



Trafficking in Persons

Trafficking in Human Beings: Humans as Commodities

Hundreds of thousands of people – most of them women and children, but also a growing number of men – are sold and forced into situations of exploitation and conditions amounting to slavery. Although the global scale of human trafficking is difficult to quantify, as many as 800,000 people may be trafficked across international borders annually, with many more trafficked within the borders of their own countries (IOM 2008). Trafficking in human beings is one of the most globalised and lucrative criminal businesses and generates tens of billions of dollars annually; profits comparable to those of the illicit traffic of drugs and arms.

What is trafficking in human beings?

Trafficking in human beings is a modern form of slavery and is internationally defined as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs” (United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women And Children, 2000: Art. 3a).

Why does trafficking in human beings take place?

Conflict and post-conflict situations, unstable economies as well as significant disruptions in socio-economic conditions due to natural disasters make many victims susceptible to trafficking. Corruption and (female) youth unemployment are typically the result of unstable economic and

political environments and are likely to increase the supply of trafficking victims (ILO 2006:1).

In many parts of the world, women and girls are at the bottom of the economic ladder and in subordinate positions in society. Therefore, they tend to be more prone to seemingly attractive promises of economic opportunities and more vulnerable to falling prey to traffickers. The increased feminisation of migration is putting more women at risk of exploitation.

However, it is not only the supply side that gives rise to human trafficking. Another factor is the demand side in the destination areas. There is great demand for cheap and easily exploitable labour, e.g. in tourism, the red light or the construction sector. Recent research suggests that the demand for trafficking victims is higher in countries that are more open to globalisation and that have a higher incidence of prostitution, regardless of the legal status of prostitution (ILO 2006:1).



How does trafficking in human beings work?

There are various forms of trafficking in persons. Victims are often attracted by financial offers from recruiters or may be lured by agencies offering job placements abroad. The commission and transportation fees drive the victims into debt. Traffickers often confiscate their victims' documents, thus preventing them from escaping. Exploitation may take various forms: forced or bonded labour (e.g. in brick-kilns, mining or as camel jockeys), sexual exploitation (e.g. forced prostitution or forced marriage) or the removal of organs. The victims usually receive little or no payment for their services and labour, and are subject to complete control, permanent threats and physical, sexual and psychological violence, including torture. Traffickers may also put victims under pressure by threatening their relatives. The basic human rights of the victims are severely violated.

Who is trafficked?

Anyone may fall victim to human traffickers. However, marginalized groups, such as women, children, indigenous people, people of 'low' caste status or migrant workers are disproportionately affected. Increasingly younger children are being targeted. In forced economic exploitation, of which 20 per cent is estimated to be an outcome of trafficking, women and girls represent 56 per cent of victims, while men and boys account for 44 per cent. Regarding forced commercial sexual exploitation, an overwhelming majority of 98 per cent are women and girls (ILO 2005:15). Groups appearing most vulnerable to re-trafficking are women, children and young adults, especially victims under the age of 18.

Dana from Romania

Dana grew up in a poor region of Romania. When she was 16, she found a job as a waitress in a nearby town, where she met her future husband. When her husband died, she returned to her home village. Her cousin told her about a restaurant in Germany where Dana could work as a waitress and lent her the money to cover the travel costs. The restaurant turned out to be a brothel. Dana was at his mercy, because she was in debt and he had confiscated her documents. He forced her to work as a prostitute and threatened to cause "problems" for her parents if she refused. She was picked up in a police raid and taken to a counselling service, where she was given psychological, medical and legal support. Dana decided to report her cousin to the police and to testify as a witness against them. In the interest of her own safety, Dana joined a witness protection programme and remained in Germany for the duration of the trial. With the help of the counselling service, Dana improved her German and began to train to be a geriatric nurse.

Who are the traffickers?

Various people may become human traffickers. People in the victim's social environment may be involved in the recruiting process (e.g. relatives, neighbours, teachers). In some cases, victims are lured by recruitment agencies. Groups of people seeking to make high profits are also involved in human trafficking, as are criminal groups of various sizes, which often form part of a network of organised crime.

Findings of the monitoring

Trafficking cannot be adequately addressed through short-term and micro projects. It is a development issue linked to larger regional and global processes. Anti-trafficking activities need to be based on a human rights approach, which puts the physical, mental and social well-being of the victims at its centre. Approaches need to address both gender and ethnic inequalities underpinning trafficking and re-trafficking situations.

Specific measures to combat trafficking in human beings include the following areas:

- Prevention, including measures such as awareness-raising activities among potential victims and on the demand side.
- Protection and re-integration, e.g. medical, psychosocial and legal support and long-term reintegration measures for victims.
- Prosecution of traffickers.
- Legislation and law enforcement, e.g. monitoring mechanisms for anti-trafficking laws.
- Research, e.g. collecting data disaggregated on the basis of age, sex and ethnicity, as well as advocacy.

Literature & Links

Anti-Slavery International: <http://www.antislavery.org>
Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW): <http://www.gaaww.org>
Legislationline.org: <http://www.legislationline.org>
Terre des Hommes Digital Library: <http://www.childtrafficking.com>
UNODC: <http://www.unodc.org>
IOM: <http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/pid/748>. Geneva, 2008.
ILO: *Global Report under the Follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work 2005. Report I (B)*. Geneva, 2005.
ILO: *Globalization and the illicit market for human trafficking: an empirical analysis of supply and demand. Working Paper 53*. Geneva, 2006.

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