

*Carleton University, Ottawa*

*Research Paper for PSCI 5501F: Other Worlds, Other Globalizations*

*Human Trafficking in The Process of Globalization*

Course Instructor: Jai Sen

Student: Vicki (Hui-Ling Wang, [viki0430@hotmail.com](mailto:viki0430@hotmail.com))

*December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006*

## **Introduction**

With the tide of globalization, the global flow of money, goods, culture and ideas has been accompanied by a global flow of people. However, with increasing migration movement, various criminal forms of migration, such as human trafficking, has become more and more prevalent in the process of globalization. Human Trafficking is not an isolated phenomenon, but is related to forms of abuse and exploitation that affect not only individuals and families, but also communities and countries.

Human trafficking often happens to desperate people from impoverished regions, probably because they have no other way to relieve themselves from poverty than throwing themselves at the foot of recruiters and traffickers, who eventually cheat them into exploitative working situations beyond imagination. But, not only dire economic needs, but maybe even more economic desires fueled by the widespread images of wealth and modernity contribute to this abusive movement of people.

In this paper I first try to present the global features and factors of human trafficking in the process of globalization, and then go on to discuss the phenomenon of human trafficking from several perspectives. In the first part I focus on the relation between globalization and human trafficking; in the second part I make an analysis of different interpretations of human trafficking, which are related to the perceptions of trafficked persons, especially trafficked women in sexual exploitation, in order to discuss whether there is any possible implication behind the phenomenon of human trafficking.

## **History and Trend**

In history, the victims of human trafficking mostly fell into two types: African blacks and white women. The former refers to those Africans who were smuggled, by force or fraud, to North America in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and sold into slavery. The latter refers to those white women from Central, Eastern Europe and Central, South America, who were trafficked into commercial sexual exploitation in the United States and Western Europe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when "White Slave Trade" was blooming (Derks, 2000: 8).

The process of globalization is marked by frequent international business transactions, the advancement in technology and communication, and the convenience of traveling overseas. At the same time, the difference in economic development between rich and poor countries is constantly enlarging. Particularly in the post-Cold

War period, the dramatic restructuring of the world political and economic pattern, since the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the drastic changes in Eastern Europe, fueled the global migration movement. In the meanwhile numerous migrants, no matter legal or illegal, would cross borders at any cost, which provides a great deal of opportunity for human trafficking.

Indeed, as a result of the tide of globalization, migration streams tend to flow from less affluent countries to more affluent ones. With rising and complicated migration levels, the number of destination countries is growing and illegal migration and human trafficking are increasingly rampant as well. In recent years, there has been a general awareness of the severity of human trafficking on the international stage.

### **A Global Issue**

Global issues include those problems that endanger the smooth running of the entire system, which are composed of the interdependent relationships between human society and its environment. These issues cause fears and concerns from various countries, and no country is capable of dealing properly with these challenges alone. These global issues have threatened, or will threaten, the socioeconomic structure of societies, and have the potential to impact the existence and the development of human beings. Human trafficking has been regarded as a global issue on the following grounds:

#### **1. Human trafficking is a worldwide activity**

In recent years, with the increase in international trade contacts and private exchanges, trafficking in women and children has flourished. "It has been conservatively estimated that at least 200-225,000 women and children from South-East Asia are trafficked annually, a figure representing nearly one-third of the global trafficking trade" (Derks, 2000: 5). In general, women and children are trafficked from developing to developed countries. There are tens of thousands of trafficked women and children are sold to prostitution, or to rich families as slaves, or become the victims of illegal organ transplantation. In fact, human trafficking has grown into a major part of the black market economy, which is the third largest moneymaking business of criminal organizations after drug and arms smuggling (Skeldon, 2000: 13).

Human trafficking organized crime groups can be found in countries all over the world. They are highly organized with detailed division of labor. Individual members are in charge of specialized tasks of recruitment, transportation, contact and sale. In some countries, the local underworld gangs collaborate with transnational criminal groups, engaging in the procedures of trafficking and selling human beings (UNODC, 2006: 69). Unlike drugs and arms, which are gone as soon as they are used and sold, trafficked persons can be recycled and exploited continuously. Thus they become a better investment for traffickers and organized crime groups to make huge profits, which could be used to enrich themselves and buy influence to further other criminal

activities.

From the legal point of view, it is obvious that traffickers remain the center of attention. However, the layers of beneficiaries do not only include traffickers and organized crime groups. The recruiting agencies, promoters, transport agencies, money changers, hotel owners, and the sex tourism industry, more or less gain from the massive human trafficking criminal activity.

## **2. Most of trafficked persons are sold into prostitution**

The U.S. State Department made the estimation that around 600,000 to 800,000 men, women, and children are trafficked across borders each year, approximately 80 percent are women and girls, and up to 50 percent are children. The data also showed that the majority of victims are trafficked into commercial sexual exploitation (U.S. State Department, 2006: 6).

A large number of people are entrapped each year in the wicked plots of human trafficking. This usually involves vulnerable individuals who answer advertisements which promise them jobs such as escorts, servers, and dancers and so on; but, once they arrive in destination countries, they would find themselves being controlled and compelled into commercial sexual exploitation (Lee, 2005:180-181). Trafficked persons who are forced into prostitution are deprived of the most basic human rights and suffered severe physical and psychological harm. They endure beating and other abuses, as well as illegal imprisonment, supervision, and loss of freedom. Although trafficked victims can be found almost anywhere, the destinations for most trafficked women are countries and regions where there are large sex industry centers and where prostitution is legalized or widely tolerated (Kelly, 2005: 253-254; Hughes, 2002: 53). That is to say, human trafficking exists to meet the demand for women to be used in the sex industry, which represents commodification of human beings in the process of globalization (Kelly, 2005: 248). Though some migrant women may appear to voluntarily enter prostitution, it seems that this number could never meet the demand.

If prostitution were a desirable and rewarding job, traffickers would not have to deceive and enslave women to get them into and keep them in sex industry. Besides, whatever the recruitment method may be, most trafficked persons do not expect a severe sexual exploitation and violence that awaits them. The existence of recruitment and enslavement of women for the purpose of sexual exploitation threatens the status of women throughout the world. If half the population can be viewed as potential commodities to be recruited, bought, sold and enslaved, there can be no true democracy and freedom in any country.

## **3. Human trafficking endangers economic and social orders**

With the acceleration of globalization, human trafficking has become a significant phenomenon and a difficult challenge in an international arena. Almost all countries around the globe are involved and encountered its negative influence. First of all, to combat human trafficking many governments have consumed considerable

manpower, goods and materials. The Japanese government, for example, allocated a huge budget of \$ 10 million yen for trafficked victim treatment, including funds for shelters, psychological services, and medical assistance in the year 2005 (U.S. State Department, 2006: 150). Secondly, trafficking young children out of their origin communities and forcing them into labored work result in their lack of good care and education, which would accelerate the cycle of poverty and illiteracy and, eventually, impede the overall development and future prosperity of home countries or regions. Thirdly, “According to the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, human trafficking generates an estimated \$9.5 billion in annual revenue. It is closely connected with money laundering, drug trafficking, document forgery, and human smuggling” (U.S. State Department, 2006: 13). These criminal activities have threatened the safety of citizens and legitimate economic and social institutions that seriously affect the social order and stability. Finally, human trafficking increases public health costs. Most of victims of human trafficking often suffer brutal conditions that result in physical, psychological and emotional trauma. Unsanitary living environment cause them to be exposed to transmittable diseases and in ill health conditions. Besides, sexually transmitted diseases (HIV/AIDS) are often the result of prostitution and are potential threats to public health (U.S. State Department, 2006: 14).

Some people suggest that human trafficking and prostitution are black economies that enable unemployed women to earn a living. The idea that women and communities may benefit from the black market of human trafficking is examined. Human Trafficking as a black economy does not bring financial prosperity to origin communities. The trafficked persons often end up with nothing, or any money they earn comes at great cost to their health, emotional well being and standing in society. Most of the money made from human trafficking, does not make its way back to the home community or country, the benefits accrued exclusively by traffickers (Kelly, 2005: 252).

### **Global Factors in Human Trafficking**

Although the underground and criminal nature hides the actual incidence of human trafficking, it is perceived to be a growing problem since its root causes, such as poverty, lack of opportunities for vulnerable individuals, and political and economic instability, as well as the growth of networks of international organized crime groups, continue to be global factors.

The integration of global economy has facilitated overseas travel, business transaction and communication. Prevailing international cooperation, application of information exchange and Internet techniques have weakened the geographical and national boundaries, contributing to more effective delivery of global resources and productivity. However, it is an undeniable fact that the process of globalization is dominated by capitalist powers. Imperfect world economic order causes the conflict between the rich and the poor, and the enlarging economic gap helps generate the soil for human trafficking.

Global factors contribute to the movement of people to cross borders, legally and illegally, especially from impoverished countries to prosperous ones. Trafficking criminals take advantage of vulnerable individuals who are seeking shortcut to wealth and prosperity. The frequency and diversity of international exchanges encouraged by globalization force provides favorable environment for human trafficking. For example, convenient transportation compromises related risks and optimizes profit making, which is the prime motive of this criminal activity. The huge profits and relatively low risks all result in the rampancy of human trafficking (Hughes, 2002: 15). Moreover, victims of sex trafficking in Europe mostly come from Eastern Europe, which can be attributed to global economic factors. "The high number of unemployed caused very great difficulties for families. They were not able to find appropriate jobs, and they were seeking any way to find financial resources. Unluckily, one of the directions they might go was to become a victim of trafficking of human beings" (Banfi, 24).

Globalization has triggered an unprecedented demand for unskilled and low-skilled laborers. It leads to migration from a weaker economy to a stronger one to provide a cheaper labor force to feed developmental needs, which is a major driving force for international labor migration. But their lack of education, experiences and social status does not give them any edge in the job-hunting efforts and, on the contrary, increases their vulnerability to human trafficking.

As a matter of fact, large sectors of our economy are counting on cheap labor offered by trafficked persons. Tragically, a huge number of people who decide to risk their legal rights and physical safety for a chance to work in more affluent countries, a minority of trafficked persons will either die en route, or once abroad, find that their contract with the traffickers can only be paid back through slavery.

## **The Perspectives of Trafficked Persons**

### **1. Shoulder the most risk to gain a better future**

Sometimes even in the most difficult situations, there are people who prefer to remain at home, while other people prefer to leave. Both are acted upon by a variety of forces, but they do not lose their ability to think through their options. Individual personalities play important roles in making choices, differences such as degree of self-confidence, willingness to take risks and flexibility in the face of change. Being in a less powerful position than people in the first world does not mean that one is not making decisions, and those decisions are influenced by a vast multitude of situations, including individual desire and goal. Therefore, the issue of personal choice in human trafficking is an ambiguous topic. It supposes to be the contrary of concepts of coercion, violence and deception which traditionally define human trafficking.

While poverty is generally named as the determining factor in decisions to cross borders, many other factors exist in reality. For example, home is not always a comfortable place for many people who may want to escape from repressive parents,

hopeless relationships, boring jobs or bleak futures (Piper, 2005: 218). Being poor do not certainly make people poor in spirit. The imagery of luxurious, joyful living conditions in developed countries swamps television and films everywhere. “In contrast to the deteriorating conditions in Russia, the people of Russia have been bombarded with images of glamour and wealth from the West by the media. Many Russians believe these images represent the average standard of living and way of life in the US and Western Europe” (Hughes, 2002: 7).

Hence, why should not these disadvantaged people want to see it all for themselves? People dream of seeing famous places, meeting new friends, becoming independent, learning a new trade and even being a tourist. These are the dreams of people from cultures around the world, including those trafficked persons. In that climate, looking for work in foreign countries has increasingly become an ambition.

## **2. Victims of Trafficking or Survivors of Trafficking**

While we confront the possibilities for exploitation of human trafficking, we need to face a variety of vague situations where clear-cut good and evil do not exist. Since the majority of trafficked persons working in illegal industries have not entered destination countries directly, there can be no absolutely correct knowledge of how they got in, how they felt about it, and how much control they had or did not have over their journey and employment (Piper, 2005: 219). The effects of trafficking experiences are thus various, and are related to the perceptions regarding the trafficked persons, from the point of view of their family, and the origin and destination countries.

Instead of perceiving trafficked persons as victims or criminals, there is now a call for understanding those who under such situations as “survivors of trafficking”. For these individual survivors of human trafficking it is important to regain control over their lives (Penttinen, 2000: 7-8). For some trafficked women, knowing that there will be a sexual aspect to their job does not mean there will be no other aspect to their future lives, nor does it indicate a destiny which cannot be changed. If they are unlucky and get into trouble, they might want to stay abroad and often remain in the sex industry, hoping to pay off debts and make the trip worthwhile. Even some trafficked women might feel that they get more protection and greater rights at a familiar environment (Bruckert; Parent, 2004: 36). It is possible that after some practical experience, many trafficked persons would find tolerable situations and learn tricks of the business so as to survive.

Moreover, to protect trafficked persons is not simply helping them get away from current positions and bringing them back home, if there is no “home” exists. If the so called "home" or the society does not accept a trafficked person, and the social disgrace becomes unbearable and distressful for the person. Given the situations they might encounter in reality, we need to realize and respect their choices and change our inherent prejudices and attitudes toward them, especially those trafficked women who were in sex industry.

## **Conclusion**

In the process of globalization, a variety of factors have accelerated and complicated the problem of human trafficking, which refers to the organized crime of luring people in the name of recruiting overseas occupations. Trafficked persons are forced to work as slave, women are usually compelled into prostitution and children are suffered in severe servitude. What behind these scenes are traffickers and organized crime groups make huge profits out of these victims' miserable situations. Although destination countries or regions might partly profit from the cheap labor offered by trafficked persons, at the same time, local governments are concerned with the illegal, criminal and social consequences of human trafficking that damages national economy and social orders, and violates basic human rights of victims, which imposes a tough challenge on society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

It is sad that there is still a form of modern slavery, human trafficking, that contributes to the world's black market economy. But it seems like people who have nothing will risk everything to cross the line of despair. So that traffickers find easy target in those who are desperate to escape from poverty and persecution, and who are marginalized in their home communities and are in search of a stable life and promising future. Trafficked persons are involved in some part of the lawbreaking, as they tend to believe traffickers are simply getting them across several borders. It is completely reasonable for a trafficked person to believe that an adventurous underground journey into destination countries does not necessarily imply a lifetime affliction, but rather a temporary illegal status on the way to future prospect. Hence, it is important that we recognize the dignity of trafficked persons and understand their survival strategies with consideration.

The public awareness of human trafficking needs to be emphasized. It is essential for the public to reflect on whether it is righteous to use money to enslave disadvantaged people, or to enslave them in order to make profits. And through widespread information exchange to encourage more and more people acquire a greater understanding of the problem of human trafficking, so that we can help to build a society in which the dignity of human beings, especially that of women and children, is highly respected.

## References

Benfi, Ferenc, “European Alliance Combats Human Trafficking”, Porter conducted a telephone interview from Washington with Banfi and Jovanovski at Southeast European Cooperative Initiative Center headquarters in Bucharest, Romania.

[http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/gli/gli\\_jun2003g.pdf](http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/gli/gli_jun2003g.pdf)

Bruckert, Christine; Parent, Collette, 2004, “Organized Crime and Human Trafficking in Canada: Tracing Perceptions and Discourses”, Research and Evaluation Branch Community, Contract and Aboriginal Policing Services Directorate Royal Canadian Mounted Police. <http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection/PS64-1-2004E.pdf>

Derks, Annuska, 2000, “Combating trafficking in South-East Asia: a Review of Policy and Programme Responses”, International Organization for Migration Publisher.

[http://www.imadr.org/project/petw/combatingtrafficking\\_southeastasia.pdf](http://www.imadr.org/project/petw/combatingtrafficking_southeastasia.pdf)

Hughes, Donna M., 2002, “Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation: The Case of the Russian Federation”, International Organization for Migration Publisher.

<http://www.uri.edu/artsci/wms/hughes/russia.pdf>

Kelly, Liz, 2005, “You Can Find Anything You Want: A Critical Reflection on Research on Trafficking in Persons within and into Europe”, in *Laczko, F.; Gozdzia, E. (ed.), Data and Research on Human Trafficking: A Global Survey, International Organization for Migration Publisher.* <http://www.nswp.org/pdf/IOM-GLOBALTRAFFICK.PDF>

Lee, June J.H., 2005, “Human Trafficking in East Asia: Current Trends, Data Collection and Knowledge Gaps”, in *Laczko, F.; Gozdzia, E. (ed.), Data and Research on Human Trafficking: A Global Survey, International Organization for Migration Publisher.* <http://www.nswp.org/pdf/IOM-GLOBALTRAFFICK.PDF>

Penttinen, Elina, 2000, “Globalization, Bio-power and Trafficking in Women”, Paper prepared for IPSA RC 19 workshop on Globalization, Democratization and Gender, University of Tampere. <http://ipsa-rc19.anu.edu.au/papers/Penttinen.pdf>

Piper, Nicola, 2005, “A Problem by a Different Name? A Review of Research on Trafficking in South-East Asia and Oceania”, in *Laczko, F.; Gozdzia, E. (ed.), Data and Research on Human Trafficking: A Global Survey, Organization for Migration*

***Publisher. <http://www.nswp.org/pdf/IOM-GLOBALTRAFFICK.PDF>***

Skeldon, Ronald, 2000, "Trafficking: A Perspective from Asia", International Organization *for Migration Publisher*, special issues, Perspective on Trafficking of Migrants. <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/1468-2435.00113>

United Nations Office on Drug and Crime, 2006, "Trafficking in Persons: Global Patterns". [http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/trafficking\\_human\\_beings.html](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/trafficking_human_beings.html)

U.S. State Department, 2006, "Trafficking in persons Report, June 2006". <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2006/>

### **Selected Internet Resources**

Anti-Slavery International

<http://www.antislavery.org/homepage/antislavery/trafficking.htm>

Freedom Network (USA) To Empower Trafficked and Enslaved Persons

<http://www.freedomnetworkusa.org/>

Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW)

<http://www.gaatw.net/>

Human Rights Watch

<http://www.hrw.org>

Human Trafficking.org

<http://www.humantrafficking.org/>

International Organization for Migration

<http://www.iom.int/jahia/jsp/index.jsp>

OMIDYAR NETWORK: Global Human Trafficking – Resources

[http://www.omidyar.net/group/issues-soc/ws/global\\_human\\_trafficking\\_resources/](http://www.omidyar.net/group/issues-soc/ws/global_human_trafficking_resources/)

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)

<http://www.unicef.org>

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

<http://www.unesco.org>

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNCHR)

<http://www.unhchr.ch>

Vital Voices

<http://www.vitalvoices.org/>