

MECPATH Training Day – January 8, 2014

The second MECPATH training day took place in the Catherine McCauley Centre on Herbert Street, Dublin as the Mercy Sister Volunteers prepare to promote the campaign in hotels in their provinces.



Denise Boyle fmdm addressing the Sisters of Mercy who attended the MECPATH training day

An issue that is gaining much attention in recent times is that of Human Trafficking. Pope Francis has championed the issue of Human Trafficking, calling it the most ‘extensive form of slavery in this 21st century’ in his Easter 2013 message. Pope Francis also called on the Pontifical Academies of Sciences and of the Social Sciences to organise a preparatory workshop to examine human trafficking and modern slavery, which was held in November 2013, and was attended by MECPATH campaign manager Denise Boyle and co-ordinator Mary Ryan. In late 2013 the Pope told new ambassadors to the Vatican that ‘the trafficking of human beings is a crime against humanity and must be stopped’. In the US, President Obama declared January 2014 ‘[National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month](#)’, culminating in the annual celebration of National Freedom Day on 1 February.

Human Trafficking could be described as the trading of human misery, and hugely important as it is to have high profile voices speak out, it is also crucial that a grass roots movement works towards preventing this despicable crime.

This is what Mercy Sisters in Ireland have been doing over the past six months, with the establishment of the MECPATH Campaign (Mercy-End Child Prostitution and Trafficking in Hospitality Sector). The aim of MECPATH is to raise awareness and to end child sexual exploitation in the travel and hospitality sectors. MECPATH also supports hotels in its prevention, by use of the [Code of Conduct for Travel and Tourism](#) (CODE). [ECPAT](#) (End Child Prostitution, Pornography and Trafficking) is an international Non-Government Organisation (NGO) which developed the CODE.



Mary Ryan rsm (Campaign Coordinator)

On Wednesday 8 January 2014 Sisters of Mercy involved in the campaign gathered at the Catherine McAuley Centre on Herbert Street for their second training day. The day commenced with campaign co-ordinator Mary Ryan rsm giving an overview of the progress made to date by the MECPATH campaign. Campaign Manager Denise Boyle, fmdm then facilitated a discussion on the ECPAT Code of Conduct.



Also presenting at the training session was barrister Colin Smith (*pictured left*), who has broad experience both in Ireland and overseas in the area of human rights law. He spoke to the trainees about the legal framework of trafficking in Ireland, and discussed the issues involved for victims of trafficking in terms of human rights.

Trainees were also advised of key points they should cover with hoteliers, when meeting them to promote the MECPATH campaign. During this session, which was facilitated by Marie Stuart rsm, the participants spent time discussing the different approaches to take during such meetings and how different situations might be best addressed.

The MECPATH volunteers are now ready to visit the first round of hotels and meet with their general managers and key hotel personnel in order to gain their support for the campaign. Specifically the MECPATH volunteers will be inviting hotels to join ECPAT and to sign the Code of Conduct. They will also extend an invitation to the General Managers to participate in the training session being organised by the MECPATH team on 28 January 2014 at the Department of Justice and Equality, St Stephen's Green, Dublin.

Messages to: Mary Ryan rsm, MECPATH Campaign Co-ordinator

Denise Boyle fmdm, MECPATH Campaign Manager