GLOBAL Shepherds

– Good Shepherd goes GLOBAL

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Good Shepherd Services

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16 DAYS OF REFLECTION FOR THE NATION

FOREWORD

"Human trafficking - the recruitment, harbouring, and transportation of people solely for the purpose of exploitation - is a debasement of the human person. It is a grotesque injustice rooted in the dynamics of our global world and current global economy. Structures and systems which increase extreme poverty of the vulnerable, support patriarchal hierarchies, and give priority to economic profit above the value of the human person render untold women and children vulnerable to being trafficked for labour and for sexual exploitation. In concert with many forms of gender discrimination and global gender-based violence, the trafficking of women and girls is a violation of their dignity and human rights.

It challenges Good Shepherd's determination to respond, first, to express solidarity with those who have suffered victimization through this horrendous crime. Second, we listen to the experiences of such persons and develop holistic programs to serve their needs. Third, we increase our capacity to understand the dynamics of trafficking so as to support women and girls in healing as well as toward self-empowerment through social supports, personal growth opportunities, and employable skills leading to secure income. Good Shepherd stands with all persons of good will who condemn this phenomena and work to eradicate it."

This is the Good Shepherd's position as a global congregation on the phenomena of human trafficking, especially of women and girls. Human trafficking has long been identified as one of the most pressing needs which Good Shepherd is compelled to respond to at the unit, regional and congregational levels. We acknowledge with gratitude the many partners, sponsors and contributors for their commitment to the Good Shepherd Mission to love and care for the marginalised and oppressed women and children, "reaching out with compassion and respect, empowering each person to wholeness and full potential."

May we continue this journey for mission with zeal and hope as we stand together to say NO to violence against women and children.

Chin Poh Choo
Executive Director
Good Shepherd Services

INTRODUCTION

Human trafficking has reached new highs in the sheer numbers of people, especially women and children, who are subject to daily horrors of servitude and abuses in our world today. Malaysia in particular remains a destination country for many migrants in the region. As a result, many have been lured into situations of forced labour, exploitation and abuses.

Resolving the problem will take great political will by the State. But what about us, the people of Malaysia? Do we not have a role in ending the abuses that continue in our neighbourhoods, the people who serve us and in the workforce?

My first encounter with a trafficked survivor was in March 2011. In the subsequent years, I met many others whose dreams were wrecked by the greed of their traffickers and the cruelties of the people who abused and exploited them. And just when you think you have heard the worse, another woman shares more horrifying details of sexual exploitation as well as forced labour.

We are encouraged that at Global Shepherds, we continue to receive the support from people of all walks of life to respond to the call for justice for those who have suffered in the margins and those who are vulnerable. We believe that if we stand together with the women and children, we can effect changes. Let us bring forth our gifts and talents to raise our voices to improve policies, support the survivors, and influence the Malaysian community to end violence against women and children.

Underpinning all of our spiritual values and beliefs is that every human being must be treated justly and with dignity. I hope that this resource booklet will be useful to bring this message across to our whole community.

Wilhelmina Mowe
Executive Director
Global Shepherds Berhad

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM

"ORANGE THE WORLD: SAY NO TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN"

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence is an international awareness-raising campaign. It takes place every year from 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women) to 10 December (International Human Rights Day).

Since 2008, the UN Women, under the "Orange the World" umbrella, has been galvanizing global attention and action to end violence against women and girls. The official colour used is orange, which symbolizes a bright and optimistic future free from violence against women and girls.

Good Shepherd Services (GSS) and **Global Shepherds Berhad (GSB)** are standing together to raise awareness and to call Malaysians of all faiths to reflection and action to end violence against women and children.

The tagline for our 16 Days campaign is **"Orange the World: Say No to Violence Against Women and Children"**. For this year, the focus of our campaign is on human trafficking of women and children.

16 DAYS

OF REFLECTION AND ACTIVITIES

This booklet is designed to be a resource for awareness, reflection and action. It can be used to follow the 16 Days campaign to educate ourselves and reflect on human trafficking issues. Through the personal stories shared, we can get a glimpse of how the lives of women and children have been impacted by their experiences of being trafficked and exploited. (Names and demographic details have been changed to protect the identities of the women and children who were willing to share their stories.)

As we read about the injustice, oppression and abuse heaped upon them by fellow human beings, let us open our hearts and respond to the needs of the marginalized and oppressed, whether through prayer or other forms of action to do good, seek justice and help the oppressed.

We invite you to join us for these 16 days to stand up against human trafficking. It only takes a single pebble to cause a ripple in the ocean. Together, we can swell the tide of events to end violence against women and children.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING
INFOGRAPHIC

Human trafficking is modern day slavery. It is a shocking violation of human dignity. The United Nations defines human trafficking as "the recruitment, transport, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a person by such means as threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud or deception for the purpose of exploitation."

21 million
estimated number of people trafficked globally

$150 billion
estimated profits generated by human trafficking globally per year

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Trafficking victims can be women, men, girls and boys.

71%
of people trafficked are women and girls, usually for marriage and sexual slavery

1/3
of people trafficked are children

UNODC elaboration of national data

Major Forms of Human Trafficking

- Forced labour
- Sex trafficking
- Domestic servitude
- Debt bondage
- Forced begging
- Forced marriage
- Removal of organs

5.5 million
estimated number of children trafficked globally

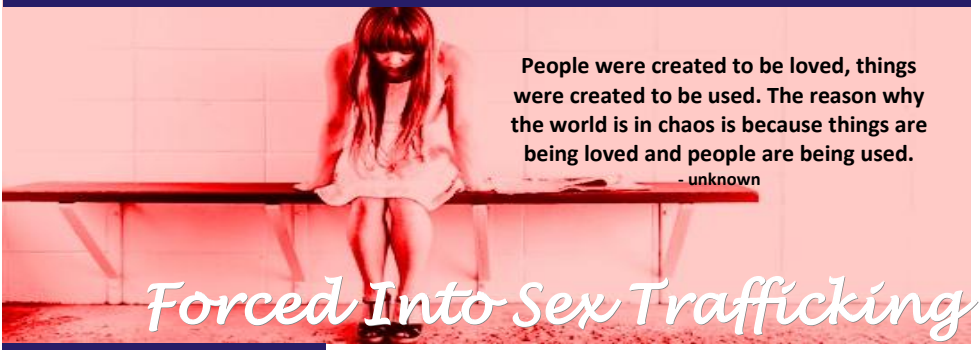
- Prostitution
- Pornography
- Sex tourism
- Forced marriage
- Begging
- Migrant farming
- Child soldiers
- Sweatshop

UNICEF USA Infographic: A Global Look at Human Trafficking

Human Trafficking in Malaysia

Image: Malaysia - Blue by FreeVectorMaps.com

DAY 1 - NOVEMBER 25



Forced Into Sex Trafficking

Reflection:

- **If as a child you felt insecure and uncared for, would not the slightest offer of 'love'/ attention be very appealing to you?**
- **Traffickers prey on a person's vulnerability and will continue to do so because for them, each life is just a commodity—some 'thing' to be traded for money.**
- **If humans were commodities, how much do you think you should be worth?**

Action:

- **Today is International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Wear orange today in solidarity with the start of the 16 Days campaign to say NO to violence against women and children.**
- **Check out UN's 16 Days Campaign at http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/take-action/16-days-of-activism**

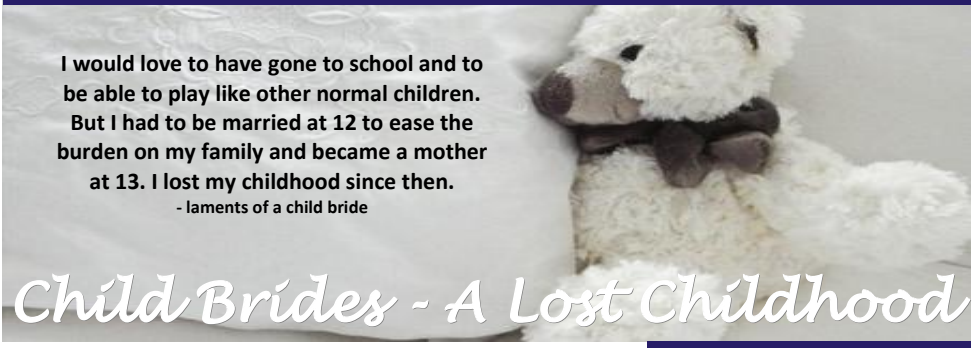
From a young age, I was exposed to the violence that happened at home. My father had often abused my mother for the smallest of reasons. I had always lived in fear that he would kill her one day or that he would also start hitting me too. At the age of 14, my worst fears came true as my father sexually abused me after coming home drunk one night. He continued to hurt me regularly. I stayed away from home as much as I could to avoid the abuse.

I finally ran away from home at 17 with an older boyfriend I had known for about 5 months. He promised he would marry me when I turned 18 but he did not do so and even started being physically abusive. I eventually found a job and started living independently.

One day, a friend at work introduced me to an agent who claimed he can help me find a more lucrative job in Kuala Lumpur (KL) for a small fee. I felt assured as my friend would also be accompanying me to KL. When we reached KL, we were brought to a small budget hotel. My possessions were taken from me, including my handphone and wallet. I was forced to take a shower and change into skimpy clothes and work in the bar. When I objected, I was slapped and threatened. I feared for my life.

It was like a nightmare as once again, I was forced into doing something I did not want to. I was moved from place to place to provide services to the customers. Each time I was sexually abused, I would shut my mind out and pretend that it was not my body. The horrors came to an end when I was finally rescued during a police raid at an entertainment outlet.

Some time has passed since my experience of being trafficked for sex but the trauma still remains. I hope I can be whole again.



I would love to have gone to school and to be able to play like other normal children. But I had to be married at 12 to ease the burden on my family and became a mother at 13. I lost my childhood since then.

- laments of a child bride

Child Brides - A Lost Childhood

I was brought into Malaysia at 12 years old to be married to an owner of a coffee shop in Kuantan. However, I was rejected by the groom for being dark skinned. I was then married off to my uncle's friend. Just 16 days into the marriage, the abuse started. He used a belt to strike me and verbally abused me every day. I made many attempts to run away but he always managed to find me and forced me to return home. I was trapped.

At 13, I got pregnant and my husband tried to get me to abort the child but I refused. He continued beating me even though I was pregnant. He said he married me just to spite my father and he wishes that my baby would die in my womb. Somehow, I safely delivered a healthy baby girl. The abuse never stopped. Still at 13, and now with a child to care for/protect, I carried on in that house. One day, he locked us in the house and went off. I just made do with whatever food that was left, not daring to venture out of the house in case he returns as we were leaving!

After 3 days, food ran out. I knew then, that I had to fend for myself and my child. I managed to find a centre, took up sewing and tailoring to get some money. I felt free during that period.

As suddenly as he left, he returned one day. The abuse resumed and he would take the money that I had made. After 5 years, I built up courage and decided that I could not take it any longer. I ran away with my daughter and sought refuge in another state. We moved around. But one day, he found us. He was extremely angry. He beat me up and took off with my daughter. Now I can only pray daily that he would not do anything to harm her.

Reflection:

- **While we played, they toiled with housework meant for adults. While we slept, they were assaulted. While we were in school, they were looking after their own off-springs. "They", the child brides, have sadly been robbed….**
- **Children have a right to a happy childhood and to cherish those moments for the rest of their lives.**
- **Can you recall the happy moments in your childhood?**

Action:

- **There are 9,061 child marriages in Malaysia in the last 5 years (Women, Family & Community Development Ministry, 2016). There could be more unaccounted cases.**
- **Learn more about the predicament of these young, often helpless girls.**
  Watch the video India's Child Brides for Sale (CNN):
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mNx3I9Zx9xs

DAY 3 - NOVEMBER 27

Trafficked by Own Father

Reflection:

- **We will occasionally read about young children who have been trafficked. Unfortunately there are many, many more untold horrors.**
- **It is estimated that about 5.5 million children are trafficked yearly. That is 17% of Malaysia's population! If we are looking at those numbers yearly, in 6 years, everyone in our country would have been trafficked!**
- **Do you know the signs of persons being trafficked?**

Action:

- **Be the eyes, ears and voice for these vulnerable children.**
- **Listen to this TEDtalk on identifying persons who may have been trafficked https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hrxhptvEOTs (talk given by a professional who has conscientiously 'trained' herself to be more observant to help the "voiceless")**

Hema* comes from a poor family with the father being the sole breadwinner of the family as her mother was mentally ill. When the father retired from working in a garment factory, money became scarcer. Hema and her sister had to stop school altogether.

One day, the father took Hema to an unknown house where she was told that she could continue her studies. Since Hema was yearning to go back to school, she willingly followed her father. Upon arrival, the 15 year old learnt that she was about to be sold to a brothel - She had been tricked and trafficked by her own father! Left without choice, she ploughed on daily, thinking that the money her father gets would be enough to shield her sister from the same fate. But unbeknown to her, her 13 year old sister had also been sold off to another brothel!

After 11 months of torment, an opportunity came for Hema to escape and she cleverly did! She ran to the nearest police station and related her story. Thankfully the police believed her and managed to apprehend the culprits (including her father), stopping one of the many trafficking syndicates in the city. Her sister was also rescued and both were sent to a shelter to be counselled and re-integrated into the community. Hema recounts that it was at the shelter that she learnt the meaning of love, kindness and security.

Today, Hema has moved on, optimistically looking forward to what lies ahead. Despite all that she has been through, she is very grateful for that second chance.

*Name has been changed to protect the identity of the person involved

Child Beggars

Anita* comes from a poor family in her home country. Having lost her father, life was harsh. Both Anita and her mother would sit on the streets to beg for food daily. One day, Anita went missing!

Anita was abducted and smuggled into Malaysia. She was placed together with some other children and were taught how to beg. Once they 'graduated', these children were sent to the streets. They were told that there is no point running away as 'aunty' had eyes all over the streets and being children, no one will believe their 'tale'.

So daily, they would take a bus to the Bukit Bintang area, returning only at night when they have 'earned' X amount of money. These children do not get to keep any of the money as it would all be passed to 'aunty'. Anita noticed that 'aunty' started to treat her better and started buying nicer clothes for her. Then she realised that she was earmarked to be sold off to a man once she is of age! Powerless, she fell into despair...but life as a beggar continued.

After months of observation, the child beggars were rounded up by the authorities and sent to a shelter. Anita knew that she was saved from being sold off as a child bride.

But her dream of being reunited with her mother again is questionable. She can only remember her mother's first name and nothing else. Being an 'unaccompanied minor' in Malaysia, she will have to follow through the process of identification and may possibly be relocated somewhere else, outside her home country. Till now, she still does not know her fate. But she feels that her perpetrators are still looking out for her.

*Name has been changed to protect the identity of the child. Shelters for trafficked persons do sometimes get queries from people regarding residents in the shelter, citing some sad stories. More often than not, these are the traffickers, trying to locate their 'goods'.

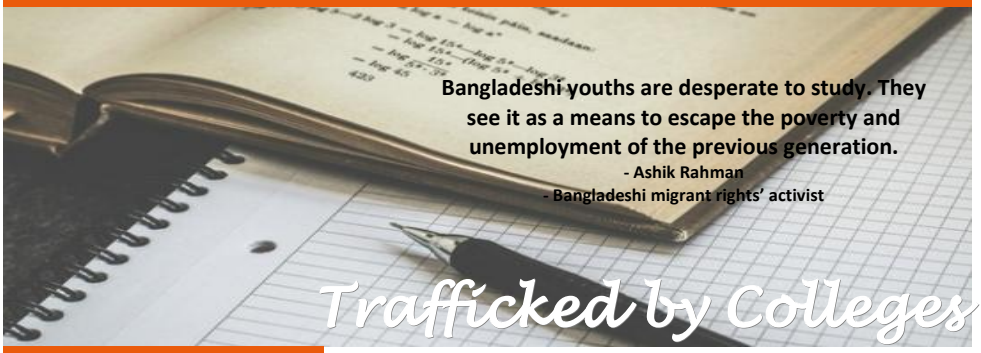
Reflection:

- **It is hard to tell if someone is genuinely a 'beggar' or not. Nevertheless, dropping loose change seems to let us think we are helping since money can be used to buy things the child needs.**
- **Does the loose change really tell child beggars we 'care'? Can we spare the time to really make a difference? Money can be earned, but time cannot be reversed… Do we really want to help or are we just easing our conscience?**

Action:

- **Find out more on the internet on child beggars. Why do you think they are on the streets?**
- **An article on the Star dated 6 August 2017 uncovered a 'begging' syndicate in Masjid India. Read more at:- http://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2017/08/05/begging-for-the-human-traffickers-children-ferried-to-masjid-india-and-forced-to-beg-or-sell-religio/**

DAY 5 - NOVEMBER 29



Reflection:

- **Parents often make major sacrifices for their children's education as they hope that a good education will provide their children with a brighter future.**
- **If you were a foreign student, what would you do to escape poverty and unemployment? If you were their parents, what would you do so that your children can have a better future?**
- **What would you do if this was your story?**

Action:

- **Watch the video "Student/Trafficked" on http://rage.com.my/trafficked/**
- **Create awareness of the issue by encouraging your family and friends to watch the video as well.**

The recent shocking revelation by the R.AGE team took some of us by surprise. College students from Bangladesh are lured by unscrupulous Malaysian colleges that promise education and jobs. According to government statistics, around 40,000 Bangladeshi college students have arrived in Malaysia over the past three years. It is unclear how many of them are here in trafficked situations, but they are by far the largest international student population in Malaysia, accounting for over a third of Malaysia's international student population.

Upon arrival, many find their hopes of escaping poverty dashed as the colleges that promised them an education are a farce. Bonded by debt, these 'modern-day slaves' have no choice but to work illegally in factories and construction sites, where they are often housed in squalid accommodations. One of the residents commented that this was even worse than the dumps in Bangladesh!

Many of these students are now left in a lurch, with no education, no valid visa, huge debts, and are at risk of being caught for immigration crimes.

The Ministry of Higher Education has closed a few colleges and together with R.AGE and some NGOs (Tenaganita and Migrant88), will extend help to students who have been trafficked. Victims can now report at rage.com.my/trafficked-reporting for some reprieve and help stop others from being cheated.

(adapted from The Star's R.age, reproduced with permission)
Expose printed in The Star on 24 August 2017

Treated as a Slave

I needed the money to pay for my daughter's heart surgery. We were still paying off a bank loan we took for my daughter's clip cleft palate operation. My husband was stretched as he had to support his mother, and his widowed sister (who was suffering from depression) as well as her children. I came to Malaysia after being promised a salary which was much more than what I earned in my home country.

I worked as a domestic worker. Coming from a simple village, I was not used to all the household appliances in Malaysia. People here also had different ways of doing things. I was scolded daily as I was not able to understand what I was supposed to do.

To cope, I worked every day from 5am - 11.30pm, occasionally until 1.30am. I wasn't given any break or day off. Sometimes, I was only fed (leftovers) once a day. I was even hit on my head with a hot frying pan. I suffered silently throughout the abuse because I needed the money.

My employer only paid me 1 month's salary while the other 2 months were given to my agent. When I found out that I did not even have a working permit, I felt so cheated!

I decided to run away. An opportunity arose when the whole family went for a function. I saw the RM200 left on the table and I just took it for the taxi fare to my embassy. I related my experience to them and was referred to a shelter that assisted me in my repatriation. Not long after, I was relieved to hear that my agent was caught. No one else should be cheated like this.

Reflection:

- **Everyone works for a reason. No one likes working far away from their own families, leaving their husband and children behind. It is always scary when you don't know what lies ahead.**
- **Have you ever had to leave your family for a few days for work? How would you cope if you had to leave them behind for 2 years, sometimes without any form of communication with them?**

Action:

- **If you hire a foreign worker in your home or organization, reflect on how you have been treating her…if you were in her shoes, would you be satisfied working here?**
- **Show her an act of kindness today.**

DAY 7 - DECEMBER 1

Abused as a Domestic Worker

Reflection:

- **Millions of women/girls are employed as house helpers around the world. They clean, cook, care for the young and old and often work very long hours. Some are even subjected to many forms of abuse – physical, verbal, sexual. In Malaysia, 1 in every 20 domestic workers will go missing, running away from their employers. What would you do if you were in CC's shoes?**

Action:

- **Malaysia has released the guidelines in hiring domestic workers. If you hire or know of someone who hires a domestic worker, go through the guidelines to see whether it is fair.**
- **http://jtksm.mohr.gov.my/images/media_sumber/penerbitan/DWGuide2017_ENG_FINAL_WEB.pdf**

CC* came to Malaysia using her sister's identity because at the point of hire, she was under-aged. Her parents are farmers and she has three other siblings who are still young to care for. With the promise of much higher wages, she was recruited and trained as a domestic worker in her home country for 6 months prior to arriving in Malaysia.

Her Malaysian employer sent her to various houses of relatives to work over the week. She would start work at 5 a.m. each day. Most days, she was given only breakfast. Frustrated with her 'incompetence' and lack of understanding of the language, her employer would beat, slap and throw water at her. She also never got paid for her work.

As the abuse escalated, CC decided she had had enough. She confided in the neighbour's domestic worker and was advised to make a police report. She left the house and went directly to the nearest police station. She was then sent to her embassy where she was given protection whilst she waited for her case to be heard. For CC, justice was served as she managed to get her 2 years' salary and was sent home.

CC was really one of the 'lucky' ones to be able to return home with her promised salary. Some of her friends never made it home.

*Name has been omitted to protect the identity of the person involved

"If my family found out, I would never be an honourable woman anymore. My family and I would probably be shunned by the villagers."
- explained a rescued woman

Shamed into Silence

P* lost her husband and with no children, she decided to follow her cousin to Malaysia to work. Upon arrival, her passport was taken away from her and she was placed in an apartment. That night, she realised the harsh reality that she had been brought in (by her own cousin) for the sex trade. She was forced into having sex with 10-15 men each night. During the day, she was locked up in the apartment.

She managed to escape one day and luckily managed to reach her embassy to seek help. She was placed in a shelter for rehabilitation while her documents were being processed. During her time at the shelter, she was given numerous opportunities to press charges and penalise her perpetrators but she chose not to.

Her reason was because she felt thoroughly ashamed of herself and to her, charging her perpetrators would mean that her village/community will come to hear about it and it would greatly dishonour her family's name. Caste and the honour of family name are still greatly revered in her home country. Therefore, she will silence this episode of her life and carry on as if her Malaysian trip was just a bad dream.

There are still many more like P* out there. All silenced, too afraid or ashamed to seek justice.

*Name has been omitted to protect the identity of the person involved

Reflection:

- **The Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report, highlights that only 14,897 prosecutions and 9,071 convictions took place globally in 2016.**
- **This suggests that many perpetrators get away scot free, ready to strike again. Hence, the number of victims may naturally increase from year to year.**
- **What are your thoughts that justice may not always be served on the perpetrators?**

Action:

- **Watch this TED talk on stopping the silence. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSum6Xe64C4**
- **Remember that "Perpetrators thrive on silence"**
  - Catalleya Storm

DAY 9 - DECEMBER 3

Reflection:

- **According to International Labour Organization (ILO), human traffickers earn an estimated profit of USD150bil a year.**
- **To put things into perspective, Malaysian's Gross Domestic Product was valued at close to USD300bil in 2016 i.e. earning only 2 times more than the traffickers! Imagine the demand that has been created for forced labour! How have you contributed to that demand?**

Action:

- **Watch this video entitled 'Simple Plan - the song that saved my life' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1__N77CLoEc**
- **Find out more about modern day slavery. Help create awareness and warn others that if a deal seems too good to be true, then it probably is!**

I had to look for work after my husband left me with 3 young children to fend for ourselves. A relative introduced an agent to me who said he can arrange for a work permit in Malaysia as a factory worker. With a heavy heart, I left my children with my elderly parents in order to earn a living in Malaysia.

When I arrived, I was taken to my employer's house where he and his wife went through my things and confiscated my passport and handphone. I was told that I would not receive any salary for 6 months as deduction for the cost of my travel and work permit fees.

Instead of working in a factory, I was made to work in a coffee shop owned by the employer's family from Tuesdays to Sundays. I had to get up daily at 5am and worked in the coffee shop until 4pm. After that, I would have to continue working in the employer's house as their domestic worker. I usually would only be able to go to sleep at 1am. I had no day offs and if I was not working in the coffee shop, my employer would make sure that I had work to do including cleaning the parents' house.

I was not allowed to go home after serving 2 years with my employer. I ended up working for my employer for 3 years and 4 months. During this whole time, I was not paid for my services and could not send money home regularly. I would only be given some money during festive season to send home. Each time I asked for my salary, I would be shouted at and threatened to be sent back to the agent without getting any of my money back.

Eventually, I garnered enough courage and found an opportune time to run away and sought help from my embassy. I had given up hope of ever getting back my unpaid wages. All I wanted then was to go home.

Exploitation of Refugees

I came to Malaysia at the age of 10. We were fleeing persecution and violence in my own 'home', running away to lead a peaceful life. We had given up all our belongings to find greener pastures. We trekked the jungles, risked our lives on the 'death' boat, just to cross borders for a safer tomorrow. Was it all worth it? Or was it not?

Our boat capsized on the way. We were 'rescued' on Malaysian waters and placed in temporary camps. There were many, many like us. Space was limited. Tents were cramped. The good thing to me was that there were many other children! We played night and day, oblivious to our squalid surroundings. How else could a child cope?

After months of staying at the camp, we were moved out into a community. I thought life would be better thereafter. But it was still harsh. My parents had to go out daily looking for menial jobs even though they held higher positions back home. Money was never enough. They had to work long hours and were underpaid. But what choice did they have? It was better than no money. Being the eldest, I had to stay home to look after my younger siblings. School was never an option. Our focus was and still is, just to get by daily.

We have been here for 7 years now. Where do I say my home is? Which country should I say I am from? I now live in a country with a 'special' pass. I am a refugee. We are deemed 'aliens', unwanted. I do not have any privileges - no access to school, healthcare and am constantly looked down upon. At 17 now, without proper education, what would my future be? What can I do to earn a decent living? Was this the future my father was looking for?

I often wonder, was it all worth it? Or was it not?

Reflection:

- **It is strange how borders define how we should 'welcome' another human being into our part of this shared earth...**
- **How would you respond if refugees are allowed to be resettled in your country?**
- **If the tables were turned and you are now the 'alien', would you still feel the same? As an 'alien' would you think it will be worth it to run away to find peace and safety even if you are not welcomed?**

Action:

- **Find out more about living as a refugee in Malaysia. Watch the video below and reflect on how you would cope and survive if you were in their shoes.**
- **UNHCR's video on Surviving Kuala Lumpur https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmNJ7vv3dqE**

DAY 11 - DECEMBER 5

The Traffickers and Abusers

Reflection:

- **"That's how I got into the work. I was trying to earn money to survive, but I also thought that it would be possible to help people make a better life outside the country. That was my primary motive."**
  - confessed an ex-trafficker who helped authorities bring down the syndicate he was working with
- **Do we really know what is happening around our neighbourhood? How can we help to prevent trafficking in our own areas?**

Action:

- **Unite with the world in combatting human trafficking. Help spread awareness to people you know about human trafficking.**
- **Go to the following website and take the survey to find out how many slaves are working for you today based on your consumption or usage of products: http://slaveryfootprint.org/**

An employer kept a migrant domestic worker imprisoned in the apartment, did not feed the worker properly, sexually assaulted and physically abused the worker that at the time of her rescue, the worker's face was beyond recognition. A child trafficker revealed in an interview with a journalist on how he dehumanizes and trafficked thousands of innocent children, that he has even lost count of how many children he killed if he could not sell them off.

When we hear about the practices of human traffickers and the abuse and suffering that they do unto others, we cannot help but wonder "What kind of a person would do such evil and despicable acts like these to another human being?" Our gut response would be to show compassion to the victims or survivors, and to condemn those who commit the evil and wicked acts.

There are always two sides of the story….

Out of desperation, a person may become a trafficker/abuser. For his/her own survival, a child lures other children into the trafficking ring to be drug mules, sex workers, etc. Do we condemn the perpetrators or condemn their evil acts on social media with a little angry emoji and carry on as if nothing has happened after a few weeks? Do we only come to know about things when it is too late? Or do we want to roll up our sleeves and actually take heed of what is happening in our own neighbourhood to prevent human trafficking in our area?

As the saying goes, it takes a village to raise a child. If we had more people looking out for one another, the world may perhaps be a safer place, especially for children.

The Advocates and Helpers

It is crucial for all parties – government, NGOs, civil societies, authorities and the public – to come together and fight this heinous crime of human trafficking. It is time for us to act now. If we fail to do anything to combat human trafficking in Malaysia, it will only get worse in the years to come.

Reflections from Aegile Fernandez, Tenaganita director,
a long-time advocate for migrants who have been trafficked and/or exploited

When our shelter initially opened its doors for women who had been trafficked in 2011, we did not expect to see 39 women coming through our doors that year. We were also overwhelmed by their stories. Each day we struggled with providing care and support to these women who came to us. Sometimes they were so traumatised that even a simple touch would cause them to flinch. And we certainly did not expect to journey with a woman who was so badly beaten up that she had forgotten how to speak her own language!

Each day we laughed with the women who found joy in sewing a simple skirt for themselves. Each day we were amazed by these very women who were able to say they forgive their abusers. Each day these women graced us with their trust, little by little. Each day we were grateful to see changes in these women who had been rescued, and that made our work here exceedingly rewarding.

So did we do right in opening our doors to these women and did we do right to these women? We certainly hope that we did.

Reflections from a former shelter director

Reflection:

- **We are indeed thankful for the many people who have responded to the needs of justice, peace, healing and reconciliation.**
- **We hope that more will come forward and that these people (and their families) will be protected so that they can continue rectifying the wrongs in this world.**
- **What can you do to support the works of the advocates/ helpers?**

Action:

- **Support a local NGO which works on human trafficking issues, either through volunteering in their programmes for women and children or by making a donation to fund their works.**
- **Invite a local NGO to conduct a talk or workshop in your organization or school to raise awareness on issues of human trafficking and exploitation.**

DAY 13 - DECEMBER 7

The Enforcement Agencies

Reflections:

- **Be grateful for the enforcement agencies who are at the frontline of the fight against human trafficking.**
- **We do not see the frightened/hollow faces of the rescued, we do not see the horrific deaths nor do we come face to face with threats. These men and women in uniform do .**
- **Let's hope for their safety and that they will be able to bring justice to those who have been wronged.**

Action:

- **Appreciate the efforts of the enforcement agencies in rescuing trafficked victims and give credit when it is due by liking the news article on social media and leaving a message of affirmation and encouragement to our men and women in uniform.**

"Police rescue 49 women from Seremban entertainment outlet"
"Immigration Department cripples human trafficking syndicate"
"Police rescue 11 Rohingya trafficked victims"

We often come across such headlines when we browse through the news on print and social media. Most of us would probably give such articles a cursory glance or skip them altogether. Some of us may feel sympathy for the victims and possibly indignation towards the traffickers. Do we pause to consider about the many men and women in uniform, i.e. the enforcement officers, who are carrying out their duties and who very often are putting their lives at risk being in the frontline?

While we may regard that these men and women have the responsibility and owe the public the duty to serve and protect us, we may lose sight that they, too, are only humans and can be affected by the ugliness and the inhumanity that they have to see and deal with on a daily basis. Many of us go through our daily lives oblivious to or shielded from such wickedness.

"This human trafficking, it is a never-ending battle. We shut one entertainment outlet down, a few more will mushroom elsewhere. We rescue a group of foreign women today and send them home safely eventually. The following month, we may see some of them again in another rescue. People get trafficked and re-trafficked. It is a tough battle, and it can be heartbreaking, especially when the traffickers escape conviction. But we cannot give up. We must not give up. These are victims, and they need our help." says a senior enforcement officer, something echoed by the many women and men in uniform serving in the frontline of the battle.

The Individual

One might ask - is human trafficking and exploitation of the vulnerable really happening around me? If we open our eyes, we can see that it is certainly there. From factories, restaurants, massage parlours, plantations, and even in our own homes behind closed doors, in the form of domestic workers, to pornography…. it touches all of us.

How are we treating our domestic workers? How are we treating the migrant workers hired in our factories; as security guards to look after our houses as we sleep; as the person who serves us the food we ordered; sweeps the floor, washes the toilets, builds the very house or condominium we live in? How are we interacting with the many foreigners in the midst of us? Are we thankful to them for doing all the 3D (dirty, dangerous and degrading) work for us? Or do we blame them for all the crimes in the neighborhood?

Being poor, uneducated and ethnically different does not mean that he/she deserves to be treated any differently from how we ourselves expect to be treated. Out of circumstances, some people are born into poverty, and hence, received very low or no education at all. Wanting a better life for themselves and their families, these people then become easy prey to traffickers. Once these victims cross borders, it appears that even more dignity is chipped away as they become 'illegal' and are treated inhumanely.

Human trafficking takes advantage of the vulnerable and totally degrades a human being. A person becomes just a commodity to be bought and sold, and when 'it' is of no use, be discarded. Would you like to be treated this way?

For all the money in the world, a person with conscience will know that no human being should ever be treated this way.

Reflection:

- **We value our own lives. We care for it and are thankful for it. Are we also thankful for those who make things convenient for us eg. the guards, house helpers, cleaners? Do we treat them right or do we think they are at their right places doing the 3Ds for us?**
- **The general rule has always been, treat others as you would have others treat you. If we see injustice, would we have the courage to speak up and right the wrong?**

Action:

- **Do a self-reflection to assess if you may have been blind to the signs of abuse and exploitation around you.**
- **See migrant workers as human beings with dignity. Help bring justice for those who may be exploited or abused.**

DAY 15 - DECEMBER 9

Reflection:

- **It is estimated that there are between 21-45 million slaves today (Malaysia has a population of 31 million people).**
- **Based on past trends, numbers are likely to grow each year. This may suggest that the next victim could be us or someone we know.**
- **What is your response to the call to rise against gender-based violence such as human trafficking? Will you join the fight against modern day slavery?**

Action:

- **Raise awareness in your own communities on gender-based violence such as domestic violence, child abuse, forced labour and sex trafficking. Domestic servitude is modern day slavery that is prevalent in many homes.**
- **Collaborate with organizations that advocate against gender-based violence and be the helping hands to those who are abused.**

We have often read or heard in the news about the horrifying abuse cases of women, children or domestic workers, some even resulting in deaths. Many times we wonder what took the people around them so long to notice or even to report these abuses happening right next door. There is a lot to be done to stop the cancer of gender-based violence against women and children. Where does the community fit into this?

The bystander effect is a social phenomenon that happens when people fail to help those in need when they know that there are other people present. In most cases, they assume that others will take action, hence, they do not need to get involved. Perhaps people are shocked when faced with something out of the ordinary and are fearful or uncertain as to how to intervene. At times, it could also be the different cultures people live in which can have a significant influence on what they accept as normal.

As part of the community, do we choose to make a difference and help our neighbours in need, or do we turn a blind eye, shrug it off as “none of my business” and leave it to “someone else” to help? What if we are the ones needing the help but no one steps up to save us?

We have the ability to overcome the bystander effect by being observant to what is happening around us and being knowledgeable about what to do and who to call when faced with an emergency situation. Get to know your neighbours. Keep an eye out for each other’s well-being. We are more likely to help people that we know personally. As a community, we can also reach out to others in need by volunteering in our community service centre or an NGO in our locality. Be that “someone else” and choose to make a difference.

Our Dream for the Nation

There shall be peace on earth, but not until
All children daily eat their fill,
Go warmly clad against the winter wind
And learn their lessons with a tranquil mind.
And then, released from hunger, fear and need
Regardless of their color, race or creed
Look upward smiling to their skies,
Their faith in life reflected in their eyes.

- Dorothy Roigt

Today is International Human Right's Day. It is also the anniversary of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The very first article of the UDHR proclaims that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." The first article has been referred to as the "cornerstone" of the UDHR.

If we want to live in a nation that respects and protects the dignity and rights of its people, we need to first ask ourselves, how are we contributing in shaping the culture in our society? How are we honouring our diversity and differences? How are we respecting the rights of others as we expect others to respect ours?

It is often quoted that "The greatness of a nation is measured by how well it treats its weakest members" (Mahatma Gandhi). The transformation begins in each of us before we can transform the nation to greatness. Let us continue to make our nation great as we seek to honour the dignity of all peoples created by God. Today, we come together in celebration of our human rights in a spirit of hope and as we stand in solidarity to make a difference in our world for the cause of justice and mercy.

Reflection:

- **If we want to live in a nation that respects and protects the dignity and rights of its people, we need to first ask ourselves, how are we contributing in shaping that culture in our society? How are we honouring our diversity and differences? How are we respecting the rights of others as we expect others to respect ours?**

Action:

- **Wear orange today in solidarity with the end of the 16 Days campaign to say NO to violence against women and children. Recognise the rights of each and every persons and respect them.**
- **Read the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) at http://www.un.org/en/udhrbook/pdf/udhr_booklet_en_web.pdf**

CALL TO ACTION

For these 16 days, we remember the women and children who have been trafficked and abused. We grief with them for the hurts and suffering they endured, we celebrate their resilience and strength as survivors, and we honour them for their continued hope in humanity - their hope that by sharing their stories, they are able to move us to participate in this fight to end the evils of gender-based violence, which includes human trafficking and exploitation.

We remember that whilst justice should be meted out to those who perpetrate such evils on others, they are in need of rescue themselves from the destruction to their own humanity. We support and continue to encourage the enforcement agencies in their tireless efforts to combat the scourge of human trafficking and to seek justice for the victims. We salute the advocates and helpers for their compassion to journey with those who need healing, comfort and justice.

We remember that as individuals and as a community, we have the power to make a difference if we continue to persevere in this fight against evil. If we understand that human trafficking is a shocking violation of human dignity and life, how should we respond? Are we willing to stand up for those who have been oppressed and exploited? Dare we acknowledge the ways in which we may have inadvertently been complicit in the conditions that lead to trafficking and exploitation - turning a blind eye to the foreign workers as they do not matter, profiting from cheap labour, easily accepting that a sexualized society is the "normal way of life in this day and age"?

Beneath the surface of human trafficking and exploitation lies poverty and the desperate need for survival. No one would will themselves to be trafficked if all people are accorded their basic human rights and dignity.

William Wilberforce, the English abolitionist who was instrumental in ending the slave trade in England in the 18th century once said, ***"You may choose to look the other way but you can never say again that you did not know."***

As we come to a close of the 16-Day campaign, we cannot say we did not know that gender-based violence happens around us. The question then is, do we choose to look the other way? Let us stand as one voice to call to an end on violence against women and children.

The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.

- Edmund Burke

WHO YOU CAN CALL

If you know of any cases of human trafficking/exploitation/abuse, you can report the incident to:-

- The nearest police station (or call 999)

- Respective embassies of the victims

- For reporting of children-related cases:-
  - Social Welfare Department (Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat)
    +603 - 8000 8000
  - Talian Kasih 15999 (for child abuse and baby dumping)

- For reporting of forced labour/labour exploitation cases:-
  - Labour Department (Jabatan Tenaga Kerja)
    +603 - 8000 8000

- For refugees:-
  - UNHCR Malaysia Call Centre Helpline
    +6012 - 630 5060

You can also seek assistance and advice from:-

- NGOs which are working with survivors of human trafficking and exploitation/abuse:-
  - Tenaganita
    +6012 - 335 0512 / +6012 - 339 5350 (24 hour hotline)
  - Change Your World
    Download the Be My Protector App at www.bemyprotector.com
  - Women's Aid Organization
    +603 - 7956 3488 / +6018 - 988 8058 SMS/Whatsapp - TINA
  - Global Shepherds
    +6012 - 318 0623 - Kuala Lumpur/Selangor
    +6019 - 534 9044 - Sabah

- The Malaysian Bar Council
  - +603 - 2050 2050 ext 2090