

Tri-monthly

NEWSLETTER COATNET

Issue-001

Christian Organisations Against Trafficking Network



COATNET wishes to inform you of developments in the field of trafficking in human beings and activities of the Network and its member organisations.

COATNET TASK FORCES FINALIZED THE 2024-2030 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Following the Biennial Affiliates Meeting held in Bangkok from March 4-8, **the COATNET Task Forces have finalised the strategic framework for 2024-2030.** You can access the document by clicking [here](#). This framework results from a collaborative effort involving the active participation of all members across the three current COATNET task forces: one focused on **advocacy and awareness**, another on **protection and safeguarding**, and the third on the **engagement of people who have experienced trafficking.**

COATNET'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNODC CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE ON TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

At the **UNODC Constructive Dialogue on Trafficking in Persons (July 10, 2024)**, some 300 participants from Member States and Civil Society Organizations engaged in fruitful discussions around the topics of trafficking in persons for the removal of organs, national issues, and priorities concerning child trafficking, and the status of the UNTOC Review Mechanism. At [this link](#), you will find the **COATNET's written contribution** to the UNODC Constructive Dialogue on Trafficking in Persons, notably **Agenda Item III-Panel 2: National issues and priorities concerning child trafficking**, submitted with the support of **Caritas Ukraine, Secours Catholique-Caritas France, Caritas Rwanda, and Caritas India.**

Sports Events & Their Link to Human Trafficking

Ahead of the **upcoming Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris from July 26 to August 11, 2024**, COATNET aims to dedicate a space in this newsletter to the link between human trafficking and sports events. France will host the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the standard bearers of the traditional values of friendship, respect, excellence, determination, inspiration, courage, and equality.

The Olympic Games often reveal the ills and injustices of the world of work, such as exploitation, unsafe working conditions, and lack of job security. As we observe the [UNODC World Day Against Trafficking in Persons on July 30](#), we focus on this critical issue.

Over the past twenty years, the Olympic Games have had several consequences for the most vulnerable residents of the host cities. These include the 'cleaning' of the streets, which often involves the forced removal of those experiencing homelessness and those living in informal settlements, and the harassment and criminalisation of those resorting to survival practices such as begging.

The effects on the physical and psychological health of people who have experienced trafficking are deleterious. Those who have experienced trafficking often face multiple forms of abuse, exploitation, and trauma. In addition to the harm caused to these individuals, **human trafficking is harmful to society as a whole.** It generates poverty and creates pockets of delinquency and crime.



Photo: Caritas Internationalis

Human trafficking is a pervasive issue infiltrating many sectors, and the world of sports presents a particularly urgent and complex challenge. The intersection of an insatiable demand for entertainment and the exploitation of vulnerable individuals creates fertile ground for traffickers. **As sports have grown into massive businesses generating hundreds of billions of dollars annually, this sector has become a target for unscrupulous criminals seeking to exploit children and adults alike.**

Young talent, often from the Global South, is at the heart of this booming business. Aspiring athletes, particularly young boys and increasingly girls dream of successful careers in sports, contributing their value and skills to this lucrative industry. Unfortunately, this dream can quickly turn into a nightmare. The trafficking and exploitation of minors, particularly in football, is a significant issue, with over 3.5 billion fans globally amplifying the problem and underlining the urgent need to address the root causes of this exploitation.

The lure of sports entertainment, coupled with significant tournaments and international events, attracts human traffickers who exploit aspiring athletes from marginalised backgrounds. **False promises and manipulations are common tactics used by these criminals:** Blaise, a father of four from Cameroon, fled the civil war in his country due to significant dangers and economic hardships. Seeking safety, he chose Albania **through an employment agent who promised to work for a sports company upon arrival.**

However, upon reaching Tirana, **Blaise realised he had been deceived after paying 6,000 euros and found himself stranded at the airport.** Desperate, he contacted an African acquaintance in Albania, who offered him a space to sleep in for a fee. Feeling unsafe, he sought refuge in a church, where a priest provided temporary accommodation. **Blaise connected with the Mary Ward Loreto Foundation (a member of COATNET) at the church, offering hope and support.**

Human trafficking is a grave violation of human rights, affecting more than 50 million individuals worldwide ([International Labour Organisation, 2022](#)). It is crucial to establish a comprehensive framework that supports trafficked persons and prevents their punishment or criminalisation for crimes they were forced to commit. This holistic approach is essential for effectively combatting human trafficking.

The [Palermo Protocol](#), established 24 years ago, aimed to combat trafficking, yet the issue persists. **We call upon sports organisations, policymakers, and global citizens to unite against human trafficking in sports.** By recognising the gravity of this issue and implementing proactive measures, we can protect vulnerable individuals and **ensure sports remain a field of dreams rather than exploitation.**

Testimony by Athlete John-Michael Lander



John-Michael Lander is **a survivor of child sexual abuse, a certified trainer and life coach, and founder of [An Athlete's Silence](#).** As a 14-year-old Olympic-bound athlete, he was groomed and abused by his trainers, winning gold medals amid shame and guilt.

He now works to improve abuse responses, illustrating how the Predatory Grooming Trifecta allows predators to evade detection. He broke his silence with the "An Athlete's Silence" speech at TEDxDayton 2018. Lander highlights that **1-in-4 females and 1-in-6 males are abused before 18, with higher rates in sports.**

His books, "Surface Tension," "Cracked Surface," and "Shattered Surface," explore abuse through the character David Matthew, resonating with the #metoo movement and male victim advocacy.

Watch [Mr. John-Michael Lander's video testimony](#) for valuable insights.

Highlights

FROM OUR MEMBERS

PREVENTION

To mark the UNODC World Day on Trafficking in Persons with the theme "Leave No Child Behind," **Caritas Nepal conducted an orientation session on July 12, 2024**, in Lalitpur district, Kathmandu. The session aimed **to educate, empower, and encourage children**, particularly child club members, **to speak up against trafficking, early and forced marriage, and child labour**. It provided information on local organisations and helplines for anonymous help and reporting.

Blaise's story highlights **the support provided by COATNET member organisations like Mary Ward Loreto Foundation (MWL) at the grassroots level**. Identified as a victim of human trafficking and at high risk if returned to Cameroon, Blaise received emergency food and accommodation, legal assistance for asylum, professional and economic empowerment, and psychological support. MWL coordinated with partner NGOs to ensure comprehensive care, leading to Blaise securing employment and his family's safety in a safe space in Cameroon. MWL continues to monitor Blaise's progress to ensure effective intervention.

PROTECTION

PARTNERSHIPS

COATNET's mission is to eradicate human trafficking and other forms of exploitation through **international cooperation, networking, and advocacy**, with a strong focus on **protecting victims and empowering survivors**.

Advocacy

Side Event at United Nations Geneva
— **[Mobilizing against Trafficking, Exploitation, and Modern Slavery in Sport - A Call to Action](#)** organised by the **Sovereign Order of Malta on June 20, 2024**.

[Intervention](#) by Geneviève Colas of Secours Catholique Caritas France for Caritas Internationalis and COATNET at the Human Rights Council of the United Nations during the interactive dialogue **'Combating the exploitation and trafficking of human beings in the context of migratory movements and protecting victims at sea or on arrival in a country'** (26 June 2024).

Campaign & Events



Global Awareness Campaign Against Exploitation: On July 9th, the Global Awareness Campaign, which was promoted by *It's a Penalty*, was launched. This campaign features great sportsmen in the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The French partner for this international campaign is the collective **[Ensemble contre la traite des êtres humains](#)**, coordinated by **Secours Catholique-Caritas France**. More details can be found here: [It's a Penalty](#). **This global campaign is based on being run in France for the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games**, which will expand well beyond **'Acting against exploitation on the sidelines of major sporting events'**. Various awareness-raising tools have been produced in English and French: a series of posters, an educational booklet, short 40-second videos for social networks on the different forms of human trafficking, a 20-minute e-learning programme to train staff and volunteers from the police, justice, health, social affairs, education, etc. They are available in English at the link https://www.contrelatraite.org/campagne_jo_gb (the written documents); and in French at the link https://www.contrelatraite.org/campagne_jo_fr (all the tools).



Stay Informed and Engaged:



- [World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, July 30th](#)
- [WhatsOn](#)
- If you want to **stay informed about COATNET members' activities**, please consult their website using [this contact list](#).

WHAT'S NEW?

- 21 June marked the 5th anniversary of the [ILO Convention to tackle violence and harassment in the world of work \(C190\)](#), the first international treaty that recognises the right of every person to work in an environment free from violence and harassment. It emphasises the crucial role of a safe working environment in achieving equality, dignity, and opportunities for all workers, regardless of status or work sector.
- [The U.S. Department of State released the 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report \(TIP Report\)](#) on 24 June. This year's TIP report's central theme is technology's role in both trafficking and anti-trafficking activities. According to the report, 32,996 victims were identified, while only 1667 convictions were recorded.

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COATNET TASK FORCES ON 26 JULY 2024

Ms Ariela Mitri of **Caritas Albania**, Ms Bellancille Mukamusigali of **Caritas Rwanda**, Ms Chimwemwe Sakunda of **CADECOM-Caritas Malawi**, Ms Geneviève Colas of **Secours Catholique-Caritas France**, Mr Inmanuel C. Biswas of **Caritas Bangladesh**, Ms M. Shimray of **Caritas Asia**, Ms Natalia Holynska of **Caritas Ukraine**, Ms Anna Bartosova of **Caritas Slovakia**, Mr Davit Mosoyan of **Armenian Caritas**, Ms Irena Kraja of **Mary Ward Loreto Foundation Albania**, Ms Sylvia Rai of **Caritas Nepal**, Ms Apinya Tajit of **Stella Maris-Caritas Thailand**, H.E. Michel Veuthey and Dr Emanuele Piluso of the **Sovereign Order of Malta**, Ms Felicitas Brugo Onetti of **USCCB**, Ms Mary Khin of **Caritas Myanmar**, Dr Radoslaw Malinowski of **HAART Kenya**, Ms Tek Sopheak of **Caritas Cambodia**.

Support Us: We rely entirely on donations. Your contribution will enable COATNET members to continue ensuring the effective implementation of the [COATNET 2024-2030 Strategic Framework](#) and providing essential support to at-risk and trafficked individuals. For those seeking further information or wishing to join the network, please email fanciulli@caritas.va. We also welcome your feedback and input.

