



The Issues of Child Trafficking in Southeast Asia

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ABSTRACT

Child trafficking is a modern-day slavery, which involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain a certain type of labor or act of commercial. The trafficking of humans a serious crime that gravely violates the fundamental human rights. Almost every country in the world is involved in trafficking of children. Every year, millions of children are trafficked, and the estimation shows that child trafficking generates billions of dollars of profit per year. Nevertheless, many cases of human trafficking involve forced labor, there are larger socio-economical reasons behind the dreadful cycle. Many of the southeastern countries are still developing, with number of population under the poverty line. As a result, some families are forced to sell their own children into the slavery, leaving no other means of survival left besides. With such reasons, it is critical for the countries to develop with the people by the side, leaving no one behind, with a long-term goal to create a more stable social environment, by creating more jobs, for instance.

KEYWORDS: Child Trafficking, Children, NGOs, Government, Southeastern Countries.

I. INTRODUCTION

Child trafficking has an impact on communities, by corrupting a community with so many children working outside of socially acceptable boundaries, resulting in communities with devastated children or mortified adults. Moreover, some victims of child trafficking come from families with difficult economic situations, with little to no opportunity for proper education. Before leaving their home community, migrant children usually only have a background of primary education or less, where many have never been to school at all. Girls who are trafficked into prostitution are not provided with enough time or an encouraging atmosphere for schooling, studying, or developing other skills necessary for a change of career. Thus, the children develop a low self-esteem and low self-image, turning them into someone who is aggressive or too fragile, where many get addicted to drugs and gambling. These children, accordingly, develop a deep distrust in people, especially in men. This report shall briefly discuss about the effort being made to stop child trafficking in Southeast Asia (SEA) by looking into governmental and non-governmental activities, in which the difference of efficiency made by each side is too apparent. Then, finally, we shall explain why it is such a dilemma for states to put an end to child trafficking.

II. CHILD TRAFFICKING

Child trafficking is also known as a hidden crime, as victims rarely come forward to seek help due to language barriers, fear of the traffickers and the fear of poor law enforcement. Targets are usually children because they are susceptible psychologically, emotionally vulnerable, or lacking of a social safety net. Often, the use of force or fraud lure the victims and force them into labour or commercial sexual exploitation. For example, Thailand is a transit country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking (US. Department of State, 2016). In 2013, Thailand spent \$6.1 million on anti-trafficking activities, yet only \$143,000, just over two percent, was allocated to victims. Consequently, the experience may greatly traumatize the victims that many cannot identify themselves as victims and end up not seeking for help. Besides, migrant children who come with their families usually travel from one place to another in search of work alongside their parents, where they wind up lacking in education and vocational training. Because these children do not have access to decent health care or skilled job, many become victims to trafficking.

In addition, children who are in the sex industry deal with an average of 3 to 7 customers per day, where girls who are in high demand have more than 10 customers per day. These sexual practices are likely to be unprotected sex, so the

higher the number of unprotected sexual intercourse acts bring the higher the risk is of HIV infection, along with other sexually transmitted infections, and reproductive health morbidity. Likewise, the trafficked victims are no exception. As a result, some girls desire to get married or to stop assuming the responsibility to generate income for their families in order to escape the cycle. However, after the marriage, these young women face social problems or disturbance from questions regarding to their past sexual intercourse with former customers, ending the marriages in a short time. Even more, children are emotionally and mentally scarred, especially when they realize how unprotected and helpless they are in the societies, where they are met with judgment and apathy.

III. THE PROBLEM OF CHILD TRAFFICKING

Human trafficking, as aforementioned, is a complicated issue to tackle, with numerous actors involved, varying from ages to nations and from socio-economical reasons to reasons simply occurring from pure lack of data. Even in the modern society, human trafficking remains as one of the most complex and arduous problems to solve as apparent. To begin with, there has been undoubted efforts made by the NGOs and the governments; however, the scopes of the problem and the areas the problems occur in have made the data collection of this to be obscure. For instance, many people confuse human trafficking with human smuggling or illegal immigrant workers, (What's the issue | Human Trafficking Foundation", 2017) While human smuggling is an act of transporting people into a country with an deliberate evasion of immigration laws, and, on the other hand, human trafficking centers on exploitation of labor or sex induced by force, fraud and coercion. Consequently, educating and informing the public in order to clarify the crucial differences between different terminologies calls for an immediate attention.

Lastly, many NGOs have been helping to break the chain of the human trafficking; however, the report shows that the victims feared to acknowledge their cases because they have been threatened upon to harm the families. In some other cases, many victims were not informed of receiving help due to their lack of understanding English and fear of not getting the exact help they needed. Until the recent day, Indonesia's poverty rate has been cut down to 10.9%, but approximately 40% of the entire population is on the verge of falling into poverty, as their income is marginally above the national poverty line (World Bank Report 2017). Many families cannot afford to raise children, therefore, think of other options, such as selling their children, handing them to 'job dealer', or refuse to give them education or even birth certificates as the fee is too expensive (J. Davis, 2002).

IV. ROLE OF GOVERNMENT AND NGOS

In the tragedy of child trafficking, NGOs play a very important raising awareness of the issue and rehabilitation

of the survivors. The organization advocates for stronger federal and state laws, operates the National Human Trafficking Resource Center hotline, provides services and support for trafficked victims, and works with survivors to develop long-term strategies to ending human trafficking. Likewise, there are many NGOs trying to combat child trafficking in Asia. For instance, there is Prajwala in India and COSA in Thailand work in Asia to help survivors of child trafficking. Standing up against human trafficking takes courage, but anyone can get help by working for an anti-trafficking group or taking a stand on an individual level. Stay tuned for our next installment to learn how you can get involved in the fight to end modern-day slavery. Since child trafficking involves a giant network of smuggling within countries, it is important that there is unanimity between those to stop the issue. Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) tried to step forward by releasing the “Declaration Against Human Trafficking, Especially in Women and Children” in 2004.

V. CONCLUSION

In many cases, the only skill they learn is to survive, since that is the only thing they learn growing up. Its often to feed to the booming sex- tourism industry. Girls end up in the sex industry, and boys often end up working as virtual slaves on farms and in the fish markets. (VOA News, 2009) They do not have decent health care or skilled jobs, and finally become victims to trafficking. To solve these issues, there is a citizen-based association called Non-Government Organization (NGOs), that plays a very important role, usually help the rehabilitation of the survivors. In brief, the lack of childcare and education within a society eternalize child trafficking crimes. Many experts say that the extreme poverty in Southeast Asia combined with poor law enforcement and corruption means that traffickers will continue to prey on the region's children (VOA News, 2009). Children Trafficking can lead to developing a low self-esteem, resulting in aggressive behavior or fragile mentality, especially when the children comes to realize how they are viewed by society. Many victims of child trafficking end up losing their trust in people, especially in adult men, but, still, many NGOs try to combat and raise awareness of the issue to break the chain of slavery and give hopes to those who thought themselves to be hopeless.

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