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Title: Human trafficking plagues SA

By Nthambeleni Gabara

Pretoria - South Africa continues to be a hub and destination for human trafficking and serious intervention is needed to curb this practice, says a study by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC).

The study, commissioned by the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), found that victims are mostly women, girls and boys trafficked for a variety of reasons including prostitution, pornography, domestic servitude and forced labour.

The study, Tsireledzani: Understanding the dimensions of human trafficking in southern Africa, said young boys are trafficked to smuggle drugs and for other criminal activities.

The study, which identified a number of trafficking flows into South Africa, found that the country is a destination country for long-distance flows for people mainly women trafficked from Thailand, Philippines, India, China, Bulgaria, Romania, Russia and the Ukraine. People trafficked within the African continent are mostly from Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Swaziland and Lesotho.

Longer-distance trafficking involves victims trafficked from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Angola, Rwanda, Kenya, Cameroon, Nigeria and Somalia. All documented cases are women trafficked for both sexual and labour exploitation and the main point of entry of this trafficking stream is OR Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg.

The study also found that the largest movement of trafficked people is from rural areas to cities.

Women, girls and boys and to a lesser extent, men are the targets of traffickers for prostitution and criminal activities.

The albino community was identified as vulnerable to human traffickers for the harvesting of body parts, due to the belief of 'white' skin having potent powers.

Trafficking of South Africans out of their country is less of a problem, but eight cases were identified between January 2004 and January 2008.

Destination countries included Ireland, Zimbabwe, Israel, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Macau. In all cases, the victims were women trafficked for either sexual and labour exploitation or forced marriage.

The study, which was conducted to obtain a more detailed national picture of human trafficking in South Africa, hopes to help guide new policies to combat the practice.

Funded by the European Union, it is the first comprehensive study of the problem in South Africa. - BuaNews

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