



PURPLE TEARDROP CAMPAIGN

stop the trafficking ~ stop the tears

Winter newsletter 2015/2016

Welcome to our Winter 2015/2016 newsletter. As well as disturbing stories, we have some extremely positive news on the work being done by truck drivers in the USA. We also have an update on our bra collection campaign and ask for your help in our new campaign involving mobile phone service providers. Thank you for your support for our work..

Purple Teardrop is collecting bras

In the last newsletter, we talked about the importance of rescued victims of trafficking being able to earn their own living once back in their home country. If they cannot afford to live, they are at grave risk of being re-trafficked.

We announced that we are collecting pre-loved, used bras in good condition. They will be sent to the Free the Girls projects in Mozambique, Uganda and El Salvador to enable rescued victims to start and run their own bra sales businesses, become financially independent and consequently safe from being re-trafficked.

In those and many other less-developed countries, bras are seen as a status symbol and even used bras sell for a good price. Each woman coming into this programme is given an initial supply of 'pre loved' bras plus some business training. Once they have sold the initial supply, they can use some of the money generated to buy more bras at less than market price, sell them and use some of the money for more stock, and so on. Thus they can build their own businesses and be financially self sufficient.

We have already received a large number of bras from all over the country. An enormous thank you to all of you who have donated your used bras or organised collections of them and sent them to us. Whether you have given your own bras, bought some and sent them to us, collected from family and friends or organised a collection on a large scale as have some lovely people in places from Southampton in the South, to Kings Lynn in the East, and Darlington in the North, we are enormously grateful.

We are also extremely grateful for one very generous donation we have received towards our bulk shipping costs.

This is a wonderful project and everyone who has contributed so far has done their bit towards helping an unknown woman in another part of the world regain her life, her self esteem and her ability to live without fear of being re-trafficked. Every woman helped leads a transformed life, running her own business and earning typically twice the living wage in her country. Thank you all so much.

We are continuing with this very worthwhile project so please, please keep sending us your bras!

As well as asking your family and friends, you could ask all your work colleagues, maybe have a bra collection point at your workplace, your church or somewhere like a hairdresser's or local shop.

The only cost to you will be postage within the UK. The Purple Teardrop Campaign will then ship them at bulk shipping rates. We would of course also gladly accept any donations towards the shipping costs but simply by sending us your bras you will be helping us to help women become free of the traffickers.

Please send them to

The Purple Teardrop Campaign
c/o Poole CVS
3 Beech House
28 - 30 Wimborne Road
Poole
BH15 2BU

Mobile phone service providers

Human traffickers force their trafficked victims to work in the sex trade and market their services to punters through advertising, latterly in the printed press and now principally on the internet. Are you aware of the prevalence of mobile phone numbers in these advertisements? Clearly, traffickers are utilising the services of mobile phone providers to carry out their criminal activity and by doing so are contravening their terms and conditions of use. We are seeking to find out from the mobile phone service companies how they achieve legal compliance in their customer base and inform us whether they already have measures in place to tackle the issue of illegal usage of their services by human traffickers with sex for sale advertisements and indeed the punters who respond.

We feel that the more people who ask them these questions, the likelier they are to focus on this and we would like your help. Would you please help by writing to your mobile service provider?



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The Purple Teardrop Campaign will provide you with all the necessary background information, templates and contact details. Please let us know on enquiries@purpleteardrop.org.uk that you will write to your provider and we will send you all the information to do this. We are hoping that with everyone's help, we can make a concerted effort over the coming months.

Disappearance of migrant children

In the last newsletter, we wrote about how thousands of migrant children are disappearing after arriving in mainland Europe, raising concerns that they are falling prey to a new and thriving market for child trafficking and forced labour.

At that point, of the unaccompanied minors who arrived in Italy from north Africa, about one third had vanished, with the authorities warning they were likely to face sexual and labour exploitation if left unprotected.

Since then, as we all know, so many more refugees have come to EU shores. Whilst the problem of what happens to these children is recognised, it seems that red tape is getting in the way. Consequently, many children are ending up in the hands of traffickers.

Take the landing point of the Greek island of Lesbos as an example. New arrivals must find their way from the rocky shoreline on the northern side of Lesbos over the mountains to Moria, the hilltop first reception centre nearly 50 miles away. The queue to register takes an average of four days, during which unaccompanied children are very vulnerable to trafficking.

According to their rights, unaccompanied children should then be offered secure accommodation on Lesbos prior to a safe transfer to a state-run home elsewhere in Greece and support to be reunited with their family in a third country. However the pressure from sheer numbers and red tape are getting in the way.

The case of Amena, 16, and Haya, seven, helps to illustrate why. Two sisters from Syria, the younger tetraplegic and wheelchair-bound, they made themselves known to authorities. Their care and case was taken up by Metadras, a Greek NGO that has pioneered a guardian programme to provide support for unaccompanied minors. With the help of Metadras, the girls were able to contact relatives living in northern Europe and a legal process of reuniting them was begun.

Time passed. In the fourth month the girls and their family lost faith and they ran away from the home in Athens to continue their journey illegally and at the mercy of smugglers.

"It is the hypocrisy of Europe," complains Lora Pappas, the head of Metadras "these countries want to be seen to say the right things but they don't act. Without a quick route, the children are left to the smugglers."

Much of her anger is directed at the maze of regulations that must be navigated for children to be reunited with family within the EU. It takes up to seven months for even the most deserving application to be processed.

She says the choice is between offering them a timely legal path to reunification with their family or condemning them to a smugglers' march through the Balkans into central Europe and beyond. Pappas is certain that many of these children have died on the way.

The number of the children being trafficked is unknown, in part due to the inadequacy of the official response on the island and in part to the ingenuity of the children themselves, who have often been told by smugglers or relatives to avoid detection by the Greek police.

Legacy of Nepal earthquakes

We are increasingly seeing that whenever there is a major natural disaster in an under-developed country these days, traffickers move in, ready to scoop up the newly homeless and destitute, especially children and exploit them for their own ends. It happened in the aftermath of the Haiti disaster and it is now happening in Nepal.

Here is just one story. In May, a few weeks after the earthquake that killed 13 year old Pharbati's mother, a Chinese man arrived in her village with a proposition for her grandmother: how would she feel if he took Pharbati and her two younger brothers to Kathmandu to resume their education?

The children's father had died some time before the earthquake struck, leaving their grandmother to make the decision. Perhaps feeling the stranger was the orphans' best chance, she agreed. "My grandmother just ordered us to go," Pharbati says. "I felt happy because I thought I was going to study in Kathmandu and I trusted the Chinese people."

Once in Kathmandu, Pharbati was separated from her brothers and taken not to a school but to a



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hotel, where she stayed with a Chinese woman for four days before locals in the capital spotted her in the company of foreigners and called the government's anti-trafficking hotline.

After a week in a rescue home in the city, Pharbati was brought to a transit centre in Sindhupalchowk, where she and her brothers have been ever since. "I'm happy here but I miss my home and I want to go back," she says. "But I can't go back as my grandmother says there's no money to support us."

Pharbati is among the luckier ones. Although the children at the transit centre are now safe, fed, clothed and studying again, some of the girls had been raped before being rescued from traffickers.

In Sindhupalchowk - a district long prone to the trafficking of women and children - the earthquake killed more than 4,000 people and completely destroyed at least 80,000 homes. It also brought fears of a surge in people trafficking in the poor, rural areas that were worst affected.

"In a less secure environment, such as after an earthquake, there is a risk that trafficking of children and women will increase," says Unicef Nepal. "Specifically, children who have been separated from their families - either as a direct result of the earthquake, or because families feel they can no longer care for their children - are particularly vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation." With one or both parents dead and food and money scarce, some children are being taken to transit centres in the hope that they will fare better there. Others are simply cut loose by relatives and end up living on the streets, where they soon become quarry for the traffickers.

The Nepalese government has stepped up its anti-trafficking efforts since the quake - using media campaigns and increased checkpoints on main roads and at the airport to tackle the problem. They are telling people about the dangers of traffickers and letting them know that their children can be used and exploited for prostitution and organ theft. They are told that they need to be careful and report if they see suspicious people."

It is hard to know whether the number of people being trafficked has risen over the past six months, or whether the authorities are just getting better at finding them. All Unicef can say for certain is that between April's quake and the end of September, its partners intercepted 793 people who were at risk of trafficking at Nepal's border with India. More than half of them - 455 - were women and girls.

Nepalese women trafficked into Syria

The earthquakes have opened up new opportunities for trafficking in Nepal, especially child trafficking as the previous article describes. However it is not a new phenomenon for Nepal. Sadly it is all too common for women to be tricked into thinking they are being offered wonderful opportunities only to find the reality very different.

An estimated 12,000 to 15,000 girls are trafficked from Nepal each year. Many others are trafficked to orphanages in the capital that exist to snare the sympathies of well-intentioned foreigners and separate them from their money.

Currently, while millions are fleeing from the brutal conflict in Syria, hundreds of Nepalese women are being trafficked to the war-torn country and forced to work as domestic maids. The women, duped into travelling to Damascus, often arrive in the country with no idea they are being sent to a war zone.

"I didn't know anything about Syria. I didn't realise there was war going on ... The agent told me it was like America," said Gyanu Reshmi Magar, 25, who was promised a job in Dubai but found herself forced into domestic service in the Syrian capital.

Magar, who was trafficked to Syria through India and then Oman and Dubai, begged to be sent back to Nepal, only to be told, "We bought you for \$6,000 [£4,000]. You can't go home unless you pay back that money." Soon after Magar arrived in Damascus, she was taken to work for a family in the capital. "I was completely cut off from the world. All I did was work and sleep ... I wasn't able to contact anyone. I didn't leave the house for seven months," she said.

The trade in women from Nepal to Syria is thriving, according to a Nepalese diplomat. "There's a heavy flow of women to Damascus. Last year we estimated there were about 300 Nepalese women in Syria and since then the number has increased ... It's a big, big number, maybe five to six hundred,"

Nepalese women are also being trafficked into other conflict zones, including Iraq and parts of north Africa.

A representative of the General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions, who helped to secure Magar's release, says the Nepal government must do more to help. "Since there is no consulate in Syria or Iraq, these women have no one to contact if they get into trouble."



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Trafficking of Britons in Britain

The number of Britons identified as victims of human trafficking in this country increased by more than 50% during 2014, the National Crime Agency has revealed. The overall number, regardless of country of origin, showed a 21% increase of the previous year.

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The report said the UK remained the most prevalent country of origin for potential child victims.

US truck drivers against sex trafficking

Trafficking remains a largely hidden crime in the U.S., but a fleet of truck drivers across the country are leading the charge in exposing the criminals behind these acts and in freeing victims.

Traffickers often bring their victims to rest areas where they present the girls as 'willing' sex workers. And when they're not being targeted specifically, truck drivers often take breaks and deliver at the other prime locations where traffickers typically exploit their victims, such as motels, petrol stations and loading docks.

Truck drivers, in many cases, have become the eyes and ears for authorities and advocacy groups. One group in particular, Truckers Against Trafficking, has already trained around 170,000 drivers in how to identify signs of potential trafficking and is working with 33 state trucking associations.

Part of the group's training involves a mobile exhibit, called the Freedom Drivers' Project, which educates industry members about specific trafficking cases and truck drivers who played integral roles in identifying perpetrators.

The group's goal is to make its training a regular part of the trucking industry's orientation and to continue to partner with law enforcement to investigate these crimes. The organization is already making some headway in making its training program an industry standard.

Ohio recently announced that starting in January 2016, it will be the first state to require truck drivers to undergo the Truckers Against Trafficking training course.

"It's important drivers understand the signs, so they can call when they witness trafficking," Capt. Mike Crispen, of the Ohio State Highway Patrol, said in a statement. "It's also important to educate them on the issue, because my experience has shown that they take the issue seriously."

Can you spare just 15 minutes...?

In 15 minutes you can do 4 amazing things to help in the fight against trafficking

1. Sign our petition to ban 'sex for sale' ads

<http://www.purpleteardrop.org.uk/what-you-can-do/lobbying/>

2. Tell enquiries@purpleteardrop.org.uk that you would like information to send to your mobile service provider

3. Sort out any unwanted bras, to send to us

4. Ask all your email contacts to do the same

That 15 minutes of your time could stop a woman being sexually exploited against her will and help a rescued woman to start earning her own living, safe from being re-trafficked.

Thank you very much.

We hope this newsletter has given you some insight into what people are currently doing to raise awareness of trafficking and how you can help. If there is anything you are doing, then please tell us about it. We would love to hear from you.

We are so grateful for any fundraising or donations and you can rest assured that the money will be put to excellent use. Thank you so much for your support. You can contact us on enquiries@purpleteardrop.org.uk