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## Hands Joined In Fight against Trafficking

By Barry Bateman

Pretoria faith-based organisations, local government and civic society joined hands at the Wesley Methodist Church yesterday to launch the Tshwane Counter-Trafficking Coalition. The coalition seeks to address the trafficking scourge in Pretoria ahead of the 2010 World Cup, but will extend their efforts beyond the event which is expected to attract thousands of foreigners to South Africa.

*“Southern Africa is an area riddled with poverty and unemployment. This creates fertile soil for the exploitation and trafficking of vulnerable women and girls. The 2010 World Cup will provide ample opportunity for sexual and other exploitation, trafficking and sale of humans. ”A concerned effort is needed by all roleplayers to prevent and combat this extreme abuse of human rights from taking place in Tshwane,” said Wilna de Beer, of the Tshwane Leadership Foundation which organized the event.*

The coalition plans to ensure all the roleplayers are educated and informed about the prevalence, incidence, and strategies of traffickers and trafficking networks and how best to counter the phenomenon. It will endeavor to develop and expand existing outreach teams which target areas of vulnerability in Pretoria, and identify and educate possible future victims of trafficking. The coalition will also raise awareness of combating this crime and ensure proper care and counselling of victims.

Susan le Roux, victim assistance specialist at the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), said statistics for human trafficking in South Africa were not readily available or reliable because the crime was difficult to detect and the authorities were not adequately trained to detect it. She said that in the last year the IOM trained about 4,000 government officials, including social workers, to detect human trafficking cases.

“In the first few hours of the course people would approach me and say that they had encountered similar cases, but they did not identify it as human trafficking.” Le Roux said South Africa, with the exception of Gauteng (*KAMALSKI NOTE: Gauteng is the province that contains Johannesburg and Pretoria, the capital areas where I stay*), did not have specialised shelters to deal with human trafficking victims.

“Victims who are being assisted will be housed at facilities which cater for...domestic abuse victims.” She said there was no legislation in South Africa to deal with human trafficking; however, there were sections of the new Child Protection Act which would be helpful.

A recent IOM study found that internal trafficking in South Africa was a cause for concern. Le Roux explained that women and girls were recruited in rural areas or informal settlements and transported to city centres where they were exploited, mainly sexually. The study found that the victims were usually black or coloured women younger than 30 years of age, their movement was restricted and drugs were used as a means of control.

**She said that key to combating human trafficking was to address the factors which made the victims vulnerable in the first place. “If you do not address the pre-traffic factors you are not addressing anything at all.” “There was a reason in the first place that made that person vulnerable.” “If you are a repatriate a person and they are still affected by poverty, domestic violence or other factors, they remain vulnerable because they face the challenges that made them vulnerable in the first place.” she said.**