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Editor's note

This issue of *SHARE* focuses on anti-human trafficking ministries. In 'Focus', our staff share what she has seen during the visit to Myanmar, revealing the situation in a country plagued by human trafficking. 'Blessings by Offering' introduces CEDAR's anti-human trafficking project in Nepal. In 'Back to the Bible', we used the book of Philemon, which deals with slavery, as a starting point to reflect on the structural sin in society. 'Learn a Little More' provides an overview of the international laws and protocols for combating human trafficking. We invite you to join us in understanding the problems of human trafficking from different perspectives and caring for those who are at risk of being trafficked.

FOCUS

Myanmar, Synonym for Human Trafficking

Written by Clara Chiu (Head of Partnership Development)

In February this year, my colleague and I went on a field trip to Yangon, Myanmar, to visit our project partners. At that time,

news of human trafficking in Myanmar was all over the city. When my friends and relatives heard that we were going to Myanmar, their immediate reaction was: 'Are you going to KK Park?' When people hear about Myanmar, they associate 'trafficking' and 'fraud'. Indeed, trafficking is everywhere in Myanmar.

Human Traffickers Defraud Parents in Slums

On our first day in Myanmar, we visited our partner serving in the slums of Yangon. They had set up a community centre (a hut made of tin) with groups for men, women, families, and youths to study the Bible and pray together. A little food was given to the groups after each meeting. One woman shared during our fellowship with the groups that she almost sold her daughter.

Yaya (pseudonym), aged 35, has three daughters and a son, the eldest is 16 years old and the youngest is 1 year old. Her husband works as a casual labourer in a coconut shop, earning about MMK 20,000 (about HK\$74) per day, but only one day of work every two weeks, which means a monthly income of only MMK 40,000, and Yaya has borrowed money from loan sharks and villagers to support her family. The interest rate is also very high at about MMK 16,000 per day (about HK\$60). With reference to the average wage of local grassroots workers (construction workers, for example), which ranges from MMK 7,000 to 10,000 per day, Yaya's daily interest rate turns out to be

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higher than the workers' daily wage. She is in debt and her life is precarious, what can she do?

One day, an 'agent' called Yaya and persuaded her to sell her daughter to a neighbouring country for marriage, and her daughter could return home after three years. At that time, her daughter agreed to the arrangement to alleviate the pressure on her family. I asked Yaya if she knew that this was human trafficking at that time, she shook her head and said she did not know. According to our partner, villagers in the slums have not received any anti-human trafficking education. Even if the government publicises the issue occasionally, it is just some superficial slogan, and the police seldom deal with the problem of human trafficking. In fact, numerous strangers enter the slums and ask for the girls' personal details, claiming to offer employment opportunities. They then pay their parents about MMK 100,000 (about HK\$370) as a 'deposit' and take the girls away, and the girls are never seen again.



Yaya cried when sharing that she had to sell her daughter to pay off her debts.

Thank God that Yaya met Jesus when she was in our partner's group studying the Bible and learnt that selling her daughter was not pleasing to the Lord. Also, it was difficult for her to leave the country due to the civil war, so the deal was terminated. Our partner gave Yaya a small loan to start a small business selling snacks to help her make ends meet and work off her debts. Although Yaya's life is still challenging, she is confident that the Lord will look after her and that she can rely on Him. I respect her faith and willingness to obey the Lord in difficult times and am thankful for her.

Human Trafficking is Everywhere

In the afternoon of the same day, we visited another partner who had started a children's learning space in a poor village. During this visit, a teacher asked for help because more than 50 young people in his neighbourhood had been trafficked and did not know what to do with them. We then contacted our partner who are fighting against human trafficking on the Thai-Myanmar border and asked for their help. At that time, I gazed at the students at the learning space and felt anxious as they were the targets of traffickers. Before leaving, I asked the children if they knew what human trafficking was. Fortunately, they had received anti-trafficking education. However, it is hard not to worry for them as traffickers are not easy to prevent.

On the second day of our trip, we visited another partner who runs two daytime drop-in centres in Yangon. The centres provide three months of vocational training, emotional and livelihood support to survivors of trafficking and sexual exploitation. The beneficiaries are predominantly female. At the centre, we also met a male trafficking victim who was referred to our partner. A Malaysian man, aged about 30, had fallen into the trap of human trafficking and was deceived by his friend, working in three scam compounds for more than two years. Just like those stories on the news: he was forced to commit telephone fraud, and was whipped and shocked with an electric prod; he was injured when he failed to

escape; and he saw a 'colleague' commit suicide by jumping off a building.



CEDAR's staff interviewing the man who was betrayed by his friend.

I also interviewed another beneficiary, Nwe (pseudonym), who was trafficked to Laukkai of Kokang and managed to escape to Yangon, where she met our partner's outreach team on the street and joined our partner's training and supporting programme. She attended a hair styling training at the centre. She enjoyed going to the centre because of the kindness and care she received from the teachers and staff, the new friends she made, and the modest amount of food provided each time she visited (which was a strategy used by our partner to reduce the likelihood of survivors returning to work in red-light districts to sustain themselves). Our partner told me that Nwe also receives individual counselling and different types of art therapy to treat the trauma of being trafficked.

Apart from going out on the streets, our partner also goes straight to karaoke and red-light districts to reach out to the girls working there, pray for them, and distribute gospel pamphlets and contact information of the centres to them. I wonder why the leaders of the sex establishments would allow our partner to go in and 'cause trouble'. Our partner said that in the business world, if one is willing to pay for the room rent, they do not care what the customers do in the room. What if our partner succeeds in persuading the girls to 'leave'? Our partner explained that the turnover rate of girls in those places is very high and their 'employers' do not care whether they stay or go.

On the other hand, our partner is very concerned about the retention of the beneficiaries. Three months after joining the programme, the survivors are expected to earn a living with the skills they have learnt and live independently rather than relying on the centres' support in the long term. Like Nwe, she nears the end of her training and is working hard to save up the shampooing supplies she has received from the centre, intending to open her own hair salon when she graduates. As a young mother of two, including a 10-year-old son with autism, Nwe has a heavy burden of caring for her family on her own. According to the programme experience, it is easy for a beneficiary to return to work in the red-light district under such circumstances. However, I am thankful that she got to know Jesus at the centre and learnt from the Bible that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, so she reminds herself not to return to her old job just for the sake of money.



After our interview with Nwe, we prayed together for the Lord's protection and provision for Nwe's needs.

Finally, I would like to share a quote from our partner: 'Trafficking often starts with vulnerability.' To combat human trafficking, we must start from the root cause, help the community to build up their understanding of human trafficking and their basic earning capacity, and cooperate with the governments of various countries to combat the criminals; however, there is a limit to the power of human beings. It is only through the manifestation of God's justice and the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven that Myanmar will be able to rid itself of the stigma of being synonymous with 'human trafficking'.

Back to the Bible

Slavery is Structural Sin

Written by Dr. Alex Ip (Director, CEDAR Fund)

Scriptures reading: Philemon 10-12

¹⁰ That I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains. ¹¹ Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me. ¹² I am sending him—who is my very heart—back to you.'

What is structural sin? Slavery is certainly an excellent example. Structural sin has at least two characteristics. On the one hand, it is difficult for people in the system to escape from it, and everyone has a part to play. On the other hand, the system is intertwined from values to practices, and everything seems to be reasonable. The Roman system of slavery had these two characteristics: in the first century, about one-third of the Roman Empire was in slavery, on a scale rarely seen in history, and with an unimaginable extent of penetration. Families of all sizes had slaves to help them. So just about everyone was involved in the system in one way or another.

Accepting the system's rationality is easy when we are all participants or have a vested interest in it. To get the Roman masses to accept slavery, the regime provided a 'reasonable' justification. Legally, they defined enslaved people as objects, incorporating laws protecting slaves within regulations concerning objects rather than human beings. In terms of values, they took over the Greek theory of natural slavery and explained slavery as necessary because human beings have different natures. Some individuals required management to sustain their livelihood.

In Philemon 10-12, Paul deliberately describes Onesimus as his son and whom he considers his very heart. These two descriptions are not accidental; they are the rhetorical effect of Paul's intentional use of two words that are used to describe a very close relationship with a slave who is seen as an object. This rhetorical approach is meant to shock Philemon into reconsidering his perception of Onesimus as an object. Paul tries to instil Philemon with his values in the hope that Philemon will follow in his footsteps and change his deep-rooted view of slaves.

Let's Think

1. Do we now have appropriate relationships with people, the world, and our brothers and sisters according to the Lord's teachings and Jesus' example?
2. How can we rebuild distorted relationships?

Put into Practice:

Find a friend every day who is seen as 'lower class' in the world, e.g., lower status in the workplace or due to social prejudices; talk to that person and learn to communicate with him/her with equality, respect, and love.

Blessings by Offering

Protecting the Next Generation from Trafficking

Written by Dustin Tang (Donor Services Officer)

Nepal is one of the countries where human trafficking is rampant. Traffickers take advantage of Nepal's open border with India to traffick Nepali women and children to India. In recent years, traffickers have been active in social media to deceive poor communities, such as posting job opportunities online and luring poor women to adult entertainment sector for exploitation. According to the 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report of the U.S. Department of State, in Nepal's Kathmandu Valley, about 17% of adult entertainment venues employ children, while 62% of adult women in the industry entered as minors. The report also mentions that nearly 30% of the child workers in adult entertainment establishments are victims of forced labour, usually as restaurant staff, and later sexually exploited by their employers.

CEDAR has always been concerned about human trafficking, and our partner in Nepal, Asha Nepal, focuses on rescuing women who have been sexually exploited, providing them and their children with a safe environment and counselling, and helping them to reintegrate into society. We began working with Asha Nepal in 2016, and the project's final phase ran from 2022 to 2024. Our partner has an office in Mumbai, India, to help Nepalese women and their children, who have been trafficked into the red-light districts there, to return to Nepal to live in our partner's shelter in Kathmandu. In the shelter, they are provided with a safe environment and necessities of life, as well as medical check-ups, post-trauma counselling and psychiatric treatment as needed to recover from the trauma of human trafficking. In addition, our partner provides education or vocational skills training for women and their children, so that the children can learn in school and the adults can earn a living with a skill that will reduce their chances of being trafficked again.

Ketaki (pseudonym) is a 13-year-old survivor in the shelter. A few years ago, her parents fled to India with her and her three siblings because of huge debts, seeking employment opportunities. But two months later, her father left the family. For the sake of her children, Ketaki's mother tried to search for work, but she could not get a job. She met a man who said he could introduce her to a job, but when she found out it was a job in a red-light district, Ketaki's mother was reluctant, but she had no choice but to endure the exploitation to support her children. When Ketaki was 11 years old, the brothel owner forced Ketaki's mother to sell her body because she was at the 'suitable' age to work in the red-light district. Due to her objection, she was beaten, kicked and mentally abused. Thank God, Ketaki's mother later met our partner in the community, and entrusted Ketaki and her siblings to the care of our partner. The children were



free from the brothel owner's clutches, while the mother was remaining in India's red-light district.

Ketaki was traumatised by her fear of contact with others, and due to poverty, Ketaki's night blindness could not be cured, and her visual impairment further undermined her self-confidence. After psychological counselling and treatment by the partner, she gradually regained her confidence in contact with others, her vision improved, and she is now studying in Grade Five. In addition to helping the children, the partner continued reaching out to their mother to save her from the red-light district.

The problem of human trafficking in Nepal is still severe. Although our project came to an end at the end of 2024, our partner is still working hard to serve the victims of trafficking, and we continue to work with other partners in Nepal to fight trafficking and help more survivors move on to a new life. We hope that you will pray for the organisations whose mission is to combat human trafficking, that they will be empowered by the Lord to actively help victims like Ketaki to get out of their plight as soon as possible.

Learn a Little More

International Laws and Agreements on Combating Human Trafficking

Written by Ken Wong (Communications Officer)

The problem of transnational human trafficking has become increasingly severe and is a global issue that cannot be ignored. To promote co-operation among countries and effectively curb the crime, the international community has gradually developed a series of legal frameworks and operational guidelines aimed at preventing human trafficking, punishing offenders and protecting high-risk trafficked communities. Below is a brief introduction to key international agreements and their roles.

Forced Labour Convention - International Labour Organization

In 1930, the International Labour Organization (ILO) established the *Forced Labour Convention*, which requires countries to prohibit and criminalise forced labour. In 1998, the ILO supplemented the Convention by advocating that countries develop policies to prevent labour exploitation and conduct inspections and controls. The ILO's efforts play an essential role in the international fight against labour exploitation, as the Convention calls for establishing effective mechanisms to help victims escape their plight and avoid re-victimisation.

Trafficking in Persons Protocol - United Nations

In 2000, in response to the increasingly serious problem of human trafficking, the United Nations annexed the *Trafficking in Persons Protocol* to the *Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (Palermo Protocol)*, requiring signatories to enact laws to criminalise and penalise human trafficking, and emphasising protection measures for victims, including the provision of shelter, legal assistance and psychological counselling, to provide a framework for countries to combat human trafficking.

Trafficking Victims Protection Act - United States

Since 2000, the United States has passed several bills to combat human trafficking, with the *Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA)* being the most influential. The TVPA not only strengthens criminal prosecution of traffickers but also establishes a fund to provide victims with safe houses,

rehabilitation and resettlement. In addition, the TVPA requires the U.S. government to regularly evaluate the efforts of countries around the world in combating human trafficking and to rate their performance accordingly, to encourage countries to improve their countermeasures. This monitoring mechanism has effectively promoted international co-operation.

Directive 2011/36/EU - EU

In 2011, the EU adopted the *Directive 2011/36/EU* which requires member states to adopt consistent legal measures to combat trafficking in human and protect victims. The Directive regulates anti-trafficking measures from prevention to punishment, providing victims with shelter, compensation and reintegration assistance. It also requires member states to report regularly on implementing their policies to ensure they are effective. The EU's actions set an example of regional co-operation.

Through years of efforts by different countries and organisations, the global anti-trafficking legal framework has strengthened the protection of victims, and the increasing international co-operation has helped to combat transnational trafficking crimes. However, the challenges remain daunting with the ever-changing modus operandi of the crime. According to the *2024 Trafficking in Persons Report* of the U.S. Department of State, trafficking syndicates are taking advantage of international border loopholes and digital technology to expand their operations, using social media, dating apps, and gaming platforms to lure and control the poor with fake high-paying jobs. They also use cryptocurrency transactions and steganography to cover their tracks, making it much more difficult to enforce the law. The report says, 'Building consensus around an affirmative vision is the first line of our tech diplomacy.' In the face of increasingly rampant transnational human trafficking, international co-operation in information sharing, joint investigations and cross-border law enforcement is increasingly essential. May all governments, organisations and citizens be guided by the Lord to help victims regain their dignity and freedom, and to curb the spread of human trafficking.

2024 - 2025 Operating Statement

For the period Jul 2024 - Feb 2025

Income		HK\$ 13,142,384
Donations		11,365,486
Donations for Disaster Relief		1,148,878
Other Income		628,020
Expenditure		HK\$ 12,237,372
Development & Poverty Alleviation		8,008,960
Disaster Relief & Rehabilitation Projects		981,864
Education & Partnership Development		2,495,554
Administrative Costs		750,994
Surplus /(Deficit)		HK\$ 905,012

Note > CEDAR's fiscal year is from 1 July to 30 June of the following year. The total budgeted expenditure for the 2024-2025 fiscal year is HK\$21,943,077. Please pray for and support the work of CEDAR and our partners.

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