

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND THE FAMILY: EXAMPLES FROM SRI LANKA ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES EXPERIENCED BY FAMILIES OF THE TRAFFICKED DUE TO TRAFFICKING

Kumudika Boyagoda^{1,*} and V.P. Nethra Senadhi^{2,*}

Abstract: *Human trafficking is a global problem affecting most countries including Sri Lanka. Issues of trafficking are commonly focused from the point of person trafficked. However, its impact is also felt by other parties – most importantly their families. Yet this aspect of trafficking has not received much attention. This paper fills the gap by discussing the issues faced by families of the trafficked in Sri Lanka, due to trafficking. The study is based on primary data collected in 2016 from persons who logged complaints on trafficking at the Repatriation Section of the Ministry of Foreign Employment, Sri Lanka by applying purposive sampling method and triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data. The results revealed that the families of the trafficked, in contrast to families of other migrants, are doubly affected – i.e. the issues faced at the origin due to trafficking as well as their mental strain due to the circumstances of the trafficked at the destination. While families of the trafficked are also impacted by consequences faced by families of other migrants such as deprivation of care givers, there are specific social and economic issues connected particularly to trafficking. Lack of remittances, burdened with the debts connected to the migration process, necessity to send money to the victim, severing ties with family members and social stigmatization from community are some among these. The study suggests that policy processes should strengthen the mechanisms to reduce trafficking; this will not only benefit the potential trafficked, but also their families.*

Keywords: Human trafficking, Social impacts, Economic impacts, Family

Introduction

Migration occurs in many forms for many reasons. Among them, trafficking is of major interest currently as it is a global problem affecting every continent and most countries, including Sri Lanka. As noted by Sarker and Panday (2006), trafficking exists at the intersection of migration and organized crime. The Council of Europe's 'Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings' defines trafficking in persons as "recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by improper means (such as force, abduction, fraud, coercion, deception) for an improper purpose including forced labor or sexual exploitation" (United Nations, 2000). According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2014), approximately 900,000 persons, originating from different countries are trafficked around the world annually. Trafficking calls for attention as it is a crime and violates

¹ Senior Lecturer in Demography, Department of Demography, University of Colombo & Senior Academic Expert, AHEAD Operation, Ministry of Higher Education, Sri Lanka. Email: kumudikaboyagoda@demo.cmb.ac.lk

² Lecturer (probationary) in Demography, Department of Demography, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka. Email: nethrasenadi@gmail.com

* Both authors contributed equally to this paper.