

SYMBOLS OF HOPE (SoH): Mobilising Churches to Proactively Respond to the menaces of Irregular Migration and Human Trafficking

“Respecting the Dignity and **God’s Image** in **EVERY** Human Being” – timely and problematic in the context of multiple religious and cultural belongs

“Migration is not a crime but irregular migration is a crime and human trafficking is a sin”

“Make the green, greener” is our slogan in a way

- **It is a presentation that seeks to trigger radical shift from:**
 - Rhetorical expressions to realistic planning for holistic response
 - Orthodoxy to orthopraxis
 - Their complicity to our complicity
 - Their responsibility to our responsibility
- There are several biblical narratives that offer strong motivation to us as individuals, as churches, as communities and as states to confront and transform conditions that make persons chose to embark in such dangerous acts.

- 1 Timothy 5:8 “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” I dare to say, any church or nation that cannot respond to needs of its people is worse than an infidel.
- The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is a global communion of Lutheran churches with 148 member churches spread in 98 countries. Its communion office is located at EC in Geneva. <https://www.lutheranworld.org>
- The SoH is a new initiative of the LWF aimed at empowering churches to respond to the phenomenon of irregular migration <https://www.lutheranworld.org/content/symbols-hope>
- Irregular migration is no doubt a major challenge in our continent, Africa – Here, human dignity is being challenged

Global overview on irregular migration and human trafficking

There are approximately 20 to 30 million slaves in the world today. According to the U.S. State Department, **600,000 to 800,000 people** are trafficked across international borders every year.

Trafficking involves exploitation in different forms, including: force victims into prostitution, subjecting victims to slavery or involuntary servitude and compelling victims to commit sex acts for the purpose of creating pornography.

Human trafficking is the third largest international crime industry. It reportedly generates a profit of \$32 billion every year. Of that number, \$15.5 billion is made in industrialized countries.

In 2014, 170,100 irregular migrants were recorded arriving in Italy by sea (an increase from 42,925 arrivals recorded in 2013), 141,484 of them leaving from Libya. Most of them came from Syria, the Horn of Africa and West Africa

IOM estimates suggest that between the start of 2015 and the middle of April, 21,000 migrants had reached the Italian coast and 900 migrants had died in the Mediterranean. Sadly, the number has not really dropped in 2016 and 2017

Perceived Causes of Irregular Migration

- ❖ There are Push and Pull forces. Some of the forces include:
 - ✓ Unbalance rate of population growth and distribution between urban and rural areas
 - ✓ Inadequate employment/job opportunities
 - ✓ Socio-economic crises - poverty
 - ✓ Climate change challenges
 - ✓ Myth and misconception about greener pasture – good life
 - ✓ Employment opportunities
 - ✓ Spiritualization of intent/reason
 - ✓ Traditional practices, etc

PAINFUL BACKGROUND



CNN TEAM INVESTIGATES MIGRANT SLAVE TRADE IN LIBYA

HUMAN BEINGS NOT FOR SALE

CNN



Targets: Geography and Population

- Pilot target countries are Nigeria and Ethiopia, with Eritrea underway. The three countries are considered prime originating countries for irregular migrants.
- Target group : Potential migrants and returnees
- Other target groups: government officials and politicians, religious and community leaders, fathers and mothers, youth leaders, traffickers and business owners.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- **Objective 1:** Churches taking active role in addressing issues of irregular migration and human trafficking in their contexts
- **Objective 2:** Churches providing accurate and reliable information for prospective migrants to support informed decision making on migration
- **Objective 3:** Churches providing returning migrants pastoral and psycho-social support to enhance reintegration into local communities

How do we achieve the objectives? KEY ACTIVITIES

- Raise awareness through media campaigns, rallies and outreaches in areas considered as epicentres of irregular migration and human trafficking
- Engage in advocacy actions and religious diplomacy
- Set up Migrant Resource Centers for information sharing and psycho-social support
- Provide persuasive real life testimonies from returnees to dissuade potential migrants
- Develop and disseminate appropriate theological messages that respond to the menaces of Irregular Migration & Human Trafficking

ACTIVITIES cont...

- Provide counselling services to returning individuals who have faced traumatic experience during journey and/ or at destination.
- Engage local communities to support returnees for re-integration
- Create peer-to-peer linkage by working with youth
- Launch SoH website <https://www.lutheranworld.org/content/symbols-hope>
- Engage returnees and potential migrants in sustainable livelihood initiatives or start-ups
- Facilitate linkages with other skills development agencies

Partnership and collaboration

- LWF-SoH is open to partnership and collaboration towards addressing in holistic manner the menace of irregular migration and human trafficking in originating countries.
- At the moment support is being received from Church of Sweden, Lutheran Church in Württemberg and Amsterdam diocese.
- At the country levels, we collaborate with FBOs, CSOs' networks, INGOs (IOM) and other relevant government agencies

Conclusion

Let us, therefore, deliberately and intentionally work together to reverse the ugly trends of irregular migration and all sorts of human trafficking.

Our message of respect for human dignity and God's image in every human person will be authenticated by our actions to confront forces, systems, structures, ideologies and logics that dehumanizes any human person regardless of the person's race, ethnicity, confession, nationality, religion, political persuasion etc.

Let the thematic emphasis of LWF stay with us always, that,
“Human Beings Not for Sale”

“Creation Not for Sale”

And indeed,

“Salvation not for Sale”

I thank you for the opportunity and for listening.