

Government, Civil Society & Scientology Combating Human Trafficking in South Africa: Some Challenges and Efforts in 2023

Scientology and its members are more and more involved in fighting human trafficking in different ways. Human Rights education and collaborative skills are key.

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[Scientology](#) and its members are more and more involved in fighting human trafficking in different ways, and living examples come to light every day, explained Ivan Arjona, Scientology representative to the UN, and Africa is a key play for this work to be done.

Human trafficking remains a deeply concerning issue in South Africa as we delve into the year 2023. Although specific statistics on human trafficking

in the country are not readily available, search results indicate its persistence, with various factors contributing to its prevalence. Traffickers often exploit vulnerable individuals, especially the unemployed and those struggling with substance abuse, using substances to maintain control over their victims, including children (1). Moreover, South Africa is an attractive destination for migrants, including smuggled migrants brought in by organized syndicates. Unfortunately, limited data collection capacity makes it challenging to obtain accurate trafficking statistics. Often, trafficking cases are misreported as kidnapping, rape, or gender-based violence, all of which are highly prevalent in the country (2). This further complicates efforts to combat human trafficking effectively.

Higher Impunity in Sub-Saharan Africa

According to the latest Global Report on Trafficking in Persons by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia report higher levels of impunity in human trafficking cases. Conviction rates for traffickers and identification of victims are notably



Glory Matipile is featured in an episode of Voices for Humanity on the Scientology Network.

lower in these regions compared to the rest of the world. At the same time, victims from these regions are identified in various countries globally, indicating the international nature of the trafficking networks (3).

Major Joint Operation against Human Trafficking

A major joint operation targeting human trafficking resulted in the identification of 1,426 potential victims across 44 countries. The operation focused on disrupting organized crime groups involved in sexual exploitation, forced begging, and forced criminality. These victims originated from various regions, including South America, Asia, Africa, the Western Balkans, and Ukraine (4). Such operations highlight the transnational nature of human trafficking and the need for international collaboration to combat this crime effectively.

Case of Human Trafficking and Child Labor

In a concerning case, seven Chinese nationals were charged with running a factory engaged in human trafficking and child labor from Malawi. Such incidents demonstrate the complexities of human trafficking, involving both local and international actors in organized crime (5).

The Role of the Financial Sector

Modern slavery and human trafficking continue to pose a threat to Africa, including South Africa. To tackle this issue, the financial sector has the potential to play a crucial role. By implementing policies that scrutinize financial transactions and funding sources, banks and financial institutions can help in detecting and disrupting human trafficking operations (6).

Measures Taken by the South African Government

Despite challenges in obtaining accurate trafficking data, the South African government has taken significant steps to combat human trafficking in the country. One notable measure is the launch of the Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons National Policy Framework (NPF) in collaboration with UNODC under the Global Action against Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (GLO.ACT) initiative (7). This policy framework aims to address trafficking and smuggling in the country and enhance cooperation with international partners.

While the government's efforts have been commendable, the country still falls short of fully meeting the minimum standards required to combat human trafficking effectively (8)(9). Nevertheless, law enforcement agencies, such as the police in Johannesburg, have been working diligently to uncover and rescue human trafficking victims (10)(11).

The Power of Collaboration, Scientology and Baagi Ba South Africa

Amidst the challenges, collaborations between different organizations have emerged as a key

factor in combating human trafficking in South Africa. The A21 organization's South Africa Impact Report 2021 highlights several factors leading to vulnerability, including job instability, violence, lower education, substance abuse, poverty, homelessness, unemployment, and isolation. This report emphasizes the power of collaboration in the fight against human trafficking (12).

One inspiring example of collaboration is the story of Glory Matipile, who discovered a human trafficking ring that preyed on young men, women, and children after her childhood friend suddenly disappeared. As a human resource officer, Matipile used her access to information to alert the police, leading to her friend's rescue. She went on to create Baagi Ba South Africa—The Future of South Africa, a nonprofit aimed at preventing potential victims from falling prey to trafficking scams and raising awareness about this issue nationwide. Through a partnership with Youth for [Human Rights](#), supported by the Church of Scientology, Baagi Ba South Africa works to raise awareness of human rights and protect the youth from becoming victims (13). In fact, as inspired by Scientology founder [L. Ron Hubbard](#), collaboration is a much-needed tool and attitude if a country wants to overcome any challenges, nature and human created.

Conclusion

In 2023, human trafficking continues to be a significant problem in South Africa. The country faces various challenges, including the recruitment of vulnerable individuals and limited data collection capacity. Nevertheless, collaborative efforts, national policies like the Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons National Policy Framework, and the dedication of organizations like Baagi Ba South Africa provide hope for addressing this critical concern. By raising awareness, enhancing cooperation, and implementing measures to disrupt the financial aspects of trafficking networks, South Africa can make significant strides in combating human trafficking and safeguarding its vulnerable population.

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