

# Global trends of Human Trafficking Conditions and Prevention Strategies

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Human trafficking in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can be termed as slavery, and is driven mostly by similar motivations to those of slavery, that is “illegal trade of humans for exploitation or commercial gain.” It often involves exploitation of the weaker and vulnerable section of the population, forcing or coercing them into the flesh trade, forced labour. According to a 2012 International Labour Organization (ILO) report, 21 million people are victims of forced labour. The Asia-Pacific region accounts for the largest number of forced labourers in the world with 11.7 million victims (56 percent of the global total), followed by Africa with 3.7 million (18 percent) and Latin America with 1.8 million victims (nine percent).

Human trafficking is the resultant of a multiple factors, in essential related to questions of social injustice and non access to basic Human rights. Addressing this complex question leads us to first ask ourselves why people are leaving and what are the underlying causes that brings them to leave their homeland, their homes and families and take the road to exile. It is here they fall prey to the unscrupulous human traffickers. Can we speak of trends of human trafficking? And what is the logic of these trends? These analyses must lead us to reflect on the preventive measures that can be undertaken in order to address Human trafficking.

I will in the first place discuss the causes and trends in Human Trafficking and the second part will be a reflection on what are the preventive measures and actions that can be introduced in order to address Human Trafficking and the third part will lead through a discussion on the Civil Society as actors to address the issue of human

trafficking with concrete examples. As a conclusion I will propose a few suggestions for addressing the issue from the civil society point of view based on Caritas experience in different parts of the world and my personal contact with those communities that were potential migrants and how the different activities undertaken in their favour has contributed to change their lives and live in dignity in their own villages.

## **1 The general trends and causes of Human Trafficking**

Based on the life stories of the migrants and different reports and studies that exist, (in particular the UNODC report , 2018), we can identify a certain number of trends that help us to understand the root causes of human trafficking.

### **Wars, conflict and violence**

Our society today is confronted with some of the most violent protracted crisis that has put millions on the road to exile in search of safety and survival. Central Africa, South Sudan, Syria, Libya, Iraq, Venezuela are some of the important crisis that have lead the people to leave their homes massively as refugees or migrants as a result of the hardship they face to lead a decent life in their countries. Such a massive displacement of populations leads to the increase of individuals' emotional vulnerability, often they are deprived of all means of financial support or means of livelihood in order to protect themselves and their families. This makes them easy subjects to abuse through trafficking.

### **Sex trade, women and children**

Women and girls are the main targets of the traffickers and represent an important percentage of the trafficked victims, either for sexual exploitation or forced labour. In West Africa, most of the detected victims are children, both boys and girls, while in South Asia, victims are equally reported to be men, women and children.

Trafficking for sexual exploitation continues to be the most detected form. Trafficking of females prevails in different regions such as Latin

America, Europe, and East Asia and the Pacific. Trafficking for forced labour is the most commonly detected form in sub-Saharan Africa. In the Middle East, forced labour is also the main form of trafficking detected, mainly involving adults. In Central Asia and South Asia, trafficking for forced labour and sexual exploitation are detected.

### **The impact of climate change and environmental crisis**

Most of the rural population in different parts of the world are obliged to abandon traditional farming and take the road of exodus to big cities in search of means of survival and their vulnerable socio-economic conditions and often fall in the hands of ruthless human traffickers who promising job opportunities lure them into the sex trade or other forms of exploitations.

### **Demand for cheap labor.**

Some economical service sectors, particularly restaurants and kitchens, domestic labour, agriculture often demand for cheap workforce and are common exploiters of human trafficking. They are often recruited with initial promises of a safe work space and a steady salary, only to later find that they are paid less than minimum wage and have to work over time, to say the least. In spite of existing international standards, there is still a sad record of exploitation of domestic workers, which often includes abuse, such as inflicting injuries on the workers. Business owners guilty of this behaviour continue to practice these illegal norms because the victims of trafficking have no means of protecting themselves and do not have other means of survival. But everyone of us is also guilty about this, as we want to consume at the lowest price without considering the implications for workers.

### **Human trafficking generates a huge profit.**

According to the ILO, the human trafficking industry generates a profit of \$150 billion per year. Two-thirds is made from commercial sexual exploitation, while the remainder comes from forced economic exploitation such as domestic work and agriculture. Unfortunately there seems not yet to be an effective way to stop these often illegal money

flows. Human trafficking is the fastest-growing and second-largest criminal industry in the world, after drug trafficking.

## **2. What are the preventive measures and what strategies?**

One of the major challenges to prevent human trafficking is the difficulty to identify it and take the necessary steps to protect the victims.

However, the phenomenon as seen above in the trends need to be addressed by taking into consideration the causes of human trafficking.

### **1) Addressing inequalities and vulnerabilities**

This is one of the important means for helping the most vulnerable not to leave their homes. Environmental degradation and increasing climate impacts are reducing yields and pushing farmers into economic deprivation and even crisis. Supporting through micro development projects such as Income Generation projects, family based traditional agriculture and small savings and cooperatives etc. the poor and the most vulnerable find the means to eke out a living and a decent life. Climate resilient eco-friendly agricultural programs can contribute to addressing the problems of poverty and vulnerability among farming communities and increase their resilience. Those benefiting from these projects are in a position to have a project for their lives. After several years of accompaniment and community organisation, those benefitting from such projects become autonomous.

This implies the active role of the civil society organisations in implementing the development programs and helping the most vulnerable becomes an important aspect to be taken into consideration.

### **2) Disaster Response and Disaster Risk Reduction**

According to the Caritas organisations working in the field, because of the proliferation of conflicts around the world (Middle East, Ukraine, etc.), which mainly affect civilians and which

result in an unprecedented number of displaced people and refugees, human trafficking and exploitation would appear to be increasingly in the forefront. (*Trafficking in human beings: in conflict and post-conflict situations*, Secours Catholique, 2016).

Emergency aid programmes, whether during the conflict phase or in support of exiled people, should do more to address the exploitation or presence of vulnerable groups, such as children without a family guardian, unaccompanied women or persecuted minorities. Aid programs must have a certain number of awareness building on the potential danger of human trafficking.

Disaster prevention activities must also be introduced in order to ensure sustainable development activities through disaster preparedness and avoid regular life be disrupted by recurring disasters.

The Emergency Response strategies must take into consideration the points discussed above.

### **3) Conflict, war and violence**

Other studies (eg. IOM) show that many displaced people because of crisis situations later find themselves in vulnerable situations. They frequently are taken advantage of, including men being bribed to become fighters during conflict, women and girls being forced to offer “sexual favours”, economic exploitation, or being forced into child marriages. Therefore, trafficking should be seen as directly related to crises situations and not just a side effect.

All emergency responses must give importance to these realities and integrate them in the disaster response strategies through awareness building and communication.

### **4) Building awareness on migration and exploitation**

There is a need to raise public awareness on the social representation of migration. Many migrants start their journey without understanding well what they might go through during

their travel. Many sign labour contracts without clear understanding of the language and the legal system of the country of arrival. Some engage in risky travels paying a fortune, saved by whole family, to smugglers. Others send their children in houses of relatives who then exploit them unscrupulously. All these examples show how the lack of understanding of possible risks during the migration can expose people to easily become a prey of human traffickers.

The development programs must also give importance to address the wrong perception of migration as the solution for a better life and help them understand the implication of accepting enticing offers from unscrupulous traffickers.

#### **5) Promotion of women**

Importance must be given to promotion of women's condition and role in the society. They must be empowered through collective community based activities and made aware of the potential dangers when in situation of migration.

All the humanitarian activities related to disaster response and development activities must integrate promotion of women as a priority in their implementation strategies.

#### **6) Developing legal pathways**

Regular migration pathways include labour mobility regimes, sponsorship programmes for high-skilled workers, student visas and protections for refugees. These ensure the safe passage of migrants into a state and enable them to be in security.

This entails relevant migration policies and labour laws that allow migrants to enter a state legally. This is one of the key messages of the recently adopted Global Compact for safe, orderly and regular Migration. Target 10.7 of SDG Nr. 10 "Reducing inequalities within and among countries" says:

“Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies”

**7) Education and raising awareness of youth and families**

people should know their rights. Invite survivors of trafficking for telling their stories: Survivors need to tell their stories more prominently (e.g. through radio programmes) to families, who are often accomplices (out of lack of knowledge or out of necessity).

**8) Putting in place legal instruments**

Implementation of legal instruments including creation of effective mechanisms to counteract human trafficking such National Rapporteur on Human Trafficking, National referral systems etc. must be enhanced at the national level.

In the same manner it is also important that Labour inspection is introduced and works efficiently especially in such sectors as domestic work, maritime industry and agriculture.

### **3. Caritas Response to Human Trafficking**

Caritas network considers Human Trafficking as a question of injustice and crime and a phenomenon which deprives the human person of his dignity. As said above it has become a means of exploiting the situation of distress of the poorest. Caritas believes that as a faith based organisation, it can have a big influence on the public opinion and in particular on the opinion of those who adhere to human values.

As result of the Anti-Trafficking Conference held in Nigeria in 2016 Caritas Internationalis is undertaking a joint project to combat human trafficking in Africa. Different projects are put in place by Caritas Member Organisations to address the question of Human trafficking on the

preventive side, as well as helping those who are victims of Human trafficking.

For example, Caritas and other Church organisations have developed a multilateral anti-trafficking project along the migration routes which concern three countries: Malawi, Eswatini and South Africa. The aim of this pilot project is to identify the vulnerable communities, organize them and in the first place build the awareness of the community leaders and also the faith leaders who accompany them and through them attain the communities. The purpose is to strengthen communities, to be aware and protect themselves from trafficking.

Thus the project aims to identify vulnerable communities and their migration routes for better prevention and protection strategies. It looks for understanding the potential victims' needs, their motivations, experience and suffering.

It has become evident today that without such knowledge, it is impossible to have a solid and efficient prevention strategy.

This project is the result of an Anti-Trafficking Conference held in Nigeria in 2016.

In another example in Zambia, Caritas works in a small village wherein the population was constantly on the move to the urban areas and then to neighbouring countries in search of labour. Such population has been organized into small communities, trained and through micro development projects is accompanied and enabled to be actors of their own development. As on today these communities have their livestock, kitchen garden credit cooperatives and are able to lead a better life and the temptation to leave their homes has been reduced.

In Bangladesh in the Chittagong Hill tracts, the tribal communities have been socialized through development project to enter into sustainable agricultural activities in their villages and are less on the move. Education and health facilities enable them to be more attached to their rural life and are escaping the grips of the traffickers.

## **Conclusion**

Human Trafficking, in spite of the efforts undertaken by the international community is a growing phenomenon. A successful prevention of this can happen only if the root causes of forced migrations are addressed and the migrants are treated with dignity.

***I would like to conclude my presentation with three suggestions.***

First of all, combatting human trafficking means addressing the underlying causes that are underdevelopment and conflicts through promoting community based integral Human development project to enable the potential victims to procure sustainable means of livelihood. This is a means to prevent that they become victims of un-scrupulous traffickers.

The second suggestion is ensuring safe and legal pathways for those who decide to migrate and protecting their interests and dignity. Therefore, we invite States to implement the Global Compact on migration that strongly promotes this point.

Thirdly the role of the Civil Society Organisations in the field of combatting Human trafficking is to be encouraged and promoted. The Civil society organisations must supported so that they can embed awareness building and prevention mechanisms in their micro development projects, advocacy actions and also in the disaster responses.

But Civil Society also needs to do its homework: Human Trafficking is a crime difficult to qualify in numbers, due to its nature. Civil society should do more to document their work, so as to get a better understanding of the real size and scope of the phenomenon.