd Sisters in Thailand mentioned COATNET to Sisters in East Asia province and to the Major Superiors Conference of Thai and Laos;

- Caritas Luxembourg informed the state working group on combating trafficking in human beings about COATNET activities;

- Caritas Bosnia Herzegovina and Caritas Albania at their regional anti-trafficking conference, organized in Sarajevo, November 2007.

## *Annual Users' Meeting*

11-13 October 2007, in Beirut, Lebanon, COATNET organised its fourth Annual Users' Meeting. The meeting's organisation outside Europe was a significant sign of the Network's growing global dimension. The participants of the meeting had a unique opportunity to gain exposure to the specific migration and trafficking realities in Lebanon and responses to the problem, as well as to dialogue on issues of trafficking prevention, assistance provision to trafficked persons and transnational cooperation. Interactions between users were prompted by speeches and presentations of invited Church, governmental, and international non-governmental representatives.

Among the main elements recommended by the participants in the deliberations about the future directions of COATNET was the consolidation of all Catholic actors active in the anti-trafficking field, followed by the reinforcement of the existing ecumenical dimension at the national and subsequently international levels and heading towards COATNET decentralization.



*Opening session of the Annual Users' Meeting*

## *Steering Group meetings*

COATNET Steering Group met four times over the year to provide guidance regarding the development and operation of the Network; review progress made and report back to Caritas Europa Executive Board. In order to contribute to a sense of ownership among users and contribute to their stronger participation in decision-making process, a representative of the Network's users from SRTV (Dutch Foundation of Religious Against Trafficking in Women) has joined the Steering Group.

## *Prevention*

Four prevention practices reflecting national responses to human trafficking were submitted by Caritas Armenia, Irish Ad Hoc Working Group, Caritas Ukraine and Caritas Albania, and processed for inclusion into *the pool of good prevention practices*. The submitted practices fall into the category of “awareness raising” actions aimed to promote safe migration, prevent illegal migration, lobby for anti-trafficking policies’ improvement and sensitise state authorities and religious organisations to the issue of trafficking with the purpose of bringing them closer to cooperation. The prevention practices were summarized and evaluated against the criteria established in the good practice pool.

The task force on prevention during their meeting in Beirut declared to continue the development of good practices’ pool and identification of common problems in prevention work through active communication and information exchange by means of email correspondence, teleconferences and meetings.

## *Assistance*

COATNET *workshop on transnational cooperation in assistance provision* was organised on 10-11 October 2007 in Beirut, Lebanon. Its aim was to build users’ capacity in transnational assistance provision. The main speakers presented their experience in rendering transnational and national assistance to trafficked persons; provided examples of the tools created to organize voluntary return; gave an overview of underlying principles for the assistance of trafficked persons; and based on those principles, emphasized some gaps and issues in practical implementation of anti-trafficking interventions.

In working groups, the participants further elaborated on the principles and standards for transnational cooperation in assistance based on the experience of COATNET partners and various anti-trafficking organisations and networks. A human rights approach towards assistance provision was put at the centre of all discussions around the principles’ development in order to ensure that “rescue” operation do not further harm the rights and dignity of trafficked persons. The workshop will significantly facilitate users’ cooperation for assistance across borders and will contribute to more qualitative and qualified services provided by COATNET users to trafficked persons.

COATNET continued to maintain, update and raise awareness about the *database of Christian organisations providing assistance to trafficked persons*. A survey of the database, launched to evaluate the use by COATNET partners, showed that the database is being frequently referred to not only by direct service providers, but also by organizations offering financial and methodological support to assistance organizations. It was revealed that eight persons were assisted by means of the database. In addition to serving the needs of the Network’s users, the database proved to be useful in the facilitation of contacts and communication between external organisations or individuals and COATNET representatives in countries of origin, transit and destination.

## *Advocacy*

Over the year lobbying with UN and European institutions at the level of the EU and the Council of Europe has continued to gain importance.

### **Advocacy at European level**

Advocacy of COATNET at European level was implemented through the Network’s continued representation in *EU Experts’ Group on Trafficking in Human Beings* in close consultation with the users. Being regularly informed about the activities of EU Experts’ Group, COATNET European partners have been in a unique position to influence EU decision-makers on key anti-trafficking issues and provide their comments on the documents under construction (e.g., a manual on indicators for monitoring anti-trafficking policy implementation).

In addition, current advocacy concerns of COATNET users were collected and communicated to OSCE Special Representative on Trafficking in Human Beings.

On the occasion of the *1st EU-wide Anti-trafficking Day* organised on 18 October, COATNET users have contributed to the elaboration of a press statement, published by Caritas Europa. The statement, as well as other initiatives of the Network’s partners on the Anti-trafficking Day, can be found at the websites of COATNET or Caritas Europa.

COATNET users’ engagement in advocacy actions around the *Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings* was further enhanced.

## Global advocacy

For the purpose of enhancing global advocacy, COATNET participated at the *World Social Forum* in Nairobi in January 2007. The seminar, organised jointly by Secours Catholique and COATNET, tackled lobbying and networking as a means to fight human trafficking. Keynote speeches included presentations of: trafficking realities in the Middle East of forced labour, mainly composed of domestic workers from Philippines, Sri Lanka and other Asian countries; trafficking and enslaving of Asian children for forced labour; trafficking of children within and between West African countries; trafficking of women to Europe; and the plight of Brazilian young people and children trafficked internationally for mostly forced labour and sexual exploitation.

This round of presentations of regional realities was concluded with a presentation of the advocacy work of COATNET partners, made by COATNET Coordinator.

Within the framework of *UNODC Global Initiative to fight human trafficking and modern-day slavery*, UNODC Anti-Human Trafficking Unit provided a platform for NGOs input to explore key points in their various fields of expertise in combating trafficking in persons and to examine complementing actions to be undertaken in the course of the Initiative. COATNET users were consulted on the questions: what NGOs need and what kind of assistance, recognition and cooperation that would best enable them to prevent and combat trafficking in persons. Users' feedbacks were communicated at an interactive NGO consultation meeting by CI International Delegate to the UN agencies in Vienna. COATNET also contributed to the development of the overall Initiative's goals by suggesting four goals for the execution by the Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking.

## Appreciation

Finally, the involvement of the members of COATNET Steering Group, participants of task forces, partners who represent COATNET at various occasions and conferences, as well as organizations and congregations that provide financial support to the Network, should be gratefully acknowledged.

*COATNET (Christian Organisations Against Trafficking NETWORK)  
is an international ecumenical network fighting against human trafficking  
that operates under the legal authority of Caritas Europa.*

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