

SOUTH AFRICA NUNS LAUNCH NEW CAMPAIGN AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING DURING THE WORLD CUP

By Carol Glatz
[Catholic News Service](#) 07 May 2010

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- An international network of women's religious orders has launched a worldwide awareness campaign aimed at preventing human trafficking during the June 11-July 11 World Cup soccer tournament in South Africa.

The campaign titled, "2010 Should Be About the Game," has been targeting fans, religious leaders, potential victims of trafficking and the general public -- warning them about the risks and urging them to spread the word.

Using the 2010 World Cup to exploit vulnerable women, children and men for slave labor, the sex industry or the drug trade is "an outright perversion of the spirit and ethical dimension of sport as well as of the idea and dignity of the human person," said Salesian Sister Bernadette Sangma.

Sister Sangma, who coordinates the anti-trafficking project of the International Union of Superiors General, and others spoke at a Vatican news conference May 6.

A similar anti-trafficking campaign coordinated by the superiors general and the International Organization for Migration was highly successful during the 2006 World Cup in Germany, said Stefano Volpicelli, a migration office official who has been working with the sisters.

Fewer than 10 cases of human trafficking were discovered in the run-up to and during the monthlong games in 2006, he said.

The campaign was successful, he said, because intense media attention to the problem led German authorities to take proper precautions, including tightening border controls and increasing police presence and inspections on the local level.

But most importantly, "for the first time the kind of fans at the World Cup were different," he said. They weren't the stereotypical rowdy groups of males or trouble-making individuals, but predominately families and young couples, Volpicelli said.

Unfortunately, the situation in South Africa will probably not be the same, he said.

For one thing, the nation's borders are extremely porous, making it fairly easy for traffickers to shuttle in victims undetected, he said.

There is also no law in South Africa against human trafficking, which means not only are there no penalties against people committing this internationally recognized crime, there are also no special police units dedicated to investigating and cracking down on traffickers, he said.

Another problem is that the government decided to close schools nationwide for the duration of the tournament, which, Volpicelli said, will make children even more vulnerable to falling prey to deceptive job advertisements.

Kids will see the time off from school as "a golden opportunity" to make money, he said, but traffickers might take advantage of that and promise them a chance to make quick and easy cash.

Traffickers often lure unsuspecting people by promising them legitimate jobs in restaurants or hotels only to force them into prostitution or other illegal activities, he said.



A poster for the awareness campaign to fight human trafficking during the June 11-July 11 World Cup soccer tournament in South Africa. (CNS/courtesy of Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference)

Another concern, he said, is that the public's perception of South Africa is that it's a dangerous place, which will probably discourage many families from attending. That means the fan base might be overwhelmingly composed of men, who come alone or in groups unaccompanied by family members, he said.

The women's religious orders' international network called "Talita Kum," Aramaic for "Get Up," is carrying out an awareness campaign in South Africa, neighboring countries, countries where large numbers of fans are expected to come from, and countries such as Thailand, where victims of trafficking are likely to be targeted, said Sister Sangma.

They are working closely with the South African Bishops' Conference and the South African government, which has set up a toll-free number for victims to call for help or for whistleblowers, she said.

The network is made up of 252 women's religious orders and it works with the international migration group; the network receives funding from the U.S. State Department.

The "Talita Kum" network is one of more than a dozen networks that the superior generals have formed since 2004 to educate and warn potential victims of trafficking, to work to combat the poverty that feeds the trade in human beings, and to rescue and provide shelter and rehabilitation for the victims.

<http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/1001925.htm>