

Abstract

Trafficking in persons (TIP) is one of the fastest growing illegal trades, yet there is very little documented evidence on the problem, particularly in developing countries. Motivated by this lack of information, this paper analyses the TIP problem in Kenya, focusing on its nature, forms, incidence and impact on the labour market. It also investigates the role of stakeholders in fighting TIP. Based on interviews with 25 TIP victims selected from Mombasa, Nairobi and Naivasha, and with 62 organisations, it was found that despite existence and increase in the number of TIP cases in Kenya, there is no specific government legislation to combat the problem nor structured programmes on rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration of its victims into the society. The most vulnerable groups to TIP in Kenya are women, mostly trafficked for forced labour and prostitution. TIP is perpetuated through deception by relatives, employment agencies, trafficking syndicates, and illegal child adoption. The key factors contributing to TIP in Kenya are poverty, better life syndrome, tourism, corruption, lack of anti-trafficking legislation and weak enforcement of immigration laws. TIP impacts negatively on trade unions and labour markets in various ways including unfair wages, loss of skilled labour, and weakened bargaining and organising power of trade unions. Efforts to discourage TIP by stakeholders are hampered by the lack of a specific policy and absence of anti-trafficking legislation. The paper concludes with policy recommendations.