



# BEYOND THE MIDLANDS<sup>3</sup>

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING

## POSITION PAPER

March 8th, 2018

### **An opportunity to think and start planning**

The international conference “Beyond the Midlands<sup>3</sup>”, organized by On the Road on 29 and 30 January 2018 at the Chamber of Deputies in Rome, was attended by a large number of national, international and local institutions; UN agencies; European and international NGO networks; and high level speakers from all over the world.

The conference provided a great opportunity to share different models, methodologies, practices, and perspectives on the complex issues related to human trafficking. Furthermore, it was a great opportunity to think and plan the future of anti-trafficking interventions to fight the greatest tragedy of our time.

### **Beyond the midlands, indeed**

The conference provided us with a great belief: we can no longer build anti-trafficking interventions in a fragmented, unilateral, and welfare manner. Organizations that keep carrying on old policies, strategies, methods, and practices will have to review their positions. The deep insights and many provocations shared by the conference speakers urge us to move forward to overcome the current standardized and obsolete dimension of our social actions.

## Factors to analyze together

Policies and strategies put in place to tackle human trafficking must necessarily be part of a fully integrated and definitive process, both at a theoretical and operational level.

We refer to the need to:

- Focus on the "movement" of people, i.e. **migratory flows**, and on how it determines structural and epochal changes. The anguish deriving from such "movement" (i.e. the unstoppable and unavoidable migration from the South to the North) is determining unstable and inconsistent policies. However, as social and political actors primarily concerned with social protection, we cannot continue closing our eyes, not understanding and not being involved in what is happening on the other side of the Mediterranean Sea. For those working to fight human trafficking, a strong moral and political obligation is emerging: go South and try to answer the numerous questions arising during our daily work with victims in shelters;
- Re-orient international **cooperation policies** so to respond to migratory movements (e.g. starting from interventions in the origin countries) and to overcome a model that sometimes resembles a form of modern colonization. We need to work in the countries of origin to implement strong social inclusion policies capable of addressing and changing the socio-economic dynamics that lead to human trafficking;
- Reflect carefully on **social inclusion**, i.e. a fundamental action providing meaning to our work and helping us to overcome distorted approaches based on the victimization, welfare dependency and the paternalistic idea of "saving" a victim. This will allow us to go beyond the "ghettoization" generated by social intervention targeting only specific segments and excluding others, thus, fueling conflicts among disadvantaged people.

Inclusion for all means the creation of innovative care services for local communities, including victims of trafficking as fully-fledged citizens. This approach will allow us to finally review some current obsolete categories, such as, vulnerability and marginalization;

- Focus strongly on issues such as **human and civil rights**, health, gender equality, childhood and adolescence as elements of a long-term strategy that is essential and inalienable even for victims of trafficking;
- Take into consideration all **forms of trafficking**, including the newest ones. Indeed, the phenomenon keeps constantly and very rapidly changing, encompassing not only trafficking for sexual exploitation but also for labor exploitation, forced begging, illegal economies, arranged and forced marriages, and the removal of organs. For this reason, we must intervene through an integrated, consistent and competent work, focusing on some crucial groups (i.e. asylum seekers who are victims of trafficking and Nigerian victims) knowing that we can count on reliable, integrable, and readable data and observatories.

### **A feasible roadmap**

First of all, we propose the establishment of an **international multi-sectoral working group** of anti-trafficking experts aimed at analyzing, developing, and sharing new reflections and working proposals. The group will not be neither formal nor institutional but it will convene to thoroughly discuss and share viewpoints on trafficking-related issues. On the Road will host the first meeting on the Italian Adriatic coast in 2018;

- We invite the Italian Government to address human trafficking through a **high-profile institutional governance**, with a strong inter-ministerial approach and an effective cooperation with public welfare agencies and NGOs. Furthermore, we urge the Italian government to appoint an independent Anti-Trafficking Rapporteur with an acknowledged national and international anti-trafficking background. In other words, it is necessary to change the current procedure that requires the Department for Equal Opportunities to be both the controller and the one to control at the same time.
- We suggest the implementation of an **integrated multi-fund** (i.e. EU, national and regional funds within different budget lines) to financially support different strategies to support trafficked persons (early identification, protection, professional training, work, housing, networks, citizenship);
- We must avoid the **fragmentation** of project-based anti-trafficking interventions, which, on the contrary, should finally become consolidated services provided on regular basis, as those offered to other vulnerable target groups (e.g. minors and drug addicts);
- We need to develop new **job profiles** based on integrated, multi-professional and strategic skills and competences. It is necessary to perform a real "genetic mutation" to move from a multi-agency model to one based on multi-disciplinary teams so to implement new training curricula. Towards this aim, On the Road, in collaboration with other institutional and academic actors, will advocate for the establishment of a **School of Advanced Social Work** to train professionals to employed in the most complex social field, i.e. anti-trafficking;

- We have to thoroughly rethink the establishment of an integrated and dynamic **Observatory on Human Trafficking** that is capable to orient proper and innovative interventions. On this point, in the upcoming months, we will exchange views with national social research institutes to implement an Observatory able to collect significant data that will inform the timely design and implementation of anti-trafficking interventions;
- Finally, start an **experimental phase based on pragmatic** and incisive actions to impact a multi-problematic scenario such as:
  - **Specific actions** aimed at the Nigerian trafficked persons both in Nigeria and in Italy, through also the involvement of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation and the EUROPEAID Funds;
  - **Widespread reception** in local communities through a specific format of interventions that create strong connection between residents and victims of trafficking;
  - **Action-research** aimed at persons who have been expelled or have never accessed the protection systems and, therefore, they are at risk of being recruited by criminal organizations (proposal to be submitted to the Ministry of the Interior in collaboration with ANCI).