

A discussion paper on

Poverty, Development and the Elimination of Slavery

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Introduction

Development and slavery have always been closely linked. The economies of Britain and other European slave trading nations were built on the profits of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, as was the wealth of cities like Liverpool, Bristol and London from which slave ships docked and sailed. Conversely the countries and communities from which people were enslaved have generally been negatively affected by the slave trade in terms of relative poverty and under development. For example the divide of the Angolan civil war can be traced back to the fault lines exacerbated by the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

As in the past, contemporary slavery arises at the conjunction of vulnerability and prejudice. Specifically this means that for people to be enslaved they are both dehumanised by the slaver and in a position of relative weakness to that of the person enslaving them. Most commonly people are vulnerable because of their material poverty, though in some instance, such as forced recruitment of children in war, vulnerability may be to threat of physical violence. Prejudice may occur on any basis including caste, race, religion, gender and age, but not limited to these categories as discrimination can occur on any spurious basis. Prejudice against migrant workers is common across the world today.

Anti-Slavery International's experience of working to combat contemporary forms of slavery clearly shows that, in the 21st century, the majority of individuals around the world who are subjected to slavery practices are generally from the most impoverished and socially excluded sections of society in their respective countries. Slavery can be a factor within poor communities with poor people themselves enslaving other poorer people, and using prejudice as a justification. Once caught in a contemporary form of slavery people are unlikely to be able to break out of the cycle of poverty and forced labour.

This paper highlights the existing links between poverty, social exclusion and the different contemporary forms of slavery and the potential for development projects to reduce both slavery and poverty internationally. We argue that development assistance which is targeted at those in slavery or at risk of becoming slaves may be particularly effective in helping to achieve the millennium development goals as well contributing towards the reduction of slavery from the world.

What are contemporary forms of slavery?

What constitutes slavery today is set out in various international standards.¹ Collectively these standards provide us with internationally agreed definitions of practices which are considered modern forms of slavery. These include debt bondage, the unconditional

¹ These include the United Nations Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery, 1956; UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, 2000; and the International Labour Organization Conventions on Forced Labour (No.29) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour (No.182).

worst forms of child labour, trafficking in human being and forced labour.² Common to all of these forms of slavery is a personalised element – slavery is something which human beings inflict on other human beings. In other words slavery is a specific social phenomenon undertaken by and affecting identifiable people.

The great majority of slavery practices contain a forced labour component which is defined as “all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily.”³

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) the *minimum* estimate of the number of people in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and the Middle East who are living in forced labour is 12.3 million.⁴

Links between forced labour, poverty and prejudice

Debt bondage (also referred to as bonded labour) occurs when an individual offers their labour in exchange for a loan, but then lose all control over their conditions of work and the amount they are paid.⁵

With a normal loan, the repayment terms are fixed and the capital sum borrowed is only subject to reasonable interest rates, but in bonded labour cases these safeguards do not exist. The bonded labourer is at the mercy of their employer who uses the debt, coercion and violence to force the labourer to work very long hours, often for seven days a week.

Bonded labourers are not free to look for other employment until they have repaid what they owe. However, their debt is often inflated by exorbitant interest charges as well as through charges for food, accommodation, transportation, tools or days lost through sickness. In practice this makes it difficult to repay the loan and bonded labourers end up working for little or no pay as their wages are used to service their debt.

Other family member may also become bonded. This may take place if the debtor dies or becomes too old or sick to work or if an additional loan is needed to pay for medicines, food or other expenses.

This practice affects millions of “low” caste people in South Asia, particularly in India, Pakistan and Nepal. In India, a survey conducted by the Gandhi Peace Foundation and the National Labour Institute (part of the Ministry of Labour) in 1978-79 remains the most detailed survey of bonded labourer in the country to date. The survey was based on

² For a detailed review of standards and mechanisms relating to slavery see David Weissbrodt and Anti-Slavery International, *Abolishing Slavery and its Contemporary Forms*, United Nations, Geneva, 2002.

³ ILO Convention No.29 on Forced labour, 1930.

⁴ International Labour Office, *A Global Alliance against Forced Labour*, ILO, Geneva, 2005, page 10.

⁵ Debt bondage is defined in the 1956 UN Supplementary Convention on slavery as: “the status or condition arising from a pledge by a debtor of his personal services or those of a person under his control as security for a debt, if the value of those services as reasonably assessed is not applied towards the liquidation of the debt or the length and nature of those services are not respectively limited and defined.”

a random sample of 1,000 villages in 10 different states and from this data it was estimated that there were over two million bonded labourers working in agriculture in India at that time.⁶

The survey also provided data which shows that the vast majority of these people became bonded because of poverty. Just over 81 per cent of bonded labourers took a loan because they did not have enough money to meet their basic daily needs (food, medicine, clothes, etc.) or to pay for a specific event like a wedding or a funeral.

Bonded labour is a particular effective mechanism of obtaining forced labour because the workers can be enslaved for relatively small amounts of money. It is the poorest sectors and most excluded sections of society who are trapped by debt bondage because they have no way of avoiding the mechanisms which drag them into debt. Once indebted they have no way of paying off the loan other than their labour.

It should be stressed that debt bondage is not confined to agriculture and can be found in wide variety of other industries including brick kilns, quarries cigarette production and the silk industry. In these industries, as with agriculture, it is poverty and their inability to access jobs, land or, in the case below, free medical services which forces them into slavery:

“After my sister got sick, we took her to the hospital, but the doctor said we had to pay more money, so my parents bonded me for 1,700 rupees (£20). I was seven or eight years old.... I only went home once a week. I slept in the factory with two or three other children. We prepared our food there and slept in the space between the machines. The owner provided the rice and cut it from our wages - he would deduct the price. We cooked the rice ourselves. We worked twelve hours a day with one hour for rest. If I made a mistake - if I cut the thread - he would beat me.”⁷

Poverty and social exclusion also underpin debt bondage in many Latin American countries, including Bolivia (in sugar cane, brazil nut production and in private ranches); Brazil (in private ranches); Paraguay (in private ranches); and Peru (in the logging industry).

In Paraguay, some 8,000 indigenous people are directly involved in forced labour or at risk of becoming forced labourers on agricultural estates in the Chaco according to research carried out for the ILO. Their vulnerability to bonded labour is based on the fact employment opportunities are extremely limited for indigenous people in this region, a fact which is made worse by their high illiteracy rates (around 50 per cent). The indigenous also have very limited access to land either for cultivation or for hunting.

Work on the estates is, therefore, one of the few employment opportunities available in the Chaco. However, the combination of paying salaries below the minimum wage and in

⁶ Gandhi Peace Foundation and the National Labour Institute, *National Survey of the Incidence of Bonded Labour*, National Labour Institute, New Delhi, 1979, page 18.

⁷ Human Rights Watch, *Small Change*, Human Rights Watch, New York, Vo. 15, No.2, 2003, page 26.

arrears, overpricing goods in the estate shop, and providing a large part of their salaries in kind, means that when their salaries are due to be paid workers find they are left with little or no money or even indebted to the estate.

The fact that workers have no money for transport, combined with the long working hours, lack of holidays and other limits on leaving the estates, means workers cannot travel to places where they can buy goods at reasonable prices. This system maximises the profits for the estate and ensures that they have a cheap and secure labour supply without the need for violence.⁸

In rural areas where there are few employment opportunities, initiatives which support land reform, fairer leasing arrangements and improved land management could have a major impact in reducing the incidence of slavery. If families have access to even small amounts of land for cultivation this can provide them with a means of subsistence or an additional source of income to supplement work as day labourers. Indigenous people in Paraguay also highlighted the fact that their inability to access land for hunting left them with little option, but to work on the estates.

Debt bondage is also one of the principle mechanisms of coercion which is used by traffickers around the world to control migrant workers and force them to work in conditions they did not agree to (see the section below on the links between trafficking and poverty for more details).

There are also strong links between other forms of forced labour and poverty, even when the state is responsible for enforcing forced labour. For example, North Koreans who are caught trying to leave the country by crossing the border into China or who are deported by the Chinese authorities are compelled to carry out forced labour in North Korean detention camps. The vast majority of these border crossers are not fleeing political oppression, but rather extreme economic hardship.

Anti-Slavery International carried out interviews in 2006-07 with 30 North Koreans migrants who had worked as forced labourers in North Korean detention facilities. An analysis of the data provided by those interviewed shows that in 70 per cent of cases those arrested received no judicial decision, formal or otherwise. Despite this, on average, those detained had to provide forced labour for just under two months.⁹

⁸ For more information on the above see Mike Kaye, *Contemporary forms of slavery in Paraguay*, Anti-Slavery International, London, 2006, pages 2-7.

⁹ Norma Muico, *Forced labour in North Korea*, Anti-Slavery International, London, 2007. Of those interviewed, 93 per cent stated that food insecurity and economic hardship were the primary reasons behind their decision to seek work in China. Interviewees spoke of the food crisis, the collapse of the Public Distribution System, loss of jobs through factory closures, and family illness and deaths as factors which led to them being unable to meet their basic needs. This information is consistent with a survey carried out by South Korea's Ministry of Unification in 2006 which found that that 61 per cent of North Koreans who settled in South Korea between 2003 and June 2006 identified economic hardship as the prime motive for crossing the border into China

Links between the unconditional worst forms of child labour and perpetuation of poverty

The unconditional worst forms of child labour are slavery practices affecting children and are defined in ILO Convention No.182. These practices include trafficking, debt bondage, forced labour; forced recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; and child prostitution and pornography. In the ILO's 2002 Global Report on child labour, it estimated that there were 8.4 million children in slavery.¹⁰

Plainly the issues of child labour and unconditional worst forms of child labour have fundamental poverty reduction implications: aside from anything else if millions of children spend their formative years outside school they will have little more than impoverished adulthood to look forward to.

In 2006, the ILO updated the Global Report on child labour and noted that the number of children in the worst forms of child labour was 126 million, a fall of 26 per cent since the 2002 report. Unfortunately, the 2006 report does not provide any breakdown of how many of these 126 million are in the unconditional worst forms of child labour and without these figures we cannot tell whether the number of children in slavery is increasing, decreasing or static.

The report itself notes that tackling the unconditional worst forms of child labour have by and large been neglected, with some exceptions in relation to measures against child prostitution and trafficking. Little attention has been paid to the children most at risk of being subjected to forced labour, bonded labour or becoming child soldiers, which affects millions of children all over the world.

Many people would not associate child domestic work with slavery, but a significant percentage of child domestics who live and work in other people's homes are in slavery.¹¹ These children are separated from their families, often at a very young age, and left totally dependent upon their employer for their welfare. This leaves them with no realistic alternative, but to perform whatever work they are given and this commonly means that they are subjected to extreme exploitation in terms of very long hours of work for little or no pay. Child domestic workers are often exposed to a range of other human rights violations including physical, psychological or sexual abuse.

There is substantial evidence to show that poverty and a lack of development opportunities, particularly access to education, are key factors which contribute to children being forced into domestic servitude.

For example, research published by Anti-Slavery International found that in Togo and Benin the majority of children started working as child domestics between the age of 8-

¹⁰ International Labour Office, *A Future Without Child Labour*, ILO, Geneva, 2002.

¹¹ The 1956 UN Supplementary Convention on slavery notes that where a child is delivered to another person, whether for reward or not, with a view to the exploitation of that child, this constitutes a slavery practice.

10 years old and the most common reasons for sending children away to work was to secure extra income or because they could not afford to take care of the child themselves. The same research found that in Tanzania two third of children were forced to work as child domestics because of poverty, with some 25 per cent being orphans with no other means of support.¹²

Research on child domestic work in Morocco noted that the drought in the second half of the 1990s was cited as a key reason for sending girls under the age of 15 to work as domestics because many male members of the household lost their jobs in agriculture and family plots did not produce food.¹³

In Paraguay, under the *criadazgo* system, children live and work as domestics in the homes of other families in exchange for accommodation, food and a basic education – they are not paid anything for their work. A study carried out in 1994 estimated that there were 11,449 children between 5-17 working in *criadazgo* in Asunción alone.¹⁴

The research in Paraguay identified that a lack of money, food and work were key problems identified by families to explain why they sent their children away to be domestics. Of the families interviewed, more than 50 per cent were living on an income equivalent to half the minimum wage or less. The families also had a high rate of illiteracy with 23 per cent of parents unable to read and write.¹⁵ These problems were extenuated by social issues like absent fathers, large families and illness, along with the child's desire to get an education and to assist in supporting the family.

A survey of 1,029 child domestics in Brazil found that 93 per cent were girls, from very poor families and of African-descent. Nearly 90 per cent of these child domestic workers began working before the minimum age of 16, often when they were as young as five or six years of age. Just under half of those interviewed said they had to work to help support the family.

Development projects which provide communities with access to local education and basic healthcare, including free medicine could also have a substantial impact in preventing people from getting into situations where they become bonded or trafficked or expose their children to the unconditional worst forms of child labour.

In particular, there is every indication that assistance which helps facilitate better access to education would have a positive impact in reducing slavery. The costs of education are in many cases prohibitive. This may be because parents have to pay for transport, uniforms, books or fees in order for their children to attend school. It may also be

¹² Anti-Slavery International, *Listening to Child Domestic Workers*, Anti-Slavery International, London, forthcoming in 2007.

¹³ IPEC, *Helping hands or shackled lives*, ILO Geneva, 2004, pages 17-18

¹⁴ Ernesto Heisecke et al., *Las Criaditas de Asunción*, 1995. Quoted in Clyde Soto, *et. al.*, (Centro de Documentación y Estudios), *Prevención y Eliminación del Trabajo Infantil Doméstico en Paraguay – Evaluación Rápida sobre Trabajo Infantil Doméstico en Hogares Terceros en Paraguay*, ILO-IPEC, Paraguay, June 2002, page 10.

¹⁵ Clyde Soto, *op. cit.*, pages 25-30.

because the family cannot forgo the income that a working child can provide, or it may be a combination of the two.

In many cases, children are trafficked or end up in domestic servitude because parents believe that they will be better off working in someone else's home where they will be properly fed and may get an opportunity to go to school. The children themselves also think they will be able to combine work and study.

In most cases this proves to be a false expectation. Many employers do not allow children to go to school as they want them to be available to work all the time or because they do not consider education important for girls or child domestic workers. Of those children who do go to school, most of them are too tired to actually learn anything and many drop out.

In the survey of child domestic in Brazil, it was noted that many child domestics were not allowed to attend school, resulting in very low levels of formal education, with 86 per cent having either no formal education or only primary education.

The pursuit of an education is therefore part of the explanation of how children become trapped in slavery practices like domestic servitude. However, once in the unconditional worst forms of child labour, these children usually fail to access anything more than the most basic education which severely curtails their future opportunities in life. Without an education their skills base is limited, as is their capacity for personal growth. Their subsequent employment opportunities are generally restricted to unskilled and poorly paid work.¹⁶

In this way the cycle of poverty is replicated in the next generation. The survey in Brazil found that nearly two thirds of child domestic workers' mothers were themselves child domestic workers.¹⁷ Research in the Dominican Republic found that this was true of 50 per cent of child domestic workers in Santo Domingo.¹⁸

In order to break this cycle of poverty and slavery it is important to try and facilitate access to free education in the local community, this may actually provide an incentive to keep children at home rather than send them to work in another town or city. Where children have no access to formal schooling it is important that they are able to engage in non-formal education or vocational training, which does support them in combining reasonable work with their studies.

Links between trafficking in people and poverty

¹⁶ Their personal development is also likely to negatively affected by the fact that they have not had the support of their family while growing up and have often been exposed to either physical or verbal abuse by their employers.

¹⁷ International Labour Organization, *Perfil del Trabajo Infantil Doméstico en Brasil, Colombia, Paraguay y Perú: contexto, estudios y resultados*, OIT-IPEC Sudamérica, Lima, 2004, page 60.

¹⁸ IPEC, *Helping hands or shackled lives*, ILO Geneva, 2004, page 19.

The trafficking of people involves the movement of people using force, coercion or deception for the purposes of either sexual or labour exploitation.¹⁹

The ILO estimates that at any one time there are some 2.5 million people in the world who have been trafficked into sexual or labour exploitation and draws attention to the fact that a third of those trafficked are used exclusively for labour exploitation (e.g. domestic work, agricultural work, catering, packing and processing, etc.).

Trafficking for sexual exploitation almost exclusively affects women and girls (98 per cent), but trafficking for labour exploitation also affects women more than men (56 per cent being women and girls).²⁰

The vast majority of trafficked people are migrant workers. Most states are either sending, receiving or transit countries for migrants who become trafficked. Migrant workers are most commonly controlled through their confiscation of travel documents; the existence of a debt which must be repaid; and through the use of threats, intimidation or violence by the trafficker.²¹

Many migrants are comparatively wealthy and are seeking work abroad to improve the quality of their lives, enhance their careers or to improve their standard of living and that of their families. However, an increasing number of people are migrating both internally and across borders in search of work as a means of survival rather than as a means of improving their incomes. It is this group which is particularly vulnerable to traffickers. While it used to be the case that the poorest sections of society could not afford to migrate, the dramatic fall in the cost of international travel and the intervention of traffickers who will pay the costs of travel up front mean the financial obstacles to travel can now be overcome.

In Brazil, a national study on trafficking of women and children for commercial sexual exploitation found a close correlation between the number of women trafficked and poverty levels in the region of origin. For example, the North and Northeast regions have the highest poverty levels in Brazil with 43 and 46 per cent of the population living in poverty respectively. These regions recorded more than double the number of trafficking cases than the comparatively rich South and Southeast regions where poverty levels are at 20 and 23 per cent of the population respectively.²²

¹⁹ The full definition of trafficking is set out in the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (2000) The Protocol defines trafficking as: 'the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;'

²⁰ International Labour Office, *A Global Alliance against Forced Labour*, ILO, Geneva, 2005, page 15.

²¹ For more on the relationship between migration and trafficking see Mike Kaye, *The Migration-Trafficking Nexus*, Anti-Slavery international, London, 2003.

²² There were 145 cases recorded of national and international trafficking in the North and Northeast as compared with 63 cases recorded in the South and Southeast. Data from PESTRAF, 2002. Quoted in

Rising unemployment and lack of economic opportunities for unskilled workers have been accompanied by an increase in female headed households in Brazil, leading to further impoverishment of women and their families and an increase in their vulnerability to traffickers who offer to arrange well paying jobs in other cities or countries.

Poverty and the absence of employment opportunities have been exploited effectively by traffickers in a variety of countries to trick people into forced labour. In Brazil, the Government has responded to the problem of forced labour in the Amazon by pursuing innovative policies²³ which, in the three years to 2004, led to the release of just under 10,000 people from slavery in Brazil.

Despite this achievement, statistics from the Department for Labour Inspections in Brazil showed that in the eight year period up to 2004, 40 per cent of workers freed from forced labour had been released more than once.²⁴ This information indicates that freeing individuals and even securing them the money that they are owed has not stopped the use of slavery in Brazil. One of the reasons for this is that the reason why workers are vulnerable to forced labour in the first place has not been addressed. Workers have still been excluded from a sustainable livelihood.

This pattern is replicated in Peru where 52 per cent of the population live below the poverty line. Only 35 per cent of the economically active female population are able to find work and even when they do these jobs pay well under the minimum wage of 460 soles a month (US\$137). Around 20 per cent of households are headed by women, and this is an increasing trend. With less employment opportunities and lower wages than men, women are becoming increasingly desperate to find reasonably paid work and therefore more susceptible to offers from traffickers.²⁵

Similarly, between 1995 and 2002, some 12,000 Dominicans are thought to have migrated to Argentina, attracted by parity between the Argentine peso and the US dollar. Around 90 per cent of these migrants were women with children. In many cases, the break up of a relationship and the lack of financial support from the father left the mother solely responsible for providing for her children.²⁶

While most of these women were not unemployed, they wanted to improve their income as over 50 per cent of those interviewed were earning the equivalent of between US\$13

Maria Lucia Leal and Maria de Fátima P., *Pesquisa sobre Tráfico de Mulheres, Criança e Adolescentes para Fins de Exploração Sexual Comercial*, Brasília, 2002, page 35.

²³ These policies included the establishment of the federal Special Mobile Inspection Group which can enter estates, enforce laws and ensure that workers are freed and paid the wages that they are owed.

²⁴ *De volta ao trabalho escravo*, Correio Brasiliense, 1 February 2004.

²⁵ Movimiento el Pozo and International Organization for Migration, *Trata de Mujeres para Fines Sexuales Comerciales en el Perú*, Lima, IOM, 2005, page 24.

²⁶ CAREF, *Migración y trata de mujeres Dominicanas en la Argentina*, IOM, Buenos Aires, 2003, page 25. This research is based on 77 interviews carried out by the IOM and 397 surveys administered through the Dominican Consulate. Quoted in Mike Kaye, *Contemporary forms of slavery in Argentina*, Anti-Slavery International, London, 2006, pages 3-4.

and US\$100 per month. Their options for getting better paid jobs in the Dominican Republic were limited by the economic crisis and by their own limited educational qualifications - only just over half of those interviewed in the research had completed primary education.

The majority of women had borrowed money to finance their trip. Over 50 per cent of those interviewed had taken a mortgage on their home, their parent's home or a loan from a bank. A significant proportion of those who migrated to Argentina were deceived and trafficked into prostitution.²⁷

Those who were trafficked invariably struggled to regain the economic position they had before leaving. Thus, their poverty led them to look for work abroad and their exposure to trafficking has left them further impoverished upon their return and more vulnerable to exploitative or coercive labour practices. It should also be noted that there are often significant social prejudices against women and girls who have been trafficked into sexual exploitation.

Where children are moved from one place to another for the purposes of their exploitation this constitutes trafficking regardless of whether violence, coercion or deception have been used.

Research into the trafficking of children between Benin and Gabon found that out of a sample of 229 trafficked children, 86 per cent were girls who were forced to work as domestics and as market traders. Nearly two thirds of the trafficked boys ended up working in the agricultural or fishing sectors. Just over two thirds of the children trafficked to Gabon described their treatment as bad and this treatment included being shouted out, being deprived of food and being beaten.

In explaining why they were prepared to hand their children over to traffickers, nearly 40 per cent of the parents interviewed (63 of the 170) said that they could not earn enough to satisfy the essential needs of their family.²⁸

In relation to trafficking, much of the policy debate has focussed on prosecutions of traffickers and the protection and support of victims of trafficking. While these are undoubtedly important issues they deal with the symptoms rather than the cause of the problem.

Where counter-trafficking strategies do consider prevention, it is often in the context of tighter immigration controls and awareness raising campaigns rather than tackling the poverty and development issues.

²⁷ CAREF, *op. cit.*, pages 28-32.

²⁸ This research included interviews with 884 people involved in the trafficking process. For more details see: Anti-Slavery International et Enfants Solidaires d'Afrique et du Monde (ESAM), *Rapport sur les Trafic des Enfants Entre le Bénin et le Gabon*, Anti-Slavery international, London, 2000.

More restrictive immigration policies are likely to increase the profitability of both trafficking and smuggling by reducing regular routes for migration. Awareness campaigns which seek to evoke fear in potential migrants and dissuade them from travelling abroad are also unlikely to be effective in dissuading migrants who have no alternative means of support from travelling away from their homes in search of work.

This is particularly true where there are established migration routes to countries or towns where there is a strong demand for migrant workers (fuelled by economic growth, aging populations, skills shortages, etc.) and where there are active recruitment agents offering to facilitate jobs abroad.

An effective counter trafficking strategy would therefore seek to provide the same development opportunities already referred to above (access to land, employment, basic education and health care, etc.) which could undermine the push factors forcing people to leave their homes.

It would also require governments to recognise that where there is a demand for migrant workers it is in their national interest to facilitate and manage this process. If channels for regular migration are opened up, migrants would have a real incentive not to use irregular migration mechanisms which make them vulnerable to trafficking.

Regular migration is not only cheaper and safer, but it also means that migrants are in a better position to defend their labour rights in destination countries. This reduces the chances of their being subjected to forced or exploitative labour practices which will substantially reduce their earnings and consequently their ability to send money home.

Increased regular migration benefits countries of destination through the contribution migrants make to the economy through their work, their tax contributions and the money they spend in the economy. It is also in the interests of governments in countries of origin as they can better manage the migration process in order to make sure it contributes to, rather than undermines, their own country's economic and social development.

The facilitation of regular migration could therefore reduce trafficking directly, but it also offers the potential to promote long term development in the country of origin and thereby tackle the causes trafficking and other forms of slavery.

The reason for this is that remittances (the portion of an international migrant's earnings that are sent back to their country of origin) often account for a substantial proportion of a state's income. In Nicaragua and Yemen remittances make up more than 16 per cent of GDP and in Lesotho the figure rises to 26.5 per cent.²⁹

The amount of money sent home by Latin American migrant workers alone was estimated to be more than \$62 billion in 2006, exceeding the combined total of all direct

²⁹ Brunson McKinley, Director General of the IOM, *International Migration and Development – The Potential for a Win-Win-Situation*, *op. cit.*, p.9.

foreign investment and foreign aid to the region. The Inter-American Investment Bank estimates the figure could reach \$100 billion in four years time.³⁰ In the Philippines, remittances for 2006 were almost \$13 billion - accounting for nearly 10 per cent of the economy according to the Philippines central bank.³¹ Over the last 20 years, annual official remittances to several African countries, including Morocco, Nigeria and Tunisia, have been worth more than double the overseas development assistance these countries have received.³²

Remittances often have a significant impact on families' income - in many Latin American countries they increase the average per capita income by between seven and 14 per cent.³³ This money may be used to cover expenditure on food or medicine; be invested in starting or developing a business; or allow families to send their children to school rather than to work.

Development programmes and policies should seek to maximise the potential of remittances to promote sustained development in countries of origin. One way of doing this is to facilitate official low cost money transfer schemes. This would remove the need for migrants to use private money transfer firms which can charge extremely high transfer fees. In Central and South America these fees are normally around 13 per cent and can exceed 20 per cent.³⁴

By offering a special transfer scheme to Senegal through the Banque de l'Habitat du Sénégal in Paris, official remittances from France increased dramatically. In 1999, more than US\$24 million was officially transferred to Senegal via this scheme, 26 per cent of the total official remittances to the country in that year.³⁵

Programmes also need to be developed which encourage the use of remittances in investment and development projects and seek to ensure that remittances benefit the wider community and not just the immediate family of the migrant. Governments in both countries of origin and of destination could commit to financing development projects as a proportion of official remittances. This in turn could stimulate demand and have a multiplier effect throughout the community, particularly in rural areas.

The Mexican Government's "three plus one" programme is a good example of this type of project. Under the programme, the federal, state and municipal governments provide

³⁰ Duncan Kennedy, *Latin America migrant money tops aid*, BBC News, 19 March 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/6465297.stm>

³¹ *Filipino remittances hit £12.8bn*, BBC News, 15 February 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/6364143.stm>

³² IOM, *Migration Policy Issues, Facts and Figures on International Migration*, No. 2 March 2003, p.2.

³³ Brunson McKinley, Director General of the IOM, *International Migration and Development – The Potential for a Win-Win-Situation*, *op. cit.*, pp.5 and 8.

³⁴ De la Garza and Lowell, *Sending Money Home: Hispanic Remittances and Community Development*, Rowman and Littlefield, Oxford, 2002. Quoted in Brunson McKinley, *Migrants' Remittances in the Americas*, *op. cit.*, p.6. Transfer costs of remittances to Nicaragua reached 25 per cent of the money transferred.

³⁵ International Organization for Migration, *World Migration 2003*, *op. cit.*, p.230.

one dollar each to complement each dollar of remittances invested by a migrant's home town association in their community. This type of programme encourages migrants to send money home because the matching funds provided by different levels of government represent a significant injection of resources into their local communities.

Agreements that set a framework for planned migration have clear benefits for both sending and receiving countries and could reduce trafficking directly. Where migration and development policy are linked (e.g. to facilitate the flow of remittances to sending countries and maximise their impact), this may also help promote sustained economic and social development which in turn would remove some of the factors which make people vulnerable to trafficking and other forms of slavery.

The potential of development projects to reduce slavery

Despite being internationally prohibited, slavery remains an extensive problem across the globe affecting the poorest and most vulnerable people.

The discussion above highlights how development approaches could help address the political, social and economic factors that underpin contemporary slavery and, in doing so, bring several steps closer the eradication of slavery.

Yet if poverty reduction approaches do not consider the issue of slavery then it is conceivable that even the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals could be reached without affecting the life of a single slave.

In fact it is more than plausible that the lives of slaves could be either relatively or absolutely worsened by humanitarian and development approaches that do not take account of the power and prejudice dynamics that are at play in some poor communities. For example in 2005, during the West African famine, Timidria, the Niger anti-slavery and development organisation, identified that some food for work programmes were employing slaves, who had been sent by their masters to work. On returning home the masters confiscated the ration cards from the enslaved workers and collected the food for themselves.

In other parts of West Africa it is common for former slaves to be excluded from access to community water resources or for the children of migrant workers to be excluded from local schools.

A very significant proportion of the millions of people in slavery today might have been able to escape this fate if there were alternatives through which they could meet their basic subsistence needs. People are often trapped in slavery for comparatively small amounts of money. For example, the research into bonded agricultural labour in India found that in nearly 70 per cent of cases the individual was bonded for an initial loan of Rs 700 or less – the equivalent of £8 or less.³⁶

³⁶ Gandhi Peace Foundation and the National Labour Institute, *op. cit.*, pages 41 and 43. Although nearly 60 per cent of the individuals who took these loans were aware that they would work for an indefinite

Development organisations have over the years pioneered innovative and effective approaches towards poverty reduction. These, if consciously targeted towards those affected by contemporary slavery practices, or at risk of enslavement, could positively transform their lives.

In addition, while slavery-blind poverty reduction programmes will have a limited impact upon slavery, slavery targeted programmes could have both a major impact on slavery reduction and a major impact towards poverty reduction. This is quite simply because enabling poor people to work for themselves and their families rather than to enrich a local slaver would make a major contribution towards helping societies work their way out of poverty for the benefit of everyone.

Anti-Slavery International argues for an approach to poverty reduction that explicitly attempts to reduce the social as well as the economic underpinnings of slavery. Such an approach would be analogous to the efforts in the eighties and nineties to ensure that poverty reduction work took proper account of gender issues in communities and wider society where the work was undertaken. Such a shift in development approach led to a qualitative improvement in programming. Anti-Slavery International believes that the mainstreaming of anti-slavery analysis in the work of poverty reduction would lead to a similar qualitative improvement in such programming which would be to the benefit of both the enslaved and their wider communities.

period in order to repay the debt, this did not dissuade them because their expenditure was unavoidable and there was no other means of securing the money.

Anti-Slavery International, founded in 1839, is committed to eliminating all forms of slavery throughout the world. Slavery, servitude and forced labour are violations of individual freedoms, which deny millions of people their basic dignity and fundamental human rights. Anti-Slavery International works to end these abuses by exposing current cases of slavery, campaigning for its eradication, supporting the initiatives of local organisations to release people, and pressing for more effective implementation of international laws against slavery. For further information see: **www.antislavery.org**

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