

Trafficking gets a red card

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Bews believes that an increase in tourism will result in an increase in commercial sex and child-sex tourism.

“We are concerned that children will be vulnerable at this time as schools will be closed for long periods, there will be increased movement between various parts of the country and it is at these times that children will fall prey to abduction,” she says.

The Red Light campaign has come in the wake of the 2009 “Trafficking in Persons Report”, which recommends that South Africa address the demand for commercial sex and protect children from commercial sexual exploitation in advance of the Cup.

Bews says she would like to see a specialised police unit dedicated to dealing with human trafficking.

“If that was the case, critical training would be given to the police so that they could deal with victims of this crime.”

She says the exact figures for South Africa are not known, but it is estimated that 1.2million people are trafficked throughout the world annually.

“Human trafficking is the most lucrative form of trafficking after arms and drugs. The industry is estimated to be worth between \$7-billion (R55.7-billion) and \$10-billion,” she says.

In South Africa, unlike in Mozambique, it is difficult to calculate the value of the industry, or the number of people involved, because there is no legislation against human trafficking.

The sole law that vaguely addresses the matter is the law regarding sexual exploitation in the Children’s Act.

“It’s difficult to locate the culprits because, in South Africa, trafficking doesn’t cross borders, it occurs within the country as people are taken from one part of the country to another,” says Bews.

She says people often fall prey to trafficking as a result of poverty, social instability and war. Most perpetrators of this heinous crime lure their victims with the promise of a job and better living conditions. They are transported in bulk or individually.

Bews says that Santac is advocating for the existence of a phone number valid throughout the Southern African Development Community, or even for the entire continent, that people can call if they find themselves caught up in any aspect of human trafficking .

With a passion for what she does and a desire for a safer environment for children , Bews is a woman on a mission.



STOPPING TRAFFIC: Child Welfare assistant director Carol Bews says trafficking is a modern form of slavery
Picture: MOEKETSI MOTICOE