

Stop Human Trafficking: Community Concern Society launches National Initiative

Edmund Burke is famously quoted as saying that "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing". Banding together a group of "good men" and taking a proactive stance to begin a national effort to combat Human Trafficking in Sri Lanka, Community Concern Society (CCS) launched a landmark initiative at a round table discussion held in Colombo early this month.

The discussion was attended by Guests of Honour Ms. Neela Gunasekera Chairperson National Committee for Women, Robert Blake U.S.A Ambassador in Sri Lanka and Gary Lewis, Representative for South Asia, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. The discussion was segmented under the themes Prevention, Prosecution and Protection and was chaired by Ms. Sriyani Tidball, Founder and CEO of CCS.

According to the SAARC convention trafficking is defined as consisting of "All acts involved in the recruitment, transportation, forced selling or buying of women and children". In Sri



Dignitaries present at the round table discussion to prevent human trafficking in Sri Lanka

Lanka, research shows that one of the key reasons for forced labour and the sex trafficking of women and children is the lack of education and communication. For instance many mothers lack the education to recognize the importance of communicating

with their children when it comes to abuse and in turn children feel that it is taboo to express such fears to their parents.

. Gary Lewis, UNODC repre-

sentative stated that the involvement of the government is an integral part of such an initiative as it is proper governance that can ensure that fewer citizens are exposed to horrendous levels of poverty and are therefore not forced to bend to financial pres-

ures and make decisions to sell or exploit their women and children.

Robert Blake discussing attempts by the US government to assist Sri Lanka commented that 50 trainers will be equipped to combat such crimes and steps have been implemented to strengthen contracts and awareness programs for women working overseas. This is meant to provide the backing the 'lions of Sri Lanka' need to combat deception, coercion, threats and the abuse of authority.

The round table discussion is the first of many such initiatives CCS intends to organize surrounding the issue of Human Trafficking in Sri Lanka. The launch event was viewed positively by attendees as an excellent first step that generated a platform for communication and the sharing of knowledge among key decision makers and members of society.