

ACRATH Member Reports on the Commission for the Status of Women Session 57

During the recent Commission on the Status of Women 57 in New York at the United Nations a number of sessions were held on trafficking and migration. We were told that the largest human migration in history was currently occurring. People smuggling and trafficking have increased due to restrictive migrant practices and immigration policies. Martin Fowke (UNDOC) said new laws are not needed current ones must be implemented: 154 countries have signed the Trafficking in Persons Protocol and 135 the Smuggling protocols, yet 34% of countries failed to prosecute any traffickers recently.

The **basic cause of trafficking** is shifting from poverty to **power structures** such as desire for money, gullibility, gender, age, race, education and economics. Often there is little spent on stopping trafficking because there is the demand for labour and sex in receiving countries. There is a need to strengthen the 5 P's (policy, prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership), 4 R's (rescue, recovery, repatriation and reintegration) in government and civil society to stop trafficking. Political unrest in a country and the need for workers in another; traffickers seeing their 'work' as a business; lack of jobs or difficult, dangerous and dirty jobs that locals don't want and the uneven implementation of laws are push and pull factors contributing to the increase in trafficking. It is up to each country to implement the Palermo Protocol and human rights laws for all.

It was further suggested that we need greater engagement on migration issues globally, to keep this on the post 2015 development agenda and get stronger commitments from governments to implement laws in practice. Argentina, for example, has an integrated approach across agencies when working with trafficked victims; California has passed laws compelling companies to publicise labour use and Sweden and other Nordic countries prosecute buyers of sex.

ACRATH was praised for its initiative and organisation in visiting Canberra each year with specific objectives in one side event. There were a number of occasions questions were asked on behalf of ACRATH with great interest in how we operate. Lucy has been asked to speak to RUN (Religious at the UN) and a group of Mercy Sisters about ACRATH strategies.

Migration often has links to trafficking. A session on Measures to ensure respect for and protection of the human rights of all migrants, with particular reference to women and children, as well as to prevent and combat smuggling migrants and trafficking in persons, and to ensure regular, orderly and safe migration highlighted some interesting points.

With excellent speakers one stood out: Francois Crepeau (Professor from McGill University) with his clear presentation. The key components of good practice, he said, are:

1. Decriminalise 'irregular migrants'; they are not illegal and are protected by the human rights law 65/212 and many other conventions most countries have ratified.
2. Take away detention as a systemic response across governments.
3. Increase and ensure awareness raising among the public re the benefits migrants bring.
4. Ensure the protection of children at all levels in line with international human rights and numerous conventions on the protection of children.
5. Be aware of and deal with trafficking by prosecution of traffickers. To date there is a serious lack of prosecution and conviction of traffickers.

6. Deal with people smuggling effectively. Policies which drive people smugglers underground are useless; governments need the will to stop this crime.
7. Ensure the civil rights of migrants are respected. In many countries human rights is not a core issue and lack of understanding of migrants is key to non-acceptance of them.
8. Migrants must have access to independent institutions, review boards and assistance.
9. The state has a responsibility to educate all departments and officers working with migrants.
10. The state has a responsibility to respect the human rights of ALL citizens.

Other interesting information from this session included the following:

- There are 214 million migrants today.
- 33 million are under the age of 20 and 6 million under four years of age.
- Domestic migrant women workers are most at risk of being trafficked and abused.
- Kuwait has two million migrant workers and one million local workers.
- At present economics drives migration: this must change, migrants are not commodities.
- More needs to be done to stress the contribution of migrants, to train officials and to tackle corrupt recruitment agencies.