

Chapter 6



The Way Forward

The diversity of forms of human mobility in the contemporary context of global linkage requires an analytical approach which can explain why the needs of the constituents of social structures and human agency (gender, class, generation and ethnicity) have converged to produce what is known as human trafficking. Without adequate explanation policy tends to shift stance and direction. Reactions premised on human rights concerns have contributed to new international, regional and national legislative frameworks that oppose abusive and exploitative practices in migration. A key concern remains the wide landscape of policy issues underlying the problem, and how policy approaches – in diverse areas such as migration management, crime control, labour standards, poverty reduction and particular needs of communities at risk – can be coordinated to curtail practices of human trafficking and ensure human rights protection.

In SSA, existing knowledge on specific features of the trafficking of children and women shows a close interaction between the cultural domain and the changing social, political and economic relations. The rise of migration by children and young people within and outside traditional practices under risky conditions may signify more than a temporary means to make ends meet. It may also reflect at a deeper level some structural transformation which is becoming manifest in various forms of coping with deprivation and poverty. Knowledge about the intersection between migration and trafficking has not yet brought about any consensus on the underlying forces and their implications for the wellbeing of children and women. This poses a considerable challenge to the makers of policy for the future recovery of this region. The benefit of remittances cannot outweigh the long-term costs to individuals and society at large. The mechanisms of intergenerational transmission of poverty triggered by current patterns of migration and trafficking constitute a key area for such research as could show how to reverse current trends.

Communities of actors have emerged throughout the world in a collective struggle against human trafficking and may be grouped according to their mandates, such as: anti-slavery, children's wellbeing, gender equality, orderly migration and crime control. In SSA, such communities have taken steps to build regional networks of knowledge and action to address the context-specific dimensions of the problem. Like-minded organisations have formed alliances through creating and maintaining a database by which to share knowledge. The information thus gathered points to some sector-specific patterns which are sensitive to the altering regional and global forces and the interface of these with local conditions. Trafficking linked with export-oriented agriculture and commercial services in tourism appears more sensitive to global forces; when linked with domestic services it tends to react to national and regional forces.

Deprived of resources and constrained by considerations of funding agencies as they are, the choices for intervention by grassroots organisations are unfortunately not always determined by what they know. For example, whereas unsustainable livelihoods may be known to those on the spot as a key causal issue, criteria for funding usually direct activities along the lines of awareness-raising, human rights education and re-shaping cultural practices. The few projects which do address poverty issues provide micro-credit for returnees merely in the context of economic reintegration and without due attention to their resumed position and 'standing' in the community. We note that communities of practitioners in SSA share an awareness about the significance of bridging and synchronizing the three levels of intervention (prevention, prosecution and protection), but this awareness at times remains detached from actual action – owing to the lack of resources and institutional capabilities.

Being a multi-causal problem, human trafficking requires a multi-dimensional answer. No single organisation is capable of 'solving' all affiliated problems, nor should it enforce one vision of the problem as global. A combination of practices capable of creating synergetic effects and consolidating policy goals among engaged actors is sorely needed; but this is being prevented by the paradox of the liberalisation of economies despite the non-liberalisation of labour mobility. One way to address this dilemma may be to lift the barriers to labour mobility irrespective of skill levels. The political feasibility of this option is small at regional as well as global level (Pécoud and de Guchteneire, 2005). Haas (2005: 13) proposes a liberal approach towards labour migration of both low and highly skilled workers where a real demand exists, but with restricted application in respect of circular migration where no permanent settlement can result. The difficulty with Haas's proposal is that it resonates with the same logic of migration management as did South Africa's Apartheid regime

which left many (Black) migrant communities in poverty as they were not permitted to settle. Their poverty has been transmitted to younger generations because working adults were constantly on the move. Constant movement of adults undermines emotional attachment, domestic stability and household asset management (Moser, 1999). The constant movement of male workers is now known also to have spurred prostitution and sex trafficking. De Haan (2000:28) points out that the denial of rights of migrants – relating to free circulation, requesting and obtaining asylum, and being accompanied by family members – in international contexts but also at the national level, limits a migrant in building an ongoing livelihood. The proposal to apply the principle of circular migration among low-skill workers may serve the interests of societies which face sector-based labour deficits, but not (in any real way) those of migrant workers and their families.

Another way of resolving the paradox could be to ‘socialise’ the mobility of financial capital by introducing norms which make it serve also social as well as merely economic ends. This would require stronger pressure on corporate responsibility through sector-specific monitoring and mobilisation for support, and a more robust attack on poverty and deprivation – one guided by the human development approach which ensures security of livelihood, and dignity of identity, for individuals, families and communities, without their resort to risky migration. When people’s capabilities and entitlements are enhanced – and when institutions of governance become responsive to their voices, anxieties and their social conditions – migration options become less attractive. This human development approach remains weak on care both as a quotidian reality and as ethical practice (Gasper and Truong, 2005). For an approach centred on the people themselves to work, the full connotation of care must be brought to bear. Care is: the maintenance of persons and institutions that makes production possible, and a moral disposition that stresses attentiveness and responsiveness to the voices of those yet excluded from the policy process but affected by the decisions taken. Understanding care in this way will help resolve the current contention between knowledge networks that hampers policy coordination.

The absence of consensus renders choices in collective action more vulnerable to error. When common sense and/or received wisdom from historical experience fails and gaps in knowledge of the current situations persist, collective action for the protection of human rights must rely on a consortium of experts who cooperate with each other to maintain a working level of effectiveness. A plurality of foci of authoritative knowledge offers diverse and potentially richer interpretation as well as fuller representation; and cross-cultural learning can improve the chance of finding innovative practices which reflect the acceptance of pluralism and diversity.