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« Jeunes migrantes et petites bonnes en Afrique »

« Migrant girls and little maids in Africa »

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Titre :

Les jeunes migrantes sont-elles forcément des victimes ? OUI

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Are migrant girls necessarily victims?

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A 17 year old ethnic Mon from a poor family in Myanmar, Ma Suu paid a facilitator to help her cross the border and find employment as a domestic worker. In July 2002, after a year of living and working in Thailand, she was accused of stealing by her employers. When she refused to confess, she was severely beaten, set on fire and left for dead in a ditch. A man found her and took her to hospital in Nakhon Sawan where she died a couple of days later, but not before she was able to tell her story and identify her murderers.

- This horrifying case of murdered domestic worker Ma Suu shows at once the vulnerability of migrant labour and the horrific results of dehumanising labour through trafficking and “ownership”.

- I get up at 6 in the morning and start work by cleaning the house. I fetch water and wash the dirty *jibbas*. I leave them soaking and go to the shop if there is something to be bought, then I make the beds – there are five or six beds that we rent ... Then I go back and wash the dishes and I get the dishes that people used for lunch and I wash them too. By this time it is dark ...
- ... I don't have any friends around here. If she [employer] finds me talking to someone, she says, "Why are you talking and not doing work?" So I don't talk to anyone.
- –Addis Ababa domestic worker, age 14, migrated at age 14 from Amhara Region, 5 years education

Emmina from Ghana

- [The woman I am staying with] treats me differently, because she thinks I am working for money. She gives me only ₵2,500 for food in the morning, and I won't eat until night, but for her own children she will give. ... It's different [here] because at home the yard is small, but here I have to sweep all. Any work they have in the house they will ask me to do. I work more here ... I prefer it at home, because if you are in your own house and you are staying with your mother you can ask her if you want something, and she can give you if she has and if she hasn't it won't disturb you. But if you are not at home anything you want you can't ask; it is only until that person thinks and gives.

Who is a victim?

- Encarta Dictionary defines a Victim as *somebody who or something that is adversely affected by an action or circumstance or somebody who experiences misfortune and **feels helpless to remedy it***
- Migrant girls from origin to destination are not in control of their circumstances and are usually helpless to do anything about them

- Not only did girls migrate in search of education and jobs, but they often came to escape forced early marriages in their rural homes.
- These girls arrive knowing little about life in dense urban centers, often with little or no education, and no family members or friends to turn to.
- Many new arrivals are initially absorbed into domestic work; some eventually drift into sex work either for lack of choice or in pursuit of better pay and fewer working hours.
- Such girls are at ongoing risk of coerced or forced sex, exchange of sex for gifts, money, support or survival, and exploitative labor.

Why is the migrant girl a victim?

Because of **who she is**

- A girl less valued by his family than his male siblings
- Young, no education, no skill, no experience
- Poor, and sometimes from broken home
- Removed from the protection of the family, community institutions (schools churches etc)
- Vulnerable and open to abuse

Because of **where she comes from**

- Rural area, usually a neglected and exploited environment with little or no opportunity for:
 - i. Education
 - ii. Employment
 - iii. Recreation
 - iv. Self-actualization etc

- Yet she is daily bombarded with promises of good life in the urban areas of which she is ill equipped for.

- Another victim of globalization.

Because of **necessity** for survival

- Open to deceit, exploitation and violence
- Usually end up in harmful and exploitative labor
 - i. Low pay
 - ii. Long hour of work
 - iii. Servitude
 - iv. Sex work
- All of which may result to sickness and death

- 10% of female domestic workers had been raped and another 8% reported rape attempts by their male employers.
- Study also found a relationship between sexual exploitation and rape of female domestic workers and prostitution.
- Around 50% of the sample of sex workers had been domestic workers.

Are migrant girls therefore necessarily victims?

Yes

