

Root causes and solutions to Human trafficking in Ethiopia

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Introduction

Human Trafficking is defined in the Trafficking Protocol as "the recruitment, transport, transfer, harboring or receipt of a person by such means as threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud or deception for the purpose of exploitation."

The definition on trafficking consists of three core elements:

- 1) The action of trafficking which means the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons
- 2) The means of trafficking which includes threat of or use of force, deception, coercion, abuse of power or position of vulnerability
- 3) The purpose of trafficking which is always exploitation. In the words of the Trafficking Protocol, article 3 "exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

The second and now standard definition taken from the (Palermo) Protocol to human trafficking is "The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring 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.” From these definitions, human trafficking broadly encompasses sexual slavery/forced prostitution, forced marriage, forced labor, and other forms of servitude.

Although trafficking in human beings is not a new problem, it appears to have expanded in many parts of the world and assumed an increasingly global character. In recent years, the problem has attracted growing international attention. Nowadays, there is a mutual understanding on the vast majority of cases trafficking has become a corrupt mode of migration, which transforms seemingly legal migratory projects into nightmare. In many cases, legal employment schemes involve deception, exploitation, and the rise in the incidence of unpaid wages, confiscated passports, confinement, lack of job training and even violence against legal migrant workers, indicating an overlap between legal migration and trafficking. People are snared into trafficking by many means. In some cases, physical force is used. In other cases, false promises are made regarding job opportunities or marriages in foreign countries to entrap victims.

Trafficking is a complex phenomenon that is often driven or influenced by social, economic, cultural and other factors. Human trafficking affects every country of the world, as countries of origin, transit or destination - or even a combination of all. Trafficking often occurs from less developed countries to more developed countries, where people are rendered vulnerable to trafficking by virtue of poverty, conflict or other conditions. Many of these factors are specific to individual trafficking patterns and to the States in which they occur. Trafficking in human beings is to a large extent a symptom of Poverty, unemployment and lack of opportunity which force millions of people to look for a better life by moving away from the places they call home. Human trafficking appears to be the worst human development outcome linked to increasing global mobility. It is a form of modern day slavery that deprives people of their human rights and freedoms.

Ethiopia is a source country for men, women, and children subjected to trafficking in persons, specifically conditions of forced labor and forced prostitution. Girls from Ethiopia's rural areas are forced into domestic servitude and, less frequently, commercial sexual exploitation, while boys are subjected to forced labor in traditional weaving, agriculture, herding, and street vending. Small numbers of Ethiopian girls are forced into domestic servitude outside of Ethiopia, primarily in Djibouti and Sudan, while Ethiopian boys are subjected to forced labor in Djibouti as shop assistants and errand boys. Women from all parts of Ethiopia are subjected to involuntary domestic servitude throughout the Middle East and in Sudan, and many transit Djibouti, Egypt, Libya, Somalia, or Yemen as they migrate to labor destinations. Ethiopian women in the Middle East face severe abuses, including physical and sexual assault, denial of salary, sleep deprivation, confinement, incarceration, and murder. Many are driven to despair and mental illness, some commit suicide.

It is clear that Ethiopian women in the Middle East are the subject of serious violence and human rights violations. Their journey, in the majority of the cases, is turning from legally recognized labor migration into a clear case of trafficking. In the last few months, several media outlets highlighted Ethiopian women in the Middle East for being subjected to forced labor and servitude, rape, sexual and physical abuse, murder, suicide, kidnapping, and various other crimes. Victims of trafficking can be any age, and any gender. However, a disproportionate number of women are involved in human trafficking both as victims and as culprits. Government has continued defending the ever-increasing migration of women to the Middle East as a voluntary labor migration regardless of its shocking results. Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn has urged the National Movement against Human Trafficking to reinforce its effort to end human trafficking. He stressed the need to take legal and administrative measures on those illegal brokers luring citizens to leave the country. To this effect, he urged the committee comprised of various stakeholders to prevent human trafficking to strengthen its effort to end the problem.

Several reasons or causes have been advanced for the incidence and upsurge of human trafficking. These include, widespread and increasing level of poverty, unemployment and

under-employment (especially of women), greed, family and communal dislocation, economic transition, globalization, rural impoverishment, accelerated commoditization of sex, economic decline and uncertainties, opportunism, false and fake dream, and dramatically deteriorating living standards. Others are low pay, discriminatory labor practices, violence (particularly against women), lack of social and welfare support, lack of educational opportunities, tourism, false or imaginary marriage, declining border controls, governance, constant and increased demand for cheap labor, combined forces of organized crime and governmental corruption, and the receding capacity of the state to provide basic social services (Abdulkadir, 2010; NAPTIP News, 2010).

These factors tend to exert pressures on victims that “push” them into migration and hence into the control of traffickers, but other factors that tend to “pull” potential victims can also be significant. On the other hand, the root causes of human trafficking can be viewed also as economic causes, socio- cultural causes and legal and political causes.

Push and Pull Factors to Trafficking

Push Factors

Trafficked persons point towards economic, and other oppressive conditions, as well as lack of opportunities in their own countries as the main reasons of why they felt the need to migrate for employment, and thus risk being used and exploited by traffickers. The economic and social decline during the transition period, including unemployment, a dramatic reduction in social services, and increasing poverty, especially affecting women and children, have created a push to leave the region. Horizontal professional segregation manifested itself in women being traditionally employed in ‘light’ industries or ‘social’ sector that have been hit first by socio-economic transformation. Women were forced to seek for alternative incomes, and offers of well-paid jobs abroad that required limited skills seemed as a solution for many.

Pull Factors

Amidst poverty and limited prospects, many individuals are willing to take risks in order to seize opportunities abroad. Popular notions of ‘The West’ conjure glamour and opportunity, while promises of steady employment, better living conditions, and access to

hard currency seem to offer a way out of endless hardship. Interestingly, the perceived importance of adventure and fulfillment as a pull factor appears related to the level of economic conditions in the country of origin; while poverty has increased in Ethiopia, there is a steady demand from Middle East for cheap unskilled labor in the informal economy.

This creates preconditions for trafficking, since migrants are dependent on illegal middlemen to buy passports and for transportation. While this paragraph mainly relates to trafficking in human beings for forced labor, servitude and slavery, the demand in the destination countries for women and children for the purpose of sexual exploitation is one of the most important root causes of trafficking in human beings. If the demand is reduced, less women and children will become victims.

Economic, Socio- Cultural and Legal and Political Causes

Economic causes

There is a chronic shortage of paid work, particularly for unskilled labor. Youth unemployment is high in many places. The labor market for young women is often very restricted – invariably more so than for young men. Women are not as highly valued in terms of their labor as men in sectors such as agriculture and are therefore restricted to household work, and sales and service jobs in the informal sector. What jobs are available usually involve working for long hours and low pay under poor conditions. Domestic work and the service sector are often poorly regulated and workers are not unionized.

Many young women start out as domestics in slavery-like conditions in the hope of finding something better. Poor people have great difficulty obtaining credit on reasonable terms and there is still no access to micro-credits, in particular for young women without assets of their own.

There is growing pressure of migration while many borders are becoming more and more impermeable. Economic restructuring is driving people from the countryside into the cities and from poorer to richer countries. Workers are also moving into sectors such as tourism, the construction industry and agriculture, where there is a greater need for temporary labor. As a result of the rapid urbanization fuelled by these trends, people from rural areas

are being exposed to new income and consumption patterns. Immigration to many high income countries is coming under increasingly strict regulation at a time when a growing proportion of guest workers and migrants are women.

Socio-cultural causes

The oppression of women and children within patriarchal family and social structures, in which women are subordinated to men, is of the main reasons why they fall prey to traffickers. It is also a major factor in the demand for sexual and other services, without which human trafficking could not prosper.

Not only do women and girls rarely enjoy the same opportunities as men and boys, they are the objects of discriminating attitudes and treatment. They are often regarded as a burden to the family and far less time and resources are invested in them. Girls are frequently prevented from going to school. Women have less say in family matters than men and in many cases cannot own or rent land. Other factors that tend to make people dependent and vulnerable are ethnic or social discrimination.

Legal and political causes

The lack of adequate legislation, properly functioning administrative machinery and an effective judiciary are the most obvious causes of human trafficking in this category. As regards trafficking linked to various types of forced labor, inadequate labor laws and regulations and poor enforcement create serious problems for the victims. This applies particularly to services in the informal sector closely related to the private sphere such as domestic work. On the demand side, inadequate penalties for sex traffickers and those who profit from exploitation is the crucial factor. The risk of discovery is small and offences are usually difficult to prove. The chances of obtaining convictions are therefore slight.

Demand and supply side of human trafficking

In most developing countries, poor economic, political and social infrastructure, which contributes to poverty, conflict and bad governance force some people to leave and look for opportunities elsewhere. Very often, these poor people who travel through irregular

channels and dangerous, hazardous and circuitous routes become victims of trafficking. Poverty, AIDS which has left many children orphans, Ignorance, lack of skills and exposure. The demand for cheap labor as domestic workers, laborers for constructions sites, plantations, factories, hotels and shops, motivate the young people to leave the rural areas and move to the towns.

The Demand Side

Who buys trafficked persons and why? Where are they intended for? The main “buyers” of trafficked persons include sex tourists, pornography producers, brothel owners, sex customers, and employers of all types looking for cheap labor both for domestic and industrial purposes. The main destinations are developed countries in the West, the Middle East as well as big cities, conflict zones, military bases and mining areas in developing countries themselves.

1. The uncontrollable expansion of the sex and pornography industry has created increased demand for child and women trafficking not only from developing countries to developed countries but also to big cities and holiday resort areas in the former. Children and women, often young girls, are held captive in local brothels and other hiding places to work as commercial sex workers at the disposal of sex tourists and sex traders or “exported” to Western destinations where they are confined in conditions that are inhumane and traded for the purposes of commercial sex, including prostitution and pornography in general and child pornography and prostitution in particular (Leinwand, 2004).
2. There is a high level of demand for cheap and submissive child labor both in the informal and formal sectors: domestic work, service (e.g., bars, restaurants, cleaning), construction (e.g., crushing stones, making bricks) agriculture, fishing and mines. In the Middle East, there is also demand for young boys who are sold and bought as “camel jockeys”. The more vulnerable and illegal people are, the cheaper they become and so greater in demand. Human trafficking offers such vulnerable and illegal labor supply in both the West and developing countries themselves.
3. In areas where there are armed conflicts and civil wars, men and young boys have been forced to become soldiers. Due to the large numbers of armed conflicts seen in

Sub-Saharan Africa during the last three decades, the coercive recruitment of young boy children into the role of child soldier has been more widespread in Africa than anywhere else. Conflict situations, peacekeeping camps, military bases and mining industries have also created a market for the services of trafficked persons mainly for sexual purposes. Armed conflicts also undermine the capacity of law enforcement and other authorities to combat the problem (World Revolution, 2005).

4. The demand for human organs for health purposes in Western Europe has become an increasingly critical factor in pushing the demand for trafficked people, particularly children.

The Supply Side

Who are the trafficked persons and why do they sell themselves? Where do they originate from? As pointed out above, the overwhelming majority of trafficked persons consist of women and children. It is estimated that 80% are women and up to 50% are minors. Most of the trafficked persons come from neglected and marginalized poor areas and social groups. Why do people, especially women and children, “allow” themselves to be trafficked?

1. The root cause of human trafficking is poverty. Income poverty, unemployment, hunger, disease and illiteracy are widespread and rampant. Employment, education, vocational training and economic opportunities are in chronic shortage. As a result, unemployed youths and school dropouts are reduced to vulnerability and thereby become easy targets to human traffickers. More vulnerable are those who migrate from rural areas, where opportunities are even rarer, to urban areas in search of employment and other opportunities. At the point of their vulnerability, young people, boys and girls alike, are lured by ruthless human traders on such grounds as promises of marriage, employment, educational opportunities, or a better life. Not knowing the evils of the world they are being lured into, the vulnerable and desperate young people (mostly girls) succumb to the deceptive schemes of the perpetrators and are shipped to brothels in the Western and/or big cities and

tourist destinations in both origin and destination countries (Brown, 2002 and Truong and Angeles, 2005).

The women and young adults see this as an opportunity for living better lives and for providing economic support to their parents and family members. In some cases parents, too, are approached and lured to “sell” their children prior to the consent of the children. In many cultural contexts, the children are not allowed to go against their parents’ wishes, resulting in situations where children are sold to sex traders without the children’s knowledge.

At other times both parents and children are approached by friends, relatives and neighbors whom they have little reason to mistrust. On the contrary, such agents are considered as wanting to help the parents and children to come out of their poverty...

Poverty in all its dimensions serves as the perpetual reservoir of human trafficking. “HIV/AIDS, poverty and hunger fuel trafficking as grandparents and guardians struggle to cope” (IRIN Africa, 2005:1).

2. In most of the origins of trafficked persons, social customs often relegate women and children to positions of being “owned” by husbands, parents and society at large. They are powerless in decision- making processes and are subjected to physical, verbal, sexual and emotional abuse (Cantwell, 2005). The home and community environments are not always safe for women and children with special conditions and/or “critical” minds. Women and children are meant to hear and not to be heard. Women and girls are socially marginalized, and often excluded from inheritance rules for land and have less access to education than men and boys. In many cultures, girls are married off at an early age, mainly for economic reasons, and exposed to sexual and physical violence, putting them in a state of vulnerability and desire to escape at any cost.

Such oppressive and abusive circumstances put women and children in vulnerable positions wanting to take any opportunity that will help them flee their homes and communities. The cunning human traffickers offer such runaways false promises and the abused women and children fall for them and get trapped.

3. Generally speaking, the magnitude and quality of information accessible to people will depend on the level of development and ability to access it. In poor economies, the flow and quality of information is limited as advanced technology and financial resources are lacking. In such circumstances, the poor have less or no access to general information due to, among other things, lack of money and education. Information about human trafficking is harder to access and the risks involved among people who are vulnerable to trafficking are far greater. Trafficked persons know very little or nothing about the world they are destined for be it within or outside national borders. They have no way of knowing anything about the human trafficking industry which is complex and specialized. They know very little or nothing about anti-trafficking laws and hence do not seek counseling and legal advice. They do not know where to turn for consultation either before or after being trafficked. Both parents and children suffer from lack of awareness.

“Women and girls may themselves take the initiative to migrate in the hope of earning a decent income, escaping a miserable life, or supporting a family back home. In such cases, they are sometimes aware that they are going to work in commercial sex, considering this to be an acceptable short-term remedy to a desperate need to earn a living. They very rarely, however, are aware of the nature of the demands that will be made upon them, the conditions in which they are likely to be held, or the possible long-term repercussions of the activity” (ILO IPEC 2002:19).

It is this weakness among trafficked persons that human traffickers use in exploiting and devouring their victims. In the absence of increased awareness about the cruel consequences of human trafficking among potential victims, the availability of trafficked persons is likely to continue unabated.

4. In certain cases, “success” stories told by formerly trafficked persons has tended to encourage young women and children to attempt the same. Sometimes, formerly trafficked people go into the trafficking business and tell “good” stories and lure friends, neighbors and relatives. In other circumstances, they collaborate with their former exploiters and serve as “supply agents”. These tend to be even more convincing as they have been there themselves and talk positively about human

trafficking. There are also cases where survivors of trafficking turn into traffickers and sex traders themselves. Of course, what is often discussed is not the subject matter of trafficking in itself. It is more business, employment, opportunities and rewards that are discussed in positive and attractive terms.

5. In Ethiopia social disasters such as HIV/AIDS have caused social instability causing millions children to become orphans. Young girls are preferred by men both for HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment purposes. As prevention, the men find it safer to go for girls who are virgins in the false belief that sleeping with virgin girls and/or girl children is a cure for HIV/AIDS (Getu 2003). This scenario illustrates what makes HIV/AIDS orphans vulnerable to human trafficking (IRIN News 2005).
6. The emergence of such establishments in rural and peri-urban settings is often followed by the influx of single men or married men without their spouses. This creates a gender gap and then becomes a cause in the spread of prostitution which in turn tends to be fertile ground for human trafficking. On the other hand, these establishments also bring job opportunities in at least two ways: (i) People get direct skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled employment and (ii) People begin formal and informal businesses in response to the various service needs created by the new arrivals.

At the closure of such entities, people lose their jobs and businesses. Employment opportunities shrink and the unemployment rate increases. This forces jobless women to migrate to urban areas in search of new opportunities. Without knowledge and support bases in the new destinations they become vulnerable and perfect targets of traffickers.

Effects of human trafficking

One of the implications of trafficking in persons is the opportunities foregone for trafficked persons leading to indebtedness and bondage, while the traffickers made huge sums of money in terms of profit. The foregone is in terms of remittance flows and human capital. Victims are unable to send remittances back home as they are typically repaying debt to their „employers“. They are only allowed to keep a negligible share of their earnings.

Human trafficking has devastating and everlasting effects. Trafficked children's lives are easily shattered from experience. This affects their well-being due to poor living conditions, separation from families. At the end they are traumatized and become threatened and powerless. Child prostitution and labor deprive the children of the opportunity to achieve their full potentials. It deprives developing nations of vital human resources for development.

Trafficked women are equally traumatized. In many cases, the women are beaten, raped, threatened, confined and/or deprived of food until they agree to the trafficker's demands. Very often, their travel documents are confiscated and used to control their movement, make them dependent on traffickers and as debt bondage to control and coerce them. The "working conditions" of trafficked women in the sex industry are brutal. Many are forced to have sex with multiple clients per day. They also suffer from a series of diseases associated with multiple rape and physical abuse. Worse still, intimidation and violence are very common, and extreme, particularly in cases with "mafia" or organized crime connections (OSCE, 1999).

Several social and human costs to development are attributable to trafficking in persons. Victims of trafficking could hardly care for the elderly and their children. In several cases, the forced absence of women leads to the breakdown of families and neglect of children. Both human trafficking and HIV greatly threaten human development and food security. The notion of fearful communities that all trafficked persons are infected with HIV/AIDS leads to further stigmatization of all women returning to their communities. Ironically, many ex-victims of trafficking hardly find relationship with men, let alone marriage. This type of experience on their return is not only traumatic, but equally devastating. Thus, the successful reintegration into their communities had positive impact on individual and general human development.

Human trafficking affects democracy and democratization in many developing nations. The ever-growing proportion of trafficking in human beings is perpetuated by organized and

sophisticated criminal enterprises. These criminal activities and the official corruption linked to trafficking undermine democratic institutions and challenge the principle of the rule of law.

Anti-Trafficking Measures – Global Response

Anti-trafficking policy tends to be dominated by the prevention, protection and prosecution paradigm, which also tends to focus primarily on short-time interventions. These measures deal with both the supply and demand sides of human trafficking. On the supply side, the various measures target the conditions of the trafficked and traffickers while sex buyers and “employers” and/or owners are targeted on the demand side. The anti-human trafficking interventions are about stopping trafficking, providing aid to trafficked persons and penalizing traders (traffickers and aides) and buyers (consumers). Governments, bilateral and multilateral international aid agencies, NGOs and faith-based organizations are all involved in combating human trafficking in one form or another (US Department of State, 2005d and Vital Voices, 2004).

Prevention

The preventive measures imply that the conditions that lead to the vulnerability of the trafficked persons are effectively addressed. The main component in this regard is poverty alleviation through the creation of income, employment and educational and vocational training opportunities. This is about economic empowerment of vulnerable social groups enabling them to be productively engaged and self-sufficient. It also means educating vulnerable persons, parents, communities, government officials, local/village chiefs, policy makers and law enforcers on the ugly nature of the phenomenon of human trafficking at all possible stages in all possible ways.

Pre-trafficking awareness-raising campaigns and warnings are conducted to promote the level of individual and public vigilance. Training and equipping border patrol police and social workers and the provision of anti-trafficking laws, publicizing and enforcing these are also likely to contribute towards the prevention of human trafficking.

Educated and economically empowered, the vulnerable are likely to be in a better position to resist any deceptive schemes designed to lure them. Similar campaigns in the countries

of destination conducted through mass media, seminars, workshops and conferences on issues related to human trafficking in communities, universities and schools will also contribute towards prevention. Public awareness and support in both the countries of origin and destination is likely to make it more difficult for traffickers to conceal their operations (Perkins 2005).

Prosecution

This relates to legal measures taken against perpetrators, i.e., people involved in human trafficking activities through direct and/or indirect means as suppliers, customers or collaborators. Prosecution is about: (i) signing and committing to the various pieces of global anti-trafficking legislation and human rights treaties; (ii) having in place anti-trafficking legislation that makes the buying and selling of human beings a criminal offence; (iii) Enforcing the law to prosecute traffickers and collaborators as well as persons exploiting trafficked persons; (iv) Naming and shaming of employers of forced labor and sexual exploiters of victims; (v) Fighting corruption which facilitates and profits from human trafficking; (vi) Identifying and interdicting trafficking routes through better intelligence gathering and coordination; and (vii) Clarifying legal definitions of trafficking and coordinating law enforcement responsibilities.

Protection

This deals with caring for the well-being of trafficked people during and after the transaction in both destination and origin countries. It is about giving proper shelter, food, medication, counseling, family mediation and reconciliation services to trafficked persons suffering from exploitative and abusive conditions. Trafficked persons are given social services and legal assistance in both destination and origin countries by counselors, psychologists and social workers in order to help them recover from the trauma caused by physical and psychological abuse. Long-term rehabilitation and reintegration of trafficked persons are important in ensuring effective care including physical safety (Perkins 2005).

Recommendations/ Solutions to Human Trafficking

Some of the causes of human trafficking are structural in character and require long-term solutions. At the same time, the seriousness of the problem and its changing nature require immediate and rapid response, timely measures, and the flexibility to rethink and change direction where necessary.

It is based on the view that poverty is a multidimensional concept with political, economic and social aspects and implications. To a large extent, human trafficking may be viewed as a symptom of absolute and relative poverty, particularly poverty among young people and women. It is also a response to the demand for – mainly – women and children for various forms of exploitation. Thus, combating human trafficking also involves addressing the causes of poverty, among them lack of or inadequate economic growth, inequitable allocation of resources, lack of social security, and the absence of gender equality, democracy and respect for human rights. Therefore, Micro-credits used to help women start up and run their own enterprises are a well-tried solution. They are particularly effective when combined with literacy programs and product marketing support.

There should be job skills training for sheltered victims. Thus, the integration program must provide victims with the ability to deal with stigmatization, acquire job skills and employment, health care educational support, food and accommodation. The skills training play a vital role, and it is through the crucial concept of reintegration that victims can access potential employment for better living and income conditions. Moreover, victims should be encouraged to learn about new information technologies, trade and business management skills, and join trade unions in order to learn about labor legislations, their rights and responsibilities in a working environment.

Increasing public awareness about the issue and supporting victims with necessary services are very crucial to successfully combating trafficking in persons. This is because the lack of support to victims means that many of them might end up on the streets again

and resorting to criminal behavior in order to survive. Education must also be made accessible and relevant to the needs and experiences of poor and socially marginalized children and young people at risk of becoming victims of trafficking. Projects must focus more closely on the knowledge children require in order to deal with the reality they live in. Examples include sex education and instruction in reproductive health and rights, health care and training in conflict resolution.

In order to more effectively combat the practice of human trafficking, it is very important to understand the characteristics of trafficked people. Thus, it is important to gain a better understanding of the economic and political conditions that make trafficking more prominent in some nations rather than others.

Governments have plenty of measures to assist victims. As more and more women and children leave their home regions to find work elsewhere in their native countries or as guest workers in other countries, measures should be taken to make their journeys easier and safer. They often lack the necessary documents and/or have little or no knowledge of the world beyond their homes. In many countries it is unacceptable for women to travel on their own and young women and girls are often entrusted to male escorts. Consequently there are grounds for supporting a range of measures designed to make it easier and safer for women and girls to move freely, and for tighter controls on agencies that hire guest workers.

Community management should be created to deal with human trafficking problems at the grassroots level. In this regard, local communities and local governments have to work together to address these issues since the local communities are the ones that can deal with them at the grassroots level. In line with this, women must also be encouraged to participate actively at all levels of social and political life. It is important to support efforts to establish comprehensive gender equality policies for the home, the workplace and in the political arena.

Support for sex education and information, and better reproductive health among women and men will, in the long, run help prevent human trafficking for sexual exploitation. Particularly crucial in the context of the fight against HIV/AIDS is the ability of women and children to protect themselves from sexual exploitation and the need to encourage responsible, considerate and respectful behavior in men.

The social safety net and support in the event of sickness, sudden death or accident is important to the prevention of human trafficking. Help in developing social insurance schemes and care and support services for people in vulnerable situations should have to be given attention.

Another part of the strategy is concerned with reducing the demand generated by parties who profit financially from the sex trade. Bars and other entertainment spots should face up to their responsibility towards children and young women who are victims of trafficking. Police, customs officials and other public servants who might abuse their authority are also important target groups as regards protection and support of victims and the need to detect and report offenders.

Measures to inform and make potential victims, their families and their local community aware of the risks and consequences of human trafficking can be a more immediate way to prevent trafficking in human beings. Schools are important fora for this type of awareness raising and information. It is also important to provide opportunities for organizations to monitor social trends and follow up students who have stopped attending school. Local radio stations have also been used to broadcast information about the risks of human trafficking. Information and follow up work of this kind must be coordinated with efforts to promote greater awareness of the right of individuals to make decisions about their lives and to move about freely. Local NGOs have an important part to play in this regard, particularly in cooperation with local media.

In addition, governments, civil-society groups and media houses can liaise to fight this crime by running special broadcasts during major, sports and entertainment events (e.g.

World Cup, UEFA Champions League, Miss Universe, etc.) when it is certain that a large proportion of viewers would get the message. If nations, and for that matter the entire society really want to curtail this crime then all major events of public interest should be used to get the world's attention to human trafficking. Media houses and journalists who report on human trafficking should be awarded to motivate them to keep reporting on the issue and also get others within the profession to add their voices in spreading the message.

Besides, students can be encouraged to form clubs, societies and associations to brainstorm on the issue, serve as peer-group educators, watch out for one another, inform their parents, and carry the message across to their communities. Teachers should also be encouraged to pay close attention to pupils and students attendance to classes and follow up on sudden and/or continuous inexplicable absenteeism. Teachers and pupils/students who help to thwart any trafficking attempt should be publicly rewarded by the respective Parent-Teacher Associations and the state. This may prove vital especially in preventing or reducing child trafficking.

Engaging the religious community is another avenue which should be explored to raise awareness on human trafficking. This is because religion is a very powerful rallying force which cuts across race, gender, culture and economic classes. Significantly, religious beliefs and teachings do shape the behavior of followers/adherents to some extent. For this reason government agencies and civil society organizations can partner with religious leaders to combat human trafficking by using times of religious activity to inform the people, either by encouraging the leaders to do so themselves or inviting resource persons over. This measure, if properly undertaken with the specific cultural and religious contexts taken into consideration would make the crime (morally) unappealing and unacceptable to lots of people and could equally foster unity and cooperation among the various authorities to address not only human trafficking but other socially and economically detrimental practices like female genital mutilation, honor killings, drug trafficking, etc.

To underline the seriousness of the crime and improve chances of enforcement, it is necessary to review a number of legal matters, such as attempted human trafficking, collusion or complicity in trafficking, double criminal liability, extradition of suspects and trafficking within countries. There are also grounds for taking a closer look at related offences such as the purchase of sexual services, forced marriages, forced labour, debt slavery, torture and male violence against women, all of which have a bearing on human trafficking.

Efforts should be made to facilitate the reporting of crimes against women and children. Victims of human trafficking and similar violations need secure and accessible procedures for reporting offenders and alerting the authorities to their situation, either through the police or via special telephone helplines. Another important measure that is effective against trafficking in human beings is the support for the fight against corruption. If governments are to reduce the profitability of human trafficking operations, they need to understand its economic basis and how profitable it is in relation to other forms of crime.

Psychosocial treatment and counselling is not always available in developing countries, particularly in the least developed countries. NGOs often play a major role in assisting and supporting victims of human trafficking, although the government's overall responsibility for providing these services should be underlined. However, NGOs will account for the bulk of social support for vulnerable groups and victims of human trafficking for a long time to come.

Returnees are often left, without money, at their country's borders, where they may face exactly the same problems that left them vulnerable to traffickers in the first place. The return of a victim can raise legal and administrative issues as around citizenship and the need for residence and work permits. Before the repatriation process is set in motion, efforts must be made to determine whether the victim can be assisted in finding work, accommodation and a meaningful social context. It is also important to ensure that she or he will be guaranteed protection and be free to lead a regular life. The journey to the country of origin must also be secure.

Coordination of government authorities within and between countries and between authorities and NGOs is crucial. Where local border cooperation exists, coordinated operations are vital to the success of efforts to detain traffickers and support victims.

There can be no doubt that human trafficking can have devastating long- and short-term consequences for its victims' physical and mental health as well as their legal, social and financial situation. Apart from the individual suffering it causes, its repercussions for society as a whole are highly detrimental. Success in combating human trafficking is predicated on effective collaboration between important players in the various countries involved and between those who watch over the policy areas concerned. Cooperation must be developed between researchers and operatives in the field. Anti-trafficking work involves NGOs as well as authorities and institutions. In light of the rapidly growing number of players, there is a need to unite behind certain common objectives and processes at regional and national level.

Human trafficking is big business with a substantial turnover, and corruption in institutions and bodies with responsibility for combating it is often widespread. Therefore, there should be concerted and genuine efforts at successfully combating of trafficking in persons and the reintegration of victims should resolve an entire range of problems faced by the victims and their families, and in particular the root cause of human trafficking, poverty, has to be addressed.

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