



## Mysery and Myopia: Child Trafficking is a Channel to Worst Forms of Child Labour in Ethiopia

Dr. A.P. Senthil Kumar

Associate professor, Department of Social Work, College of Social Science and Humanities

### ABSTRACT

*Ethiopia is on the horns of Africa. It is endowed with a dynamic, youthful and entrepreneurial population and an abundance of natural resources. Yet, for too many years, peoples of regions have been suffering from child trafficking, child labour, poverty and hunger. The twin problems of child trafficking and child labour have various and complex causes that could be put under categories such as domestic/ national, regional and international causes. Methodologically, this paper is based on the analysis of secondary sources. This article analyzes, in a quasi comparative approach, the domestic, regional and international factors responsible for the child labour and child trafficking in Ethiopia.*

**KEYWORDS : Horn of Africa, Child Labour, Child trafficking, poverty and hunger.**

### INTRODUCTION

Ethiopia is a source country for 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 Ethiopia, primarily in Djibouti and Sudan, while Ethiopian boys are subjected to forced labor in Djibouti as shop assistants and errand boys.

Child trafficking is a modern form of slavery. It involves exploitation of human beings in the most intolerable way by deceiving and taking them from their home and family. The potential monetary turnover from exploitation is enormous for traffickers. In most legal regimes, victims are left without any remedy upon the prosecution of the trafficker. They may be expatriated to their home country having nothing after being exploited. Human trafficking mainly targets the vulnerable group of the society usually the children.

Child Trafficking is a Channel to Worst Forms of Child Labor. The Case of Addis Ababa Transit, Destination and Residence City for Child Trafficking. Ethiopia has experienced quite a great number of the people and have consequently exposed them to a variety of social failures. The scale of poverty is high especially among the rural communities where farm products are markedly decreasing due to drought and the degradation of farmlands and the high rate of population growth. The magnitude of poverty is also alarming among urban slum dwellers as a result of the decline in the economy of the country and its failure to create employment opportunities as well as because of the structural adjustment programmes.

Though the toll of poverty among the rural and urban population as a whole is severe, its effect on children that constitute the major portion of the country's population is much more severe. While poverty is responsible for driving even younger children out of their rural communities to migrate to urban slums and urban children out on to streets, it also makes them prone to be fallen in the hands of cruel child traffickers. Family break downs due to the country's economic crisis in urban areas and drought and famine in rural communities, losing either one or both parents to HIV/AIDS or other ailments, and the abject poverty scale in most households, have made children easy preys to child traffickers.

Haspels and Suriyasarn confirmed that lack of economic opportunities and both natural and man made calamities can encourage people to leave their origin and migrate from rural to urban areas and sometimes across borders. Migration can be a cause to serious violation of human rights such as child trafficking (Haspels and Suriyasarn, 2003).<sup>1</sup>

Even though there is no systematically compiled and documented statistics as regards to the number of children trafficked in the country, hijacking children from one rural or urban area and transporting

them to other domestic or international destinations for worst forms of labors like prostitution, house maid (girl children), daily laborer, etc has become a common practice.

Rural girls are forced to migrate to urban areas due to a combination of push and pull factors, including early marriage and divorce, misconception regarding life in urban centers. These children come to the cities with the traffickers by promises of good education or employment but end up as sex workers, domestic workers, or left on the street without food, shelter, clothing or any protection.

In addition to this, United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN)<sup>2</sup> quotes the sayings of Ljungqvist, Head of United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and "the most at risk of being trafficked in Ethiopia are girls who have dropped out of school and do not have alternative options for supporting themselves or their families." As other reports also indicate, girls are being approached mostly by stranger women at schools and in their villages to be transported to towns and cities to serve as sex objects in bars and hotels or as housemaids. However, the magnitude of child trafficking practice in the country as a whole on both sexes has to be thoroughly studied.

In response to the above problems, the Ethiopian Government recently ratified ILO's worst forms of children labor convention (number 182) thereby committing itself to take immediate and effective measures to secure prohibition and elimination of worst forms of child labor including trafficking of children. But, by issuing laws alone, trafficking cannot be prevented and due to the illegal nature of the act, it is not an easy task to identify and bring the traffickers to justice (Atsedowne and Tsehay, June 2000).<sup>3</sup>

Child trafficking, as a process of recruiting, transporting, transferring, harboring or receipt of children for the purposes of sexual or labor exploitations is an ominous human rights violation being practiced in the country in a wider scale. With the exception of some survey studies made by the United Nations' agencies like International Labor Organization (ILO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and International Organization for Migration (IOM), and some reports indicated by Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MOLSA)<sup>4</sup> and Child Labor Survey Reports by the Central Statistics Authority, the problem of child trafficking in the country has not been properly researched and documented.

So, the need for an investigation into the problem is all the more essential and timely. Therefore, the study focuses on investigating the scale of the child trafficking process with in the city and its effects on the victim children.

Child labour is a serious problem and a challenge phenomenon for many developing world. Despite existing UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the practice still continues to exist on a massive scale, sometimes in appalling conditions, particularly in this world. International Labor Organization (ILO), estimates that there are

around 211 million children aged between 5-14 working in hazardous and intolerable occupations in worldwide (ILO, 2002). Moreover, in Ethiopia, child labour prevalence rate is more than 90 per cent. It also indicates that most of them engaged in Agriculture sector and unorganized sectors like bakery industries. The main aim of the research was to sensitize the community to overcome traditional practice of employing their own child in bakery industries. The present study made attempt to understand the problems and consequences of Child labour issues in Gondar Town. The research design adopted for this study was Descriptive in nature, since the study aims to examine the socio-demographic status of the respondents and their association with the key dependent variables such as academic anxiety, adjustment-problems and self-esteem of Child labor. The current study adopted a multi-stage probability sampling procedure. Both self-made interview schedule and standard scales were used to measure the academic achievement and psychosocial problems of the child labour. Children usually work to contribute and provide financial support to their families. Their health is often ignored by their parents or they may not be aware about their children's health. This paper illustrates child labour and the factors that influence the incidence of child labour continues to be prevalent. The results from this study explain the reasons which forces children to work, poverty. This paper also draws conclusion that governments, societies, and communities should cooperate in a better way with each other to decrease child labour. Possible and innovate solutions and suggestions are arose at the end of this paper.

### Literature of Review

Most literature on the Horn of Africa lacks a comprehensive analysis of the causes of child trafficking and Child labour in the region. This is the task taken up in this paper. A brief recommendation is also part of this article.

**Redlinger (2004:8)** indicated that Child trafficking is a serious crime that many governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs)<sup>7</sup> around the world are trying to address. Child trafficking involves multiple forms of exploitation, and therefore has been described as modern slavery. It involves forced labour such as prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation, debt bondage, coercion or the threat of violence against the victim, as well as physical and mental abuse and related violations of fundamental human rights. Trafficking is a global problem and the victims have issues of poverty and desperation in common. According to the Palermo Protocol (2000:14),<sup>8</sup> child trafficking is defined as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of children, through threats, force, coercion, abduction, fraud and/or deception.

**Materns, Pieczkowski & Vuuren-Smith( 2003:125) and McDonnell (2006:12)**<sup>9</sup> explained that internal trafficking of children occurs in South Africa, largely for reasons to do with labour and sexual exploitation. Since , South Africa is also a major destination for regional and extra-regional trafficking South Africa is identified as a major trafficking centre for both internal and cross-border trafficking. It is reportedly Africa's major cross-border destination for receiving children trafficked from over ten countries. Female children are the primary victims, although male children have also been identified as victims.

**Pretoria News (21-10-2007)**<sup>10</sup> study depicted that child trafficking for child prostitution and child pornography have become major money making operations for individuals, gangs and syndicates in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban and other parts of the country, just as they are in the rest of the world. Molo Songololo's research reveals that children are trafficked across South African borders, both into and from South Africa, as well as within its borders. **AGRINET (2003)**<sup>11</sup> An NGO conducted a study on child trafficking in Ethiopia, which was submitted to USAID, considerable number of trafficked children and women were left with scars as a result of the physical violence inflicted upon them. Battering, maiming, mutilation and scars were some of the consequences of physical violence on trafficked children and women. Child trafficking in Ethiopia is a tragic form of human rights violation. It is a tragedy, because beyond exposing the children to sexual and forced labor exploitations, the domestic traffickers inflict permanent physical and mental injuries on the children to make them permanent sources of income. **International Labour organization and International Program on**

**the Elimination of Child Labour ( 2001)**<sup>12</sup> study revealed that the trafficking of children is not new; it has existed for many years and continues to grow across all continents and all cultures. However, the scanty numbers of research materials may not allow us to make a comparative study on the trend, magnitude and effects of the problem; but there are still some available materials that have been conducted in the present decade. Some individuals and organizations, in addition to reports by the International Labor Organization (ILO) and International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC), have conducted these studies.

**International Labour organization and International Program on the Elimination of Child Labour (2002)**,<sup>13</sup> Trafficking vulnerable children and young people is a violation of their rights to protection from exploitation, to play, to an education and to health, and to family life). Under international laws, trafficking is a crime involving the movement of children and their exploitation. The movement may be voluntary or coerced; it may be across borders or within a country; and the exploitation can take several forms.

**The UN protocol (2000)**<sup>14</sup> postulated the definition on trafficking is to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children has been adopted in . The protocol in its article 3(a) defines child trafficking as follows: 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, or deception, of the abuse of power or of position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of person having control over another persons for the purpose of exploitation. **AGRINET, 2003**, Pearson, 2003, ILO-IPEC, 2002 and Bangladeshi National Women Lawyer Association (BNWLA), 1996)<sup>15</sup> combinly conducted study on the root causes of women and children trafficking in Ethiopia. This explained that different push and pull factors that expose women and children to trafficking. That is poverty, unemployment, lack of economic opportunities, draught and famine, political instability and bad governance are amongst the major push factors. False promises of good employment and education opportunities, misconception of the city life are some of the pull factors that make children victims of the traffickers.

**International Labour organization and International Program on the Elimination of Child Labour (2000)**,<sup>16</sup> further explains that the root causes of the trafficking of children is a result of demand for cheap labor and demand for young girls in the fast-growing commercial sex sector. The report said that children are easily exposed to abuses due to the fact that they are less assertive and less able to claim their rights than adults, and they can be made to work longer hours with less food, accommodation and payment. These are some of the demand factors that play roles in the growth of child trafficking according to the reports. **Atsedewoine and Tsehay, (2000), Subedi, (2002), AGRINET, (2003) and Haspels and Suriyasarn, (2003)**<sup>17</sup> confirmed that the consequences of trafficking is not only a social and economic issue, but it is also a health and survival issue. They further explain that the victims of trafficking suffer from physical and sexual molestation, particularly rape, ruthless economic exploitation, infection caused by unhealthy life on the streets, and social discriminations. The consequences are not only traumas, loneliness, self-hatred but also serious physical and health disorders, including HIV/AIDS. In this matter, Haspels and Suriyasarn, (2003) further explains that trafficking makes children drug dependent, deprives them of their rights to education and freedom from exploitation. Pearson, (2003)<sup>18</sup> and Atsedewoine and Tsehay, (2000) explained that Trafficking of children, especially child- girls from Ethiopia to the Gulf countries are wide in scale. In Lebanon alone there are about 20,000 Ethiopian domestic workers. A significant number of those who are trafficked are approached either by middlemen or friends.

**Multipurpose Community Development Project (2004)**<sup>19</sup> survey conducted in the southern Nations Nationalities and peoples Region(SNNPR) indicated that most common work children do starting from the age of 4-5 years is herding cattle. They keep the cattle from dawn to dusk in the pasture fields. This is to free the adults in the family to do the hardest work of subsistence crop production. This cause not only the physical deformity and also psychological impact in their life.

**Save the children Denmark on Child labor in Ethiopia (2003)**<sup>20</sup> showed that nearly 65 per cent of the working child population in urban areas joins the labor market below the age of 15 years. Moreover, the children start to work in the rural areas at the age of 4 years. This is to support their parents or guardians who usually are preoccupied with the subsistence farming in the extremely fragmented plots of land to sustain the family. Research results in this particular problem of trafficking gave emphasis to the trafficking of child girls and women. Therefore, we found that conducting a study on the trafficking of both boys and girls inside the country is very crucial for the domestic practice of child trafficking is ever increasing.

A very few researchers have documented on problems of the child Trafficking in Ethiopia. Most of the studies were concentrated on the child labor issues in industrial and agricultural sectors related issues only. The researcher found that lack of studies on Child trafficking issues on multi-dimensional factors related to various social problems like prostitution, exploitation, and forced child labour in Addis Ababa. Since, child trafficking is one of the major causes of Child Labor in Ethiopia.

### Factor Anatomy

Child trafficking via the border and also from the rural to urban within the nation is quite common in Ethiopia. Human trafficking is in the form of recruitment and transportation of Children from one place to another, or one country to another, by using deception or force for the purpose of exploitation. It is a criminal activity which also violates human rights. By offering potential victims false promises, traffickers paint a rosy picture of a better life, such as a good job, educational opportunity or marriage. If a potential victim falls for the false promises, the trafficker transports the person to another place or country for exploitation. The children become a victim of human trafficking. Victims of trafficking do not run away because they are controlled by their traffickers. It is through debt bondage, a victim is told that he or she owes the trafficker money used for transportation, accommodation, food. The 'debt' never decreases and the victim remains trapped by the trafficker. Other forms of control include taking and keeping a victim's identity or travel documents, use of threats to harm the victim's family, locking up the victim, and force drug use. The victim is completely controlled and often too afraid to try to escape. In addition, there could be strong links between child trafficking and other crimes such as child sex tourism and child prostitution, which are increasing concerns in (capital of Ethiopia) Addis Ababa. There is therefore a need to address child trafficking, as Africa has been identified as one of the greatest traffickers of children and one of the current hot spots for child sex tourism and child prostitution. Additionally, some African states are failing in their international obligations to take appropriate steps to combat child trafficking menace.

### An Integrated Theoretical Framework

Child trafficking permeates diverse institutions whose systematic operations are entwined into a multitude of activities. A combination of theories should provide an integrated explanation of the occurrence of child trafficking. Factors that enable human trafficking to occur vary and are interdependent and interconnected (Stop Violence against Women (SVAW), 2008:1; Truong, 2001:34-35; Van Impe, 2000:117-118).<sup>5</sup> It is possible that human traffickers observe trade in human beings as a profitable area to generate income, especially when considering that few human traffickers are arrested, prosecuted and sentenced for this crime. Ineffective criminal justice and community response to human trafficking strengthens the trafficking process, increases abuse of trafficked persons and allows human traffickers to generate financial proceeds from the crime. An integrated model to explain human trafficking appears to be a logical step towards an understanding of the crime.

The process theory integration entails merging of concepts from diverse disciplines and theories to explain a crime which involves a high contingent of perpetrators. Theory integration is a process of combining the best elements of existing theories to better explain the causes of criminal behaviour (Brown, Esbensen & Geis 2007:410; Lanier & Henry 2009: 382).<sup>6</sup> This study has merged concepts from, rational choice, victimology, demand theory, constitutive criminology, economic theories and psychological theories to explain trafficking of children for involuntary prostitution. Child trafficking for involuntary prostitution requires a network of variables in order to construct a

comprehensive view of its occurrence.

### Conclusion and Recommendations as per several studies

- Ensure adequate financial resources for effective investigation, prosecution and conviction of trafficking cases.
- Establish a cooperation and data exchange system with at least major countries of destination and transit to ensure the collection of evidence for the effective investigation, prosecution and conviction of trafficking cases.
- Short-term measures could be taken to prioritize and address the problem of socio-economic push factors. This may include addressing gaps in the enforcement of the legislative regime for PEAs and criminal law rules on traffickers as a matter of priority and reassessing the immigration regime applicable to potential migration to destination countries.
- The first challenge in addressing the problem of trafficking for forced labour from Ethiopia is the challenge to create a common understanding among key actors about what constitutes the problem. Since the incidence of trafficking in persons from Ethiopia occurs within a context of regular and irregular migration, it may also be necessary to clarify distinctions between trafficking in persons for labour exploitation and labour migration
- In the absence of effective law enforcement, the legal regime on the establishment and operation of PEAs is being used to provide illegal brokers and other traffickers a shroud of legitimacy. In addition to the existence of 'unlicensed agencies', the new rules on the opening of branch offices under the Employment Exchange Services Proclamation No. 632/2009 appear to have given an impetus to local brokers presenting themselves as representatives of PEAs. To address this emerging challenge, it may be appropriate to consider the efficiency and effectiveness of local and regional level follow-up, monitoring and enforcement mechanisms.
- Parallel efforts to promote foreign employment in selected destination countries with appropriately protective employment regimes for migrant workers and adequate foreign-service capacity to monitor the situation of Ethiopian migrant workers may also be considered in light of capacity limitations to address gaps in destination countries.

### Conclusion

Ethiopia is suffering from the twin problems of Child trafficking and Child laborers. These cataclysmic problems are the results of inseparably blended internal and external grafted elements. So, the indigenous socio-economic and political development process should be developed to reduce the impact of child labour and child trafficking in this region. In light of the very high prevalence, magnitude and incidence of trafficking in persons for labour exploitation among specific regions, short-term measures to reduce current trends may be considered. These may include awareness raising, information dissemination and sensitization programs targeting most vulnerable groups and the community at large, enforcement measures targeting local brokers to break the link between recruiters and facilitators, and economic empowerment activities focusing on the youth. Government should improve the socio-economic conditions of the society. Moreover, it should expand education about negative impact of child labour and child trafficking issues among the families.

## REFERENCES

1. Nelen Haspels and Busakorn Suriyasarn (2003). Promotion of Gender Equality in Action | against Child Labor and Trafficking: A Practical Guide for Organizations. Bangkok. | 2. [www.irinnews.org](http://www.irinnews.org) | 3. Atsedewoine Tekle and Tsehay Belaynehe (2000). Trafficking of Women from Ethiopia. | 4. ILO and UNICEF (2013-14). A Survey report on child trafficking in Ethiopia. | | 5. Stop Violence Against Women. (SVAW). (2008). Factors that contribute to trafficking in women. OJ Available: <http://www.umn.edu/humanrts/svaw/trafficking/explore/3factors.htm> Assessed 25/03/2008 | 6. Brown, S.E., Esbensen, F., & Geis, G. (2007). Criminology: Explaining crime and its context. | Sixth Edition. Cincinnati: Anderson Publishing. | 7. ED.Linger, J(2004). Child trafficking and sexual exploitation. United States of America: | University of Iowa. | 8. United Nations Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in persons(2000). Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. Italy: United Nations. | 9. Martens, J., Pieczkowski, M. & Vuuren-Smith, B. (2003). Seduction, sale and slavery: trafficking in women and children for sexual exploitation in Southern Africa (3rd ed). Pretoria: International Organization for Migration. | 10. Pretoria News (21-10-2007). A study depicted that child trafficking for child prostitution and child pornography in South Africa. | 11. Agrinet (2003). Assessment of the Magnitude of Women and Children Trafficked Within | and Outside of Ethiopia. Report submitted to USAID. | 12. ILO-IPEC (2001). Report on Combating Trafficking in Children for Labor Exploitation in West and Central Africa. Switzerland. | 13. ILO-IPEC (2002). A report on Trafficking and Sexual Abuse among Street Children in Katmandu, Nepal. | 14. United Nations Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in persons(2000). Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. Italy: United Nations. | 15. Elaine Pearson(2003). Study on Trafficking in Women in East Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Nigeria). Eschborn. | 16. International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (2000). A report submitted on making progress of the Child Labour. | 17. Atsedewoine Tekle and Tsehay Belaynehe (2000). A second Annual report of the Ethiopian economy on Trafficking of Women. | 18. Pearson, E 'Study on trafficking in women in East Africa(2003). A situational analysis including current NGO and governmental activities, as well as future opportunities, to address trafficking in women and girls in Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Nigeria': published by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ). | 19. Southern Nations Nationalities and People's Region (2004). A survey was conducted on sustainable development and child issues. | 20. Save the Children (2003). A study was conducted on the Problems of the Child Labor in Ethiopia. |