

Child Trafficking as a Profitable Crime in Ethiopia

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Abstract

The paper assesses the causes that make children vulnerable to trafficking, the process of child trafficking, people who are participating in the trafficking process (traffickers), and the effects of trafficking on children and the trend of child trafficking in Ethiopia. The data collected using key informant interviews, in depth interviews and document reviews were analyzed using descriptive techniques of data analysis. Both findings from the study and the literature review indicate that child trafficking is an emerging global crisis, in which many children are deceived and coerced into sexual, labour and other forms of exploitations, where they exposed to psychological, physical and sexual abuses. Most of the children are also recruited, transported and exploited by the people whom they know very well; neighbors and aunts taking the lion's share. The victims of trafficking are exposed to different behavioral problems, health problems, lack of education and street life. The high demand for child labour in the big urban areas and the pushing factors such as lack of job opportunity, lack of social services, unbalanced family size and economy, poverty, death of one or both of parents and others cause child trafficking to exist as one of the most profitable crimes for traffickers and exploiters. Hence, an effective child protection system that gives priority for both preventing child trafficking and protecting the rights of child victims need to be designed.

Keywords: Child trafficking; Traffickers; Crime; Adama; Ethiopia

Introduction

Currently the world is facing one of the worst forms of human right violation in the form of trafficking. The number of victims, the number of people who are participating in the trafficking process, the profit earned from trafficking and its effect is also increasing time to time. Trafficking in person, especially women and children is also increasingly becoming an issue of global concern. According to the United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking report, with an estimated annual profit of USD 31.7 billion, trafficking in person is still growing and profitable transnational crime enterprise next to drug and weapons trade [1].

Nowadays many children in the world are facing different problems which can hamper their development as a human being. One of the major problems amongst others is child trafficking for the purpose of exploitation. Based on a report, about 1.2 million children are being trafficked worldwide each year both internally and externally [2]. The report of UNODC also explains as the number of children who are victims of trafficking is increasing time to time; it comprises about one third of the total global victims of trafficking [3].

Trafficking is a problem all over the world; especially in Africa no country is immune from this problem. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime report about 89% of African countries have been engaged in human trafficking. However, other study shows that all the nations in the continent are affected by human trafficking as countries of source, destination or a combination of all three [4].

The situation gets its worst level in sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries. Child trafficking in SSA is a demand driven phenomenon-the existence of an international market for children in the labour and sex trade coupled with an abundant supply of children from poor families with limited or no means of education in a cultural context that favors child fostering [2]. A study conducted by African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect shows that child trafficking is a common and wide spread activity in the four sampled countries of Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania [5].

Ethiopia as one of the sub-Saharan African countries is the source of men, women and children subjected to trafficking in person [6]. Currently children are becoming the major targets of traffickers for both internal and external trafficking. It is known that a huge number of Ethiopian children are facing different problems because of different factors such as individual, family, societal and institutional that make children vulnerable. Being exposed to trafficking is one of those problems Ethiopian children are facing. According to United States Department of Labor's Bureau of International Labor Affairs, children are being trafficked from Oromia Region and Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR) to other regions in the country for forced labour in domestic services and the weaving industry. Most children are reportedly trafficked from rural to urban areas and poor urban to the better ones for commercial sexual exploitation, begging, street vending and manual labour.

A report by US department of states indicates as the effort of Ethiopia is increasing in fighting the external trafficking even though the awareness to heighten internal trafficking remained negligible [7]. On the other hand, UNODC's report of 2014 explains as though a larger number of foreigners are convicted of trafficking, most victims are not trafficked abroad; instead they are exploited within their own country. The report further explains as about 64% of traffickers are nationals of the victims own country [3].

Global estimate indicates that about 30 to 50% of all trafficked victims are children less than 18 years of age [8]. However; in Africa, it accounts more than 68% [9]. Even if Ethiopia is a destination and transit country for very few of victims of trafficking, it contributes

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Received June 19, 2018; **Accepted** August 14, 2018; **Published** August 21, 2018

Citation: Megento TL, Wolde YT (2018) Child Trafficking as a Profitable Crime in Ethiopia. *Social Crimonol* 6: 189. doi: [10.35248/2375-4435.18.6.189](https://doi.org/10.35248/2375-4435.18.6.189)

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a larger number of men, women and children as a source. A study conducted by a team of researchers for IOM, expressed as women and children are being trafficked from rural parts of the country to urban areas and most of these victims are also exposed to different types of abuses and exploitations [10].

Internal trafficking in Ethiopia mainly focuses on very young children under 18 years of old like the global experience; young girls for sexual exploitation and young boys for weaving, farming, and cattle herding. Different studies conducted in the major regional towns and in the country’s capital state that a substantial proportion of women and children work as prostitutes, domestic workers, beggars and weavers in the traditional weaving industries as well as children living in the streets are victims of trafficking [11]. Adama is one of the major regional cities in the country and growing in different aspects. As a result larger numbers of children are deceived and/or forced and trafficked from rural and poor urban areas to the city. Currently even if there is no recorded data that can show the situation in the city; the reality on the ground indicates as the problem is worsening time to time. Therefore, this problem needs the attention of not only governmental and non-governmental organizations but also requires the attention of every individual.

Root causes that make children vulnerable to trafficking

There are many causes for child trafficking, but they can be broadly categorized as demand side causes and supply side causes of trafficking. However, trafficking is overwhelmingly a demand driven phenomenon. The” demand side” of trafficking refers to the nature and extent of exploitation of the trafficked person after reaching the destination point as well as the social cultural, political, economic, legal, and development factors that shape the demand and influence or enable the trafficking process. It occurs first and foremost because there is a market for children in labour and in the sex trade, and this is matched by an abundant supply of children, most often from poor families, who are easy prey for those who seek to make a profit by exploiting their vulnerability.

Economic growth tends to result in increased demand for cheap migrant labour, as the domestic workforce is able to move away from

low-skilled, low-wage employment. Economic disparities between regions also lead to more general migration flows, as more affluent countries draw upon the potential workforce of poorer countries as a source of labour [2].

Methods and Materials

The study area

Astronomically, Adama City stretches between 8°33’ to 8°36’ North latitude and 39° 11’ 57” to 39° 21’ 15” East longitude (Figure 1). The city is situated at the central part of the country. The city with an area of 29.86 km² and an elevation range of 1500-2300 m above sea level is located in the East Shoa zone of Oromia region at about 100 kms (old road) or 57 km (using the new express way) from Addis Ababa on the south east along the main road to Harar.

Data types and sources

The study used both primary and secondary data sources to obtain the required qualitative and quantitative information. The primary data for the study was gathered through in-depth interviews with victims of trafficking and key informant interviews with representatives of concerned governmental and non-governmental institutions and law enforcement officials. The secondary data, to gather quantitative information was collected from the reports of the four Woreda/ districts police stations’ department of women and children affairs of City Administration of Adama and reports of NGOs working on the same issues especially the annual reports of Forum for Sustainable child Empowerment.

Sampling techniques

Purposive sampling technique is employed to generate the primary data of the research. This sampling technique is selected; though, the number of trafficking victims in the city is larger in number, most of them are found in individuals’ houses. The ones identified as victims such as children of the street, children on the street, those who are working in shisha/drug houses, groceries and bars and restaurants and with NGOs are fewer in number, therefore during the process of sampling almost all of the children the researcher believed, are victims

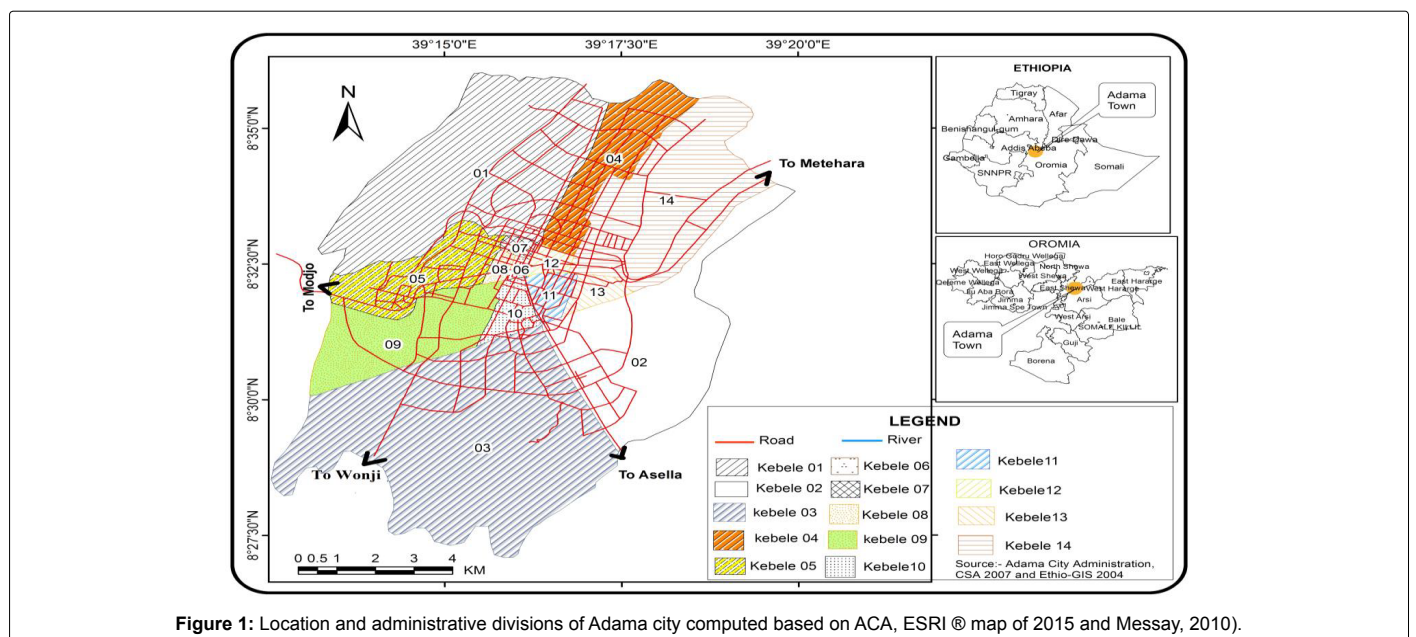


Figure 1: Location and administrative divisions of Adama city computed based on ACA, ESRI © map of 2015 and Messay, 2010).

of trafficking taken as samples. Therefore, it was believed as there is none other than this technique that fits the sampling process of this research.

Since trafficking in person is a crime, it was not easy to find the victims of trafficking and collect the primary data needed for the study. Therefore, an NGO that works with children that are exposed to different problems including trafficking and one of the child protection units (CPUs) in the country, which is found in Adama were purposively selected. Here even if the CPU was not functional, the manager helped a lot in identifying the victims of trafficking amongst children of the street.

Additionally, street children and some children who are participating on street vending were systematically approached and interviewed informally by making them friends and using their services. Then from these NGO and street children, putting in to account the clandestine nature of trafficking, the resource allotted to the research, the secretive nature of the victims, difficulty of differentiating amongst street children those who are trafficked or not and the limited number of children who are identified as victims of trafficking, 20 children were purposively selected and in-depth interview was conducted with the help of their guardians, police officers and the NGOs representatives. Four NGO and police representatives, who are closely working with victims of trafficking, were also purposively selected to undertake key informant interviews. These key informant interviewees were from Adama city police women and children affairs office, representative of Adama police at the bus station of Adama Selam Medium child Protection Center.

Results and Discussion

Causes of vulnerability

Both pulling and pushing factors were identified that make children vulnerable to trafficking. As evident from table 1, children are getting vulnerable to trafficking because of different individual, family, social and institutional failures. Nine (45%) of the interviewed children left their original places because of unbalanced family size and the economy their parents have, which is one of the family, societal and institutional failures (Table 1).

The society encourages having lots of children in a family without considering the social services needed for the children, the carrying capacity of the economy and the job opportunities available. The different institutions who are working on family planning, child trafficking and other institutions that are expected to create job opportunities for the children and their families failed to work together in creating awareness and to put in place job opportunities for the children and their families according to the objectives of their institutions. The other major cause that makes children vulnerable to trafficking is lack of job opportunities in their original places. Out of the

Causes that make children vulnerable to trafficking	Male	Female	Total	%
Family death	0	2	2	10
Family separation	0	2	2	10
Lack of job opportunity	1	3	4	20
Lack of social service	1	0	1	5
Need to learn religious education	1	0	1	5
Peer pressure	1	0	1	5
Unbalanced family size and economy	3	6	9	45
Total	7	13	20	100

Source: Survey data, 2016.

Table 1: Causes that make children vulnerable to trafficking.

20 interviewed children 4 (20%) reported as lack of job pushed them from their hometowns and villages. Family death, family separation, lack of social services and peer pressure are also some of the causes that make children vulnerable to trafficking. The following story is quoted from the in-depth interview with a girl, who is exploited sexually.

I am from Debrezeit. I lost both of my parents. It is a trucker whom I knew at Debrezeit who brought me here with a promise of job opportunity. He told me till he gets me a job as I have to stay in a small pension with him. He also told me after he gets me the job as I am going to have my own rental house. I had no choice other than going to the pension with him. During our stay in the pension He was so kind for me and convinced me as he is going to stay by my side. I believed him and started to like him. One day we were drunk and had sex with him for the first time. After two weeks he told me as he is going to get me the job when he comes back from Djibouti and gave me one thousand birr for my expenses and went to Djibouti. That day onwards his phone is switched off and never seen him again (Waitress at grocery).

On the other side, though the pushing factors played a pivotal role in making the children easy to be trafficked, the pulling factors from the destination areas also contributed a lot in the process of trafficking. According to the interviews conducted, most of the children who are pushed by any of the pushing factors seek to get a better job opportunity in the destination areas. About 60% of the interviewed children trafficked to Adama with a promise of a better job opportunity followed by better education which accounts 25% of the respondents. Therefore better job opportunity and education are the major bribing tools for the traffickers to pull the children towards Adama. About 10% of the victims are told as they will learn and work so that they will change their life. Being attracted by urban life is also one of the pulling factors (Table 2).

The process of trafficking

The process of trafficking might be complicated. Sometimes the source places of trafficking might be destinations and destinations also might become source places or it may create a kind of vicious circle like some children who are previously trafficked and get back to their source areas might again be trafficked if those vulnerability factors pushed them previously are still existing [11] (Table 3).

Factors attracted children to Adama	Male	Female	Total	%
Looking for a better job opportunity	3	9	12	60
Looking for a better job & education opportunity	1	1	2	10
Looking for a better education	2	3	5	25
Attracted by urban life	1	0	1	5
Total	7	13	20	100

Source: Survey data, 2016.

Table 2: Factors attracting children to Adama.

People who recruited and convinced children	Male	Female	Total	%
Mother & father together	1	1	2	10
Father	0	1	1	5
Uncle	0	1	1	5
Aunt	0	4	4	20
A friend of parents	0	1	1	5
peer	1	1	2	10
Broker	1	1	2	10
Neighbor	3	2	5	25
Truck driver	0	1	1	5
Self-convinced	0	1	1	5
Total	6	14	20	100

Source: Survey data, 2016.

Table 3: People who recruited and convinced children to go to the bigger urban areas.

Many people knowingly or unknowingly are participating in the process of trafficking from convincing the children, especially children of rural and small urban areas to go to the bigger cities with using different bribing mechanisms to transport and exploit them. The process starts with recruitment, which is identifying children that are vulnerable and can be easily bribed. Even with in a family parents recruit amongst their children the ones whom they think stronger and responsible. The neighbors, aunts and brokers recruit children, who are vulnerable to the different pushing factors. After the recruitment is done it is convincing that follows with using the different bribing methods and promises. According to Table 3, neighbors (25%) and aunts of the children (20%) are the most influential people in convincing the children to go to the bigger cities using better education, better job opportunity and urban life as a pretext to get the attention of the children.

All of the children interviewed came or brought to Adama directly without being harbored in other places. Even if there is a police station which follows the issue of child trafficking together with the other crimes at Adama bus station, so amazingly 18(90%) of the children came or trafficked to Adama using the legal means of transportation which is bus. The others reach to the city using truck and mid truck (isuzu). During the process of transporting the children especially the ones who are using public transport systems are acting as they are parents of the children.

About 65% of the children are also living with people who brought them from their original places; this clearly shows that most of the people who recruited, convinced and transported the children are also their exploiters. Brokers bar owners, long distance truck drivers, parents, relatives and neighbors play a great role in the process of trafficking. Traffickers use different methods to get the attention of children and take them away from their place of origin, which includes among others bribing, giving false hopes, forcing, stealing and other mechanisms [11].

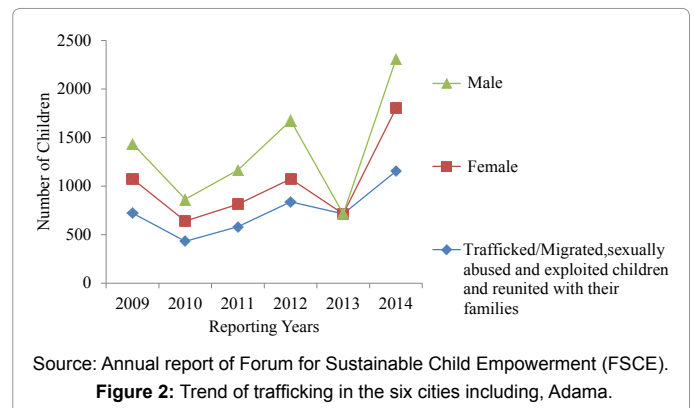
The trend of child trafficking

According to Wolansa, representative of the Adama police women child affairs, even if she couldn't support it with written documents, because of misplacement she stated as the number of children who are being trafficked to the city is increasing time to time. Regarding this she further explained as:

The parents and children of especially Arsi zone of Oromia and Wolaita zone of Southern Nations and Nationalities and peoples region are considering Adama as a place where there is a lot of job opportunity (Arab country). Almost all of the children from SNNP are coming here looking for a better job opportunity, whereas some of the children from Oromia region of Arsi and Jima zones are coming to the city to learn quran in addition to the better job opportunity.

On the other hand, annual report (2009-2014) prepared by Forum for Sustainable child empowerment (FSCE), which works in Adama, Dessie, Bahir Dar, Dire dawa, Akaki Kality and Addis Ababa gives some picture of the trend of trafficking within the past six years, though the data does not show the number of all children that are trafficked to these cities and a sub city.

According to Figure 2, the trend of trafficked/migrated, sexually abused and exploited children, even if it shows fluctuation at some times, is increasing time to time. This fluctuation may be because, the report depends on the number of children traced by the organization; however there are other children that are not traced and reported.



Considering the two years (2012 and 2014) on which the data is gender disaggregated and the number of trafficked children in Adama is clearly put, the trend of trafficking towards Adama is increasing. In 2012 the number of children trafficked/migrated, sexually abused and exploited was 118 (Female=72) and it became 200 (Female=144) in 2014. The data clearly shows as the number of children being trafficked to Adama is increasing time to time. It also shows even if the number of boys is increasing but the share of girls is doubled.

Traffickers

As Table 4 shows aunts and neighbors with 25 and 30 percent respectively are not only convincing the children, they are also at the top of the rank in transporting the children from their original places to Adama. They are also the major ones in exploiting and torturing the children. According to the above table, aunts are more comfortable in convincing and transporting girls. Surprisingly parents of the children are also participating in transporting their children to their relatives in urban areas.

According to the key informant and in-depth interview interviewees; most of these neighbors, uncles, friends of parents and aunts are originally from the original places of the children and are currently living in the big urban area (Adama). These people are going back to the rural or small urban areas for different occasions such as holidays and to visit their parents. So, it is these times, which give them the opportunity to recruit and convince not only the children but also their families. The kind of support they are making for their own parents also ease the work of convincing the children and their families.

Peers of the children, who previously went to the big urban areas and started, supporting their parents and them, are also contributing a lot in influencing the children to think of going to the big urban areas. These incidents create conducive atmosphere for traffickers to get their prey easily. People, such as truckers transport children especially from small urban areas to the bigger ones. In this study even if the data obtained from the in-depth interview shows as the contribution of brokers in convincing, transporting and exploiting is meager, it is reported by the key informant interviewees as their contribution is higher. Concerning the gender share of traffickers Women's participation is higher with 61% than men, especially in trafficking girls.

In general, most of the children are transported from their origin to their destination by people whom they know very well such as their own parents, neighbors, relatives, truck driver and friends of their parents. As opposed to the report which states as the participation of women in trafficking is lesser as compared to men, in this research, women are highly participating than men in convincing, transporting and exploiting children [9].

People who transported children from their origin to Adama	Number of children transported		Total	%
	Male	Female		
Neighbor	3	3	6	30
Aunt	0	5	5	25
Uncle	1	1	2	10
Broker	1	1	2	10
Mother	1	0	1	5
A friend of parents	0	1	1	5
Oneself	1	1	2	10
Truck driver	0	1	1	5

Source: Survey data, 2016

Table 4: People that transported children from their origin to Adama.

Forms of exploitation

It is well known that the core purpose of trafficking is exploitation. The victims of trafficking are exposed to different forms of exploitation. According to Table 5, most of the male children (71%) are exposed to labour exploitation especially the ones who are 16-18 years of age. The rest 29% of the male children are exploited in the form of slavery or servitude. On the other hand 69% of the female children are exploited in the form of slavery or servitude. This might be because of the high demand of house maids in the big urban areas. Of the girls interviewed 31% are exploited either only sexually or together with labour exploitation. Most of the girls who are working in ‘shisha’ houses are facing the double exploitation which is labour and sexual exploitation. 15% of the girls are also raped. About 45% of the children reported as they were being beaten and insulted by their exploiters. According to this study 71% of the trafficked children are not going to schools against the policy of the country “no child should stay at home”. Though, 30% of them are going to schools, they have no time to study and they are also got absent whenever needed by their exploiters.

Even if they have no play time, no time for rest and not getting a salary that compensates the amount of work they have done; about 15% of the children are not provided with enough amount of food for their survival. It is also reported that children are also used by their exploiters to participate in different crimes such as petty crimes/ street crime to avoid the danger of being caught and punished for that crime. On the other hand as reported by Adama police child and women Affairs department representative, though she couldn’t tell their number, children with the age of 1-5 years are participating in begging or used by their exploiters for the purpose of begging. Very thankfully, there is no report yet trafficking of children for the purpose of organ removal.

In general, most of the children below the age of 10 are used by their exploiters for begging and stealing, whereas the bigger ones are exploited as house servitude. Most of the male children especially the ones with in the age group of 16-18 are facing labour exploitation. World Bank [8] states as most of men and boys often trafficked in to the manual labours including agriculture, mines, quarries and fishing.

Most of the girls with ages under 16, even if there are some cases of sexual exploitation, are exploited as house servitude; whereas the ones with in the age group of 16-17 are needed for prostitution and labour exploitation in *shisha* houses, hotels, cafes, bars, groceries and restaurants. Therefore, most of the children trafficked/migrated to Adama are exploited as house servitudes, which is labour exploitation with in residential houses (private houses). Regarding Ethiopia as one of the sub-Saharan African countries where forced labour was largely detected [9]. The following cross tabulation shows the relation between age, sex and forms of exploitation (Table 5).

Forms of exploitation	Age group	Sex		Total
		Male	Female	
Labour exploitation	6-10	0	0	0
	11-15	2	0	2
	16-18	3	0	3
Slavery/servitude	6-10	0	0	0
	11-15	2	9	11
	16-18	0	0	0
Sexual exploitation	6-10	0	1	1
	11-15	0	0	0
	16-18	0	1	1
Labour and sexual exploitation	6-10	0	0	0
	11-15	0	0	0
	16-18	0	2	2

Source: Survey data, 2016.

Table 5: Forms of exploitation.

Effects of trafficking on children

Since child trafficking is a crime its result is expected to be dangerous and negative. The children who passed through this crime are the ones who are denied of their childhood. They are victims of inhuman treatments and tortures of people whom they know very well, as a result they are exposed to physical, sexual and psychological violence; isolation, deployment in areas unknown to them, dependent on alcohol or drugs [12].

Educational deprivation

It is well known that most problems of children who are exposed to trafficking is not going to schools. According to this study about 75% of the children are denied of going to school and exposed to illiteracy. Even though some of them are attending classes they are not following attentively, if it is needed by their exploiters they will get absent from class. In line with this research stated that children who are trafficked and deprived of education are also the ones who are robbed their future to improve their economic situation. The study further explained the adverse outcomes of education deprivation including developmental delays, language and cognitive difficulties, deficits in verbal and memory skills, poor academic performance and grade retention.

Health problems

Victims are exposed to different health problems especially the ones who are raped and addicted of ‘*khat*’, ‘*shisha*’, cigarette and other addictions which may simply lead to be affected by different diseases. Some of the children because they are working without a rest and spend most of their time in unprotected environment, they reported as they are exposed to respiratory organ problems such as the ones who are

working in 'shisha' houses and back pains and other physical illnesses such as children who are involved in dish washing and waitresses. A related research identified those victims of child trafficking experience inhumane living conditions, inadequate hygiene and diet, beatings and abuse, neglect and denial of basic human right to health care which in turn may lead to a lasting health problem. The ones who are especially exposed to sexual exploitation further affected by unplanned pregnancies, as a result unsafe abortion and sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS.

The different insults and physical punishments also exposed them to emotional problems. They are also deprived of their right to live with their parents, to play and to get rest. A study revealed as trafficked children will have negative emotional effect, such as depression, hopelessness, guilt, shame, flashbacks, nightmares, loss of confidence, lower self-esteem and anxiety.

Behavioral problem

As Walansa, one of the key informant interviewees explained, most of the trafficked children are exposed to some behavioral problems. She further explained that as they don't care about anything "*they are caught having sex on the street*", some of them especially the ones who exposed to street life are becoming threats for the security of the city. It was stated as trafficked children are having adverse behavioral outcomes, including attachment difficulties, mistrust of adults, antisocial behaviors and difficulties in relating with others.

Being exposed to street life

About 20% of the interviewed children are exposed to street life. Children who could not withstand the tortures and other forms of exploitation are sometimes running to the streets of the city to get relieve away from their exploiters. The following quote, taken from the in depth interview may give some picture how trafficked children are treated and the challenges they are facing.

I am from Chench. It is my uncle who brought me to Adama. I lived here in Adama for the last three years; two years in my uncle's house and one year as a street girl. When I was in my uncle's house I didn't even know the city. Let alone visiting the city, I had no time to rest. In addition to that his wife was always insulting and beating me for everything she thought is a mistake. I was never happy. I was always crying and started becoming stressed. One day I was sent to a nearby shop to buy a soft drink. On my way to the shop I found a boy from my village and have been discussing with him about how I am doing and other things. In the middle of the discussion my uncle's wife saw me talking to the boy. When i get back to home she started to insult me. I tried to explain about everything, but she was not in a position to listen to me, instead she started beating me with a big stick, that time I run away out of the yard to escape from her. At first when I left the house it was just only for the sake of escaping from the physical punishment, however, I got frightened to get back to home. That's why finally I decided to go to the street. If my uncle hasn't brought me I wouldn't be a street girl like this (Street girl at Adama).

Conclusion

Most children are getting vulnerable to trafficking because of the different pushing and pulling factors from the source and destination

areas of the children. Unbalanced family size and economy, lack of job opportunities in their original areas and lack of social services are the major factors that push the children from their source area and Seeking to lead urban life, the bribing methods of traffickers (better education and job opportunities among others) and peer influences are among the major pulling factors that attract children to go to the bigger urban areas. The process of child trafficking starts from understanding the weak side of the child, which is recruitment (children who lost their parents, from low economic background, from a family whose family size and their economy is unbalanced, those who are not going to school and the ones who are badly in need of job and others) followed by convincing the child and his/her parents by preaching as there are good opportunities in the bigger urban areas than their source areas. Convincing the children is also undertaken by their (children) family members including mothers and fathers, relatives especially aunts and uncles and neighbors.

People who came from big urban areas are in a better position to be believed and get acceptance by the children and their parents. Most of the children are recruited, convinced, transported, abused and exploited by the people whom they know very well. In this regard aunts and neighbors take the lion's share in the process of trafficking. In order to end or minimize child trafficking, influential personalities, religious leaders, members of the community, organizations that are working on child trafficking, schools and the other concerned bodies of the government are required to work together. Encouraging people to expose such crimes to police or any legal system by creating favorable conditions such as introducing short digit phone numbers which may help to expose the perpetrators and protect the children. Effective child protection practice demands the capture, preservation, communication and sharing of a range of information across all actors involved. It is imperative to have a standardized system, practice and technology of data operations that fits the given context well and that helps in the future planning of child protection.

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