



SACHA JOURNAL OF POLICY AND STRATEGIC STUDIES

Volume 5 Number 1 (2015) 13 - 28

ISSN 2045-8495 (Print) ISSN 2045-8509 (Online)

Publishers: Sacha & Diamond, England, United Kingdom

www.sachajournals.com

Cumulative Impact Factor: 5.99



SOCIO-CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF TRAFFICKING AMONG WOMEN IN  
ETHIOPIA: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

PATI, R. N., PhD<sup>1</sup> and SHAIK Yousuf. B., PhD<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology  
Institute of Paleoenvironment and Heritage Conservation,  
Mekelle University, Mekelle, Ethiopia.

ABSTRACT

Trafficking of women from Ethiopia is a serious global issue since last couple of decades. The growing episodes of trafficking of women in Ethiopia are closely interlinked with patriarchal social system and numerous socio-cultural determinants stimulating gender violence in rural regions of the country. This piece of research is based on content analysis and review of 27 research articles published in different journals on this thematic area. Greater priority is given on critical analysis of contents and inputs of these studies in responding to research questions and validating the key research hypothesis adopted for the study. Patriarchal social setup coupled with limited economic opportunity and social deprivations among rural women of Ethiopia tend to promote socio-cultural milieu for being trafficked. The feminization of poverty is key contributing factor for trafficking in women and increasing gender violence in rural Ethiopia. The diminishing access to education, employment opportunities, empowerment are positively correlated with enhanced out flow of women being trafficked to middle east countries annually for last couple of decades. The socio-cultural determinants may be categorized as stimulants and barriers in context of trafficking of women. Poverty, gender violence, patriarchal social norms, absence of policy enforcement, practice of child marriage, ethnic diversity, inimical cultural practices, ignorance about trafficking are key stimulating socio-cultural determinants of trafficking. Education of women, opening of employment opportunities, higher ethnic status and birth order of girl are mitigating or protective socio-cultural determinants curbing and flow of women being trafficked. The conclusions cover wide range of recommendations to address policy gap and promote empowerment of women as a viable alternative for mitigating trafficking. Expansion of job opportunities coupled with enforcement of migration and criminal laws and involvement of private organizations would go a long way in combating trafficking from the land of Ethiopia.

*Keywords:* Feminization of poverty, Trafficking, Socio-cultural milieu, Gender violence, Patriarchal.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ethiopia takes an alarmingly significant land mark in international map of trafficking of children and women who are vulnerable and exposed to exploitation of forced labour and commercial sexual exploitation. The headlines of newspapers and electronic media cover news on trafficking. The children and women from rural areas of Ethiopia are trafficked to countries like Saudi Arabia, U.A.E, Bahrain, Sudan, Djibouti, Syria, Yemen, Egypt and Lebanon for working as domestic aides and forced labour in traditional weaving, agriculture, and gold mines. The situation of the women victims are worst who have been pushed into sex trade mostly in Saudi Arabia and Gulf states. Ethiopia, most peace loving country in Africa upholds unique multi-ethnic cultural tradition and rich hub of historical, paleo-ecological and religious heritage dated back to time immemorial. All international agencies, anthropologists, ethnographers draw new insights and develop new theories and models from empirical investigation and research across different regions of the country. The scientists and academicians from Europe, U.S.A, Canada and Australia rush to Ethiopia for conducting their field work and research projects. Ethiopia is one of the countries in Africa with alarmingly high chunk of poverty stricken people constituting not less than 38 per cent of the total population of the country. Not less than 12 million people are exposed to chronic food insecurity.

Poverty and unemployment are major push factors for growing episodes of trafficking of women from rural regions of Ethiopia. Women exploited for sex trafficking contribute towards the fastest growing criminal enterprise in the world. Women and girls constitute 98 per cent of victims exposed to sexual exploitation. The growing incidence of trafficking in women from African countries has shocked the entire world. UN agencies and world leaders have enacted number of preventive and rehabilitative agenda in international enactments and drawn attention of national government of developed countries to articulate these enactments. The benefits have not been percolated to grassroots. The episodes of the trafficking in women is multidimensional and complex. The trafficking involves use of force, deception, coercion to recruit and transport victim individuals from country of origin to country of destination. These victims are exposed to threats and exploitation of forced marriage, forced labour, sexual slavery and forced prostitution which undermine their quality of life and alienate them from social cultural milieu.

This problem has become a global threat challenging protection of human rights and safeguarding of gender rights. The prevalence of trafficking in Ethiopia is greatly influenced by cultural, social and economic factors. The growing of unemployment coupled with abject poverty and social insecurity have forced millions of people from rural Ethiopia to out migrate for search of employment and better standard of living in foreign land (Gebreegziabher, 2013). The women from all rural regions of African countries are more or less affected by such corrupt mode of out migration for trafficking. The trafficking of women from Ethiopia can be categorized as internal trafficking involving out migration of young women from rural to urban area for domestic work and prostitution, whereas, international trafficking involves out migration of women to neighbouring countries for domestic labour (Endeshaw and Reta, 2010).

Gender equality, protection of gender right, rights of women through empowerment constitute vital strategy for eliminating global poverty. Barrack Obama, President of United States, in his presidential address of January, 2013 strongly advocated for eradication of extreme poverty by connecting more people to global economy and empowering women. Gender equality and removal of various constraints affecting women's equitable participation in education, nutrition and health are key to minimize the feminization poverty and expanding opportunity to women. UN Millennium Development Goals, 2010 has initiated efforts for gender equality and elimination of poverty. The poverty rate has been declining in many developing countries. But the benefit of these programmes failed to reach the poor persons

who constitute 1% of global poor. The women constitute a significant chunk of global poor and two third of global illiterate persons. The UN Development agenda beyond 2015 focuses on gender and equality and women empowerment. Millennium Development Goal has prioritized on addressing poverty among women in countries of Africa and ensuring gender equality and empowerment of poor. Beijing Declaration 1995 in Fourth World conference on Women recognized key contribution of women in sustainable development. Gender discrimination multiplies the prevalence of global poverty which needs to be addressed through Millennium Development Goals agenda. Gender inequality and discrimination exist in every nation. Promotion of women economic security and empowerment will not only eliminate gender poverty but also gender inequality. UNDP Human Development report reveals that women in African countries constitute 52% of total population but they contribute 75% of agricultural work and produce 80% food in African continent. They earn only 10% of African income and own 1% of property of the continent. This indicates wide scale gender gap prevalent in countries of Africa which is closely interlinked with gender violence and episodes of trafficking among women in African countries.

The government of United States of America (USA) has prepared a report on growing incidence of trafficking across seventeen countries of the world including Ethiopia and formulated rehabilitation agenda for combating incidence of the trafficking. Hillary Clinton, Secretary of States, United States of America raised serious concern about growing incidence of trafficking in Ethiopia and forced migration of women to transiting neighbouring countries (Gollust, David. 2009). Different studies on issues of trafficking in women across rural regions of Ethiopia have indicated that the genesis and origin of trafficking is traced back to psychological and social legacy of slave trade widely prevalent in the country till 1930. This evil cultural practices have been reflected not only in historical perspectives but also in socio-cultural milieu of Ethiopian society which shape psychosocial environment and value of tolerance igniting growing episodes of trafficking on this soil (Endeshaw and Reta, 2010).

The dynamics of push and pull factor significantly influence of women victims trapped in vicious circle of trafficking. The discriminatory gender structure coupled with inaccessibility of women to education, employment, social security and growing poverty operate as prominent push factors promoting women trafficking in Ethiopia. Ethiopia upholds huge labour force potential along with unique natural resources which attract different stakeholders from foreign land. The availability of cheap labour force coupled with growing demand for domestic workers, uncontrolled sex trades act as potential pull factors promoting trafficking of women and girls from Ethiopia. The breakdown of social security net and episodes of structural violence in terms of divorce, separation, multiplication of women headed households, absence of appropriate social security for women and girls promote internal trafficking (Gebreegziabher, 2013).

The studies have indicated that neighbours, friends, relatives are involved in promoting trafficking of young girls from rural areas along with agents employed by traffickers, bar and restaurants as well as brothel owners operating trafficking network across the country. The internal trafficking of women have far reaching socio-psychological impact which are manifested in the trauma and psychological disorder among trafficked victims. The abuse and discriminating are multifaceted and complex. They are exposed to labour exploitation, sexual abuse, physical and emotional torture which undermine their self-esteem as well as quality of life. They are stigmatized and ostracized from the community and very often lead an isolated life characterized with deprivation, social exclusion, marginalization and vulnerability. On the other hand, the dynamics of external trafficking are multifaceted and linked without migration of young women from rural areas to Middle East countries for working as house maids. Break down of safety nets at family and community level coupled with growing family disorganization, separation, divorce, unemployment abject poverty, gender vulnerability operate as prominent push factor for external trafficking. The high school drop-out girls' aspirant for better urban life and young women below 24 years are more

vulnerable for external trafficking. The local brokers with false promise of arranging lucrative jobs and better life opportunities in Middle East Countries are reported transporting hundreds and hundreds of women and girls in Ethiopia. The individuals and institutions stimulating trafficking are travel agents, owner of import and export business, close relatives, neighbours, friends and known persons. They play a very vital role to sustain trafficking network and transport victims from place of origin to place of destination (Temesgen, 2014).

A good number of International Conferences have been organized and series of International enactments have been made to curb down the growing episodes of the trafficking in African countries, Europe and South-East Asia. Unfortunately the agenda of these International enactments have not been appropriately trickled down and articulated at grass root levels. The gap between macro level policy enactment and micro level execution of action plan is yet to be minimized through capacity building intervention in local governance, coupled with reformation of policy deficiency and sensitization of bureaucracy with institutional reforms. Amnesty International in a report of 2004 estimated that annually seven million people are exposed to trafficking for sexual exploitation, whereas, two millions girls below fifteen years are forced to enter in commercial sex market. The report also indicates that during 2001 to 2002, as many as 50,000 women and children were exposed to trafficking annually from Africa. Trafficking has been recognized as second largest organized crime generating not less than 32 billion USD profit annually. The women from Ethiopia and Eriteria rank first among all trafficked victims to Middle East countries. The women from other African countries are brutally exploited to sustain this unregulated sex trade. The organ piracy is also very closely associated with the network of the trafficking. The government of Ethiopia has enforced stringent laws and administrative measures to control trafficking and out migration of women from the country. The Nation Council Against Human Trafficking of the country is critically examining different dimensions of trafficking and action plan for combating these growing crime.

Trafficking of women from Ethiopia is deep rooted in patriarchal social set up and structure and substructure of the society. There is an urgent need to unfold socio-cultural determinants stimulating trafficking in women from soil of Ethiopia. This paper is an attempt to critically examine different socio-cultural dimensions associated with trafficking of women from Ethiopia since last couple of decades and assess viable alternatives for socio-economic rehabilitation based on success stories and case studies of different interventions conducted across the country. This paper critically examines how socio-cultural determinants facilitate or mitigate trafficking of women in Ethiopia and what type of viable alternatives do the past research provide for curbing trafficking in women. Socio-cultural determinants are prominent factors shaping the process that mitigate and stimulate trafficking in women from Ethiopia and their sexual exploitation in country of destination. The research studies have validated that women empowerment coupled with literacy, creation of job opportunities and enforcement of gender friendly policies would go a long way to minimize the vulnerability of women exploited through vicious circle of trafficking net.

The genesis of violence against women is deep rooted in structural influence of violence in Ethiopian society. The powerlessness of women without property rights leads to subjugation and violence. The emerging forces of globalization and economic liberalization stimulate the occurrence of gender violence and trafficking among women in Ethiopia. Women have become commodified. The traditional means of production, profession and mechanism have been replaced by globalized economic order. The agricultural sector has been revolutionized. The prevalence of trafficking of women and gender violence is manifestation of male dominance and patriarchy value in controlling and exploiting women's body and labour when women resist fulfilling wishes of perpetrator and underestimate masculinity (Mrsevie and Hughes, 1997). The prevalence of trafficking among women in Ethiopia is closely interlinked with manifestation of unequal power relation between men and women and traditional mechanism of perpetuating gender inequality.

The social factors make women difficult to face the challenges and leave the battering relationship in disorganized families. Divorcee or separated Ethiopian women have fewer options to search for marital partners with lower income and social status. They are reluctant to take help of police to initiate action against perpetrator. In absence of community support system such as shelter homes, rehabilitation programme, the rescued victims are often pushed into trap of re-trafficking. Because, these rescued victims often suffer deadly violence from family, members and community in form of stigmatization and ostracisation (Pearson, 2003).

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Pearson (2003) has conducted a situational analysis on different interventions of NGOs and Government directed towards addressing trafficking issues among women in Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Nigeria. The study unfolds that longstanding African tradition among parents of poor homes encouraging their children to live and work with rich families and normalization of cultural tradition of engaging children in domestic work serve as robust cultural determinants for growing incidence of trafficking in women across East African countries since decades. The parental value of children associated with girl child in patriarchal set up contributes significantly towards growing episodes of trafficking. Limited opportunities provided by parents and community lead to a greater likelihood of girls and women being trafficked. Larger patriarchal structure expands gender equality in all aspects of women life. The risk of women for being trafficked expands when job opportunity for them have restricted.

Teweldebirhan (2012) reveals that Ethiopian women trafficked to Middle East countries are exposed to sexual exploitation and serious human right violations. There is strong co-relation between legal recognized labour migration and trafficking in women which needs to be further empirically investigated. The trafficked victims are forced to work as domestic slaves in rich houses of Middle East. The Middle East countries like Bahrain, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates pull young women from rural area of Ethiopia to work as domestic labour through legal and illegal employment agencies. In a majority of cases, these victims are forced to prostitution and work eighteen hours a day which undermine their quality of life and human rights. The author has noted that the failure of social, economic and political structures ensuring equal opportunity for women to work and protect dignity have multiplied the episodes of feminization of poverty and feminization of migration. Poor economic conditions and related factors significantly contribute to greater likelihood of women being trafficked for commercial sex. Employment of women in low paying jobs rendered them more susceptible to being trafficked.

Gebreegziabher (2013) in his study entitled "The Situations of trafficking women from Ethiopia to Sudan" unfolds trafficking routes, network of traffickers, handling the victims throughout the trafficking process and form of exploitation exposed to victims. The findings of this study corroborates inter-linkage of socio-economic structure with push and pull factors of trafficking. Trafficking of women in Ethiopia is very complex and influenced by economic, social and cultural factors. These factors are culture specific and specific to individual victims in which they occurred. Other factors are common to trafficking across all other regions. Poverty coupled with lack of women rights, absence of social inequality are found as common factors to local conditions which force the victims to out migrate in search of better life. The displacement, destabilization and structural violence are positively co-related with vulnerability of women to sexual abuse and exploitation through trafficking and forced labour. The enhancement of women participation in non-agricultural sector is positively correlated with decrease in incidence of trafficking of women. The participation of women in non-agricultural employment acts as a proxy for societal and patriarchal. The expansion of non-agricultural employment sector for women would facilitate absorption of women in skill sector for better wage and eliminate negatively patriarchal influence on women.

Gollust (2009) airs global concern about growing episodes of trafficking in Ethiopia involving children and women who are exposed to forced labour and commercial sexual exploitation. The empirical investigation strongly recommends promotion of police action and judicial understanding of trafficking towards mainstreaming prosecution of growing number of trafficking offenders. The vibrant role of NGO in rescue and socio-psychological rehabilitation of victims have been highly recognized and appreciated.

Temesgen (2014) highlights socio-cultural, economic, legal and political factors promoting trafficking among women in Ethiopia. The oppression of women within patriarchal family and social structure push them to out migrate and get trapped by traffickers with attraction of better job opportunities and livelihood in countries of destination. The poor execution of legal provisions meant for safeguarding honour and preventing gender violence coupled with inappropriate functioning of administrative and judiciary mechanism not only stimulate episodes of trafficking but also encourage traffickers to capitalize on administrative and legal flaws.

### 3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper is an outcome of desk top research and qualitative content analysis of 27 research studies conducted across different regions of Ethiopia. The study critically examines different socio-cultural dimensions associated with trafficking among women in Ethiopia and other parts of the globe. Greater efforts have been taken to correlate key hypothesis validated through research findings of these studies and unfold gaps in rehabilitation action plans. The content analysis of different research reports, newspapers clips and research articles published in different journals provide a clue for interdisciplinary study of gender violence and sexuality, responding to key research questions adopted for this paper. The authors have critically reviewed the research articles and reports for detailing socio-cultural determinants of trafficking across rural and urban area of Ethiopia. Critical peer review of research articles and interventions were made for developing key hypothesis of this piece of research. The content analysis was adopted to formulate research questions, validate key hypothesis, selection of analytical strategies and writing of results.

The scientific underpinning of qualitative content analysis method have been explored to draw insights from past research on trafficking definition of trafficking objectivity and intersubjectivity, validity, generalizability, reliability and replicability. The researchers adopted pre-analysis exercise and follow a theoretical framework prior to adopting analytical strategy. Utmost care was taken by the researchers to use analytical strategy for unfolding rationale for study message. The theory and past research message effects were utilized for logical basis for content analysis. Greater priority was given on examination of relationship among key variables and review of past research and development of key research questions while addressing research questions of what social-cultural factors influence the occurrence of trafficking among women. The authors have explored a wide range of explanations. This paper further critically examines into socio-cultural determinants that lead to trafficking and also access the social and economical structure that enhances vulnerability of woman to exploitation and sexual abuse through trafficking net. There is a positive correlational between trafficking women and women's rights which has been strongly advocated by the researchers in different studies (Lim. 1998 and Raymond et.al. 2002). The paper further validates how gender inequality, patriarchal values and norms have rendered women as sex objects rather than individuals. The unequal power relation between men and women is often reflected in gender violence and trafficking. This piece of research aims at identifying the magnitude and particulars of trafficking in women so as to envisage viable prevention and rehabilitation action plan.

#### 4. RESULTS

The prevalence of social marginalization, social exclusion, discrimination and deprivation associated with trafficking women from rural regions of Ethiopia have brutally violated their quality of life and undermined their human rights. In rural areas, the women occupy traditionally subordinate roles and are forced to undertake hard labour for subsistence under patriarchal norms and authority. The socio-economic structure do not provide adequate space for accommodating constitutional provisions for better quality of life and enjoying equitable social status with men. The employment opportunities are restricted to women who fail to avail equal access to work. The women in urban area take lead role in informal trading sector but often exposed to discrimination in terms of employment, credit, managing business and equal remuneration. The trafficking of women is outcome of many inimical cultural practices traditionally prevalent in some ethnic groups of Ethiopia. The extended family or community promote trafficking of girls and women significantly at higher frequency than nuclear families. Among some ethnic communities, the customary practices of discriminating women and girls enforced through customary laws create negative social sanctions for trafficking. In rural regions of Ethiopia, the cultural practices of polygamy, levirate marriages, isolation of women's inheritance rights and child marriage rendered women vulnerable socially excluded and marginalized. Among a good number of ethnic groups in rural regions of Ethiopia, early marriages and forced marriages of young girls are prevalent since generations.

The young girls are exposed to levirate marriage and social discrimination and exclusion. They are exposed to deprivation of opportunities health care and better quality of life by enforcement of inimical customary rules and patriarchal values. The cultural factors promoting social exclusion and deprivation among young girls in rural regions of Ethiopia are numerous and complex. These factors create social milieu for multiplication of gender violence and trafficking in women (Temesgen, 2014). Family disorganization is a stimulating factor for pushing women out of home and felling in the trap of traffickers in rural conservative society. The growing family disorganization has led to multiplication of women headed household in both rural and urban areas of Ethiopia. These families are adversely affected by feminization of poverty, deprivation of women rights and control over agricultural land resources. Virginity before marriage and fidelity are treated serious issues for up keeping family honour. The women violating such honour and ethics are divorced or separated. Most of the young married women in rural areas are compelled to get separation from their spouse due to conjugal violence and spousal rape. These women are most vulnerable for trafficking with attraction of alternative life support system abroad. These cultural factors strongly stimulate episodes of women trafficking in absence of appropriate social security measures at family and community level. The studies have validated that gender discrimination continues to affect interventions for women education, their equality with men and prevent sexual abuse and trafficking. The other cultural determinants for growing episodes of trafficking in women of Ethiopia are erosion of traditional cultural values and norms supporting gender equity, inappropriate management of social change associated with urbanization and globalization, inability of victims and perpetrators to meet social expectations and erosion of customary rules within society.

The patriarchal culture multiplies the inequality of sexes and fuels inimical cultural practices. These practices forced women to opt for independent life in foreign land through economic and social independence (Hughes, 2000). The cultural practices stimulating out migration of women from homes are prevalent taboo and prohibition of food, custom of levirate, wrongful widowhood rites. In addition to these, the existence of legal pluralism very often deprives women of their legal rights of inheritance and conjugal role and responsibilities. Their silent protest against polygamy is overlooked. They are exposed to deprivation and social exclusion from cradle to death. All activities of gender violence are carried out under

the seal of silence and treated as normal. Under above compulsions, the helpless women have no alternative in absence of social security measures than to opt help of traffickers for better employment avenues in country of destination (Orphant, 2001).

Ethnic diversity and cultural passive role leads to poor empowerment of women along with their social exclusion, isolation and deprivation in large chunk of ethnic groups of rural Ethiopia. Culture remains silent with respect to role of women in inheritance of property, decision making and participation in employment opportunities. Customary rules very often compel young girls to go for early marriage at the cost of educational deprivation. A very little social security and protection is provided to women and girls against gender violence in home, school and work place. Their quality of life and human rights are undermined by physical violence, deprivation of food, verbal abuse, sexual exploitation, forced marriage. These women are restricted by cultural factors to air their protest against gender violence and sexual abuse demanding their human rights. Inappropriate action for honouring court decision and inadequate resources to initiate rehabilitation actions for women victims in rural areas often forced rescued victims to be trapped in re-trafficking. These social cultural aspects are numerous and complex which undermine the process of women empowerment and quality of life of women across rural and urban area of Ethiopia (Endeshaw, et al. 2010).

The socio-cultural determinants of trafficking may be categorized into two i.e; protective and stimulating determinants. Greater focused needs to be given on incorporation of stimulating determinants in rehabilitation policy and strategy. The facilitating socio-cultural factors are generally associated with marginalization and vulnerability exposed to women (McGregor; Kelsey and McEwing, 2013). The protective socio-cultural factors cover status of the women in social hierarchy, citizenship, maternal education and socio-economic empowerment. Women with social status in ethnic hierarchy are reported exposed to sexual exploitation and gender violence comparatively at higher rate than women with lower status. The women with no citizenship status in country of destination are deprived of rights and access to services of social security, employment, health and education. Such women are highly vulnerable to trafficking. The education of mother is highly associated with diminishing vulnerability to trafficking. The educated mothers air their concern for their rights, gender violence and strict enforcement of legal provisions for prevention of trafficking. These socio-cultural protective determinants have strong bearing on prevention, protection and rehabilitation of trafficked victims. The studies have shown that the birth order of girl child in family is strongly associated with protective cultural determinants related to trafficking in Ethiopia. The eldest daughter in the family holds a very prominent protective position to protest against trafficking in terms of the role and responsibilities assigned to her in the family. Involvement of eldest daughter in advocacy and community sensitization programme against trafficking will go a long way to curb the growing episodes of trafficking in women from the soil of Ethiopia.

On the other hand, stimulating socio-cultural determinants cover components such as trafficking ignorance by victims, migration, conflict and displacement, cultural discrimination, demand for cheap labour, ethnic diversity, family disorganization, globalization, domestic violence, issue of virginity and so on. These stimulating factors play a very significant role in creating pro-trafficking environment in the community breaking down the social security net meant for vulnerable women. The illiterate women without proper understanding of trafficking network and risk of out migration to foreign lands and jobs are reported increasingly trapped and exploited by traffickers from different rural areas of Ethiopia (Teweldebirham, 2012). Out migration of women either for job or for working with known relatives in foreign countries is a threat to women which facilitates expanding vicious network of trafficking and exploitation trap for them. The studies conducted on women trafficking in Ethiopia have indicated that the negative cultural factors undermine the position of women in family, community and society and induce biases for their greater vulnerability. The conflict and displacement very often creates greater vulnerability for women and multiply their poverty



pushing them to out migrate for employment in foreign lands (Pearson, 2003). Growing demand for cheap and free labour of Ethiopian women to work as domestic help in Middle East countries in absence of stringent policy regulation acts as vibrant pull factor facilitating large chunk of women migrants from Ethiopia every year.

The women living in villages located in close proximity to border of Eriteria are more vulnerable to trafficking than the women living in villages away from borders. The studies have indicated that enforcement of immigration rules across borders, open borders, lack of enforcement of procedural formalities for crossing borders coupled with oversight by border patrolling force encourage traffickers to multiply trafficking of women across border. The growing demand for sex service by soldiers coupled with feminization of poverty and illegal employment opportunity available in Middle East Countries forced young girls from border areas to be trafficked. Gender commodification in globalization era promotes trafficking in Ethiopia. The globalization has far reaching impact on aggravating trafficking episodes across border area. The enforcement of free trade and liberation of market forces have encouraged relaxed border on unregulated labour out migration and import and export of commodities to address supply demand dynamics of trafficking. The women have been commodified in globalized world. Women are sold and handled as sex objects or sex commodities. The rural areas have been disrupted and facilitated displacement of communities and women from safety nets. The rural markets have been converted into hubs for collection and supply network of all commodities including women. The network of international market agents as well as traffickers have been strengthened in rural areas of Ethiopia facilitating export of cheap labour to multinational business houses of Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Yemen, Djibouti, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Sudan.

Marital status of women is an important socio-cultural determinant stimulating vulnerability and gender violence. This dynamics has not been properly understood in analyzing dynamics of trafficking. The studies have indicated that marriage is considered as a powerful recruitment tool by traffickers to trap unmarried, single, widow, divorced and abandoned women from rural and urban areas of Ethiopia (Teweldebirhan, 2012 and Temesgen, 2014). The unmarried girls from poor homes are lured for marriage with rich grooms of United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia and trapped in trafficking nets. The child marriage of girls is a common cultural practice of a last section of ethnic groups in rural areas of Ethiopia. The girls entering into marriage at young age are exposed to physical, psychological and emotional exploitation and marital rape by spouse much higher to their age. The social circumstances are created for preferring elopement with other through premarital and extramarital sexual relationships or getting separated or divorced in the event of bigamy and levirate promoted through cultural practices. A significant section of divorced and widowed women are most vulnerable to trafficking and sexual exploitation in their effort to get self-employment by help of traffickers in foreign lands.

The cultural beliefs and values among large sections of ethnic groups in rural Ethiopia prefer marriage with virgin girls as a preventive measures against HIV/AIDS and sexual transmitted diseases. The demand for virgin girls from Ethiopia is very high in Middle East countries. The traffickers offer lucrative prices to agents and family members of virgin girls for such profitable deal. The virgin girls from poor homes are targeted by traffickers on priority basis which stimulate clandestine export of girls from rural areas of Ethiopia to Middle East Countries (Endeshaw, et al. 2010).

## 5. DISCUSSION

The patriarchal mind-set and social structure contribute to women vulnerability for being trafficked in rural regions of Ethiopia. The patriarchal values and norms place Ethiopian girls and women at lowest ladder of the society providing restricted opportunities for employment, education, agricultural production, decision making as compared to male. The

feminization of poverty is positively correlated with women seeking employment on foreign land and ultimately growing incidence of trafficking. Teweldebirhan (2012) makes similar discovery that poverty is major contributing factor that drives women and girls to become victims of sex trafficking. Global poverty project (2013), reveals that women constitute 70% of world's poor population and are disproportionately poorer than male. The patriarchal societies in rural Ethiopian communities restrict equal rights and opportunities for girls like education and decrease their options to ensure their survival and livelihood. The restricted opportunities provided to the girls lead to enhanced likelihood of women and girls being trafficked. Different studies conducted across various regions of Ethiopia reveal that less educated females are exposed to high risk of trafficking than educated girls and women. The diminishing access to education very often promotes vulnerability among girls and women being trafficked (AbdulKadir, 2010, Endeshaw, et.al. 2010, Teweldebirhan, 2012, Temesgen, 2014). However, the majority of research studies indicate the lower education of women and girls is a contributing factor to higher out flow of women as sex commodities and growing incidence of trafficking in women from Ethiopia.

Women in rural areas of Ethiopia play a vital role not only in household food sector but in agricultural production. Women contribute towards food production, food access and food utilization. At household level women play a major role for providing food and nutritional inputs to aged and children. They collect fuel required for food and make food accessible to all family. Unfortunately, the significant role played by women in household food security has been ignored by policy makers. The women headed households in rural Ethiopia are responsible for food production in small crop fields. They lack access to high yielding seeds, organic fertilizers, tillage service, water management and credit information. They are isolated from equal opportunity in crop production activities as compared to male farmers. The female headed families in rural Ethiopia are poorest of the poor. They are pushed deeper into the poverty trap. The gender dimensions of food insecurity has not been well addressed in comprehensive intervention packages by NGOs and other agencies appropriately for empowering rural women in Ethiopia.

Women trapped in vicious circle of trafficking fail to safeguard their own dignity, quality of life and human rights. The studies have indicated that the traffickers trapped potential women with lure for job and hiked inflated price at the time of recruitment towards their travel, lodging and boarding, documentation and transportation to destination countries. After arrival in destination countries, these victims are roped in debt bondage and forced to repay the debt by working as sex workers. They are denied their independence and locked in brothel, apartment by agents of the traffickers. Denial and resistance to accept prostitution cause assault, rape, sexual abuse and even withdrawal of food and ultimately murder. The victims are denied their right to personal liberty and autonomy, right to freedom of movement and expression, right to bodily integrity, right to be free from discrimination and right to be free from forced labour and slavery. The socio-cultural and economic rights of women covering health facilities, access to information, favourable working conditions, and reasonable working hours are grossly violated. The cumulative effects of socio-cultural and economic deprivations account for gross human right violation of victims. Food deprivation causes indirect form of physical harm leading to malnutrition and starvation. The victims in country of destination are very often exposed to sexual transmitted diseases such as Syphilis, Gonorrhoea, and Urinary Tract Infections etc. They experience multiple reproductive health hazards such as vaginal and anal tearing, pelvic pain, rectal trauma and urinary problems. Living in unsanitary and dangerous housing conditions caused multiple infections such as tuberculosis, malaria, pneumonia and hepatitis. They are denied timely and appropriate treatment by the traffickers and forced to continue sex trade which aggravate their health hazards. The victims experience wide numbers of psychological and emotional problems. They suffer from depression, stress disorder and acute anxiety which create a strong sense of helplessness, shame, humiliation, self-hatred, disbelief, suicidal thoughts and phobias. The

denial, deprivation and marginalization of victims undermine their self-esteem and leads to violation of gender rights and better quality of life.

The globalization has multiplied the vulnerability of women in the migration process. The studies have shown that more than 50% of women migrants alone in search of employment. This process has been induced by globalization and led to wider discrepancy in wealth between countries and higher demand for labour in female designated sector of work in country of destination. The female designated sectors of work have been characterized by lack of protection, healthy working atmosphere and work place safety. These sectors are highly unregulated. The women migrants are pushed into this sector illegally which exposed them to sexual violence, abuse and exploitation. They are socially excluded and deprived of protection against gender violence. In certain cases, the right for protection and assistance are made conditional basing upon their understanding and arrangements with law enforcement bodies. The process of out migration of women to countries of destination shall not be checked unless they are provided equal opportunities in labour market and security against growing threat of violence and discrimination. Without enactment and enforcement of legal policies on migration of women, the migrant women workers should be forced to take risk relating to their safety and illegal entry in the country of destination.

Poor economic opportunities available to women in rural regions of Ethiopia are another stimulating factor for being trafficked. The poor roles of women in exploring economic opportunities coupled with gender inequalities shrink the arena of the employment opportunities. The women and girls are at greater risk of being trafficked when the doors for employment opportunities are closed. The higher rate of female unemployment in rural areas of Ethiopia is closely linked with growing incidence of trafficking of women. The women who are employed in agricultural, livestock and small enterprise sector are less likely to being trafficked. The employment in extremely low paying wage sector is likely to make women more vulnerable to being trafficked. In a rural areas of Ethiopia, the trafficked victims are segregated into labour incentives and low wage work which render them more vulnerable.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The women exposed to trafficking and gender violence are prone to multiple psycho-social and health problems which can be prevented through appropriate remedial measures. There is an urgent need to focus on addressing socio-cultural determinants promoting trafficking in women of Ethiopia. The policy makers and administrators need to keep space in policy framework towards addressing social determinants of trafficking and achieving health equity and social equity among stratified ethnic communities of rural Ethiopia. Greater opportunities need to be provided to all individuals irrespective of socio-economic status to live a life free from slavery and abuse and enjoying human rights such as right to liberty, right to freedom of movement, right to security and right to favourable work conditions, health and education. There is a growing demand for mobilizing political will to eliminate poverty through promotion of education among women and creation of vast employment opportunities. The Federal Government of Ethiopia has initiated a good number of schemes and programme to eliminate gender violence and promote women empowerment. The administrators and government agencies are in the process to implement stringent and effective labour migration policies so that educated and unemployed women and youth from Ethiopia shall be facilitated to migrate legally outside for job assured with effective migration policies. The findings of research studies strongly recommend for promotion of collaboration among international and anti-trafficking organizations to streamline poverty reduction programme and implementing strategy for combating trafficking. World Health Organization (WHO) promoted a global network of policy makers, researchers and civil society organizations popularly known as Commission on Social Determinants of Health (CSDH) to tackle social causes of poor health and inequalities among vulnerable communities. During 2005 – 2008, the Commission

enacted global agenda to be implemented at grass root level in developing countries towards improving daily living conditions and ensuring equitable distribution of power, money and resources. These recommendations of the Commission strongly endorse linkage and balancing of dynamics of stimulating and protective socio-cultural determinants related to trafficking in women of Ethiopia. The Commission on Social Determinants of Health (CSDH) emphasize on complex dynamics between social determinants of health which needs to be addressed simultaneously. In rural society, the social and environmental factors greatly lead to promotion of social stratification, whereas, cultural values, norms, local and global governance support the sustenance of such diversity. There is an urgent need for policy makers and government agencies to enforce existing law for prevention of trafficking and to prosecute the traffickers and hold accountable the concerned government official for their inability to enforce trafficking laws effectively. Greater priority needs to be given on strengthening bilateral agreement relating to prevention of trafficking and risk migration patterns.

The rehabilitation strategies envisaged for rescued victims need to incorporate mechanism for building community management and development mechanism along with reduction of corruption. The women and vulnerable group need to be empowered instead of covering them under welfare programmes. Greater focus needs to be given on mobilization of adequate resources for better enforcement of law and action programme in addition to intensification of awareness and rehabilitation of victims. The capacity building interventions for police, government officers and service providers need to be strengthened and streamlined with better financial and human resource inputs for handling prevention of trafficking mission at national and local level. The corporate sector and civil society organizations are required to be encouraged to join hands with government for creating awareness and execution of projects on community based socio-economic rehabilitation and reintegration of trafficked victims across different rural and urban areas of Ethiopia. The opportunities available for planning and executing need based employment and rehabilitation programme through mobilization of funds from International agencies need to be explored by civil societies organization and government agencies. Greater priority be given on developing migrant and ethnic minority right and migrant work policy. The cumulative affects all above components of interventions shall go a long way in combating trafficking in women from the land of Ethiopia.

There is a pressing need for organizing skill training and expansion of employment opportunities for rescued victims. This will promote reintegration process of trafficked victims who come back to Ethiopia through rescue operations. Such victims are more prone to re-trafficking in absence of appropriate rehabilitation and income generation opportunities. The studies indicate that a section of rescued victims have been re-trafficked 3 to 4 times when they find no alternative arrangements for livelihood in home country and forced to go back to traffickers rejecting the choice of living like slaves or beggars in homelands. Some of them are forced to enter the vicious cycle of re-trafficking owing to non-repayments of loans borrowed by their families from agents (Pandey, et al. 2003, Feeny, et al. 2004 and Blanchet, 2002). The Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) implementing micro-credit and vocational training for women across different region of Ethiopia need to be encouraged for accommodating rescued victims in their schemes.

The empowerment of rescued victims needs to be streamlined through forming their own associations and linking with employment opportunities, vocational training, credit and thrift programme and micro enterprise activities. A sense of ownership and assets management needs to be infused in them through empowerment process. Such women associations shall be interested to guide and monitor new migrants who are aspirant to go foreign countries for jobs and better quality of life. The success stories and best practices of selected national and regional NGOs need to be replicated and incorporated in rehabilitation and reintegration interventions strategy envisaged by Government Agencies. The labour law and criminal laws related to trafficking of government of Ethiopia need to be properly taught

to the members of such organization so that they would be sensitized and educate new migrant who are prone to trafficking.

The civil society organizations and concerned government agencies are required to promote advocacy on UN trafficking protocols which will generate meaningful inputs for revising criminal law on trafficking and migration law of the country favouring effective elimination of gender violence and sexual exploitation of women. The illegal brokers and unregistered placement agencies involved in arranging employment for Ethiopians in Middle East countries and others need to be monitored strictly in terms of legislation and legal provisions of Private Employment Agency Proclamation No. 104/1998, Government of Ethiopia. The strict enforcement of these laws shall protect human rights of Ethiopian workers abroad and prevent trafficking of women. There is an urgent need to encourage government registered private employment agencies to operate recruitment for overseas employment and placement by establishing office in Ethiopia as well as in country of destination. These registered placement agencies are required organize pre-departure training for migrants and submitting annual reports on recruitment and placement to government periodically. The involvement of registered private employment agencies is missing.

Adequate steps need to be taken for involving good number of registered private recruitment and placement agencies for overseas recruitment so that preventive measures against trafficking in women in Ethiopia can be initiated. The women workers recruited through non-registered employment agencies and brokers are deprived of legal and social protection in country of destination. The illegal and unregistered employment agencies organize placement very quickly within 3 to 4 weeks ignoring stipulated educational and eligible criteria for recruitment and related formalities. Most of these unregistered agencies have opened their offices in urban areas of the country and recruit girls and women from urban area at increasing rate for overseas placement.

In recent past, the media and NGOs have created greater awareness about traffickers, trafficking and work of illegal unregistered employment agencies in urban areas for which these agencies have shifted their focus from urban area to rural area. These agencies now have given top priority on recruiting young women and girls from rural area with promise for better life and better jobs in Middle East countries. The studies have shown that ethnic minorities of Southern Ethiopia and Tigrean are mostly victimized by the traffickers. Well over 57% of victims belong to Amhara ethnic groups. Poor economic opportunities available to women in these communities render them vulnerable of being trafficked. Expansion of economic opportunity and job opportunities for these vulnerable women through capacity building and micro enterprise and vocational training would go a long way in curbing the growing episodes of trafficking of women in Ethiopia.

The fallacy and flaws in existing criminal and migration laws need to be identified and out dated laws need to be reviewed. Stringent legal measures and police actions need to be initiated for prosecuting trafficking offenders on exemplary basis. The incidence of re-trafficking of rescued victims occur due to poor legal aid and socio-psychological rehabilitation and reintegration support service available in rural areas. NGOs and private sector organizations need to be encouraged to join hands with the government for opening and expanding counselling and rehabilitation facilities both in rural and urban areas of Ethiopia. The rescued victims need to be facilitated with rehabilitation and reintegration opportunities through projects implemented by NGOs mobilizing funds from national and international donors.

The policy makers working on trafficking face numerous challenges in terms of base lined data available, for monitoring and supervision, and prevention and rehabilitation activities. A data bank needs to be developed on out flow of trafficked person from the country through periodic survey. The base line information would facilitate formulation of comprehensive prevention and rehabilitation action plan as well as mechanism for monitoring

of preventive actions initiated both by government and civil society organizations. There is an urgent need to integrate human right approach with anti-trafficking action plans.

There is pressing demand to create vast employment opportunity for women in labour market and reduce feminization of poverty. The women opting for job outside Ethiopia will prefer to opt for promising employment in their own country which will reduce the incidence of trafficking. The opening of vocational training programmes linked with micro finance shall create platform for successful reintegration and social inclusion of trafficked victims. The promotion of equal opportunity in labour market by incorporating gender equality will open pathways of prevention of trafficking among women. There is an urgent need for mobilization of political will and allocation of funds for successful implementation of gender equality in Government action plan. Specific training programmes required to be organized for judiciary and law enforcement agencies to execute gender sensitive programmes. Besides, sensitization training programmes on human rights and trafficking need to be organized for women, educating them about their rights, criminal law related to gender violence and discrimination and punishment for trafficking. The law enforcement agencies need to examine and legalize the migration channels and opportunities for registration of female migrant workers employed in female designated sectors in country of destination. Such legalization will ensure rights and entitlement to women migrants and minimize the risk of sex violence and trafficking.

Steps need to be taken for organizing mass public awareness campaign regarding safe migration for potential migrants and registering details of migrating individuals, working conditions with employment sector in country of destination. Such campaign will ensure promotion of awareness as well as sense of human rights among potential migrants. The government law enforcement agencies need to take appropriate steps for integrating the standard agenda, ethics of international human rights system into their policies, programmes and legislation. The strict enforcement of such legislation shall be achieved by support of increased political will backed up by allocation of adequate financial resources.

## REFERENCES

- Abdul Kadir, M.S. (2010). "Economic Crises, Poverty, Unemployment, Slave and Human Trafficking in Nigeria". (Paper presented at the International Colloquium on Slavery, Slave Trade and their Consequences), August, 23 – 26.
- Asian Development Bank (ADB),(2003). *Combating trafficking of women and children in South Asia: Guide for integrating trafficking concerns into ADB operations* (ADB, 2003)
- Belser, P (2005). *Forced labour and human trafficking: Estimating the profits* (Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2005). Available at <http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1016&context=forcedlabor>.
- Commission on the Social Determinants of Health (CSDH) (2008), *Closing the gap in a generation: Health equity through action on the social determinants of health, final report of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health* (Geneva, Switzerland: WHO, 2008), p. 43. Available at [http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2008/9789241563703\\_eng.pdf](http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2008/9789241563703_eng.pdf).
- Cwikel, J. and E. Hoban. (2005). "Contentious issues in research on trafficked women working in the sex industry," *Journal of Sex Research* 42 (2005), pp. 306–316.
- Endeshaw, Y, Gebeyehu, M and Reta, B. (2010). Assessment of trafficking in women and children in and from Ethiopia. IOM, International Organization for Migration, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- Feeny, N; E. Foa, K. Treadwell, et al. (2004). "Posttraumatic stress disorder in youth: A critical review of the cognitive and behavioural treatment outcome literature," *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* 35/5 (2004), pp. 466–476.

- Gebreegiabher, Shewit. (2013). The situations of trafficking women from Ethiopia to Sudan, Munich, GRIN publishing GmbH, <http://www.grin.com/en/e-book/229561>.
- Getu, M.( 2003). “Christian Microenterprise Development and HIV/AIDS” Transformation, 20, 1, January.
- Gollust, David. (2009). Trafficking in Persons Report. US department of state, Washington DC, 16 June, 2009.
- Hausner, S. (2005). *The movement of women: Migration, trafficking, and prostitution in the context of Nepal’s armed conflict* (Kathmandu: Save the Children, June 2005), p. 46. Available at <http://www.humantrafficking.org/>
- Hughes S (2000). “The Natasha trade: The transnational shadow market of trafficking in women,” *Journal of International Affairs* 53/2 (2000), pp. 1–18.
- International Labour Organization (ILO). (2002). “Forced labour, Child labour and human trafficking in Europe: An ILO Perspectives.”
- International Organization for Migration (IOM),(2000). *Combating trafficking in South-East Asia: A review of policy and programme responses* (Geneva, Switzerland: IOM, 2000), p. 7. Available at <http://www.unesco.org/most/migration/ctsea.pdf>.
- Kaufman M; M. Crawford. (2011). “Sex trafficking in Nepal: A review of intervention and prevention programs,” *Violence Against Women* 17/5 (2011), pp. 651–665.
- Lefton Rebecca. (2013). Centre for American progress, March 11, 2013.
- Lim L (1998). *The sex sector: The economic and social bases of prostitution in Southeast Asia* (Geneva: ILO, 1998), p. 7.
- McGregor Perry, Kelsey and McEwing, Lindsay. (2013). How do social determinants affect human trafficking in South East Asia, and what can we do about it? A systematic review in Health and Human rights Journal, Vol.15. No.2 December, 2013 ([www.pubfacts.com](http://www.pubfacts.com))
- Mrsevie, Z., Hughes, D.M. (1997). Violence against Women in Belgrade, Serbia : SOS Hotline 1990 – 1993, *Violence against Women – An International Interdisciplinary Journal*, 3 (2) : 101 – 128.
- Orphant M (2001). “Trafficking in persons: Myths, methods, and human rights,” *Population Reference Bureau* (December 2001). Available at <http://www.prb.org/Publications/Articles/2001ATraffickinginPersonsMythsMethodsandHumanRights.aspx>.
- Pandey B., D. Jena, and S. Mohanty. (2003). *Trafficking in women in Orissa: An exploratory study* (Bhubaneswar, India: Institute for Socio-Economic Development in collaboration with UNIFEM,).
- Pearson Elaine. (2003). Study on Trafficking in women in East African, GTZ, Germany, December, 2003. PP.4 – 8.
- Raymond, J; J. D’Cunha, S. R. Dzuhayatin, et al. (2002). *A comparative study of women trafficked in the migration process: Patterns, profiles and health consequences of sexual exploitation in five countries* (2002),p.15 Available at <http://action.web.ca/home/catw/attach/CATW%20Comparative%20Study%20002.pdf>.
- Richard O (2000). Center for the Study of Intelligence, *International trafficking in women to the United States: A contemporary manifestation of slavery and organized crime* (2000), p. 3. Available at <https://www.cia.gov/csi/monograph/women/trafficking.pdf>.
- Stark and C. Hodgson. (2003). “Sister oppressions: A comparison of wife battering and prostitution,” in M. Farley (ed), *Prostitution, trafficking, and traumatic stress*. (Binghamton, NY: The Hawthorne Press, Inc., 2003).

- Taylor L. R. (2005). "Dangerous trade-offs: The behavioral ecology of child labor and prostitution in rural northern Thailand," *Current Anthropology* 46 (2005), pp. 411–431.
- Temesgen, Gabriel. (2014). Root causes and solutions to Human trafficking in Ethiopia in the Global Initiative against Transnational organized crime, Sept. 16, 2014. ([www.globalinitiative.net](http://www.globalinitiative.net)).
- Teweldebirhan, Seble. (2012). Ethiopian women becoming victims of Human trafficking (Ezega.com), Addis Ababa, February, 13, 2012.
- UNESCO. (2006). "Human trafficking in Nigeria: Root causes and Recommendations" in Policy Paper, No.14.2 (E), 2006. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- US Department of State. (2004). "The link between Prostitution and Sex Trafficking in Global Affairs".
- Vindhya U and V. S. Dev. (2011). "Survivors of sex trafficking in Andhra Pradesh," *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* 18/2 (2011), p. 141.
- Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia. (2010). Human Trafficking.
- Willis and B. Levy. (2002). "Child prostitution: Global health burdens, research needs and interventions," *Lancet* 359/9315 (2002), pp. 1416–1422. Available at <http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736%2802%2908355-1/abstract>.

©Sacha & Diamond Academic Publishers, Meridian Centre,  
258 Kingsland Road, Hackney, London E8 4DG, England, United Kingdom.  
In Compliance with the Standards Approved by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council  
Abstracting and Indexing in:

GIGA - The Electronic Journals Library of the German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Information Centre, Hamburg; Google Scholar; Global Development Network (GDNNet); Social Science Research Network (SSRN); Econlit - The American Economic Association's Index; EBSCO; IndexCopernicus USA; British International Libraries; Anton's Weekly Digest; Econlit (USA); International Abstracts in Operations Research; Environmental Science and Pollution Management; Research Alert

For the Advancement of Knowledge to the World. [www.sachajournals.com](http://www.sachajournals.com)