

Helpdesk Research Report: The impact of human trafficking on people and countries

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Query: Please provide an overview of the impacts of human trafficking on people and countries

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1. Overview

The impacts of trafficking are felt both in the countries from which people are trafficked, and the countries to which they are trafficked. In both sets of countries there are implications for:

- **Society**, including the impacts of family and communities left behind, and gender relations in receiving countries in which women are often sold into sexual slavery
- **Economy**, particularly in contexts where people seeking migration opportunities for employment end up being trafficked, resulting in significant remittance losses
- **Health:** women and children trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation are at risk of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, and of spreading the diseases among wider society; people are trafficked in dangerous conditions and often held, even after they reach their destinations, in circumstances that can have long-term detrimental effects on their mental and physical well-being
- **Rule of law:** in both sets of countries, the operations of organised criminal groups, whose illicit activities often extend beyond trafficking, can have serious implications for national security.

Human smuggling and trafficking have become a world-wide industry, incorporating millions of people annually, and generating an annual turnover of billions of dollars (Belser 2005). This paper provides a brief overview of the causes and impacts of (mainly transnational) human trafficking around the world. Human trafficking has become an increasing phenomenon globally as a result of various factors, including:

- **The effects of globalisation:** an increasingly international world has seen the rapid transfer of goods, services and social aspirations across borders. However, the expansion of areas of free mobility, such as the European Union, has been accompanied by stricter border controls. This, set against a growing regional imbalance, has resulted in an increase in illegal migration and corresponding rise in opportunities for human trafficking (Väyrynen 2003).
- The more closed the borders, the greater the opportunity for **trans-national criminal groups**, who have taken advantage of demand (increased dependence on trafficked and exploited labour and consumers seeking cheap goods and services, including sexual services) and supply (spurred by the desire to access a better standard of living) conditions. The involvement of criminal groups in migration means that smuggling leads to trafficking and thus to victimisation and the violation of human rights (Väyrynen 2003).
- **Underdevelopment, poverty and warfare** contribute to the rising tide of illegal migration and opportunities for traffickers, fuelled by increasing numbers of economic migrants and political refugees, the outbreak of internal armed conflicts in certain regions in the 1990s, and the activities of rebel groups, who have turned to illicit activities, such as trafficking, to fund campaigns and obtain fighters (Shelley 2010). Increasing economic disparities between the developed and developing world, along with the feminisation of poverty and marginalisation of many rural communities, have produced conditions making people vulnerable to trafficking. This may worsen, given the current economic crisis.

No region of the world has been untouched by trafficking. The paper concludes with a summary of regional patterns of human trafficking, including main origin and destination countries/regions. Surprisingly, there is little correlation between the development status of a country and its status as a country from which people are mostly trafficked. Central and Eastern European countries feature prominently, and it would appear that the transition from a closed economy, higher aspirations and a desire for opportunities abroad have fuelled people's desire to go migrate, by whatever means, which has made many vulnerable to trafficking (Danailova-Trainor and Laczko 2010).

2. The impacts of trafficking

It is difficult to accurately measure the impact of trafficking because of its clandestine nature and hidden economies in which trafficked people work. Lack of legislation and inadequate national definitions; lack of political will; inexperience in dealing with the issue; corruption; victims' inability or unwillingness to cooperate all make it difficult to determine the scale and impact (Aronowitz 2009).

However, while trafficking is too covert to accurately measure, the numbers involved are significant. Estimates suggest that 400,000 illegal immigrants reach Europe each year, while 850,000 arrive in the US annually (however, these figures include those who have paid smugglers, as well as trafficked victims). In 2004, the US government approximated that 600,000-800,000 are trafficked internationally annually, of which 80 per cent are female and 50 per cent are minors, with 70 per cent of females being trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation (US Department of State 2004). ILO estimates that 2.44 million people are in forced labour worldwide

as a result of trafficking (out of an estimated 12.3 million people worldwide in forced bonded labour, child labour, and sexual servitude) (ILO 2008).

It is also clear that everywhere it occurs, the consequences are devastating for victims and the larger community – all society suffers, as well as principles of democratic freedom, principles of democratic society, rule of law and human rights. The scale of trafficking also deals a particular blow to gender equality and women's rights, presents a strain on law enforcement, and affects security and health systems (Danailova-Trainor and Laczko 2010). Below is a closer examination of the impacts of trafficking in specific areas.

Economic impacts

Trafficking represents lost opportunities domestically, including an irretrievable loss of human resources and future productivity (US Department of State 2011). According to the 2008 Trafficking In Persons (TIP) report (US Department of State 2008: 22) trafficking also results in a huge loss of remittances to developing countries, because trafficked persons often have to pay off the 'debt' they incur for being trafficked (which they may never do). Given that the annual level of remittances to developing countries is an estimated US\$ 325 billion (US Department of State 2011), the lack of remittances from trafficked victims could imply a loss to development (according to Danailova-Trainor and Laczko (2010), of approximately US\$ 60 billion).

Additionally, the costs of coercion and exploitation cannot be measured but it is clear that the worst forms of child labour (and by extension trafficking), for instance, represents a loss in productive capacity of a generation of individuals who would have otherwise gained from increased education and improved health (US State Department 2004).

Further, if the fight against trafficking is successful, funds currently used to fight trafficking crimes may be channelled towards alternative development initiatives.

Societal impacts

In addition to the foregone benefits in terms of remittances and human capital, there are other human and social costs to development attributable to trafficking. The direct impact on the family and community left behind cannot be easily quantified but nevertheless should not be ignored. Trafficking undermines extended family ties, and in many cases, the forced absence of women leads to the breakdown of families and neglect of children and the aged (Danailova-Trainor and Laczko 2010). Victims who return to communities often find themselves stigmatised and shunned, and are more likely to become involved in substance abuse and criminal activity (US Department of State 2004).

Children trafficked into forced labour or sexual exploitation have their development as a person 'irreparably damaged' (US Department of State 2004: 17). Survivors often suffer multiple traumas and psychological problems.

Health impacts

There are significant health impacts for victims both while they are being transported and when they have reached their destination. Perilous journeys expose trafficked victims to injury and even death, while overcrowded and unsanitary conditions, and shortages of food and water increase the risk of spreading infectious disease (Todres 2011).

Trafficked persons experience 'physical, sexual, and emotional violence at the hands of traffickers, pimps, employers, and others. They are also exposed to various workplace, health, and environmental hazards' (Todres 2011: 463). Individuals trafficked for the sex industry also experience increased risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STIs). Frequently denied the choice to use condoms, sex trafficking victims can introduce HIV to the broader population. Trucking routes served by prostitution rings along trucking routes, can cause HIV/AIDS and other STIs to be spread even more widely, including across international borders (Todres 2011).

Health effects are not limited only to those trafficked for sexual exploitation. Trafficked workers live and work in overcrowded, unsanitary conditions, with no consideration of safety (Todres 2011). These are problems not just for the individual, who may suffer from long-term adverse health, but as such conditions can harbour infectious diseases, wider populations may also be put at risk.

Gender equity and human rights

The impacts of human trafficking fall disproportionately on women and children, who are the main victims, largely trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation. That this is a billion dollar industry, worldwide, and growing, is a continued expression of unequal power relations that reinforce women's secondary status in society.

It goes without saying that trafficked victims are stripped of their human rights. Trafficked people are subject to all manner of human rights violations, not least of all the rights to life, liberty and freedom from slavery. Trafficked children are deprived of the right to grow up in a protective environment, and to be free from sexual exploitation and abuse (US State Department 2004). Less considered are the rights to adequate healthcare, education, a decent work environment, and freedom from discrimination, to name a few (Todres 2006).

National security and rule of law

The profits to be made from human trafficking, a process that often requires the control of the entire migration cycle, attracts large crime syndicates, unlike smuggling, which can be run by small enterprises. Human trafficking is estimated to be the third largest international criminal enterprise, generating an estimated US\$9.5 billion annually (US State Department 2004). Organised criminal groups often combine human trafficking with other types of criminal activities, and its profits fuel other criminal activities, which present huge security threats to countries, such as the drug trade, particularly as some of the trade routes, which they control, are the same (Väyrynen 2003).

Human trafficking operations undermine government efforts to exert authority over its territory, threatening the security of vulnerable populations. Many governments are unable to protect women and children who are kidnapped from their homes and schools or from refugee camps. Moreover, the bribes paid by traffickers impede a government's ability to battle corruption among law enforcement, immigration, and judicial officials (US Department of State 2004; Shelley 2010).

Impacts on destination countries

In addition to the societal impacts on destination countries, other costs include the costs of anti-trafficking measures. For example, the US government has provided approximately US\$ 447 million in foreign assistance to non-governmental organisations, international organisations and

other governments to combat and help eliminate human trafficking since 2001 (Danailova-Trainor and Laczko 2010).

Additionally, to support US efforts to investigate trafficking in persons within the United States, the US Bureau of Justice Assistance funded a total of 42 law enforcement task forces on human trafficking, at a cost of over US\$ 17 million between 2004 and 2006 (Danailova-Trainor and Laczko 2010).

There are also significant impacts of unregulated migration on both the economy, and security, particularly given that trafficking is considered an element of the larger problem of organised crime and the illicit global economy, and closely linked with the trade of illicit drugs, arms, and so on.

3. Factors influencing the rise of trafficking

Trafficking refers to the 'recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat 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 exploitation' (UN 2003). The UN Protocol further identifies the main forms of exploitation as prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the removal of organs.

The factors affecting the rise of trafficking over the past 15 years (US State Department 2011) include globalisation (including network effects/scale economies associated with illicit trade; the demand for goods and services); the social and political environment (including the degree of law enforcement in both origin and destination countries; community vulnerability factors: perceived poverty; access to financial, social, human and economic capital; unemployment; gender discrimination; inequality; and aspirations with incomplete/inaccurate information) (Danailova-Trainor and Laczko 2010). These various factors are discussed below.

The global economy and globalisation

The causes of human trafficking are often summed up in monetary terms: people are regarded as commodities, which are moved illegally for a payment across borders because they have high profit value for the smugglers. Trafficked people are often in demand in the recipient country, primarily to fill gaps in the employment structure that needs cheap, irregular labour (Väyrynen 2003). It is an attractive business for criminal groups as it has low start-up costs, minimal risks, high profits and large demand (Shelley 2010).

One prominent feature of globalisation is the increasingly free movement of goods, finances and services, which has not been accompanied by a commensurate increase in the freedom of movement of people (Gallagher and Holmes 2008). Human trafficking is a specific sub-category of human smuggling, which in turn is a special case of illegal immigration. The rise in illegal migration has been matched by an unprecedented rise in human trafficking over the last decade, and neither can be separated from the larger dynamics of the global economy, nor the policies

pursued by governments, including 'migration regimes that restrict the ability of individuals to secure legal access to preferred destinations' (Gallagher and Holmes 2008: 321).

Over the years, many developed countries have enforced strict immigration laws, and it appears that the more strictly the laws of immigration against illegal entrants are enforced, the more sinister forms of criminality are used in human trafficking to overcome the barriers that are needed for making a profit (Väyrynen 2003).

New opportunities provided by the globalisation of technology have helped traffickers enormously. Increasingly, the business of human trafficking is conducted by the help of the internet, particularly for recruiting women for sex trafficking. The Internet introduces a new resource for sex traffickers to find vulnerable women, sell women for sexual exploitation, while concealing their own identities. Because of the highly unregulated nature of the Internet, pimps and those who purchase trafficked women and children can use the use the platform for criminal purposes with minimal risk of prosecution (Kunze 2010). Available transportation infrastructure and reduced transportation costs have also facilitated increased travel by paedophiles and others to engage in sex tourism (Shelley 2010).

While the focus on economic models of supply and demand has its analytical merits, it ignores the social and political dynamics of globalisation, in which trafficking takes place, and overlooks the powerful domestic social structures that create vulnerabilities among women, children and migrants that provide the conditions and policies that fuel the practice (Väyrynen 2003; Gallagher and Holmes 2008).

The social, economic and political environment

Trafficking is linked to a variety of factors at country, regional and cross-country levels. As discussed above, it is also heavily interrelated with illegal migration, which can be spoken of in terms of push (factors influencing people's desire to leave their community/country) and pull (factors influencing people's desire to go to a particular community/country) factors. Push factors include: inadequate employment opportunities, poor living conditions; lack of access to basic services; political and economic insecurity; conflict; loss of livelihoods; discrimination; gender violence; the dissolution of family; and natural disasters. Pull factors include: increased ease of travel; the possibility of higher salaries and opportunities abroad and in larger cities; established migration routes and ethnic communities in destination areas; active demand for migrant workers; and high expectations, boosted by the global media, the internet, and stories of returning migrants (IOM 2008; Aronowitz 2009; Danailova-Trainor and Laczko 2010).

Trafficking as a problem of development

These push and pull factors present a compelling case to consider trafficking as a complex development issue, with many different dimensions (Danailova-Trainor and Laczko 2010). The human development approach recognises that poverty is multi-dimensional and dynamic, with both monetary and non-monetary aspects, including social constraints and personal circumstances. It is about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accord with their needs and interests (Danailova-Trainor and Laczko 2010).

Poverty is often regarded as the 'root cause' of trafficking; however, the links between poverty, a lack of development and trafficking are complex. At the country level, poor economic, political and social infrastructure, which leads to poverty, conflict and bad governance provide fertile soil for criminal activity and forces some people with limited access to resources to leave and look for opportunities elsewhere. The vast majority of men and women seeking to escape poverty are lured into trafficking by the false promise of economic gain (Danailova-Trainor and Laczko 2010).

However, the link between poverty and trafficking must be made with caution. Danailova-Trainor and Laczko (2010) compare UNDP human development measures for the set of countries identified by UNODC as key origin countries for trafficking victims (Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, China, Lithuania, Nigeria, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Thailand and Ukraine). They found no simple correlation between the UNODC ranking of a country and the country's human development index score, the rate of poverty, or the measures of income or gender inequality of that country. In fact, Nigeria is the only lower income country of origin of trafficking victims with low human development indicator values. The other nine countries are lower to upper middle-income countries, with medium to high level of human development, adjusted slightly for gender discrimination and inequality. In sum, there is no clear correlation between trafficking and poverty at the country level.

What may perhaps be more significant is that eight of these countries have been transition economies, for which the turmoil of transition, the freedom to move and seek opportunities abroad, and higher aspirations after several decades of isolation may have been key push and pull factors for trafficking (Danailova-Trainor and Laczko 2010). However, it is also clear that economic crises among countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and regional conflicts in the Balkans and sub-Saharan Africa have contributed to a significant rise in poverty, which have contributed to a rise in trafficking (Aronowitz 2009).

A significant issue that cannot be separated from development and trafficking is that of gender and gender relations. Human trafficking is the only trans-national crime where women are significantly represented (importantly, not only as victims but also as perpetrators and activists) (Shelley 2010). Gender discrimination and violence, forced marriage, and bonded labour are among the many practices that make people vulnerable and potential targets of both transnational and internal trafficking (Danailova-Trainor and Laczko 2010). It is therefore particularly common in areas of low social status and low investment in girls and in countries where it is common to use girls to advance families' economic situation (Shelley 2010).

Conflict, particularly regional conflict, is another source of trafficking. This has included the capture of children to fight and of women to serve as sex slaves, both within or across borders. For instance children have been captured by the Lord's Resistance Army to fight in Uganda, including from the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and the Central African Republic (US State Department 2011; Shelley 2010).

In addition, an unfortunate by-product of peace agreements and the presence of peacekeepers in post-conflict countries has been the accompanied rise in trafficking and sexual exploitation to satisfy peacekeeping and humanitarian personnel (Shelley 2010).

4. Regional perspectives on trafficking

Every continent of the world is now affected by human trafficking (Shelly 2010). The ILO provides an estimation of the regional distribution of trafficked forced labourers (which it estimates accounts for 32 per cent of all trafficked persons). As the table below shows, Asia and the Pacific accounts for over half of all people estimated to be in forced labour as a result of trafficking.

Table 1: Regional distribution of trafficked forced labourers

	Number of people in forced labour as a result of trafficking
Asia & Pacific	1'360'000
Industrial Countries	270'000
Latin America & Caribbean	250'000
Middle-East and North Africa	230'000
Transition Countries	200'000
Sub-Saharan Africa	130'000
World	2'440'000

Source: ILO 2008

UNODC's 2006 report gives an overview of global and regional patterns of trafficking. It also indicates Asia as a main region involved with trafficking. The largest reported references to traffickers are to nationals of Asia (comprising several sub-regions) followed by Central and South Eastern Europe. Its research also finds that the main destination countries of trafficked persons are: Belgium, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Thailand, Turkey and the USA. The most frequently reported origin countries are: Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, China, Lithuania, Nigeria, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Thailand and Ukraine, receiving an incidence ranking of 'very high' (Asian and Central and Eastern European countries dominate the next tier of reporting on origin countries, receiving a ranking of 'high'. The most frequently reported transit countries include: Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Poland and Thailand.

Summary by region (UNODC figures unless otherwise stated)

Africa is predominantly an origin region for victims of trafficking. Western Europe and Western Africa are reported to be the main destination (sub-)regions for African victims. Western Africa is also reported to be the main origin sub-region for victims trafficked from Africa. This points to intra-regional human trafficking in Africa in general, and Western Africa in particular. At a country level, Nigeria ranks 'very high' as an origin country, while Benin, Ghana and Morocco rank 'high' as origin countries. Human trafficking in West Africa usually takes the form of '...child trafficking within national borders and across the region for labour and sexual exploitation; recruitment of children by force into armed conflicts; and women and girls being trafficked within and out of the region for sexual exploitation (UN.GIFT 2008).

Asia (including Western Asia and the Middle East) is both a 'high' origin region and 'high' destination for trafficked in persons. Asian victims are reported to be trafficked to Asian other countries, in particular to Thailand, Japan, India, Taiwan and Pakistan. Trafficking into countries in the region is reported mainly from the Commonwealth of Independent States, followed by South-Eastern Asia, pointing to intra-regional trafficking. South-Eastern Asia is reported to be a crucial point of trafficking both out of and into the region. Thailand ranks 'very high' in the citation index as an origin, transit and destination country.

The trafficking of children in South-East Asia tells a dismal story. UNICEF estimates– that there are 800,000 child prostitutes in Thailand, 400,000 in Indonesia and India each, and 100,000 in the Philippines, many of whom will have been trafficked (UNODC 2006).

Another difference in South-East Asia is that most of the child prostitutes are sold by their poor parents or they are abducted from rural villages to work in urban brothels in their own countries. In Thailand, for instance, the sale of young girls for prostitution is a common practice, sanctioned by prevailing religious beliefs (Väyrynen 2003).

Debt bondage of prostitutes and other victims of trafficking is particularly prevalent in South and South-East Asia. The financial arrangements are so onerous that victims have little chance to be released unless he or she becomes physically useless for the trafficker. Often the debt burden accumulates over time despite all the work carried out by the victim for the trafficker (Väyrynen 2003).

Central and South Eastern Europe is reported as predominantly an origin sub-region. Victims trafficked out of this sub-region are reported to be exploited in Western Europe. A number of sources also refer to countries in Central and South Eastern Europe as a destination for victims from the sub-region, indicating that intra-regional human trafficking is a problem. Central and South Eastern Europe is reported, to a lesser extent, as a destination sub-region for victims mainly trafficked from the Commonwealth of Independent States. Central and South Eastern Europe is also reported to be a main transit sub-region.

At a country level, within the Central and South Eastern European sub-region, Albania, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Romania are ranked very high in the citation index as origin countries; the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Slovakia are also ranked high. **Western Europe** is reported largely as a destination sub-region. Countries from Central and South Eastern Europe are cited most frequently as the origin of victims trafficked to Western Europe, followed by the Commonwealth of Independent States, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Commonwealth of Independent States is mainly reported as an origin region for trafficked victims. In addition to Europe, women from Russia, Ukraine and elsewhere are trafficked to the United States, Japan, Macau, and other places where there is local or tourist demand for sex services. For instance, in South Korea there are 6,000 illegal Russian female immigrants who make their living through prostitution (Väyrynen 2003). Other reported (sub-) regions are Central and South Eastern Europe, and Western Asia and Turkey. At the country level, Belarus, Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine are ranked very high in the citation index as origin countries; Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are ranked high.

Latin America and the Caribbean are primarily reported as origin regions. Most UNODC sources report Western Europe as the destination for victims trafficked out of this region. North America is also cited as a destination for victims trafficked out of Latin America and the Caribbean. As a region, Latin America and the Caribbean is reported, to a lesser extent, as a destination and transit region. At a country level, Brazil, Colombia (South America), Dominican Republic (Caribbean), Guatemala and Mexico (Central America) were ranked high in the citation index as origin countries. **North America** is reported almost exclusively as a destination region and victims are reported to come from all main origin regions listed above.

Oceania is primarily reported as a destination region, with the focus on the sub-region of Australia and New Zealand. Victims are reported to be trafficked to Oceania predominantly from South-Eastern Asia. Australia ranks high as a destination country in the citation index.

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8. Additional information

Selected websites visited

International Centre for Migration Policy and Development <http://www.anti-trafficking.net/>
Anti-slavery international <http://www.antislavery.org/>
Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women <http://www.gaatw.org/>
humantrafficking.org <http://humantrafficking.org/>
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Experts consulted

Jonathan Todres, Georgia State University College of Law
Siddharth Kara, Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, Harvard University
Louise Shelley, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center (TraCCC), George Mason University

Jonathan Martens, Department of Migration Management, International Organization for Migration
Frank Laczko, IOM

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