Human Trafficking in East Asia: Current Trends, Data Collection, and Knowledge Gaps

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INTRODUCTION

Migration in Asia is dynamic and complex, especially intraregional movement of people. The volume of migration flows in the region has dramatically increased over the decades in terms of the overall number of migrants hosted by East Asian countries. The increase is alarming because some 30 to 40 per cent of total migration takes place through unregulated channels (Wickramasekera, 2002). It is unknown how much of this migration flow is human trafficking. However, various studies and continuous media reports suggest that human trafficking is widespread throughout the region and on the rise.¹

Trafficking in persons in East Asia has not been widely studied.² This is rather curious because Japan, for example, has a large sex industry employing a significant number of non-Japanese women. As I will discuss later, there are many challenges in conducting research on human trafficking in the region. As a result, literature on the subject, including research-based publications, is rather limited, particularly in comparison with the number of publications on trafficking in South-East and South Asia. Instead, media reports and the United Nations (UN) and other agencies’ intervention-oriented studies dominate the literature on East Asian trafficking. Such studies tend to focus on trafficking in women and children for sexual exploitation and highlight serious violations of human rights. Even though these studies are not empirically based and do not present survey results, they still improve the understanding of the trafficking processes, their underlying causes, and impacts on the trafficked persons.

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Accordingly, this paper will examine the general trends in human trafficking reported in East Asia from rather disparate sources, identify the main issues and problems raised in the existing information sources, and discuss data collection, research activities, and knowledge gaps.

East Asia includes the People’s Republic of China (hereafter referred to as China), Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China (SAR), Macao SAR, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (hereafter North Korea), Japan, Mongolia, and the Republic of Korea (hereafter South Korea), according to the classification of world regions in the \textit{UN International Migration Report 2002}. However, Taiwan Province of China (POC), Macao SAR, and Mongolia are not discussed beyond occasional mention, as data on these areas are almost non-existent.

\textbf{INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND WOMEN IN ASIA}

For the past two decades, Asia has been characterized by the rapid growth of a market-driven intraregional migration. The end of the cold war, the onset of economic development in China, and the growing global market integration of the region, meant that the more developed parts of Asia, including Hong Kong SAR, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan POC started to experience severe labour shortages. While none of these governments allow permanent settlement per se,\textsuperscript{4} the regional inflows of migrant workers have become firmly established in these countries.

The destination countries of East Asia have fairly restrictive immigration policies, particularly toward the unskilled. Neither Japan nor South Korea allow unskilled foreign workers to hold even short-term jobs.\textsuperscript{5} These restrictive policies, coupled with the governments’ lack of capacity to manage migration, left the organization of migration in Asia largely to the private sector.

Much of the earlier labour migration flows in Asia included unskilled men. However, starting in the 1990s, the high proportion of women in contract migration became one of the distinctive characteristics of migration in the region (Lim and Oishi, 1996). In the mid-1990s, about 1.5 million Asian women were working abroad both legally and irregularly (Asis, 2002). Overall, female migration in Asia also increased during this period. By 2000, it was estimated that the number of female migrants surpassed that of male migrants in East and South-East Asia (5 million versus 4.9 million). Hence, approximately half of the migrants in East and South-East Asia are women. In South Asia, the corresponding rate is 44 per cent (Zlotnik, 2003), although not all of these women are migrant workers. The flows of female migration show geographical and sectoral concentration. The majority of female migrants are from a rather small number of countries,
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namely the Philippines, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka. The female migrants are employed predominantly in such unprotected sectors as entertainment and domestic services. It is estimated that about 2 million women from South and South-East Asia work overseas as domestic helpers (Hugo, 1998), and the flow of female entertainers has also grown in recent years, as will be discussed in subsequent sections. These facts have raised much concern.

Against this backdrop, trafficking in women and children is considered to be increasing in the region. The routes, destinations, and modes of trafficking are fairly well known and stories of corruption among public officials and local authorities are common. However, “trafficking” presents a particular challenge to researchers, as the identification of cases is far from obvious, even after the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime provided some conceptual boundaries.

There is a certain pattern to the processes in which either legal male migrants or trafficked women are recruited, transported, and possibly exploited by sets of brokers in both the countries of origin and destination. As Skeldon (2000) observes, there is a “continuum of facilitation” ranging from fairly transparent recruitment at one end to the flow through networks tightly controlled by organized criminal groups at the other.

Both labour migration and trafficking fall between two ends of the continuum, although the latter admittedly involves more illegal practices and exploitation. In addition, unlike “smuggling”, which necessarily involves border crossings, “trafficking” also includes internal movement of trafficked persons per the UN Convention. Furthermore, the difficulties of separating trafficking from other forms of migration becomes even more problematic, when we consider the international flows of adopted children and brides who have been abducted from their communities. China is an example of this conundrum as internal bride trafficking has been frequently reported, while systematic research on these diverse forms of trafficking is sorely lacking. “Traditional” bride prices defy any automatic application of concepts such as “profit”.

Thus, it is difficult in a practical sense to isolate the movement of trafficked persons, but available information indicates a number of lasting patterns of migrant trafficking within the Asian regions and some variation by subregions (IOM, 2001).

While the UN definition is difficult to absorb, the three core elements of the definition are the activity, the means, and the purpose, where: (1) The activity refers to some kind of movement either within or across borders; (2) The means
relate to the involvement of some form of coercion or deception, and (3) the purpose is the ultimate exploitation for profit of a person and that person’s loss of self-determination (IOM, 2004a).

As long as these elements are present, I have included various forms of trafficking including forced marriage, in this review. Furthermore, although some elements of smuggling and trafficking are similar, it is useful to make a conceptual distinction for analytical purposes: unlike smugglers, the trafficker has a vested interest in their victims’ arrival, hence the payment after the victims have reached the end of the process where she or he is about to be exploited.

In East Asia, countries with well-developed sex industries, including Japan, South Korea, and Hong Kong SAR, are destinations for women from the Philippines, Thailand, several Commonwealth of Independent States (hereafter CIS) countries, Eastern European countries, and South American countries. Within China, a large number of women and children are trafficked for forced marriage or, in the case of infant boys, for adoption. Reportedly, some rural Chinese women and children in southern China are trafficked cross-border to work in the sex industry in Thailand and Malaysia.

There is also increased movement between Asia and other regions; IOM field offices report Moldovan and Romanian women stranded in Cambodia, Peruvian women stranded in South Korea, and Colombian women stranded in Thailand, and even Sri Lankan migrants stranded in Central Asia.

**RESEARCH ON TRAFFICKING IN EAST ASIA**

Despite the reported growth of trafficking in the world, there are very few indicators that can dependably gauge this activity. Apart from the US Department of State’s *Trafficking in Persons* (TIP) report, our literature review suggests that newspaper articles remain the most frequently cited source of information on trafficking in East Asia. There is neither a comprehensive regional report that examines the trafficking situation in the East Asian region as a whole, nor any reputable national reports that can be reviewed and critically evaluated. Needless to say, there is an urgent need to systematically collect reliable indicators of trafficking in the region.

A literature review indicates that most studies on trafficking are qualitative. The few existing surveys (see references) are based on small samples and include participants referred by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These surveys highlight multiple vulnerabilities trafficking persons face such as
deception, abduction, sexual exploitation, forced labour, domestic servitude, forced marriage, confinement, exposure to life-threatening conditions, including sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), HIV/AIDS, or abuse at the hands of the authorities.

**Information sources**

The following section includes a brief description of materials examined for this paper. This listing illustrates the varied nature of available sources of information on this topic.

*Country narratives* from: (1) the US Department of State’s TIP report; (2) UN reports, including publications by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime; and (3) NGOs, such as Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), and the Protection Project.

*Media reports* were also collected: for China, 44 media reports between the years 1995 and 2003 were analysed. Thirteen of the articles were printed in 2003, 20 in 2002, six in 2001, two in 2000, and one each in 1999, 1997, and 1995. Media reports principally came from Agence France Presse (8), the Associated Press (5), and the Deutsche Presse Agentur (7); for Japan, 39 media reports between the years 1997 and 2003 were included in our review. Twenty-five of the articles were printed in 2003, 11 in 2002, and two each in 1999 and in 1997. Media reports principally came from Agence France Presse (4), Bangkok Post (5), and The Japan Times (4), and the Associated Press (1); and for South Korea, 42 media reports between the years 1994 and 2003 with eight articles from 2003, 24 from 2002, three from 2001, three from 2000 and one each from 1999, 1998, and 1994 were analysed. Media reports principally came from the Korean Times (8), the Korea Herald (7), Agence France Presse (3), and the Associated Press (4). Finally, several media reports on the rest of the region were also collected.

Reports by intergovernmental organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Human Rights Watch constitute the majority of the reports on trafficking in East Asia, with the exception of the South Korean case where we found rather significant survey results. Reports specific to particular countries in the region are summarized below.

**China**

(1) International Labour Organization (2002): as of this writing, this is the only available report on a situation within China based on a survey. However, this
report only discusses two counties of one province in southern China, i.e. Jiangcheng County and Menghai County in Yunnan province; (2) UNICEF (2001): this report also discusses the forced marriage and adoption in southern China.

**Hong Kong SAR**

(1) Emerton (2001): this is one of the first reports on trafficking in the area and established the existence of the problem by reviewing reported cases. It also extensively discusses local as well as international laws related to trafficking and provides information on policy approaches taken by the Hong Kong SAR authorities; (2) Emerton and Petersen (2003): this paper discusses human rights violations of Filipino women in the Hong Kong SAR sex industry. It provides comparative information vis-à-vis Filipino women in similar situation in South Korea and Japan.

**Japan**

The main points of discussion in this paper are drawn from the following reports: Dinan (2002); Human Rights Watch (2000); Molina (2001), which has a detailed description on the organization of the trafficking from Colombia to Japan; Caouette and Saito (1999); and IOM (1997). These publications are fairly comprehensive and present findings from empirical research. The last two reports are based on surveys among the returnees in the Philippines and Thailand, respectively. The information is somewhat dated and the samples are small (i.e. 100 for the Filipinas and 55 for the Thai women).

**South Korea**

(1) Seol et al. (2003): this research is based on a survey and in-depth interviews, funded by the South Korean Government, and conducted by local university-based researchers; (2) Lee (2002): this is the first English-language report reviewing the subject.

The above reports cover trafficking trends, causes and impacts, and a host of related issues in East Asia. Most of them touch on legal aspects, some more than others (e.g. Human Rights Watch, 2000; Emerton, 2001). To date, there is no report or a systematic evaluation on programme interventions made by governments, NGOs, and/or international organizations.

**Research methods employed**

The majority of work on trafficking in East Asia is based on interviews with law enforcement agents, local NGOs, and a limited number of trafficked persons.
Most reports identified limited access to trafficked persons as the major obstacle in conducting research. Involving local researchers, NGOs, and gaining support from local communities are identified as critical in facilitating access to even the smallest groups of trafficked persons. The two reports on trafficking to Japan (IOM, 1997; Caouette and Saito, 1999) are based on interviews with returnees, Filipina and Thai, respectively. However, the information elicited from these victims may be outdated given the lapse of time.

Caouette and Saito (1999) used ethnographic research methods to conduct their study. It is worthwhile mentioning that the researchers, Thai and Japanese respectively, paid much attention to establishing trust with the trafficked women so that confidential information could be shared. Also, with the help of focus group discussions and participatory observation, the researchers were able to study both the trafficking and the reintegration processes. However, the sample size was very small and included Thai women from two provinces of northern Thailand. The sample size problem can be partially mitigated by using multiple methodologies and different data sources. A recently completed research project supported by the Ministry of Gender Equality of South Korea seems to be a notable exception among this body of research in that it did indeed use multiple methods including in-depth interview, survey, and participatory observation (Seol et al., 2003).

In the Korean study, a team of social scientists including a migration specialist and a women’s studies professor carried out research on female migrants in the sex industry in South Korea, which is principally a country of destination. The study has a relatively large sample size (195 trafficked persons) and applies various research methods, including in-depth interviews with 32 trafficked persons and participant observation by trained anthropologists. In addition, the research included a survey of more than 1,000 South Korean men, potential users of sexual services provided by trafficked persons. In addition, the research team carried out a series of interviews with those who returned to the Philippines to examine the reintegration issues.

This study is by far the largest research effort in the region, and is notable for pointing out research challenges, including access to trafficked persons. While Philippine women with entertainment visas live mostly around the US military bases, women from Russia or the CIS countries are scattered throughout the country working in bars frequented by South Korean men. The former group is relatively proficient in English, hence more is known about these women. However, both Lee (2002) and Seol et al. (2003) found that the latter group is larger and faster growing. Furthermore, the study pointed out that numerically smaller groups of trafficked women, without an informal network of their compatriots, were less accessible to the research team.
The study did not include ethnic Koreans from China who enter the country with various visitor visas or possibly without proper documents and work in such places as karaoke joints and massage parlours, allegedly providing sexual services. They are physically impossible to differentiate from other South Koreans and linguistically difficult to identify. Local activists argue that their working conditions are just as exploitative as those of the Philippine and Russian women and should therefore be counted as the victims of trafficking. However, practical difficulties prevented the study team to include this group in their sample.

As laudable as this research effort is, the resulting report has several limitations and ambiguities. For example, the report does not assess how many women are indeed working in exploitative conditions. The report simply indicates that there are cases in which women entered the industry knowingly without being forced and experience few problems.

While the study managed to identify a large number of trafficked persons and carried out in-depth interviews, it failed to examine the critical number of court cases referred to by the Ministry of Justice in response to the 2001 TIP Report’s Tier 3 rating (Lee, 2002). The study does, however, examine three court cases and make relevant recommendations.

Additionally, the research did not include discussion of South Korean women reportedly trafficked to Japan and the United States. The Government’s position vis-à-vis this group of women remains ambivalent, as the South Korean women are believed to be fully aware of their involvement in the sex industry at destination and their “criminal” acts occur outside the South Korean sovereign territory. It remains to be seen how these research findings will inform the Government’s future counter-trafficking activities by, for example, providing an operationalized definition of trafficking.

TRAFFICKING IN EAST ASIA – MAIN ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

The flows of trafficked persons throughout the region are numerous and complex. In reality, there is much more diversity in terms of trafficking typologies and different levels of organized crime involvement, and varying degrees of consent and complicity. Based on a thorough review of data, studies, reports, etc., some generalizations can be made about the scale and routes, forms of exploitation, causes in origin and destination countries, trafficking process, and traffickers.
Scale and routes

Given the clandestine nature of the phenomenon, calculating estimates on the scale of trafficking is next to impossible. However, some direct as well as indirect indicators\(^{10}\) are available, including police records and the number of visas issued to those working in entertainment industries, and useful in providing rough estimates of the possible scale of the trafficking in the region. Needless to say, however, the former are revealing only to the extent that the number indicates, while the latter does not mean every person with such a visa was trafficked.

As for China, according to a news-clip reported in *Asian Migration News* (2004), statistics from the Public Security Ministry of the Chinese Government show that between 2001 and 2003, the police resolved 20,360 cases of trafficking in women and children, arrested 22,018 traffickers, and freed 42,215 kidnapped women and children.

As for South Korea, the Government reported 100 cases in the years 2000 and 2001 (Lee, 2002). While these cases have not been available for research, a recent study reviewed three such cases and identified problems that prevent trafficked persons from pursuing legal recourse (Seol et al., 2003). Emerton (2001) also examined court cases in addition to Hong Kong SAR’s legal environment vis-à-vis trafficking. However, the involved numbers were rather small and did not show any tendency to either increase or decrease.

Both Japan and South Korea have a visa category for entertainers. This has been widely known to be a legal channel that is abused for trafficking women for sexual exploitation. In Japan, the entertainment visa is authorized under the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition law, while in South Korea it is made available through the provisions of the Departure and Arrival Control Act. In both cases, entertainment visa holders are barred from working as hosts or hostesses at establishments serving alcohol as well as those allowing for a direct contact with customers. However, women entering Japan and South Korea on entertainment visas not only work in the sex industry but also overstay and become irregular migrants.\(^{11}\) The governments of both countries consider these women criminals; these views have met with much criticism from local as well as international activists (Dinan, 2002).

According to Immigration Bureau Statistics, Japan approved 118,000 applications in 2001 (*Kyodo News Service*, 2002), and 123,322 in 2002 (*Daily Yomiuri*, 2003; for earlier statistics, see Sellek, 1996) under the entertainment visa category. Reportedly, in both years, 60 per cent of the applicants were Filipinas. The equivalent for South Korea is 5,092 in 2001 and 5,285 in 2002 (Seol et al., 2003).
The extent to which female entertainers are involved in the sex industry and suffer from human rights abuse and labour exploitation has not been established. Nevertheless, a recent study conducted by Seol et al. (2003) with 200 cases, indicates that in South Korea the majority of these women are indeed being exploited, including being sexually exploited.

In Japan, the visa issuance figures seem to be accurate and are widely used by the media and counter-trafficking to indicate the scale of trafficking, In fact, the Protection Project (8 October 2003) cited: “40,000 Filipino women enter Japan every year with an ‘entertainer’ visa, and a large number of them are trafficked” (see also Japan Times, 2003a; US Department of State, 2001). In South Korea, activists argue that the figures are much larger, highlighting under-reporting problems.

According to some estimates, as many as 100,000 foreign women are trafficked to Japan every year (Women Overseas Workers Network, cited in IOM, 1997). Reportedly, there are approximately 200,000 illegal female migrants in Japan at any given time. Although 90 per cent come from other Asian countries, there is an increasing number from Latin America, Colombia in particular. Estimates on the scale of trafficking are often vague and they cannot serve as a reliable knowledge base for programme intervention and policy design. Instead, mapping of major trafficking routes in a region, identifying “hot spots” and organized crime groups can provide valuable information on the nature of trafficking in a given area. This knowledge can then be used to devise various measures for prevention, victim assistance, and cooperation among field practitioners and government officials.

As Figure 1 shows, based on the review of existing materials, the “hot spots” in the region include the Yunnan province of southern China, north-eastern China with an inflow from North Korea, some coastal provinces of China with a flow from inland remote rural communities, and the Russian Far East to South Korea. A major trafficking route has been established from the countries in South-East Asia, including Thailand and the Philippines, to Japan and South Korea. The flow from South Korea to Japan and the United States has not been studied. A relatively recent flow from Colombia and Taiwan to Japan has started to receive some attention.

Confirming the general understanding, the trafficking routes in the region indicate that origins and destinations tend to come from less-developed to more-developed countries (e.g. from the Philippines and Thailand to Japan and the West), and the continuing importance of sexual exploitation for which victims of trafficking are used.
Human trafficking in East Asia

Source: This map is made based on a review 167 news articles, 17 sources from Internet websites in addition to five national publications including the US DOS report, and so on. The period of reporting in these sources ranges from the mid-1990s to the present. The 167 news articles from sources such as the China Daily, Mainichi Daily News and Xinhua News Agency with one article published in 2004, 61 in 2003, 66 in 2002, 20 in 2001, ten in 2000, four in 1999, one in 1998, two in 1997, one in 1995 and one in 1994. The websites include Stop-traffic and Migration Dialogue, dated after 2000.

Forms of exploitation

Given the high volume of irregular migration in Asia mentioned earlier, men are undoubtedly part of this flow and are vulnerable to exploitation. However, cases reporting male victims are rarely found. Furthermore, men, women, and children are also found in exploitative labour situations, including forcible beg-
ging in the streets in southern China. Both men and women find themselves in situations where smuggling turns into debt bondage and becomes trafficking. Initially, migrants may consent to pay smugglers. However, if they are unable to pay all of smuggling fees, the smugglers may “sell” them into indentured labour to recover their costs. This debt bondage can amount to virtual slavery. Organ removal, reported in other parts of Asia (see, for example, IOM, 2004b), has not been found in the examined data sources.

A broad comparison of the various forms of exploitation in selected countries has been illustrated in Figure 2. As can be seen, trafficked persons in China are often forced into the sex industry (14/34 citations – see Figure 2 for more information), trafficked as brides (9) or forced into bonded into labour (6), while in Japan and in South Korea, trafficked persons are almost exclusively exploited in the sex industry (25/29 citations and 25/28 citations, respectively). This corresponds with an observation that Japan and South Korea do not have a comparable demand for foreign domestic workers (Lee, 2003) while they do have an entertainer visa that is known to be (ab)used as a trafficking channel.

FIGURE 2
FORMS OF EXPLOITATION: COMPARISON WITHIN COUNTRIES
(values represent number of citations found)
Beyond the overwhelming trend of trafficking for sexual exploitation in the region, a number of reports exist about trafficking for forced marriage in China. This happens mainly internally. However, recently there have been reports of Chinese women being replaced by women kidnapped from Viet Nam and North Korea (ILO, 2002; Human Rights Watch, 2002). Vietnamese women are trafficked to southern Chinese villages, while those fleeing North Korea are deceived or encouraged to marry rural Chinese men in the north-eastern provinces. This indicates, if not the intensity, the geographic spread of the phenomenon within China.

In addition to poverty in rural areas in China, rampant trafficking is often also attributed to a decade-long one-child policy that resulted in gender imbalance, and a universal expectation to marry. Men in communities experiencing severe shortage of women are under strong pressure to find a bride. When they cannot afford to pay the high bride price for local women, they readily resort to purchasing brides kidnapped from other areas. For example, the traditional bride price may be between US$ 1,250 and US$ 2,500, while a kidnapped woman may cost anywhere between US$ 250 and US$ 800 (Marshal, 1999). The purchase of trafficked women thus provides a more cost-effective solution for men in the “marriage squeeze” and yields a high profit for traffickers and middlemen.

According to a report by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, the kidnapping and sale of women has increased since the mid-1980s and such trafficking accounts for 30 to 90 per cent of marriages in some Chinese villages (Coomaraswamy, 2003). Popular areas of origin for domestically trafficked brides are the poorer areas of Yunnan, Sichuan, and Guizhou where poverty renders women more vulnerable to trafficking (CATW, 1999a). Traffickers generally sell these women in distant areas, such as Shaanxi, Ningxia, Guangxi, Hainan, and Guangdong provinces with large gender imbalances (Pomfret, 2001; Eckholm, 2002).

It is unclear how much of a positive impact the Chinese Government’s response to bride trafficking has made on curbing the practice. Nevertheless, the Government has banned sex selection and holds purchasers of brides as well as brokers who kidnap and sell women accountable for trafficking. In fact, the law against trafficking in women in China is as severe as the law prohibiting rape (US Department of State, 2001). Furthermore, public awareness programmes sponsored by the Chinese Ministry of Public Security and UNICEF target rural farmers, warning against domestic bride abuses. However, corruption, weak enforcement measures, and police complicity impede the successful implementation of such laws and programmes, leaving women vulnerable to trafficking for forced marriage in this region.
In “traditional” East Asia and apparently still in some remote rural villages in China, the consent to a marriage proposal has not been that of a bride-to-be. Here, as in the case of seemingly voluntary participation in the sex industry, the question remains whether or not a woman’s seeming willingness to marry a man chosen by her parents counts as genuine consent in a culture where women do not choose their own husbands. Even when the concept of “profit” is considered, it still is not straightforward as to whether or not the difference between paying a traditional bride price and buying a wife is wide enough to classify the former as a “cultural practice” and the latter as “trafficking”, even if both are against the will of the bride. These questions need more fine-tuned research. In addition, as in the case of the sex industry where the question of individual choice of prostitution or “sex work” as an occupation draws a division among the activists, a similar disagreement may exist among researchers and practitioners.

**Causes**

Common “push” and “pull” factors reported elsewhere are found underlying the seemingly growing problem in East Asia. Such factors that render persons, especially women and children, vulnerable to trafficking are development processes that marginalize women, in particular from employment and education, gendered cultural practices, gender discrimination, and gender-based violence in families and communities.

General poverty in Chinese inland communities and the traditional preference for male children exacerbated by the Government’s one-child policy have been described as the main causes behind the rampant bride trafficking and kidnapping of male babies for adoption in China. If a woman already has a child, she is often forced to have an abortion or be sterilized. Couples failing to comply with the one-child policy regularly face demotion or loss of jobs, extreme fines, or loss of benefits or access to social services. At times, even homes and personal property have been demolished or confiscated for unpaid fines (Methodist Resolution Supporting Human Rights in China, 2004). In addition, gender discrimination at work is unofficial yet common, and in some areas domestic violence is culturally accepted. Those young girls trafficked out of southern China are reported to be from an ethnic minority (ILO 2002).

In the case of South-East Asia and in general, it is true that the so-called push factors in source countries are better studied. In East Asia, however, given the uneven amount of reports existing on Japan and South Korea, the demand side (or pull factors) has received far more attention, both in media and research.
Restrictive immigration policies and laws contribute to the development of underground migration channels, in particular by generating a market for trafficking. Indeed, the migration policies and laws of both Japan and South Korea are considered restrictive in a sense that both countries limit their intake of foreigners as long as the flow is considered “temporary”, in spite of the structural labour shortages in parts of their economies. This has been closely linked to the region’s high volume of irregular migration, as these two countries are one of the four main destination countries in Asia. Furthermore, globalization is believed to have accelerated the development of such economic sectors in these countries, which demand gender-specific cheap labour, as well as the growth of commercial sex industries in the region. However restrictive the overall immigration policies may be in these two countries, the Japanese and South Korean visa policies (including their entertainer visa) have inadvertently facilitated the inflow of women who end up working illegally in bars and forced to perform sexual services. This observation has generated a fair amount of criticism from both academic researchers and activists.

In South Korea, the presence of US military bases has also drawn considerable amount of attention from both within and outside the country. A close tie between sex trade and militarization\textsuperscript{14} in South Korea is one of the recurrent themes in all forms of writings about the phenomenon in and outside of the country (e.g. Enloe, 1993; Moon, 1997; Cheng, 2002). The militarization of Korea and its special tie to the development of the sex industry began during the Japanese colonial rule (1910-1945) of the peninsula, when prostitution was officially recognized, licensed, and even developed on a nationwide scale. This trend continued following the end of Japanese rule to the later establishment of US military bases. In fact, the operation of Rest and Recreation facilities by the US military bases has been cited as creating practices and attitudes that are simultaneously racist and sexist to become pervasive in South Korean society. The operation is purported to be a cause of gender exploitation and violence against both South Korean and foreign trafficked women.

Testimony provided by Donna Hughes (2003a) at the Subcommittee of East Asian and Pacific Affairs of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 9 April 2003 illustrates this view:

\textit{The US military also plays a role in the trafficking of women. In South Korea, there are documented cases of women from the Philippines, the Federation, Bolivia, Peru, Mongolia, China, Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan being trafficked into bars and clubs around the US bases. Last year, a TV filmed US military police patrolling bars and brothels that held trafficked women. An investigative reporter for \textit{Navy Times} documented that military police have relations with pimps and bar owners where there are trafficked women. (...) Not only does the demand for prostitution result in the trafficking of women for these bars and clubs, the negative local reaction to the abuse}
and exploitation by US military personnel provides fodder for anti-American sentiment and interests. (...).

Given that the growing customer base of these trafficked women now includes South Korean men, such notions as foreign sexuality, racism, and power were also explored (Moon, 1997; Cheng, 2003; Hughes 2003b). A good number of social analyses on military prostitution focus on the women who perform sexual services. However, these socio-political dynamics and cultural notions constitute the demand side of the market and indeed are reflected, for instance, in the going prices of the sexual services provided by different nationality/race groups of trafficked women in South Korea. White women from far-eastern Russia cost most, followed by those from the Philippines, and so on (Seol et al., 2003).

Also noted is the generalized collusion between government officials and criminal organizations, such as Yakuza (Human Rights Watch, 2000), which contributes to the reported “little” recognition of the problem by Japanese authorities and keeps trafficking a high-profit, low-risk venture. More discussion will follow.

**Trafficking process**

As the trafficking process involves multiple stages, the entire process is carried out by a number of people along the route from the countries of origin to destination. In the region, a formalization of the entire process, especially recruitment, has been reported.

In the most immediate level in the countries of origin, there are people who can identify potential victims. They tend to belong to the same social network as the victims, either through family lines or other social groupings. In Colombia, those so-called “contacts” are neighbours or acquaintances of the trafficked persons who are also relatives of the recruiters, intermediaries, or managers in Japan (Molina, 2001). In China, they are called ma zai (horse boy) (Xiang, 2004).

The more or less formal recruitment is quite usual in the countries of origin such as Philippines and Thailand, where young women are recruited by either or both local and Korean/Japanese recruiters. Hyperbolic job advertisements are common promising jobs abroad as escorts, servers, and dancers, or otherwise “art performers”. In addition to advertisements in public media, mail-order catalogues, scholarship opportunities, and various cultural events are also used in trafficking Colombian women to Japan (Molina, 2001).

Less formal means are used to recruit women and children in remote rural villages in southern China for mostly forced marriages (ILO, 2002). However,
the ILO report observes that with the growing urban migration of rural young women there coincides a tendency of trafficking with false promises of work. These women end up being forced to provide sexual services in richer neighbouring countries. Furthermore, in the past the internal trafficking for marriage in China from kidnapping to (re)selling trafficked persons was carried out by independent operators. Now, organized crime gangs overseeing the entire process are increasingly dominating the trade. Even some training for sexual exploitation or begging was mentioned in ILO study on the Yunnan Province (ILO, 2002).

The transportation stage seems to be one of the least studied stages of the trafficking process, as far as the materials on East Asia is concerned. While the majority of trafficking cases studied to this date in China involve internal trafficking or very porous border-crossings, attention has not been paid to document forgery, etc. A study on the trafficking of Colombian women (Molina, 2001) describes in some detail a transporting process from Colombia to Japan. Colombian foreign affairs ministry reports that many Colombian minors receive forged documents such as passports and national identity cards to enter Japan (Molina, 2001). The passports from Spain, Peru, Brazil, and France are most frequently used and some of the forged passports are made in Hong Kong SAR for less than US$ 2,000. Control mechanisms and related human rights violations drew much attention in the studies examined for this paper, as the bulk of the reports are written in order to raise public awareness of the fairly unknown problem with the general public and authorities.

Debt bondage as the major enforcement tactic is commonly reported among those in the sex industries of Japan, South Korea, and Hong Kong SAR. In addition to the fees that trafficked persons incur when being transported to their destination, the debt accumulates fast with arbitrarily imposed fines for being late to work, drinking, having a boyfriend, possessing a mobile phone, etc. (Seol et al., 2003; Dinan, 2002). In Hong Kong SAR, it is required that women pay back the fee within two or three months of their arrival. The fee is usually around HK$ 10,000 to 16,000, while the average monthly income without “escort service” is around HK$ 4,200 to HK$5,100, making it very difficult to pay back the debt in time (Emerton and Petersen, 2003).

Pressure to perform sexual services in bars and clubs around US military bases in South Korea comes from so-called “drink tickets” of which an unreasonable quota to sell such tickets is imposed on those working as bar hostesses (Lee, 2002; Seol, 2003). As most of those working at military camps do so on an entertainer visa, they are by law prohibited to serve customers, and legally allowed only to conduct performances for entertainment. Nevertheless, if the
quota is not met, a penalty is imposed. In order to avoid such a situation, the women provide sexual services.

While there are studies on the exploitative working conditions of those forced to provide sexual services, not much has been reported on the situation of those forced into marriage in China. An unusual report by Human Rights Watch (2002) depicts horrendous situations in which North Korean women fleeing their home country find themselves married to a local man (including Chinese national ethnic Koreans) in rural north-east China. Physical and sexual abuse as well as slavery-like forced labour is quite common, as is the constant threat of being reported to Chinese authorities who are certain to deport them back to North Korea, where they would face severe penalties.

**Traffickers**

From the literature reviewed, the level of criminal organization involvement in sex trafficking in East Asia seems rather high. Caouette and Saito (1999) report that all 55 Thai women studied were sent to Japan through criminal networks and 90 per cent started working in bars upon arrival. Earlier studies among 100 Filipina returnees from Japan (IOM, 1997) also recorded that one-third had worked in bars controlled by a criminal syndicate.

The organized crime group, called yakuza, is believed to have initiated the importation of foreign women to Japan in the 1980s, when demand for sex tours had declined in response to the loud protests by feminist groups in the destinations of such tours, namely, South-East Asian countries and South Korea.

In Japan, as Dinan (2002) observes, yakuza enjoys acceptance among the population due to their unusually open style of operation (e.g. registered organization with membership list), contribution to community emergencies, and substantial bribes to government officials. This penetration of the crime group into civil society and government has certainly prevented the Government from taking decisive action against trafficking, although there has been some shift in the Japanese legislation, allowing the police to criminalize some yakuza activities.19

In spite of the deep involvement of such criminal organizations as yakuza, in trafficking of women in East and South-East Asia, it is incorrect to assume that trafficking in East Asia is entirely handled by international criminal gangsters. In South Korea, most companies involved in employing foreign entertainers, such as the recruiting agencies, entertainment management companies, and clubs are run like a family company. In many cases, the division of labour among them exists only on paper, while closely related people share the work. These companies use this loose operation to evade at times responsibilities for delayed
wages or prostitution charges. Thus far, there is no indication that these companies operate like a mafia-type criminal organization. Nevertheless, frequent mention is made that organized gangsters are involved in trafficking of women from the far north-eastern part of Russia (Seol et al., 2003). However, the UN Trafficking Protocol’s own definition of “organized crime” is such that it broadly covers small trafficking networks as well as large, well-established crime syndicates.

Regarding the smuggling and trafficking in and out of China, there is a debate about the nature of the networks, called “snakeheads”. While some describe it as a well-organized, highly sophisticated crime syndicate (e.g. Kwong, 1999), some studies dispute this and emphasize that the networks comprise only loosely connected individuals (e.g. Skeldon, 2000; Pieke et al., 2004). However both share the view that snakehead networks are in a way enmeshed in community networks in places of origin and therefore quite difficult for the authorities to root out or even track.

The relationship between snakehead networks and the normal social networks of the trafficked persons still needs to be clarified. Given the complex nature of human smuggling and trafficking in China, both of which often occur after voluntary emigration is initiated, a government crackdown alone may not be a sufficient solution. More research is needed to identify possible mechanisms with the potential to utilize these social networks to empower migrants and prevent them from being victimized (Xiang, 2004). At the same time, however, this overlap of networks means it is unrealistic to expect human smuggling and trafficking to be eradicated altogether any time soon. Instead, the immediate priority for governments and international agencies may be to reduce the human suffering accompanying smuggling and trafficking.

In the majority of reports on trafficking worldwide, there is a widely held assumption that women are trafficked by men. However, several reports in East Asia point out the growing tendency of the operation of female recruiters who also often were former victims themselves (Molina, 2001; ILO, 2002). They are sometimes forced to recruit other women, often their own friends or relatives, to reduce their own debt to the traffickers.

Other groups of women (internationally known as mama-sans) also are involved in the daily operation of bars and clubs in South Korea and Japan. These women most often exercise the first line of control over the trafficked persons. As such, most literature on these women in Japan and South Korea depict them invariably as perpetrators of violence, verbal and physical. However, Emerton and Petersen observe in Hong Kong SAR where prostitution itself is legal (2003) that some mama-sans are considered to protect the trafficked women’s interests. None of the 18 interviewed women in the sex industry reported any form
of abuse by their *mama-sans*. The *mama-san* not only brings the customers to the women but also makes sure the male customers pay for the women’s service.

It would be interesting to compare this group of women in the three destinations in East Asia and analyse perhaps the factors that affect the apparent difference in the *mama-sans’* behaviour. This alerts us to the important need for more nuanced research and a truly gendered perspective, which locates the dichotomy of the male traffickers/users and female victims in a broader social context.

**DATA COLLECTION, RESEARCH ACTIVITIES, AND KNOWLEDGE GAPS**

**Data gathering and sharing in East Asia**

At the international level, a number of international agencies play an important role in data collection on trafficking. There are databases compiled by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). These international organizations play a crucial role in raising awareness worldwide. East Asia, however, has been represented neither sufficiently nor accurately in these databases.

Given the sizable irregular migration flows and the increasing complexity of their organization, the governments in the region face significant challenges in managing migration. Regional cooperation has been enhanced over the past several years. During this period human trafficking has become one of the major concerns of both governments and organizations active in the field of migration. In Asia, several regional processes brought together government representatives to share information and improve the dialogue about diverse aspects of irregular migration. As a recent example, in February 2002, the Bali Conference on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime gave regional priority to the issue of, *inter alia*, human trafficking.

These initiatives also include some activities coordinating data collection on trafficking as these regional counter-trafficking strategies emphasize the need to share data and information within the region. In April 2003, the second Regional Ministerial Conference on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime (known as the Bali Process) was held to further reinforce existing legislation and to improve regional cooperation among law enforcement, and to enhance information and intelligence sharing. Section 5.3 under the Plan of Action of Ad Hoc Expert Group I of the Bali Conference
identifies the need to establish a process for analysis of migration flows to, from, and within the region through effective international migration data management approaches.

As indicated earlier, the national governments in the region have begun to collect data. China, for example, released figures after some crackdown efforts. Both Japan and South Korea are believed to have fairly reliable data, including information about undocumented migrants. However, the researchers and activists observe that the governments are not willing to share or publicize some of the data. Furthermore, trafficking is a topic on which a consensus is hard to establish, even by the agencies of the same government in terms of its definition and solution.

Nevertheless, collecting reliable data is the essential first step to developing efficient and targeted measures on trafficking in human beings. Data are critically needed that segregate the male, female, and child victims of trafficking in the region. Additionally, improving research and developing analytical tools is also vital, including those on the character and scale of trafficking and the exploitation mechanisms deployed by organized criminal groups.

**Research activities in East Asia**

Numerous counter-trafficking initiatives, some containing research components, are being undertaken in South-East Asia, especially on the trafficking occurring in the Mekong region (Derks, 2000; Caouette, 2002). By contrast, one cannot find any similar initiative in North-East Asia with the exception of the ILO-IPEC initiative in southern China. In terms of research reports, IPEC-ILO has a programme involving the Yunnan province of southern China (2002) and some international NGOs, along with IOM have produced reports on Japan and South Korea (Human Rights Watch, 2000; IOM, 1997; Caouette and Saito, 1999; Lee, 2002). Nicola Piper points out elsewhere in this volume that the production of a large amount of information and data on trafficking in South-East Asia is due to the enormous activities of donor and UN agencies. A relatively low volume of activities carried out by these agencies in North-East Asia can perhaps be associated with a lack of sufficient information on the phenomenon. Lack of donor interest translates into lack of funding for local researchers, who otherwise might pursue research on trafficking. The fact that the region is known as a destination area might have also contributed to the lack of research, as source countries tend to be better studied than destination countries.

However, the question of why there is not much research on trafficking in this region needs to be examined beyond these practical issues of donor interest.
and the availability of local expertise, as both Japan and South Korea are quite capable of providing the needed resources. In addition, activists have long criticized the Japanese Government internationally and internally for its lack of action on trafficking. The South Korean Government also has been criticized for not having taken enough actions to improve the situation of women in the sex industry. China also receives its share of criticism regarding its human rights situation in general and women’s rights in particular.

China

After some Chinese scholars conducted surveys on internal trafficking of women in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Chinese Government took various measures in order to crack down on trafficking. However, since then, this topic has not attracted very much attention from scholars. As noted earlier, the Chinese Government collects and releases from time to time figures on court cases involving apprehension and prosecution of traffickers, and women and children released.

Considering the Chinese Government’s aversion to outside influence and that the trafficking of women and children occurs mainly within its territory, it is not surprising that few international agencies can make a case to the Government, which will allow them to research and carry out programme activities. The case in point here involves North Korean women reportedly trafficked in the northeastern provinces of China. An even larger group not being assessed includes men and children fleeing from North Korea since the mid-1990s (if not earlier) due to North Korea’s failing economy and repeated environmental disasters. The Chinese Government considers this group of North Koreans illegal economic migrants. Accordingly, those who are caught by the local authorities are sent back to North Korea based on the terms of a treaty with the North Korean Government.

Japan

While individual government officials have made comments from time to time, there is no public position or platform relating to trafficking in Japanese Government print or electronic publications. The three Trafficking in Persons Reports produced to date have not generated a public response from the Government either. The possibility of a reduction in the trafficking of women to Japan is hence considered severely constricted by the Government’s reticence to publicly acknowledge the problem. After the release in 2003 of the Trafficking in Persons Report, Human Rights Watch (2003) published their criticism on the report. An entry concerning Japan’s Tier 2 rating reads:
Japan: Japan should be placed in Tier 3. Specific legislation prohibiting trafficking does not exist and there is no indication that there will be. In fact, there are special agreements that facilitate trafficking, allowing the admittance of “entertainers” into the country but not unskilled workers. Trafficking cases are not aggressively pursued and penalties are weak. Though the government has funded international programs to increase awareness in other countries, little to nothing has been done to control the growing trafficking issue in Japan.

Kinsey Dinan of Human Rights Watch observed “[t]he Japanese government has been more reluctant to acknowledge that human trafficking exists in Japan, than other countries” (Financial Times, 2003). This reluctance has to be understood in a broader context of regional history and politics. Before and during World War II, the Japanese Government invaded a number of countries in the region (including the Philippines and Taiwan POC, two of the main source countries of trafficked persons into Japan) and colonized South Korea. The Government has been accused of systematically forcing women from these countries, particularly from South Korea, into sexual slavery for the benefit of Japanese soldiers at war. This has been criticized as a form of “state-sponsored” trafficking by the South Korean activists claiming that the Japanese Government should acknowledge their war time atrocities involving the South Korean women and make compensation. Considering this context alone, a government-sponsored research project on trafficking may not be realistically expected.

South Korea

By contrast, the South Korean Government has actively responded since the first Trafficking in Persons Report in 2001 that included the country among the 23 countries that did not fulfill the minimum requirement set by the US Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act for combating trafficking. The situation related to trafficking research in South Korea and a discussion of some of the factors that might have contributed to the different developments seen in Japan and South Korea are outlined below.25

Firstly, in both Japan and South Korea, prostitution is illegal yet widespread. The Ministry of Gender Equality (MOGE) of the South Korean Government conducted a comprehensive survey of the sex industry in 2002 that concluded that as many as 500,000 women, Korean and foreign, engaged in some form of prostitution in the country. The study estimated that the country’s sex industry had generated US$ 22 billion in profits that year (US Department of State, 2004). In Japan, it is estimated that the volume of sex industry reaches approximately US$ 83 billion (Inter Press Service, 2003; Financial Times, 2003), and the figure of “illegal” migrant women in this field amounts to tens of thousands.26 Both countries have the notorious entertainer visa to facilitate the temporary stay of
those deemed qualified to enter the country. As noted, the number of foreign women in the respective sex industries, however, seems to suggest that Japan has a larger share of foreign women working in the sector than South Korea.

The particular attention that has been given to the matter in South Korea started with the publication of the US Department of State’s *Trafficking in Persons Report* released on 12 July 2001. This report ranked South Korea in Tier 3, meaning the Government failed to meet minimum standards in attempting to stop the trafficking in human beings, mostly women and children, who are exploited as prostitutes or placed in low-paying jobs with abusive employers.

Upon release of that report, the South Korean Government charged that the US report negatively portrayed South Korea and was not based on an adequate review of the country’s situation. The suggestion that South Korea turns a blind eye to such practices shocked Korean government officials, who also readily admitted to the press that they were completely surprised by this report (Lee, 2002: 10). In addition, the Korean Government urged Washington, DC to make immediate changes to the report so as to reflect the “real” conditions in the country, which included, for example, various articles of South Korean criminal law that heavily punish those involved in the sale of human beings for prostitution.

The issue otherwise would have faded from public attention. Yet it continued to linger in part due to constant media attention on human rights violations among migrant workers in South Korea, including those in the sex industry. In addition, the alleged link of the onset of international trafficking involving those from the Philippines with the existence of the notorious Rest and Recreation facilities of the US military base in South Korea kept some US media interest in the South Korean trafficking case.

The then newly established Ministry of Gender Equality (MOGE) in the South Korean Government took up the issue and in 2003 commissioned a survey to study the foreign women engaged in the South Korean sex industry. In September 2003, the Ministry also organized an international conference with the Justice Ministry. A wide range of South Korean authorities, representatives of national governments in the Asia Pacific region, international organizations, and other experts from national and international NGOs contributed to this meeting that focused particularly on identifying the needed action and relevant target groups for further awareness raising on trafficking in the region.

Further impetus was given to the issue after the appointment of a new minister, Madame Eun-hui Ghee, who had working experience as an activist to abolish
prostitution. With the MOGE initiative, the South Korean national assembly passed in March 2004 a draft law, Prostitution Victims Prevention Act,\textsuperscript{32} which heavily criminalizes the acts of intermediaries in the sex industry. Whether or not this Act will qualify the South Korean Government as a government with a decent anti-trafficking law will have to wait until legal experts can fully examine its contents. Nevertheless, it does include a clause in which a temporary delay of deportation can be granted on a case-by-case base if a designated deportee is cooperating with law enforcement bodies in an investigation.

In sum, such factors as a willing government, an active civil society, and perhaps a fortunate turn of events within South Korean politics plus a little outside pressure seemed to have contributed to recent favorable developments. It is particularly positive that the MOGE has started its efforts by commissioning the unusually large survey study among non-Koreans in the sex industry. However, much work is needed to transform the research results into a knowledge base that can be operationalized for local policy purposes, as well as for the various government agencies and NGOs who would participate, along with others, in assisting trafficked persons. Furthermore, the earlier mentioned lack of cooperation among the South Korean Government agencies, in particular the national police force, needs to be improved.

**Remaining gaps in knowledge**

To date, research studies on trafficking in women in East Asia have been descriptive, qualitative analyses based on interviews with trafficked persons, government officials, and representatives of civil society. These descriptive studies have been crucial in understanding the operation of traffickers and the impact on victims, but they provide no systematic way to estimate the precise magnitude of the problem.

The research needs are many in East Asia, specifically:

- A more comprehensive understanding of trafficking in China has to be established through research, particularly with the growing regional economic disparities within the country. More up-to-date research on Japan is also urgently needed to develop counter-trafficking activities.
- More research and exchange of information on trafficking in children is another area that is lacking in the region, especially given the tendency of younger victims being reported.
- More in-depth analyses of the root causes, supply and demand, trafficking networks, and the economic consequences of the various kinds of trafficking in human beings are needed. As suggested earlier, a gendered analysis is needed involving both men and women in the process.
Research dealing with the Internet needs to be initiated,\textsuperscript{33} as the Internet is a space through which a lot of trafficking-related activities are presumed to happen according to some media in South Korea.

Despite the clandestine nature of the phenomenon, it is absolutely crucial to develop reliable measures of trafficking activity; without such measures, the governments and the international community cannot evaluate the performance of their counter-trafficking activities. The success in identifying indicators and measures of trafficking depends on the accurate conceptualization of the framework and definitions of trafficking. One of the factors hindering research and policy on trafficking has been the lack of definitions and clarity in distinguishing among different phenomena involving movement of people across borders. The United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplementing Protocols\textsuperscript{34} does provide the bases for a conceptual framework for trafficking that is differentiated with smuggling, but not without some critical caveats.\textsuperscript{35}

As far as Japan and South Korea are concerned, it is not entirely unrealistic to develop a trafficking process model for sexual exploitation, given qualitative information on the various stages in the process through which women are taken from source countries to the sex industries of these two countries. The information does show remarkable similarity in the process of recruitment, transportation, deployment, and control. This is because the overwhelming majority of the trafficking cases to the two countries is, as shown earlier, for sexual exploitation with quite a high level of involvement by criminal organization. This model can (at least during the start-up and set-up phase) exclude trafficking for labour exploitation, domestic service, or organ removal. In terms of migration data in general, both South Korea and Japan have advantages, as the former has heavily defended land borders and the latter is an island, which make the monitoring of arrivals and departure relatively easier.\textsuperscript{36}

Additionally, as unfortunate as it may be, these countries both do have data on their issuance of entertainer visas, and their estimates of overstayers are fairly reliable and can be used at least in a longitudinal analysis. Furthermore, South Korea conducted a de facto regularization exercise in 2002 and is going through a process in which undocumented migrants can register and benefit from an upcoming employment permit system. This series of factors puts this Government in a rather unique position of knowing precisely the composition of the foreigners residing in its territory in an irregular situation.

Still, further government cooperation is needed in accessing data on court cases in order to be able to accurately know the profile of trafficked persons as
well as that of the traffickers. Additionally, interviews with the incarcerated traffickers would be of enormous importance to verify the qualitative information gathered mostly from trafficked persons.

NOTES

1. This is only a general perception, as there is no way a precise figure can be generated about the extent of trafficking. The perception is generated partly due to growing public interest and frequent coverage in various media.
2. This paper will not discuss the already much-studied irregular migration out of the region that originates from the People’s Republic of China. Furthermore, it should be noted that even after the United Nations provided definitions distinguishing “smuggling” and “trafficking”, the usage of both terms, often in one article, continues in some media reports on China.
3. In China, external migration remains insignificant despite much attention to its outflows to North American and European countries, while the size of internal migration to emerging urban centres has exponentially grown since the 1990s.
4. These governments, however, do facilitate the settlement of highly skilled professionals.
5. In August 2004, the South Korean Government started an employment permit system, which allows temporary employment of foreigners up to one year (renewable up to two times).
6. Several Beijing-based researchers contacted during the preparation of this paper are not aware of any English literature on trafficking. The Chinese Women’s Federation did do some research related to government practices in the Yunnan province (in Chinese), however, this too was unavailable at the time of this writing.
7. One focus group meeting was inadvertently held in the house of a woman who was later identified as a former pimp and broker. This was found to affect the conversations and the relationship among the women and the researchers. For this and other reasons, data from a focus group discussion needs to be handled with much care.
8. While preparing my paper (Lee, 2002), I contacted the Ministry of Justice who was at the time preparing the written response to the US report. The Ministry official mentioned that collecting related court cases would involve enormous work internally within the Ministry as information on such cases was not centralized and is spread throughout the country’s local courts.
9. Both 2002 and 2003 TIP Report mentioned that some South Korean women are trafficked to Japan and North America. Some of the recent media coverage on this includes Crecente (2003) and Fox News (2004). It is well known and supported by the Ministry of Justice, GOJ with their statistics that a good number of South Korean women (most of them overstayers) are found in the Japanese sex industry, although the South Korean Government (and possibly the Japanese
Government) do not seem to think these Koreans are trafficked (personal communication with the government officials).

10. In general, statistics are most easily available for offender and victim-related data. These data can be obtained from police records, prosecution, and court statistics. Victim-related data might be available from NGOs and international organizations. There are direct indicators, such as criminal justice statistics, which show the offences committed. But there are also indirect indicators, such as the number of visas issued for people working in the entertainment business, which is often the destination of trafficked persons. Data collection efforts should include both direct and indirect indicators.

11. For example, it is reported that “among the total 30,000 Thai women living in Japan, only around 8,000 had legal visas, while most of them were tricked by Japanese Yakuza gang into working as prostitutes”, cited in Protection Project, 22 August 2003, and “Large number of Thai women forced into Japanese sex trade”, *Chinese Media People’s Daily*, 19 August 2003.

12. This number is also used in a more recent reference, Babidor (2003). Babidor confirmed that this estimate is based on personal communication with her informants in Japan who are involved in migrant worker and trafficking issues.

13. With rising affluence and increased participation of women in the labour force, a market for foreign domestic workers has been established in many countries. Filipinas are widely popular as domestic help in the Middle East as well as in Hong Kong SAR in East Asia.

14. Militarization is “an act of assembling and putting into readiness for war or other emergency”, according to www.cogsci.princeton.edu/cgi-bin/webwn. Militarization may suggest a society dominated by military values, ideology, and patterns of behaviour. This definition accounts not only for the role of the army itself but also the authoritarianism, oppression, and violence that become a routine part of state affairs. For a detailed discussion on militarization, see Enloe, 2000.

15. The Government of Japan has started paying attention to trafficking and ratified *Japan’s Action Plan of Measures to Combat Trafficking in Persons* in December 2004.

16. A trafficking process can range from the recruitment of migrants and their possible training and preparation, the transportation of the migrants to their country of destination, to the final insertion of the migrants into the exploitative work.

17. These opportunities are advertised in a catalogue form. The destination for such scholarships is the United States travelling via Japan.

18. This is certainly not the case for international migration of the Chinese, especially smuggling (e.g. Chin, 1999).

19. For example, the Law Concerning Prevention of Unjust Acts by Violent Group Members that went into effect in 1992, cited in Dinan, 2002.

20. Many regional consultative processes have emerged over the past decade or so to address migration related issues. These processes have focused on irregular migration, and often singled out specific topics such as trafficking or smuggling. An overriding concern is to ensure jointly that such aberrant forms of migration do not pose security problems and contribute to regional destabilization.
Regional processes bear witness to the fact that, while border management remains a sovereign issue, governments acting alone can no longer effectively deal with migration. The processes vary greatly, but they generally share a common objective and a commitment of the participating countries, despite their non-binding character.

21. For example, Kangapunta (2003) notes “East Asia is slightly higher as a receiving area than it is as an origin or transit region. Countries cited as destination countries in East Asia were China, Taiwan POC, Hong Kong SAR, Macao SAR, Republic of Korea, and Mongolia.” In this paper based on media coverage, Japan, the best-known destination in East Asia is missing, demonstrating the fact that proper research must complement media reports.

22. In Europe, Sweden and the Netherlands have national rapporteurs who publish every year reports on known cases of trafficking. The German police keep some related information.

23. Biao Xiang made this observation after consulting several researchers in Beijing early 2004.

24. UNHCR Beijing has asked reportedly for the Chinese Government’s cooperation on their situation assessment efforts.

25. For the sake of a fair comparison, one should note that the Japanese population was 127,096,000 in 2000, while that of South Korea was 46,740,000 in the same year.

26. According to Inter Press Service, 24 January 2003, the Justice Ministry of Japan reports that as of January 2002, there are around 224,067 overstayers in Japan, of which 105,945 are women. More than 46 per cent of these women work as bar hostesses and prostitutes (i.e., 103,371), the rest as waitresses and factory workers. By nationality, South Koreans comprise 25 per cent of these overstayers followed by the Philippines and Thailand.

27. A summary of the South Korean Government’s rebuttal to the points made or implied in the US Trafficking in Persons Report 2001 is included in the appendix of Lee, 2002.

28. The second US Trafficking in Persons Report (2002) ranked South Korea as a Tier 1 country. This has not stopped the criticism from local NGOs. I have received repeatedly questions on the base of this change from mainly the US and South Korean media.

29. I was interviewed by the local correspondents of Newsweek and Time magazines in this very linkage and possible collusion between the US military and South Koreans including bar owners around the military camps. Local activists were interviewed as well. Both news magazines, however, either cancelled or changed the core argument of their intended articles on the subject.

30. The Ministry of Gender Equality, Government of Republic of Korea was established on 29 January 2001.

32. The translation is mine as the official English translation of the Korean law is not yet available.
33. For example, Raymond and Hughes (2001) drew qualitative data from men’s writing on the Internet about their procurement of women and their description of the sex industry.
34. Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, and Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, both supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. Japan and South Korea are the only two signatories for both protocols in East Asia. However, it should be noted that “being a signatory” of an international convention does not mean that the state party is immediately obliged to follow the contents of such a convention. The international convention does not take effect until the national legal regime has been adjusted accordingly.
35. For example, it is widely acknowledged that a term such as “organized crime” is too widely defined by the Convention, as it defines a criminal group as “three or more people working together to commit one or more serious crimes for material benefit”.
36. In addition, the vast majority of migrants in both Japan and South Korea are workers, legal or illegal, with a small number of non-working dependants. These dependants are the spouses and/or children of legal migrants who belong to various professional ranks of the economy. However, it is noted that there exists a small but growing population of children by undocumented migrant parents.

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