

A Problem by a Different Name? A Review of Research on Trafficking in South-East Asia and Oceania

Nicola Piper*

INTRODUCTION¹

Trafficking in human beings is a global phenomenon which has been subject to increasing international attention in recent years. Anti-trafficking initiatives have mushroomed, globally and regionally, and trafficking projects have become an important item on international development agencies' agendas (Marshall, 2001).² Global and regional responses have been phenomenal, so much so that "(f)rom a poorly funded, NGO women's issue in the early 1980s, human trafficking has entered the global agenda of high politics, eliciting in recent years significant legislative and other action from the United States Congress, the EU and the UN" (Wong, forthcoming). These global developments constitute an important background to the issue of researching and generating data about trafficking in general, and specifically in the Asia Pacific region.

Asia constitutes a region often described as a hub of trafficking in persons, particularly for the purposes of sexual exploitation. The largest number of children and women trafficked are said to be *within* or *from* Asia.³ In this sense, trafficking is not only a national and international issue, but also essentially a regional issue. As a result, a number of anti-trafficking initiatives have been instigated in the Asia Pacific, resulting in all governments in this region taking some kind of interest in, and steps toward, tackling this problem (Marshall, 2001).⁴ At the same time, the lack of systematic research (as opposed to paying mere lip service to this issue) has been widely commented upon. As a result, reliable data on the trafficking of humans that would allow comparative analyses and the design of precise countermeasures is scarce. In this sense, the

* Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, Singapore.

findings from this research confirm findings from other regional contexts (such as, for example, Kelly, 2002). At the same time, there are some notable differences which distinguish Asia from other parts of the world.

The specific part of the Asia Pacific region dealt with in this paper, South-East Asia and Oceania, has been of great interest to scholars analysing domestic and international migratory flows for quite some time, by paying more or less attention to the specific issue of trafficking. Oceania has been subject to very little research in the context of trafficking. Existing studies mostly revolve around refugee movements, and in Australia and New Zealand, in particular, around issues of integration and multiculturalism in the context of settlement migration. South-East Asia, by contrast, has been highlighted in the existing literature as having great significance with regard to extensive intra-regional trafficking taking place around Thailand – one of the major source, transit, and destination countries for trafficking in women and children for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Another country that has emerged as a sending, receiving, and transit area for both domestic and international trafficking is Indonesia, but unlike the Greater Mekong subregion,⁵ it has not been subject to much research in this particular regard. The Philippines is also a source country of great significance. In Thailand and the Philippines, connections have been made in the (mostly feminist) literature between trafficking for sexual exploitation and prosperous sex tourism as part of both countries' economic developmental policies. Cambodia has more recently become subject to attention for a more specific sex tourism, namely that of *child* sex tourism. A vast range of projects and programmes – largely sponsored by United Nations (UN) agencies and international donors – have been instigated on various aspects of trafficking in the Mekong subregion and the Philippines. Indonesia, on the other hand, has not yet been given as much attention by donors in this regard. Overall, there is quite an extensive literature on all sorts of aspects of trafficking on South-East Asia available – at least as far as the source countries are concerned.

By contrast, countries which are usually classified as “destination countries” in the region under investigation here – i.e. Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, and New Zealand – are more known in the context of receiving foreign migrant workers and have to a far lesser extent been subject to analysis in the specific context of trafficking – which does not automatically mean that trafficking does not occur. Even less is known about the Pacific Islands in this regard. Most of the literature on Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, and other Polynesian islands deals with labour *out*-migration (Bedford et al., 2002). These islands have, however, been described as “potentially vulnerable” to trafficking.⁶ East Timor is another potential source country which deserves attention in the near future.⁷ As so little is known and written about trafficking to, between, and from these islands, the

remainder of this paper will not discuss this subregion any further. To do so, a separate research exercise is needed.

This article has the main objective to review existing research and literature on trafficking in South-East Asia and Oceania in the larger context of regional migration patterns. It attempts to identify key themes and critically assess the knowledge base and gaps that emerge from this review. The major issue areas which are being addressed are: (1) quantification and definitional issues, and (2) resulting responses to trafficking by policy makers and law enforcers. Data and studies from this region confirm findings from other regions in many respects: (1) trafficking in humans emerges as a complex phenomenon that requires multi-dimensional responses; (2) despite its high and growing profile, statistical data and precise figures do not exist; and (3) although our understanding of the processes, dynamics, and underlying causes of human trafficking has substantially improved, it remains largely fragmented. Reflecting the feminization of migratory movements in general and the growing demand and supply in the sex industries, it appears as if women comprise the bulk of those trafficked. There are, however, also some region-specific issues and trends which yield different findings from studies in other regional contexts.

BACKGROUND

Approach and methodology

Although clearly also an internal problem, trafficking of South-East Asians within the same region, as well as to Oceania, cannot be divorced from broader international migration patterns and policies as well as specific characteristics that have been widely acknowledged globally: the “feminization” as well as “illegalization” of labour migration. In addition, South-East Asia is also characterized by high incidences of child migration, domestically and across borders. Despite the rapid rise in women’s participation in these migration flows, the discussion of trafficking cannot exclude male victims. In light of the Asian region being notorious for its large numbers of irregular migrants with few legal channels available, there is evidence of men migrating under precarious conditions that can be classified as trafficking. In addition, women and children are not only trafficked for sexual exploitation, but also for other types of work. Among the various studies on child trafficking, reference has in fact been made to boys as well as the trafficking of girls for non-sex work (Archavanitkul, 1998).

To take a perspective on trafficking located within broader migration pattern and policies has often been criticized for disregarding human rights issues. However, this does not have to be so. There is in fact an increasing literature

analysing the various exploitative and abusive aspects of migration, pointing to the violation of international standards set by various United Nations (UN) and International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions (e.g. ILO, 2004; Pécoud and de Gucheneire, 2004; Satterthwaite, forthcoming; Piper, forthcoming). In this literature, the emphasis is not only on the movement aspects but also on the exploitative aspects of the processes and outcomes of such movement. Furthermore, studies focusing on trafficking for sexual exploitation have pointed to the serious violations of women's human rights. Thus, Gallagher's argument is fully agreed with here that "human rights are not a separate consideration or an additional perspective. They are the common thread" (2001: 1004).

With trafficking being strongly linked to the issue of sexual exploitation, this involves a debate which revolves around two fundamentally opposed views regarding the legitimacy of the sex industry, and thus, also around the choice of terminology. In this way, whether to speak of "prostitution" as opposed to "commercial sex work", often reflects the ideological position of the speaker/author. It is, in particular, the issue of "consent" which is highly contested, with some proponents arguing that a woman never consents to working in prostitution and that she is driven by socio-economic circumstances seriously limiting her choices. This is a somewhat broader (and older) debate, full engagement with which is beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, this review follows Surtees (2003: 63) in choosing to speak of commercial sex workers (rather than prostitutes) to avoid projecting any negative associations on individuals involved in this type of income-generating activity, and also to make the comparison, in terms of trafficking, with other forms of forced labour.

The literature and data search undertaken for this paper involved desk research as well as fieldwork. The desk research revolved around detailed Internet searches on: (a) anti-trafficking programmes and projects by various UN and donor agencies; (b) literature searches through e.g. the *Violence Against Women Online Resources*; (c) contacting NGOs, academics, and government officials via e-mail; and (d) use of survey questionnaire data compiled as part of the BALI Process.⁸ Identification of existing studies was limited to publications in the English language and can, thus, not claim to be exhaustive. Fieldwork was conducted between December 2003 and April 2004 in Australia, New Zealand, and Fiji involving informal, semi-structured interviews with government officials, national commissions for human rights, academics, and senior staff members of relevant NGOs. In addition to e-mailing informants, some of the information-seeking efforts in Australia involved telephone conversations.

Data from an earlier field trip to Cambodia and Viet Nam, undertaken in March and April 2002 on a different project investigating NGOs' involvement with trafficking issues, are also included in this paper.

Regional migration flows and policies

Over the last few decades, the economies and labour market conditions in the region under discussion have undergone considerable changes. Intensified migration pressures have resulted in the supply side of migrant labour outbalancing the demand, resulting in reduced financial benefits for migrants because wages have been pushed down and recruitment fees up. On the labour-sending side, new source countries have emerged (such as Viet Nam and Cambodia), resulting in increased competition at the destinations. Certain abuses have become more common, such as the non-payment of wages. This might, to some extent, reflect the current state of the economy in many receiving countries where unskilled migrants are usually employed either in small- and medium-sized companies, which typically take the brunt of increased global competition, or as domestic helpers in middle-class households, which are also suffering from decreased economic growth, such as in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China.⁹ At the same time, transition from socialist to free market systems and economic growth in some countries have brought about socio-economic disparities resulting in the re-emergence of prostitution – with some enjoying higher incomes to take advantage of the feminization of poverty driving women into prostitution (Piper and Yeoh, forthcoming).

Overall, the costs of migration have become disproportionately borne by the migrants themselves. The situation of increased competition and increasingly higher costs incurred results in greater debts and fewer benefits for the women and men involved. There is evidence, for example, that Thai women working in Germany's sex industries could make good money in the 1970s and 1980s, but over time working conditions changed and deductions from their salaries increased (Skrobanek et al., 1997). Similar evidence exists in the context of male migrant workers, such as Indonesians in Malaysia (Jones, 2000) and Bangladeshis in Singapore.¹⁰ This is related to economic boom and busts in destination countries, and increased involvement of recruiters/brokers over time.

Trafficking has to be seen as part and parcel of the reality of these broader migration patterns, particularly undocumented flows. The overall numbers of undocumented migrants leaving Asia are small compared with the numbers moving within Asia (Skeldon, 2000). The stock of undocumented migrants is at least equal if not higher than that of legal labour migrants (Wong, forthcoming). Thus, most labour migration within Asia is arranged through the medium of brokers or recruiters, at the origin as well as destination country, under a wide range of scenarios (Skeldon, 2000) reflecting the unavailability of legal channels, let alone settlement policies. The flows of trafficked people throughout this region seem to occur on a comparatively large scale and are of a very

complex nature in the sense that there are several human trafficking typologies at work, with different locations, different levels of criminal activity (more or less organized), different degrees of consent and complicity, and with different sources and destinations.

In addition, globalization processes have increased the awareness of opportunities outside the country of origin. However, despite severe labour shortages in certain sectors in the destination countries, the unavailability of legal migration channels has resulted in an increased shift from legal to illegal practices (Skeldon, 2000).

In most of the existing literature, trafficking is related to the increased demand and supply of mainly women in the sex industries in South-East Asia and Oceania. In addition to prostitution, the “trade in brides” as well as domestic work have also been included in the discussion of trafficking, albeit to a far lesser extent in the context of Oceania. Specific to the Asian regions seems to be another category of trafficking about which more is being written, and that is the trafficking of children for begging, as domestic workers, for adoption, as brides, and in other forms of labour (Marshall, 2001; Archavanitkul, 1998).¹¹

To sum up, Asia-specific features revolve around the large scale of undocumented or irregular labour migration, which results in a blurred distinction between trafficking and smuggling; the widespread movement of women as wives and domestic workers, in addition to sex and entertainment work; the trafficking of children for labour, sexual exploitation, and adoption; and the strong link between prostitution, sex tourism, and militarization.

Oceania’s specific features are the relative insignificance of trafficking in numerical terms which is largely due to its geographic remoteness and inaccessibility, but also to its different migration policies (such as family unification and refugee migration which are two channels absent in South-East Asia) and “demand” structure. But even within Oceania, there are variations. Australia appears to experience larger incidences of trafficking than New Zealand.

RESEARCHING THE PHENOMENON OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

When reviewing existing studies and addressing the issue of “doing” research and generating knowledge that is based on defining a problem such as “trafficking”, it is important to look at the academic and research environments in the countries at issue as well as the sources of funding in order to raise the following questions: are there differences between destination and source countries?

Is the research mainly conducted by government departments, NGOs, or academic institutions? Is the research conducted in source countries host country and/or donor driven? All of these issues are assumed to have an impact upon definitions, data, and analysis.

A review of the existing literature shows that certain countries are better researched than others. In the Asia Pacific region, this mainly refers to source countries, but even there it is the Mekong subregion which is particularly well researched. This has to do with the fact that any research on trafficking tends to focus on commercial sexual exploitation with Thailand, which is regarded as *the* hub for the sex trade. Cambodia has been an important focus of many UN activities since the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia period, and trafficking of children has been identified as a specific problem. Indonesia is better known for “exporting” labour migrants (such as domestic and construction workers), with little attention given to trafficking for sexual or any other exploitation. The focus of NGO advocacy and service provisioning in these countries seems to follow the same pattern: there is quite a large number of NGOs in the Mekong subregion engaged in trafficking, but in Indonesia, most NGOs are concerned with migrant labour issues.

Studies on trafficking in the context of Oceania are the scarcest – a fact also confirmed by the bibliography of trafficking compiled by the *Violence Against Women Online Resources* which does not list a single study on Australia, New Zealand, or the Pacific Islands.¹²

Academic research

Existing studies on trafficking issues can be divided into two broad categories distinguishing those coming from a sexual violence perspective (and thus with a focus on commercial sexual exploitation) and those taking migration as their starting point (the latter can be further subdivided into gender and non-gender analyses). Both perspectives agree on the exploitative and abusive practices, often making reference to human rights violations, but the former perspective typically results in an alarmist tragic victim discourse, whereas the latter tends to look at practical measures which can be used to combat exploitation – one of which is the promotion of the rights of sex workers. The disagreement on the definition of the problem has implications for assessing the extent of trafficking in numerical terms. As a result, recommendations and suggestions for solutions to tackle trafficking also tend to differ.

Scholars coming from a sexual violence perspective exclusively focus on women and children, whereas those writing from a migration perspective also acknow-

ledge the possibility of trafficking taking place in non-sexual contexts and, thus, including male victims. However, despite this recognition by the latter, very little concrete research has been carried out that would have a clear focus on these other (non-sexual) types of trafficking or that would offer a comparative analysis of trafficking in a “non-sex trade” context with trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Invariably, it is commercial sexual exploitation that ends up being the main subject of theoretical and empirical works. This begs the question, why? Part of the answer seems to be that trafficking research has been dominated by feminist approaches – which explains the focus on sexual exploitation of women and children – and the enormous gains and influence achieved by the political activism of the feminist movement that managed to place “violence against women” firmly onto the agenda of international and national policy makers (Meyer and Pruegl, 1999); and, partly resulting from this, the emergence of a gendered understanding within public and policy makers’ discourse associating men with being smuggled and only women and children with being trafficked (Hemming, 2004).

Since the 1990s, feminist researchers have intensely discussed feminized migration in Asia in relation to the increasing incidences of trafficking in women and “mail-order brides” on the one hand, and growing sex tourism on the other (Barry, 1995; Enloe, 1989; Hall, 1992; Matsui, 2000; Truong, 1990; Wijers and Lap-Chew, 1997; Constable, 2003; Hill Maher, 2003). In these debates, researchers have established a link between internal migration and sex tourism as a gendered phenomenon. This is because increasing numbers of migrant women engage in sexual labour in major tourist sites in search of better economic opportunities unavailable in their home communities. Throughout the post-World War II era, the presence of American military bases and frequent eruption of regional wars in East and South-East Asia gave rise to a prosperous sex industry (Enloe, 1989; Pettman, 1997). With the advent of the age of global tourism since the 1970s, the sex industry has expanded rapidly as an integral part of the tourist industry. Under heavy pressure to repay their foreign debts, governments of Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia have promoted tourism as a national policy (Phongpaichit et al., 1998; Bell, 1998). Consequently, with abundant labour supplied by local and migrant women, sex tourism boomed in these countries’ metropolises and resorts, drawing massive numbers of male tourists from Japan, Australia, Europe, and North America (Enloe, 1989; Bulbeck, 1998; Matsui, 1999). There has, thus, emerged a vast literature on various aspects of the rapidly expanding entertainment and “sex sector” (to use Lim’s phrase, 1998).¹³ The more recent economic reforms in former socialist countries such as Viet Nam and China have also resulted in the revival of local sex industries, triggering internal and international migratory flows (Piper and Yeoh, forthcoming). In addition, child sex tourism has also been identified as a bur-

geoning problem, particularly in countries like Cambodia (Archavanitkul, 1998). The causes, patterns, and outcomes of child trafficking appear to have many parallels with trafficking of adult women – in the sense that “real” abductions are rare, but deception, various levels of violence, debt bondage, and slavery-like conditions pose serious problems. Internal migration of women who often end up in prostitution because of the lack of other opportunities has also been attributed to environmental and developmental problems, as in Thailand (Mensendiek, 1996).

In this sense, accelerated globalization processes have contributed to movements across borders by women ending up in the sex and entertainment industries in the economic powerhouses of this region as well as beyond. Partly in response to transnational feminist campaigning and widespread public criticism against sex tourism, the numbers of East Asian men travelling abroad to purchase sexual services decreased, but at the same time the introduction of the so-called “entertainer” or “artist” visa by Japan and Korea resulted in the “import” of foreign women (Piper, 1999). On the whole, global trafficking in women appears to have surged sharply in East and South-East Asia. Since the late 1970s, networks of recruiters/traffickers throughout the region have begun to transport women (and children) from Thailand and the Philippines to Japan and Korea, and from Burma, Laos, and Cambodia to Thailand and Malaysia (Singhanetra-Renard, 1996; Matsui, 1999; Asia Watch, 1993; Caouette and Saito, 1999).

Parallel to the emergence of this literature, numerous studies on international labour migration have been produced, with increasing attention being paid to irregular flows and the documentation of abusive practices involved, but these two strands of literature – trafficking and irregular migration – have hardly engaged with each other which might to some extent explain the little recognition of male victims of trafficking. What does happen at times is that reports or research papers start off by acknowledging the fact that victims of trafficking can be male and female, in a sex and non-sex work context, but subsequently they all focus on trafficking in the context of sexual exploitation and thus, on women and children. This has been explained by the difficulty of “separating trafficking from other forms of labour migration” and men being “arguably less open to exploitation than women” (Skeldon, 2000: 17). In fact, when men are brought into the discussion, the distinction between trafficking and smuggling becomes even more blurred than when the focus is on women only, especially for sexual exploitation. As it stands, the evidence of male victims is mainly anecdotal. For Australia, a recent report by an NGO has identified a comparatively small number of male victims (Project Respect, 2004). The same is true for trafficking of women in a non-sex context. According to the National Commission for Human Rights in New Zealand, in 1999 there were

seven Thai women freed from slave labour conditions in an Auckland factory.¹⁴ An Indonesian NGO has also reported women trafficked to perform non-sex work.¹⁵ The final report by GPAT (2003b) mentions the case of two male Filipino victims held against their will and forced into slave-like conditions on a Malaysian plantation. Personal interviews conducted with Bangladeshi male workers in Malaysia¹⁶ have shown that there are cases of men that fulfil the criteria of the UN's definition of trafficking (deception, coercion, debt bondage, slavery-like conditions). In spite of this, men have been treated as "the invisible dimension of trafficking" by researchers (Skeldon, 2000: 17), and it is only women and children who are clearly acknowledged as victims of trafficking. This, however, often results in an indiscriminate categorizing of any individual in the sex and entertainment industries as a "trafficked victim" without a more sophisticated distinction of the very complex and hierarchical nature of the industries and processes involved.

More recently, trafficking has also been researched from a health perspective (Piper and Yeoh, forthcoming) which is not surprising considering the rising numbers of HIV/AIDS infected individuals in South-East Asia and the many projects funded by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNAIDS, especially in the Mekong subregion. A clear link has been made by WHO between migration and health concerns (WHO, 2003). Going beyond HIV/AIDS, a recent comparative study on five countries has provided a comprehensive insight into the array of health problems women trafficked into sexual exploitation experience (Raymond et al., 2002).

Trafficking is also subject to academic analysis in the context of the 2000 UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and related protocols – from a critical human rights perspective (Gallagher, 2002) or a more legalistic/criminological perspective (Schloenhardt, 2001). However, the extent to which organized crime is involved is questionable. At least within the Mekong subregion, trafficking appears to resemble more of a cottage industry (carried out at home) rather than organized crime, with local recruiters being seen as providing a service to the community (Marshall, 2001). In the Malaysian context, it has also been found that the involvement of organized crime networks is minimal (Wong, forthcoming). It seems as if shorter distances to a neighbouring country do not require a sophisticated crime network, unlike the crossing of larger distances.

There are no studies on the trafficking of organs in South-East Asia and Oceania. This is, however, a category of trafficking included in the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime. There is only anecdotal evidence of repatriated corpses which were found to have some internal organs missing.¹⁷

In many receiving countries, local academic communities often ignore the issue of trafficking. This is most certainly true for Malaysia (Wong, forthcoming) and Singapore where there are no leading academic institutions which conduct research on trafficking. Key informants in Australia have mentioned this with regard to academic institutions there also. Likewise in New Zealand, no researchers working on trafficking could have been identified. Reasons for this lack of research include: denial that such exploitative, or slavery-like, conditions exist; no funding opportunities because of little political interest; and lack of understanding of trafficking as a whole. This, however, means that there is a serious lack of experts.

Policy makers' and non-governmental studies

The “international career” of concerns for trafficking has been remarkable with the mushrooming of NGOs devoted to this issue as well as the extensive involvement of the UN as well as international development agencies (Wong, forthcoming). The fact that the United States, the European Union, and the United Nations – in their capacity as the three most important sources for donor funding and development aid – are the driving force behind projects and programmes on trafficking in the Asia Pacific cannot be denied.¹⁸ These forces – NGOs and donors – most certainly also explain the increased reaction, if not interest, on the part of source countries' governments to take some kind of action against trafficking.

A vast amount of programmes and projects in this region have produced a lot of data. In 2001, within the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) region, there were six projects run by UNESCAP itself, two projects by the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)/ILO, eight by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), four by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), four by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 32 by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and two by the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).¹⁹ Many of these programmes focus on the Mekong subregion. Research institutes like the UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) have also been involved in projects in this region. The most comprehensive programme on trafficking in the Mekong region, involving most UN agencies, is the UN Interagency Project (UNIAP) headquartered in Bangkok with regional offices in Viet Nam, Cambodia, and Laos.

Most research conducted on trafficking of children appears to be instigated by UNICEF and IPEC-ILO as well as by NGOs such as ECPAT, Save the Children, and the International Catholic Migration Commission. Most of this research

concerns the Mekong subregion, but more recently also Indonesia (Rosenberg, 2003). Data on internal child trafficking for domestic work in Jakarta have found that these children rarely experienced any extreme forms of exploitation. A project investigating child trafficking in Bali could not find any evidence of trafficking, despite the occurrence of internal migration by children. A study undertaken for IPEC/ILO found that the actual procedures through which children are recruited seem to follow the same pattern as for adults, and that the most vulnerable are minorities, the lower castes, and children of undocumented migrants (Archavanitkul, 1998). The types of exploitation seem also similar to adult trafficking: (1) low remuneration and excessive hours of work, (2) hazardous work conditions, and (3) physical and mental abuses. Trafficking children into begging has been identified as a new form of bonded labour, and trafficking of girls into prostitution is also seen as a comparatively new phenomenon that had not existed before 1970 in some countries in the subregion. There is evidence of a small number of boys trafficked into the sex business (Archavanitkul, 1998). Unfortunately, no study exists which links trafficking of children to trafficking of adults, although data from interviews with adults often indicate an early involvement in internal trafficking for sex work at the age of a child which subsequently led to further trafficking – often across international borders – as an adult.

Ethnographic community-based research has been carried out by Trafficking from Community to Exploitation (TRACE), a research network comprised of six researchers in Laos and Thailand respectively. UNESCO has conducted field-based research in connection with a project on the citizenship of Thai hill tribe villages based on the argument that the lack of citizenship rights is one of the root causes exposing minorities in particular to the risk of trafficking. In fact, UNESCO has been working on a website which is to function as a clearing-house of trafficking data and information for Asia.²⁰

As laudable as these initiatives might be, the lack of an overall coordinating body – similar to UNAIDS – might mean that much duplication and little exchange between individual agencies is occurring. Many of these programmes are host/donor country driven with many donors (such as DfID, AusAID, SIDA, CIDA, GTZ, DANIDA, USAID, etc.) channelling funds through UN agencies or NGOs for trafficking projects, directly or indirectly. But not all of these projects or programmes include a research component, and even if they do, it is not always independent research.²¹ Likewise, it is not always clear why a certain country has been chosen over another.²² The UNIAP has been designed to address many of these problem areas. Its activities so far, however, have been described as a “stock taking” exercise rather than one which produces original research to fill the gaps that still exist.²³ An independent evaluation report lists in detail the

positive outcomes achieved so far and areas subject to improvement (Caouette, 2002). In general, with little own research components, many projects depend on secondary data and are thus hampered by the unavailability of reliable data with governments often reluctant to disclose their data (if gathered at all).

Regarding the link between donor/UN and local researchers, two other issues have arisen: one concerns the fact that independent research institutes sometimes do not exist, such as in Cambodia, or where they do exist, they have serious difficulties surviving economically and thus heavily depend upon donor funding; the other issue concerns the seemingly little interest by donor/UN agencies in involving local researchers. The donor sector thus appears to create “jobs for the boys” without engaging in local capacity building.²⁴ Hence, more independent evaluation and assessment of these projects and the way they are designed and carried out needs to be done.

The enormous activity of donor/UN agencies largely explains the production of information and data as far as the source countries are concerned. By contrast, the situation at the destination countries in this region is very much under-researched. At the receiving end, governments’ programmes or anti-trafficking initiatives do not usually include a research component or funding for thorough research. A good example is that of the AUS\$ 20 million initiative recently implemented by the Australian Government: most of this funding goes to the Australian Federal Police for training and the locating of an officer in Bangkok as well as for an awareness campaign and for victim support services. Not a single Australian dollar goes to independent research or to NGOs active in this field.

There are also a huge number of local NGOs in South-East Asia devoted to trafficking issues, offering welfare services, awareness raising campaigns and engaging in advocacy. Many conduct their own research, but based on budgetary and staffing constraints, the end products are limited. Larger NGOs, such as the Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW) branch in Bangkok and the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) in Manila, have been able to produce more comprehensive research due to their networks with local and international researchers. It is interesting to note that most of these NGOs are either feminist/women organizations or NGOs concerned with children; there is not a single NGO advocating for male victims of trafficking – which also explains the general focus on the trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation.

Very little research has been undertaken by trade unions. Only two reports could be identified: one written for the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions

(ICFTU) on the contributions of the union movement to the problem of commercial sexual exploitation of children (Grumiau, nd); the other for the ILO on the role of employers and workers' organizations in taking action against trafficking of children (Smith, 2001). Both reports draw on examples from the Asian region (Mekong subregion, Philippines, Nepal).

To sum up and conclude this section, it cannot be said that there is a general lack of research in the region investigated here. Source countries of trafficking tend to be better researched than countries of destination. This is most certainly related to UN and donor agencies' interests and funding opportunities. However, the research which has been conducted – as important as it is – remains fragmented and typically offers only a snapshot²⁵ in four main regards: (1) geographically (ethnographic work in one specific village or community; or one specific country without cross-locale or cross-national comparison); (2) typologically – i.e. one type of trafficking only (children or women and often in the context of sexual exploitation only); (3) periodical timing – one specific and short time period during which research is carried out (no longitudinal or life course analysis type of studies)²⁶ makes the identification of victims problematic as establishing networks and a relationship of trust is crucial to NGOs, government officials, and the victims themselves; this requires a lot of time;²⁷ (4) disciplinary terms – no interdisciplinary studies, using multi-methods, exist.²⁸ One recent study on women trafficked for sexual purposes in five countries (Raymond et al., 2002) is an exception to this, offering a multi-methods as well as an interdisciplinary approach by having a research team comprised of researchers with different disciplinary backgrounds. Trafficking is a dynamic phenomenon, but most research tends to be of a static rather than longitudinal nature (Marshall, 2001). Methods used are mostly qualitative involving the use of secondary data and interviews with government officials, NGO representatives, and a relatively small sample of individual victims, the latter reflecting the general difficulty of “accessing” victims of trafficking. Also, research on trafficking is rarely contextualized with other social problems whose research encounters similar problems with regard to the production of exact data, such as drug abuse, domestic violence, rape, child prostitution,²⁹ etc. Important lessons could be drawn from such studies.

Because of the snapshot nature of most research, contradictory findings emerge, particularly with regard to the extent of serious violence involved in trafficking. The report by Raymond et al. (2002) lists an extensive range of various types of violence experienced by trafficked women, whereas GPAT reports less severe forms of violence being the norm. This might be related to different contexts, i.e. to differing experiences in the source as well as destination countries and also to differing experiences by different types of trafficked victims.

Overall, it can be said that our qualitative understanding of dynamics, patterns, and impacts involved in trafficking – despite its sketchiness – has improved, but the problem of producing reliable statistical data (that would allow comparative analysis) still remains. Apart from “practical” reasons, the production of quantitative data is in many ways related to the definition of the problem and, thus, to the very nature of the problem.

A note on “gender research”

With men usually being treated as “smuggled” labour migrants and the trafficking category being reserved for women (and children), this clearly points to assumptions about the sexes and, thus, the need for a gendered analysis. “Gender” as such does not necessarily mean “women” only, but refers to women in relation to men. There is, however, a tendency in gender research to be centred on women and rarely on the two genders defined in relation to one another (Carling, 2001). Because the starting point in social scientific research has traditionally been men’s subject position, much of “gender” research has come to mean a focus on women with the quest to make women visible. This has been, and still is, a very important undertaking, but the move from “women per se” to “women in relation to men” has so far rarely been made which is reflected in the numerous empirical case studies hardly ever including male respondents. Even the concept of “victimhood” hardly ever includes men as potential victims of socio-economic pressures and structures leading to their being trafficked. In the context of trafficking research, it would, for instance, be valuable to gain insights into (female and male) local recruiters or brokers’ roles and the type of constraints they might encounter.³⁰ Similarly important would be a project on male customers of prostitutes to fully understand the demand for, and use of, paid sexual services. In this sense, gender has not sufficiently been approached as a “relational” concept.

A second problem area – as pointed out by Carling (2001) – is the generally held assumption that women-in-general are oppressed everywhere by men-in-general. However, gender relations are always mediated by other socially constructed categories such as class, age, “race”, and ethnicity. There are many different classes and nationalities of women, and they do not constitute a monolithic category (Piper and Roces, 2003). Hence, what is required is the examination of migrant/trafficked women vis-à-vis other women, such as their female employers (an issue raised by Anderson, 2001; Chin, 1997; and Macklin, 1994 in the context of domestic workers), female recruiters, female NGO representatives (raised by Cheng, 2002), and female politicians/government officials. We do not know the role, motivations, and constraints of female *mama-sans* (brothel or hostess club owners) and other female employers who are perpetrators of violent acts (such as female employers of domestic workers).

In other words, the “gender and trafficking” problem needs to be integrated into a larger socio-economic and cultural context of men-women relations and women-to-women relations. This perspective is also confirmed by a recently held session organized by the UN Commission on the Status of Women titled “The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality” held in March 2004. The emphasis is on considering “men and boys not just as beneficiaries of women’s work or holders of privilege or perpetrators of violence against women, but also explicitly as agents of change, participants in reform, and potential allies in the search for gender justice” (Connell, 2004: 2). This position is highly controversial within sections of the women’s movement fearing that “working with men and boys is diluting, diverting and even trivializing” women’s struggle (Wainaina, 2004: 3), but projects which include men and boys in their strategies to achieve gender equality have shown compelling reasons for involving male counterparts to move the empowerment of women forward (Wainaina, 2004: 3).

To sum up, there is in fact a wealth of documented experience, research, and analysis on sex work and sex trafficking of women and children, especially into and out of Thailand as well as the Mekong subregion. Studies cover a spectrum of trafficking issues: trends; causes; abusive practices; and policy and programme interventions by multilateral institutions, states, and NGOs. This might give the impression of an exhaustive treatment, but certain gaps remain. D’Cunha (in Raymond et al., 2002: 124), for instance, has pointed out that it is particularly “the nature of violence intrinsic to the institution of prostitution and sex trafficking” that begs further attention. In other words, it is the deconstruction of the sex and sexuality of prostitution for women and clients that remains inadequately addressed. Her own study contributes to the development of a deeper understanding of the terms “consent” or “choice” as well as the documentation of cumulative and related violations. Other gaps involve the socio-economic contexts of gender relations, showing the extent of constrained choices or “survival strategies” (to use D’Cunha’s term) of men and women involved in trafficking. Thus, we need more investigation into the pre-trafficking situation (evidence of child abuse, broken families, socio-economic pressures on men and women, etc.). In addition, it is also necessary to further research what happens after trafficked victims return to their country of origin.³¹

STATISTICAL DATA AND DEFINITIONS

Quantifying trafficking

It is a universally agreed upon fact that accurate figures are impossible to come by. One of the earlier studies on trafficking stated that finding reliable statistics

on the extent of trafficking is virtually impossible and attributed that to two main reasons: (1) lack of systematic research, and (2) lack of a precise, consistent, and unambiguous definition of the phenomenon (Wijers and Lap-Chew, 1997: 15). As a result, there are practical as well as definitional (or ideological) reasons involved in the problem of quantifying trafficking. On a practical level, when drawing parallels to undocumented migration and issues revolving around various forms of sexual violence in general (such as rape, domestic violence, incest), particularly in countries where talking about sexuality constitutes a strong taboo and legislation to address all forms of sexual violence are not in place, it is not surprising that accurate numbers are elusive. It is also a well-established fact that the under-reporting of any crime or illicit practices is a common problem everywhere in the world.³² It has also been shown that victims of trafficking do not report their experiences because they do not trust authorities – neither in their country of origin, nor at the destination (GPAT, 2003a). In addition, budgetary constraints in the source countries, sometimes confounded by the lack of experts, obstruct setting up the infrastructure needed to collect statistical data.

In a more specific context, recent studies carried out by GPAT of trafficked victims from the Philippines to destinations such as Malaysia, Italy, and Australia, have noted that reliable data on migrant smuggling and human trafficking are scarce. A recent Australian study also concludes that there is limited evidence available regarding the incidence and nature of human trafficking (David, 2000).

In the absence of reliable data, all that can be produced are estimates or “guesstimates”. And even there, a huge gap between government and NGO estimates is common, mainly because of definitional inconsistencies. Governments usually claim to base their estimates on the definition of trafficking as promoted by the UN which is based on the notion of initial intention, but most NGOs measure trafficking based on the outcome only. Even among NGOs, however, there is disagreement, typically reflecting their differing positions vis-à-vis prostitution or sex work. To illustrate this, the Australian case offers a good example: the Project Respect NGO estimates that up to 1,000 trafficked foreign women are in the Australian sex industry under contract at any one time, whereas another NGO, Scarlet Alliance, presents a much lower estimate of less than 400 foreign women in any one year. The figure of approximately 300 foreign women in the sex industry seems generally accepted, of whom a much smaller number is said to be in servitude, and thus fitting the UN definition of trafficking (Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Australian Crime Commission, 2004).

The low numbers quoted by governments also has to do with their reliance on the actual numbers of complaints (i.e. victims coming forward) which sig-

nificantly understates the problem (Carrington and Hearn, 2003) as lamented by NGOs. In addition, there are also intra-governmental discrepancies regarding figures as a result of the lack of coordination among the various ministries, as in Malaysia where the police are said to have one set of figures, while the Immigration Department has its own data which do not match.

Concerning governments' narrow definition of trafficking victims, scholars coming from a migration or general human rights' perspective have argued that the approach to, and interest in, trafficking on the part of destination countries' governments has to be seen in the context of the "politics of migration control" (Gallagher, 2001; Wong, forthcoming). This also explains, at least partially, the reluctance on the part of destination governments to broaden their definition of trafficking, and thus, the overall figures, as they do not want to be seen as lacking control of their borders. The situation in source countries is slightly different: governments do not want to admit to the large numbers of trafficked, and thus illegal, persons, mostly for diplomatic and/or political reasons. A high occurrence of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation is also seen as highly stigmatizing and embarrassing for source countries. Moreover, as argued by Jones (2000), sending countries are mainly interested in making money out of migrants (through charging recruitment and other fees) and hence do not want to officially recognize this as trafficking and, thus, as a criminal and moral matter that should be combated. At the same time, source countries have come under pressure (mostly exerted by the destination countries, and often through donor funding) to implement anti-trafficking initiatives. In Asia, this can be seen in the BALI process for instance.

This still leaves the widely observed problem of the absence of an agreed upon definition of trafficking. Despite the passage of the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and its three additional protocols, which establish a now widely accepted definition of trafficking, many fundamental questions remain unanswered at both the theoretical and practical levels (Gallagher, 2001).

It is interesting to note that despite the problems with establishing clear figures, the trafficking phenomenon has been described as being on the rise globally. In the context of Thailand, however, it has been noted that the number of trafficked victims is actually *decreasing*. On a positive note, this has been related to demographic changes and the drop in the overall birth rate, lowering the availability of children and young women for trafficking. These changes are somewhat connected to Thailand's overall socio-economic development in recent years, resulting (among others) in the improvement of education for women (Skeldon, 2000). On a negative note, this decrease has seen a corresponding increase in the number of foreign girls trafficked for sexual exploitation, the

majority from Burma, followed by Yunnan. The number of foreign children as beggars has also risen, mostly Cambodians (Archavanitkul, 1998).

Definitional issues – who is trafficked and what for?

The above section still leaves the issue unanswered as to why men are absent from official figures or “guesstimates” of trafficking. More and more studies seem to find that numerically speaking, trafficking for labour outside of the sex trade also constitutes a significant problem. David Feingold from UNESCO even goes so far as saying that approximately 90 per cent of trafficking in Indonesia is labour trafficking (Silverman, 2004).³³ Existing research on trafficking in children also finds that more children are trafficked for labour than sexual exploitation. “Trafficking for labour” clearly includes men and women, boys and girls. This means that there is evidence to support the argument for an all-inclusive, broad definition of trafficking going beyond sexual exploitation alone.

To include men and women into trafficking for non-sex work, however, would in law enforcement terms (regarding anti-trafficking laws) mean that larger numbers than currently acknowledged, or assumed, would be involved, potentially creating a bigger administrative and budgetary burden than at present. It is highly unlikely that destination countries would agree to this. Hence, a narrow approach focusing on “worst forms” seems more realistic in legalistic terms. There is no doubt that trafficking in the context of sexual exploitation constitutes the worst form of trafficking. In this regard, one can draw a parallel to the debate on child labour, as suggested by Skeldon (2000): there are many forms of child labour, more or less exploitative, happening in specific socio-economic contexts in which a total ban on child labour would actually have detrimental effects unless alternative opportunities for income generation are created. Hence, it is the worst forms of child labour that need tackling. Similarly, it is the worst forms of trafficking that require urgent attention and that can realistically be met by legislative means. If we take trafficking for sexual exploitation as the worst form, and given that gender inequality is one of the overarching root causes (Brown, 2001; Dargan, 2003), the interacting socio-economic and political structures, processes, and relationships involved in trafficked women’s experiences need to be addressed.³⁴

Law enforcers’ approach to identifying victims

A narrow approach to the enforcement of anti-trafficking legislation (in the sense of “worst forms”), however, does not automatically mean a narrow approach to policy making on trafficking in general. To address the root causes of trafficking and to prevent re-trafficking, a comprehensive, multi-layered

approach is required tailor-made to the specific circumstances in the source and destination countries. As it stands, however, this is not happening.

Considering that receiving governments' number one priority is illegal immigration, it does not come as a surprise that victims of trafficking tend to be prosecuted under Immigration Acts, as in Malaysia, Singapore, and Australia until recently. This is reflected in the fact that the lead agencies responsible for smuggling and trafficking are typically immigration departments or home affairs departments, and never Ministries of Labour which would focus on the monitoring of labour standards at work sites rather the visa status of the foreign worker. The common practice of giving priority to the victims' immigration status, thus, results in neglect for the work-related abuses they have endured.

In the context of the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (more widely signed or ratified than the migrant worker specific ILO or UN conventions), Gallagher argues that the regime established by this instrument (whereby trafficked persons are accorded greater protection and therefore impose greater financial and administrative burden than smuggled migrants) creates a clear incentive for national authorities to identify irregular migrants as smuggled rather than trafficked. In addition, neither the protocol on smuggling nor the one dealing with trafficking provides clear guidance on the issue of identification. Gallagher refers to this as a "significant, and no doubt, deliberate weakness" (2001: 1000). According to the Advisory Council of Jurists of the Asia Pacific Forum (2002), international law generally does not articulate the nature and extent of the obligation of states to identify trafficked persons. Article 18 of the 1949 Trafficking Convention requires states to have a declaration taken from aliens who are prostitutes in order to establish their identity and civil status. Although not explicitly articulated, the requirement to identify trafficked persons is implicit in the provisions of the Trafficking Protocol (art. 6, 9, 13). But according to Gallagher (2001), the definition of smuggling in the Smuggling Protocol is so broad that it can be applied to all irregular migrants whose transport has been facilitated. This leaves only a small number of trafficked persons who enter the destination country legally who would not be considered smuggled migrants. It is individual states who retain the capacity to decide who is smuggled and who is trafficked, and there is no independent institution in charge of this.

Even if the UN definition of trafficking was to be imposed as the golden rule, it could be argued that the overall size of the problem would be even lower than stated by (destination) governments' estimates. The primary reason for this is that the definition could be interpreted as being initiation-based – that is, what the intention of the recruiter or broker was at the time when the recruitment or transport was transacted. Many cases of alleged trafficking, however, are cases

of contract substitution, and accordingly are subject to civil, not criminal remedies, and thus they fall out of the trafficking basket. It is extremely difficult to prove this initial intention. According to this interpretation, the number of trafficked victims would be even smaller than commonly acknowledged or assumed.³⁵

In Australia where the government has passed a AUS\$ 20 million anti-trafficking package, increased training and awareness among law enforcers has in fact taken place. It is nonetheless difficult to prove the various criminal offences as stipulated by the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. To identify a woman as a victim of trafficking, the individual has to come forward and claim to be such. Compliance raids on brothels tend to be rather unsuccessful in identifying victims as they (1) can only be carried out if serious suspicion of the involvement of illegal migrants exists,³⁶ and (2) the women have to be seen as “working” (i.e. offering their services and are hence seen as breaching the conditions of their visa), which is difficult as most brothel owners are warned prior to such raids being carried out and usually manage to hide the women. Even when a woman is “found” or comes forward, prosecution is difficult because most women knew what sort of work they would be doing, that they would be in the country for a short while, and incurring some sort of debt. To capture the issue of debt bondage and slavery-like conditions (no freedom of movement, unexpected increase of the debts, no control over the number and choice of customers), the law must be tightened.

Other countries in the region under discussion have also passed anti-trafficking legislation, most notably the Philippines and more recently Thailand, but it remains to be seen how well such laws are implemented.³⁷ All of this points to serious limitations of a pure law enforcement approach – which has been highlighted by researchers, such as Schloenhardt, who writes that “criminal law and its enforcement cannot substitute the structural and political changes that are necessary to address the more fundamental causes of human trafficking” (2000). In addition, all existing anti-trafficking legislative efforts narrow the scope of trafficking victims to women and children for the purpose of sexual exploitation. No government is seriously interested in tracking down trafficked victims in construction, agriculture, factories, or any other sector.³⁸

As touched upon above, the migration framework to trafficking points to factors that compels individuals to leave their community or country of origin. The human rights framework is concerned with the lack of appropriate and adequate legal structure that criminalizes the traffickers rather than the trafficked, protects the human rights of the trafficked, and provides support to the victims (Ucrarer, 1999). As the situation in South-East Asia (as elsewhere) has

shown, these two perspectives – migration and human rights – need to be linked. Thus, any policy approach that uses only one will be ineffective.

Another issue that has implications for the identification of victims is an issue that has appeared in Malaysia: the link of missing persons and trafficking. In Malaysia, figures obtained from the police on missing persons in 2003 show that the majority were female between the ages of ten and 17, with 1,405 cases reported. Of that, 983 were found. Although there is no conclusive evidence, among the three possible scenarios trafficking constitutes one. A UNICEF spokesperson is quoted as commenting on the issue of “untraceable children” that “in some places, the child may never have been registered at birth so there is no official record of their existence. Children without an official name and age are very vulnerable to exploitative labour, including prostitution. Since they have no birth record, they cannot be registered as “missing.”³⁹ The issue of registration and citizenship provided at birth should thus be a clear right. This is also an important case.

All of this shows that a pure “law enforcement” perspective is far too narrow to address the multi-layered issues implicated in trafficking. A comprehensive rights-based approach might prove far more useful.

Problems encountered in researching trafficking

Limitations and/or problems experienced when researching trafficking are clearly linked to the nature of trafficking involving many practices deemed illegal and illicit. This relates first and foremost to the difficulties that are encountered when attempting to locate trafficking victims – a problem remarked upon in many studies, including those that involve local researchers (GPAT, 2003a, 2003b; Caouette and Saito, 1999; Darwin et al., 2003; Raymond et al., 2002). Another serious issue is the uncooperative stance taken by many governments which do not disclose any information on trafficking (for Indonesia e.g., see Raymond et al., 2002; it is in fact noted that the Indonesian Government might not even collect such data).

GPAT (2003b) listed in its final report the major problems identified during its course of study as follows:

- lack of agreement or confusion on the definition of “trafficking”,
- lack of recognition or denial of the problem coupled with criminalization of the victim.

Those two go hand-in-hand. Due to the fact that there are no anti-trafficking laws in many countries under study,⁴⁰ or even where they exist implementation

remains a problem, it is not surprising that individuals working within governmental bureaucracies either have difficulty recognizing this problem or are reluctant to take concrete action. In addition, unsympathetic attitudes on the part of government officials towards trafficking victims, to different degrees according to country context or parts of a country, contribute to the non-recognition of the nature of this problem.

In addition, the following issues aggravate the situation:

- lack of government experts or focal points in destination countries,
- difficulty in accessing case files and victims,
- limited validity and quality of data.

This relates, for instance, to the interviews with individual victims: if they were conducted with women “still under the control of the sex clubs”, it is impossible for researchers to use structured questionnaires. When interviews are conducted with “returnees” or repatriated victims, the data might be skewed the more time has passed since returning. In addition, the samples are often relatively small, without any large-scale quantitative type of surveys done. Lacking expertise in both the research field and within government agencies also contributes to the list of problems.

The lack of accurate statistics available on the magnitude of human trafficking is closely related to the general problems identified when researching trafficking:

- countries often lack mechanisms for registration and data collection;
- the use of different definitions and laws, or the lack thereof, with respect to trafficking;
- much of the trafficking in human beings takes place within communities and countries; border control checks are thus useless against this form of trafficking (all three points were listed in GPAT’s final report, 2003b).

But the above is only part of the larger story regarding problems with researching trafficking.

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE? CONCLUDING REMARKS

Despite the improvement of our qualitative understanding of the causes, patterns, and processes involved in trafficking, a number of gaps in our knowledge remain. Quantifying the extent of trafficking is an impossible task, largely based upon the use of inconsistent definitions and the very nature of trafficking itself.

What the review of existing literature and interviews with policy makers and law enforcers have shown is that the chasms between an all-inclusive conceptualization of trafficking and the narrow definition of legalistic approaches cannot easily be wedded. To overcome this situation and move forward, it is the very root causes of trafficking that need to be placed at the centre of analysis and policy making. To do so, it is not only empirical gaps that are left to be filled, but conceptual and methodological innovations are also needed.

To move beyond the “snapshot type” of existing research as well as beyond an ideologically dividing and criminalizing discourse on trafficking, new conceptual tools and methodologies are needed to capture the complexities of the “trafficking” phenomenon which would lead to a set of principles offering a new way of thinking about trafficking and moving toward a new normative agenda. As indicated above, the two approaches to trafficking (1) trafficking for sexual exploitation and (2) irregular migration have dominated the conceptual debate to date and have reached an impasse. This debate can only be moved forward in a meaningful manner (and yield important policy recommendations) if it concentrated on addressing the root causes of trafficking by establishing a link between internal and international trafficking – something which has largely been neglected. This neglect underpins the above argument that much trafficking research is donor-driven and thus first and foremost concerned with illegal migration. To address the root causes means to address issues with development in general and social development in specific. This would require engagement with the development literature and gendered perspectives thereof. To take this matter to a higher level of abstraction, the fairly recent concept of “human security” is suggested here as a normative framework that could shape future research on trafficking, conceptually and empirically.

The concept of “human security” was first introduced by UNDP in its 1994 Human Development Report and has since been elaborated on by the Commission on Human Security (CHS, 2003) as well as by the ILO (2004), albeit with a focus on economic security. The objective of the CHS was to generate a dialogue between the human development and human security communities to develop a practical policy agenda to examine how building human security is an essential contribution to the development process. As a consequence, in recent years, the debate has shifted as both security and development actors have been strongly encouraged, and some have actually begun, to incorporate a human dimension into their policies to expand the debate from a near-exclusive focus on economic growth and development to incorporate issues such as social and human aspects of development and politico-economic governance.

In the specific context of human trafficking, the concept of human security should best focus on the aspect of *in*security. This would allow for an inte-

grated approach to the three major types of migration that lead to many abusive and exploitative practices: (1) undocumented labour, (2) refugee migration, and (3) human trafficking. A future research agenda should be built around the broad objective of investigating human insecurity as the root cause leading to migration (and thus focus on countries of origin). One such dimension to this is discrimination on the basis of gender. Gender-specific economic, social, and cultural insecurities explain to a great extent different motivations to, and modes of, migration. For instance, there is some evidence that in the case of women, it is often not purely economic hardship as such that leads to migration and trafficking, but also such aspects as violent marriages or family relations and stigmatized status as a widow or single mother. This also shows that inadequate social policy and social welfare provisioning is an important source of insecurity. A team of development, social policy, and (internal and international) migration experts need to get together to draft a research project that maps and analyses various forms of migration from a regional perspective to investigate the gendered patterns and to establish indicators of insecurity causing migratory movements of vulnerable people. This could yield data on the worst forms of trafficking that would inform policy making, but would also help to address other precarious scenarios of migration.

NOTES

1. I would like to sincerely thank all those informants who kindly agreed to be interviewed and/or to assist via e-mail in the collection of materials and data for this report. This was partly only possible with the help of other colleagues in identifying key persons and organizations. My gratitude, therefore, goes to Professor Richard Bedford (University of Waikato, New Zealand), Dr. Riwanto Tirtosudarmo (LIPI, Jakarta), Dr. Dang Anh (Department of Sociology, Hanoi), Mr. Chan Sophal (CDRI, Phnom Penh), Ms. Kathy Richards (ACFID, Canberra), and Dr. Sallie Yeah (RMIT, Melbourne). A special "thank you" also goes to all those dedicated NGO representatives who kindly took the time to reply to my e-mails and to put me in touch with other NGOs or individuals. I also would like to extend my gratitude to Ms. Judy Hemming for her research assistance. Last but not least, I have benefited from the useful comments of two anonymous referees.
2. To what extent these are informed by thorough research is of course a different matter.
3. This statement was made by the regional director for the East Asia and Pacific region of UNICEF See www.emedia.com.my/Current_News/MM/Sunday/Frontpage/20040418082107 (18 April 2004).
4. Such as the Asia Pacific Consultation, the Manila Process, the BALI process, workshops run by the Mekong Regional Law Centre, potentially a new ASEAN

Trafficking project sponsored by AusAID, various one-off initiatives addressing irregular migration, ARIAT, Asia Pacific Seminar of Experts on Migrants and Trafficking; moves continue to put trafficking onto the agenda of regional forums such as APEC and ASEM.

5. Comprised of six countries: Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam.
6. Personal conversation with IOM office in Canberra, April 2004.
7. This was pointed out by an Australian Federal Police agent (personal conversation, April 2004).
8. This is an Australian-Indonesian initiative launched in 2002 and refers to the Regional Ministerial Conference on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime in Bali which have taken place twice. The countries covered by the survey questionnaire are: Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Laos, Fiji Islands, and Myanmar. Viet Nam and Cambodia seem to have not replied to the questionnaire as their responses were unavailable.
9. In Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China, for example, there were several attempts by the government to lower the minimum wage guaranteed to domestic workers by law.
10. I owe this information to Mr. Mizanur Rahman whose PhD thesis on Bangladeshi workers in Singapore will soon be finalized (National University of Singapore).
11. Trafficking of children for the purpose of camel jockeys seems to be limited to South Asian children taken to the Middle East and thus not a phenomenon that occurs in South-East Asia.
12. This bibliography, however, was compiled in 2001 while, or just before, crucial publications on Australia have been produced. See e.g. Meaker, in Thorbeck (2002), Carrington and Hearn, 2003; David, 2000; Tailby, no date.
13. See also "Bibliography of Trafficking" compiled by Yukiko Nakajima, *Violence Against Women Online Resources*, <http://www.vaw.umn.edu>, 2002.
14. E-mail communication with a staff member, March 2004.
15. This information comes from Migrant Care in Jakarta, received through e-mail communication in April 2004.
16. I conducted these interviews in April 2003 in connection with a project on migrant workers' rights.
17. This has been verbally transmitted to me by NGOs in Indonesia and the Philippines.
18. In this context, a note on the US State Department's TIP report seems appropriate. Since the passage of the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act 2000, the State Department is required to produce an annual report on all UN countries on the state of anti-trafficking initiatives by classifying countries according to a three tier system. Critical voices have commented upon this report being coloured by the political interests of the United States and not at all approached by any considerations or sensitivity for gender. But because classification in the bottom tier results in economic sanctions, countries are compelled to comply with US demands. However, that does not necessarily result in policies with positive outcomes for the victims,

or potential victims. For a detailed critique, see www.hrw.org/press/2003/06/us062703ltr.htm.

19. For more detail, see <http://www.unescap.org/wid/04widresources/03traffick/trafficking-directory-updated.pdf>.
20. See www.unescobkk.org/culture/trafficking.
21. Personal conversation with Vietnamese researcher, Hanoi, April 2002.
22. Critical voices in a recent trafficking project involving the Philippines have indicated their surprise over the choice of the Philippines where there is very little evidence of trafficking (as defined by the UN) as opposed to other countries in this region where trafficking might be a more serious problem (personal communication with researchers, March 2004).
23. Claim made by a Vietnamese researcher involved in the Vietnamese component of this project (March 2002).
24. Claim made by a Vietnamese researcher involved in the Vietnamese component of this project (March 2002).
25. This has also been referred to as “quick and dirty” studies by social researchers (Kelly, 2002).
26. One exception is Kinsey Dinan’s report on Thai women in Japan, written for Human Rights Watch. This report covers the period from 1994 to 1999 and points to changes and new developments.
27. Some studies have been able to build upon trust relationships due to the researchers’ long-term involvement in NGO work, etc. (Archavanitkul, 1998).
28. The need for a multidisciplinary approach has also been pointed out by Van Impe (2000).
29. As for example the study by Grant et al. (2001).
30. Research on recruitment agencies in Sri Lanka, e.g. has shown that such agencies often go broke because they do not receive payments of debts by migrants (personal conversation with the researcher, November 2003).
31. I owe this last point to Dr. Sallie Yeah (RMIT, Melbourne) who has been involved in drafting a research project with IOM in Manila on this very issue.
32. This under-reporting is said to amount to at least 30 per cent (Grant et al., 2001).
33. This can be found at <http://japan.usembassy.gov/e/p/tp-20030912b3.html>, 14 April 2004.
34. For a more detailed discussion of these gendered structures, processes, and relationships, see e.g. D’Cunha (in Raymond et al., 2002) and a case study on West Java done for ICMC Indonesia, no date.
35. This information is based on an e-mail exchange (April 2004) with a data and methodology expert (who prefers to remain anonymous) who was involved in assessing trafficking projects in South-East Asia and Australia.
36. As sex work as such is legalized in most Australian states, the criminal offence is illegal immigration only.
37. For a more detailed discussion, see Dixon and Piper, 2004.
38. A recent initiative in the Mekong Subregion called COMMIT (Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative Against Trafficking), assisted by UNIAP, takes a comprehensive view on human trafficking “including trafficking for all end

- purposes and involving women, children and men". It remains to be seen, however, how this will be realized and implemented.
39. Same as above: www.emedia.com.my/Current_News/MM/Sunday/Frontpage/20040418082107 (18 April 2004).
40. As evident from a recent survey of legislation in place done as part of the BALI process.

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