

## Item REC-002

### *A Resolution to Expand the Church's Ministry with and Advocacy Against Human Trafficking from the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns*

The Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns (ACWC) recommends that the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2008) do the following:

1. **Direct the General Assembly Council and the Office of General Assembly to expand their ministry with and advocacy against human trafficking to include adults, especially women, by supporting the Racial Ethnic and Women's Ministries/Presbyterian Women ministry area to work with the ministries of Compassion, Peace & Justice in providing resources to the wider church for education and advocacy;**
2. **Urge the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) to regularly include trafficking of persons in its human rights updates;**
3. **Encourage the Presbyterian Hunger Program, Self Development of People, Presbyterian Women, and other grant making entities in the PC(USA) to fund partner congregations, presbyteries and synods, in order to:**
  - a. **Provide safe housing, medical and psychological help for trafficked persons;**
  - b. **Support efforts to obtain appropriate documentation; and/or,**
  - c. **Assist trafficked persons, especially women, in safely returning to their country of origin.**
4. **Direct the Presbyterian Washington and the United Nations Offices to:**
  - a. **Express concern for the escalation of trafficking within the US and use the public witness channels available to them to raise issues with appropriate national and international representatives; and,**
  - b. **Partner with ecumenical and interfaith entities to build coalitions against trafficking and participate in activities such as the National Day of Human Trafficking Awareness (January 11) and the Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN).**
5. **Direct the General Assembly Council ministries of World Mission and Compassion, Peace & Justice, in consultation with Racial Ethnic and Women's Ministries, to work with appropriate offices and partners, to:**
  - a. **Gather data on initiatives that respond to the terror of human trafficking and provide materials on the web or in its interpretation resources, which lift up the PC(USA) efforts to combat trafficking systemically, in the United States and around the world.**
  - b. **Report its findings to the 219th General Assembly (2010).**

### **Rationale**

*Even on the male and female slaves, in those days, I will pour out my spirit. Joel 2:29*

ACWC continues to study and monitor the trafficking of women and to seek ways to inform PCUSA congregations of the immediacy of this problem. Trafficking is escalating globally and is inextricably linked with migration and is the second largest criminal industry in the world following the illegal arms trade.<sup>1</sup> No one program area or committee can sufficiently address all aspects, we do not have sufficient resources. The PCUSA needs to work collaboratively to connect the ministries of compassion and advocacy to positively impact this terrible reality.

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Campaign to Rescue and Restore Victims of Human Trafficking* (US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families) [www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking)

The General Assembly has historically acted to condemn trafficking, sexual exploitation and slavery of women and children. Since 1983, the General Assemblies of PCUS, UPCUSA, and PCUSA have adopted reports and statements condemning sexual exploitation, prostitution and abuse of women and children. Most recently, GA approved the 2006 overture from the Synod of the Northeast, *On Condemning International Human Trafficking In and Sexual Exploitation of Children*. Recognizing that 80% of sex trafficking involves females the scope of the focus on sex trafficking of children needs to be expanded. Including women in our targeted ministries will ultimately impact and improve the lives of children.

Every day people worldwide are coerced into bonded labor, bought and sold in prostitution, exploited in domestic servitude, enslaved in agricultural work and in factories, and captured to serve as child soldiers. The US Government recently reported that 800,000 people are trafficked across international borders each year and almost half are minors.<sup>2</sup> The international and diplomatic communities continue to recognize the threat of trafficking. In 2000, the nations of the world developed the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, (commonly referred to as the Trafficking in Persons Protocol). Globally, nations recognize the increased vulnerabilities of women and children and agree to name it in efforts to combat trafficking. The protocol defines the term “trafficking in persons” as meaning

the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs<sup>3</sup>

This definition makes it clear why the church must bring its prophetic voice and particular actions to work against trafficking. There are many forms of trafficking and there are many estimates for the scope and magnitude.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) – the United Nations agency charged with addressing labor standards, employment, and social protection issues – estimates there are 12.3 million people in forced labor, bonded labor, forced child labor, and sexual servitude at any given time; other estimates range from 4 million to 27 million.<sup>4</sup>

These numbers are overwhelming, almost too large to comprehend. Yet each of these numbers is a person – a child of God. Each of these numbers has a story to tell – a story we need to hear. One story in the “Trafficking of Persons Report, 2007” follows:

14-year-old Jenny left her native Nigeria for the United States to work in the home of a couple, also originally from an African country. She thought she would be paid to look after their children, but the reality was very different. For five years Jenny was repeatedly raped by her employer and his wife physically assaulted her, sometimes with a cane, and on one occasion with a high-heeled shoe. Tipped off by a local NGO [non-governmental organization], law enforcement officials rescued Jenny and prosecuted the perpetrator.<sup>5</sup>

The US Government’s Trafficking Victims Protection Act, passed in 2000, intended to prevent trafficking overseas and protect and rehabilitate victims. This legislation has led 36 states to create task forces using funds provided by the Protection Act. However, evaluations of results have revealed failure either to identify or protect victims to any significant degree.<sup>6</sup> The responses explored so far have not ended trafficking but lessons have been learned and we are called to follow a God of Hope who will not let us fail the least of these.

Traffickers use force and coercion to control victims. Rape, beatings, restraints and confinement are just some of the techniques used in efforts to control.<sup>7</sup> We stand with the Prince of Peace and declare the amazing love for each and every child of God. We Presbyterians have resources. The voices of these least (long silenced) beseech us to employ our resources to witness to the injustices of human trafficking and actively work toward its eradication in the family of God.

---

<sup>2</sup> National Council of Churches/News, 1/21/08, <http://www.ncccusa.org/news/080110humantrafficking.html>

<sup>3</sup> *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime*, United Nations, 2000. p. 2. [http://www.uncjin.org/Documents/Conventions/dcatoc/final\\_documents\\_2/convention\\_%20traff\\_eng.pdf](http://www.uncjin.org/Documents/Conventions/dcatoc/final_documents_2/convention_%20traff_eng.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> *Trafficking in Persons Report, 2007*. United States Department of State. p. 8. Available online at [www.state.gov/g/tip](http://www.state.gov/g/tip). This resource includes information on more than 150 countries.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 18.

<sup>6</sup> National Council of Churches/News, 1/21/08.

<sup>7</sup> US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families [www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking)