



Human Trafficking in Indo-Nepal Terai Region: A Study of Stakeholders Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The Indo-Nepal Terai region, stretching nearly 1,700 kilometres, serves as a critical geographic and socio-economic corridor between India and Nepal. Covering Nepal's southern plains and bordering Indian states such as Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and West Bengal, the region plays a central role in cross-border mobility. According to the 2023 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, both India and Nepal function as source, transit, and destination countries for human trafficking. As the world's second-largest criminal activity, human trafficking represents a grave violation of human rights, encompassing sexual exploitation, bonded labour, organ trafficking, and domestic servitude. This article examines the underlying causes of trafficking between the two countries and explores stakeholder perspectives on existing laws, legal frameworks, and law enforcement effectiveness. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study draws on primary data from in-depth interviews and secondary sources. The findings reveal persistent institutional and operational gaps, highlighting the urgent need for stronger strategies, resources, and cross-border collaboration to prevent trafficking and support survivors effectively.

Keywords: Cross Border Trafficking, Human Trafficking, Legal Measures, Stakeholders Perspective.

INTRODUCTION

Human trafficking is a grave violation of human rights and remains a pressing issue even in the 21st century. Despite global advancements, modern slavery continues to persist, affecting millions of individuals worldwide. In 2020, research indicated a 13% decline in reported human trafficking cases, which initially provided a sense of hope to key stakeholders dedicated to combating this heinous crime. However, this optimism was short-lived, as further analysis in the following year revealed that the decline was not a result of intensified anti-trafficking efforts but rather a consequence of the COVID-19 lockdowns, which temporarily restricted movement and reporting mechanisms. Human trafficking is the second-largest organized crime globally, generating billions of dollars in illicit profits. According to the U.S. Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Report, both India and Nepal are classified as Tier 2 countries, indicating that while they are making significant efforts to address trafficking, they have yet to fully comply with the minimum standards for its elimination. Furthermore, these nations serve as source, transit, and destination countries for human trafficking, exacerbating the complexity of the issue.

The history of human trafficking is extensive, dating back to ancient civilizations, and is deeply intertwined with slavery, exploitation, and the movement of people across regions. Some scholars argue that trafficking is one of the oldest forms of organized exploitation (Sarkar & Chaudhury, 2014), evolving over centuries in response to socio-economic and political changes (Bravo, 2007; Kapardis & Clark, 2024). Historically, human trafficking was often associated with slavery and bonded labour, but over time, it became more closely linked to the commercial sex trade and forced prostitution (HRLN, 2011).

Ancient societies such as Greece, Rome, and Egypt institutionalized slavery, which frequently involved the forced movement and exploitation of individuals. Under the Roman Empire, enslaved people were compelled to perform various roles, including domestic work as maids, guards, and cooks, while some were also coerced into sexual servitude. The exploitative practices of these early civilizations persisted into the European colonial era, during which slavery became a cornerstone of economic expansion. The 16th century marked one of the darkest periods in the history of human trafficking, with millions of Africans forcibly transported to the Americas to work under brutal conditions on plantations. As the transatlantic slave trade declined in the 18th and 19th centuries, new forms of exploitation emerged, including indentured servitude. This system often coerced individuals either voluntarily or under

deceptive circumstances into signing contracts that bound them to labour for a fixed number of years in exchange for passage to foreign lands. While historical justifications for slavery were largely rooted in racial and ethnic hierarchies, contemporary human trafficking is primarily driven by economic vulnerabilities, particularly affecting low-income communities. Today, poverty, gender inequality, and socio-economic marginalization remain significant factors fuelling human trafficking, with women and children disproportionately affected.

India and Nepal share deep-rooted cultural, historical, and geopolitical ties, which have contributed to their complex socio-economic relationship. Historically, human trafficking in the region can be traced back to ancient times, where women and girls were often forced into servitude as *dasis* (female attendants or concubines) for royalty. This practice reflected a broader system of exploitation that persisted over centuries. The two nations share an open border, allowing for unrestricted movement between them. While this facilitates economic and social exchanges, it has also been exploited by traffickers who take advantage of the lack of stringent border controls (Sarkar & Chaudhury, 2014). Nepal faces significant economic challenges, including high poverty levels, unemployment, and limited opportunities, which drive large-scale migration of Nepali nationals to India in search of work. This migration trend has increased the vulnerability of Nepali individuals especially women and children to human trafficking.

A key factor fuelling trafficking is the demand for inexpensive labour in India, particularly in sectors such as construction, agriculture, and domestic work. Many Nepali migrants, especially men and boys, are subjected to exploitative working conditions, often receiving little or no wages for their labour. Despite the scale of the issue, official data on trafficking remains significantly lower than estimates provided by anti-trafficking organizations, suggesting an underreporting of cases. A report by Nepal's National Human Rights Commission (NHRC, 2012) highlights this discrepancy, emphasizing the need for stronger monitoring and intervention mechanisms.

OBJECTIVES

- 1.** To examine the socio-economic, political, and structural conditions that increase vulnerability to human trafficking between India and Nepal.
- 2.** To assess the viewpoints of key stakeholders, including law enforcement agencies, policymakers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
- 3.** To analyse the existing limitations in combating human trafficking and to propose measures recommended by stakeholders.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating primary and secondary data to analyse human trafficking between India and Nepal comprehensively. Primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including law enforcement officials, policymakers, and NGOs, providing qualitative insights into policy effectiveness, enforcement gaps, and socio-economic drivers. Purposive sampling has been adopted for this research because this study demands selective participants while secondary data was sourced from government reports, academic studies, international organizations, and legal documents, offering statistical trends and policy analysis. By combining these methods, the research ensures a holistic understanding of trafficking, capturing both macro-level policy perspectives and micro-level lived experiences to inform evidence-based recommendations.

Purposive sampling has been chosen for the study as the study demands selective participation. The study employs a qualitative method for data collection and the data were collected through participant observations and interviews including telephonic interviews.

The Critical Role of Key Stakeholders in Combating Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a deeply entrenched, pervasive, and often hidden crime that requires a multi-faceted and collaborative response from various stakeholders. The engagement of key stakeholders such as service providers, government officials, policymakers, law enforcement agencies, researchers, funding organizations, survivors, community groups, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is crucial in not only raising awareness but also in developing and implementing effective strategies to prevent trafficking, protect victims, and prosecute offenders (Clawson et al., 2009; Hounmenou, 2012; Macias-Konstantopoulos et al., 2015). So, basically a stakeholder refers to any individual, organization, or community with a vested interest in a particular issue, policy, project, or initiative (Friedman & Miles, 2006; Schiller et al., 2013).

In the context of human trafficking, stakeholders play a pivotal role in shaping anti-trafficking strategies, influencing legal frameworks, implementing victim support programs, and ensuring the sustainability of intervention efforts. Their engagement is critical in ensuring that anti-trafficking initiatives are in sync as to effectively combat trafficking. Interventions must align with community needs and address its root causes. By focusing on the most vulnerable populations, these efforts can achieve their intended outcomes and provide meaningful support to those at the highest risk. Additionally,

maintaining long-term effectiveness requires adaptability to evolving trafficking trends, ensuring that strategies remain relevant and impactful over time (Brugha & Varvasovszky, 2000; Deverka et al., 2013; Forrester et al., 2008; IDS Knowledge Services, 2013; RMC Research Corporation, 2009). Various studies show that incorporating stakeholders into the research and policy development process is widely recognized as a best practice, particularly in health and social sciences (Boote, Telford, & Cooper, 2002; Concannon et al., 2014; Deverka et al., 2013; Durham et al., 2014; Gliklich et al., 2012; Mackie et al., 2016; O’Haire et al., 2011; Ray & Miller, 2017).

The participation of stakeholders is essential as it increases the acceptance and legitimacy of research findings within affected communities, institutions, and governments. Additionally, involving stakeholders enhances the practicality and relevance of research designs by incorporating on-the-ground perspectives and real-world insights. It also facilitates the dissemination of knowledge and best practices, ensuring that findings translate into tangible policy and legal reforms (Deverka et al., 2013; Powell & Vagias, 2010). Not only this, Stakeholders also bring specialized knowledge and expertise that significantly enhance anti-trafficking policies and programs (Burton et al., 2008). Their contributions are vital in shaping policy decisions that strengthen legal protection and enforcement mechanisms, improving service delivery for trafficking survivors by ensuring access to justice, rehabilitation, and reintegration programs, and guiding research priorities to ensure studies are evidence-based, victim-centred, and actionable. Unlike the general public, stakeholders actively represent specific communities, institutions, or organizations, giving them the power and responsibility to advocate for meaningful systemic changes. Their influence can drive policy innovations, enhance institutional capacity, and foster a culture of accountability in anti-trafficking efforts (Deverka et al., 2013; Forrester et al., 2008). As the nature of human trafficking is transnational, no single entity can combat it alone. Effective responses require multi-sectoral collaboration, continuous engagement, and dynamic knowledge-sharing among all relevant actors.

Drivers/ Contributing Factors of Human Trafficking in the Indo-Nepal Terai Region

Human trafficking between India and Nepal, particularly in the Terai region, is fuelled by a combination of push and pull factors. The prospect of financial gain and economic opportunities acts as pull factors, while poverty, illiteracy, natural disasters, and gender inequality serve as significant push factors. Furthermore, socio-economic challenges, legal gaps, and political

instability exacerbate the issue. The primary factors contributing to human trafficking in the Indo-Nepal Terai region include:

Porous Border

When Nepal signed the Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship with India in 1950, the nation did not foresee that this agreement would inadvertently contribute to one of the most severe human rights crises in South Asia. The treaty, designed to solidify diplomatic ties and establish a strategic security alliance, allowed citizens of both nations to move freely across the border (Betteridge, 2020). It played a crucial role in Nepal's socio-economic development, granting access to essential resources from India that facilitated advancements in infrastructure, healthcare, education, and human resource development (Embassy of Nepal, 2022). However, despite its initial intentions to foster peace and prosperity, the treaty inadvertently created conditions that enabled widespread human rights violations (Sapkota, 2022). Today, the Nepal-India border is notorious as one of the busiest human trafficking corridors in the world, with an estimated 30,000 women and girls trafficked annually (Friends of WPC Nepal, 2025).

Poverty

One of the key factors exacerbating this crisis is acute poverty in the region. Extreme financial hardship, an overdependence on agriculture, and limited access to essential services leave countless individuals vulnerable to exploitation. In many cases, families struggling with economic desperation are coerced into selling their children or relatives, further fuelling the cycle of trafficking and exploitation (Sharma, 2018). The unintended consequences of the treaty, coupled with socio-economic vulnerabilities, have turned this open border into a gateway for exploitation, highlighting the urgent need for stronger border controls, policy reforms, and cross-border cooperation to combat human trafficking.

Social inequality is another major driver of human trafficking in the Indo-Nepal Terai region, with both the patriarchal system and caste system playing a significant role in perpetuating exploitation. The rigid caste hierarchy, particularly in rural areas, marginalizes lower-caste and backward caste populations, forcing them into bonded and forced labour, often in agricultural fields, where they are subjected to extreme exploitation and economic dependence (Sharma, 2018). This systemic oppression is deeply rooted in both India and Nepal, making it a widespread issue across the region. Additionally, the patriarchal structure further exacerbates vulnerability, as women and girls from marginalized communities face limited access to

education, employment, and property rights, leaving them at a heightened risk of trafficking. Lack of education and a deficit of basic amenities further aggravate the problem of human trafficking, creating an environment where vulnerability and exploitation thrive.

Natural disaster

As discussed above, Nepal's topography, characterized by its hilly and mountainous terrain, along with the presence of young folded Himalayan mountains, makes the country highly susceptible to natural disasters such as landslides and earthquakes. Additionally, Nepal is home to over 6,000 rivers and their tributaries, with a significant portion contributing to the Ganges River system. As a result, the Indo-Nepal Terai region faces recurrent flooding during the monsoon season. The persistent threat of these natural disasters not only disrupts livelihoods but also induces vulnerabilities, making the entire region more susceptible to human trafficking.

Key Stakeholders in the Fight Against Human Trafficking

This study adopted an inclusive approach, engaging in meaningful interactions with approximately 32 individuals from organizations deeply committed to combating human trafficking. The survey strategically targeted entities operating within the Indo-Nepal Terai region while also incorporating major organizations with a nationwide reach. To ensure a comprehensive perspective, the study involved dialogues with key government authorities, including Shashtra Seema Bal, the Indian Police, IPS officers, Anti-Human Trafficking (AHT) Police, and Nepal Police (Prahari). Additionally, interviews were conducted with representatives from prominent NGOs such as Manav Seva Sansthan SEVA, Shaktivahini, DEHAT, Maiti Nepal, Kin Nepal, and Three Angels Nepal, as well as various counselors with specialized expertise in the field. The interviews were conducted over different timeframes, spanning from January 2022 to May 2023. This deliberate selection of organizations and stakeholders ensured a diverse and well-rounded representation of anti-trafficking efforts, providing a nuanced and in-depth understanding of the multifaceted challenges and ongoing initiatives in the fight against human trafficking.

These organizations are deeply committed to combating human trafficking. The study discovered that, in collaboration with Indian police, Shashtra Seema Bal, and Nepal Police, all NGOs are actively engaged in the crucial task of rescuing trafficked victims. However, upon further investigation, it became evident that the number of organizations dedicated to the equally critical phases of rehabilitation and reintegration is comparatively

low. While the collective efforts in rescuing victims are commendable, there is a pressing need for increased focus and participation in the subsequent stages of rehabilitation and reintegration to ensure a holistic approach to addressing the challenges posed by human trafficking.

Table 1
Stakeholder's Profile

S.N o.	Name of the Organization	Representative s	Total Number	Male/Fem ale
1.	SSB	Officers	4	Male
2.	Indian Police	Officers	3	Male
3.	Nepal Police	Officers	2	Male
4.	IPS	Officers	1	Male
5.	Social Activist (Nepal)	Individual	1	Female
6.	MSS 'SEVA'	Director	1	Male
7.	GNK	Director	1	Male
8.	DEHAT	Director	1	Male
9.	Shaktivahini	Director	1	Male
10.	Shmbhu Nath Singh Research Foundation	Director	1	Male
11.	Gram Seva Samiti	Director	1	Male
12.	MSS 'SEVA'	District Coordinator	2	Male and Female
13.	Shakti Samuha	District Coordinator	1	Female
14.	Kin Nepal	District Coordinator	2	Female
15.	Three Angles	District Coordinator	2	Female
16.	Maiti Nepal	District Coordinator	1	Female
17.	ABC Nepal	Counsellor	1	Male
18.	PRC Nepal	Counsellor	1	Female
19.	MSS 'SEVA'	Counsellor	3	Female

20	Maiti Nepal	Counsellor	2	Female
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Source: Prepared by Author

Table 2

Activities Performed in the Context of Human Trafficking by Organizations including Government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

S.No.	Activities
1.	Rescue
2.	Rehabilitation
3.	Re-Integration
4.	Legal Help
5.	Vocational Training
6.	Awareness Program
7.	Counselling
8.	Capacity Building
9.	Prevention of Child Marriage
10.	Integration with Livelihood
11.	Disaster Resilience Program
12.	Meeting with Stake Holders

Source: Prepared by Author

Government organizations prioritize rescue operations as a top-tier initiative. Through this survey, a noteworthy collaboration between government bodies (GO) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) emerged, contributing significantly to the success of rescue operations. NGOs are working tirelessly at the grassroots level, demonstrating their ability to take decisive actions and offer timely assistance to those in need. The effectiveness of any initiative relies heavily on well-defined objectives, pursued meticulously through continuous monitoring and evaluation.

Major Areas of Working of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Here the given below Table 1.3 highlights the primary focus areas of various non-governmental organizations (NGOs), showcasing their contributions to critical sectors and initiatives.

Table 3*Major Area of Working of NGOs*

S. No.	NGO	Major Work Area	Location	
1	Manav Seva Sansthan 'Seva'	Health and Rehabilitation, Trafficking	Disaster, Human Trafficking	Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal
2	Dehat	Human Rights Protection		Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra
3	GNK	Capacity Building with Community	Working with Marginalized	Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttrakhand, Bihar, West Bengal
4	Shakti Vahini	Welfare of Children, Environment	Welfare of Women and Children, Protection of Environment	Delhi, West Bengal
5	Maiti	Welfare of Children, Disaster, Human Trafficking	Welfare of Women and Children, Health and Rehabilitation, Human Trafficking	Nepal, India
6	3 Angles	Welfare of Children, Education, Human Trafficking	Welfare of Women and Children, Health and Rehabilitation, Human Trafficking	Nepal, India
7	KIN Nepal	Welfare of Children, Rehabilitation, Trafficking	Welfare of Women and Children, Rescue and Rehabilitation, Human Trafficking	Nepal
8	Shakti Samuha	Support to the Victim of Women Trafficking and Enslavement		Nepal, India
9	Sambhunath Singh Research Foundation	Welfare of Children, Education, Rehabilitation	Welfare of Women and Children, Health and Education, Rehabilitation	India
10	Gram Seva Samiti	Health, Livelihood, Disaster Relief	Health, Education, Disaster Relief	India
11	ABC Nepal	Women Rights, Trafficking	Women Rights, Human Trafficking	Nepal

Source: Prepared by Author

Difficulties and Challenges Faced by Organizations/ Individuals (Social Activists)

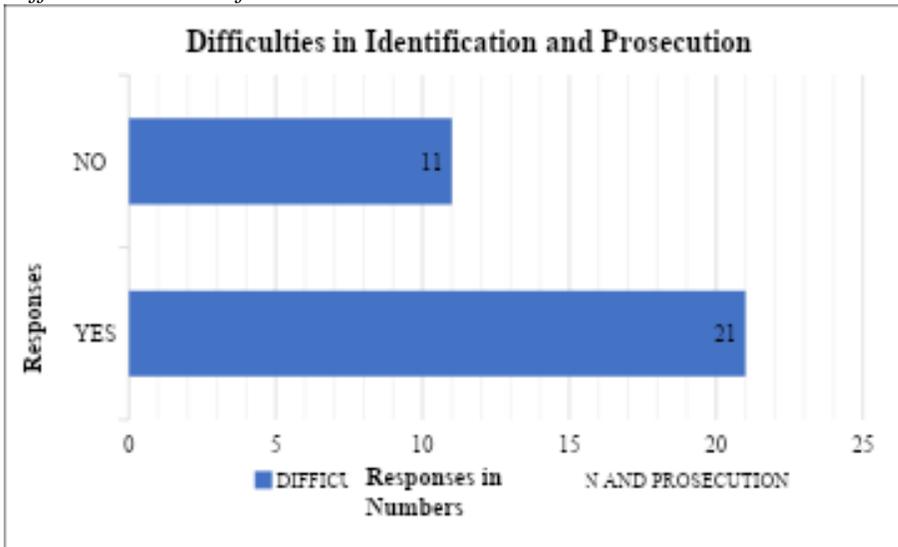
To explore the challenges encountered by organizations in their rescue efforts, the data states 21 responses affirming difficulties and 11 responses indicating no difficulties. The accompanying bar graph (Figure 1.4) visually represents the distribution of these responses, highlighting the proportion of organizations facing challenges during the prosecution and identification of traffickers and those operating without significant hindrances. For the organizations acknowledging difficulties, these challenges encompass inadequate resources, legal complexities, lack of cooperation, and other obstacles impeding their efforts in addressing trafficking issues. On the contrary, the category indicating ‘No difficulties’ primarily comprises government organizations or entities with effective systems, sufficient resources, robust legal frameworks, or successful collaboration, enabling them to handle trafficking issues seamlessly.

To further explore the significant challenges encountered during rescue operations and prosecution, an in-depth analysis revealed that impediments posed by traffickers, marked by threats, intimidation, and various obstacles, are widespread. One of the police personnel mentioned during an interaction that- “One of the significant challenges in addressing human trafficking in our region stems from its geographical location along the border, which is characterized by numerous unpaved and informal pathways frequently exploited by traffickers. From my observation, there appears to be insufficient coordination between the neighbouring countries in terms of border security and collaborative efforts, particularly at the operational level. While both governments have initiated various measures and policies aimed at combating trafficking at the official level, the crime rate remains persistently high, indicating gaps in the effective implementation and cross-border cooperation necessary to curb this transnational issue.”- Durgesh Kumar Singh, Chauki Incharge, Sonauli, UP, India.

Likewise, other police personnel from Nepal said- “One of the primary challenges we encounter during the initial stages of investigating human trafficking networks lies in gathering accurate and reliable information about these criminal operations. In some cases, it can take months or even years to identify key traffickers and their networks. This challenge is not

confined to domestic trafficking alone; we also face significant difficulties in addressing cross-border trafficking, particularly between India and Nepal. Given the transnational nature of this crime, there is an urgent need for both countries to adopt a collaborative and unified approach, transcending national boundaries, to effectively combat human trafficking. As neighboring nations, India and Nepal must recognize the shared human responsibility to work together in eradicating this grave violation of human rights”- Ram Hari Pandey, Assistant Head Constable, Nepal

Figure 1
Difficulties in Identification and Prosecution



Source: Prepared by Author

Dr. P.M. Nair, a Retired IPS officer, who is actively involved in combating this crime mentioned that- “Human trafficking is fundamentally a demand-driven crime, with the demand for exploited labour, sexual services, and other forms of exploitation serving as its driving force. One of the most significant challenges in combating trafficking lies within the demand sector, whether it pertains to child trafficking, forced labour, or sex trafficking. The persistent and often clandestine nature of this demand fuels the trafficking networks, making the identification of traffickers particularly difficult. The covert operations, coupled with the complex, transnational nature of trafficking, further complicate efforts to disrupt these criminal networks and bring perpetrators to justice”- P.M. Nair, Rtd IPS, India

One of the major challenges faced by the Director of the NGO Manav Seva Sansthan relates to the personal threats and dangers encountered while combating human trafficking. In his account, “he shared that he has been subjected to multiple death threats from traffickers, receiving numerous threatening phone calls and even surviving one or two physical attacks. These incidents underscore the significant risks working on the frontlines of anti-trafficking efforts”- Dr. Rajesh Mani Tripathi, director, MSS ‘SEVA’, India During the interaction with the director of Gram Niyojan Kendra, a prominent NGO, he said that – “Human trafficking is inherently clandestine, making it extremely challenging to identify and apprehend the perpetrators involved. Traffickers often operate with a high degree of sophistication, constantly altering their methods and routes to evade detection. Each time they abduct or exploit victims, they employ different strategies, which complicates tracking their activities. These criminals are often well-acquainted with their victims’ vulnerabilities and carefully select the most opportune moment to entrap or abduct them. In my view, locating and identifying traffickers remains one of the most significant challenges in combating this crime, as their elusive tactics make them difficult to apprehend and prosecute”- Mr. Bibhas Chatterjee, Director, GNK, India

The challenges associated with tracking traffickers are universally acknowledged by all respondents in this study. These organizations report that law enforcement plays a crucial and supportive role in combating human trafficking. However, despite assistance from both state and central governments, the prosecution process remains a significant challenge. Even when traffickers are apprehended, navigating the legal system to ensure successful prosecution is often fraught with delays, complexities, and systemic obstacles. This reflects the need for further strengthening of legal frameworks and judicial processes to effectively address human trafficking. One of the respondents mentioned that- “The open and porous borders between India and its neighbouring countries, particularly Nepal and Bangladesh, are a significant factor contributing to the prevalence of human trafficking in the region. These loosely regulated border areas facilitate the movement of traffickers and make it difficult to monitor or intercept illegal activities. Our organization, which operates primarily in the border region of West Bengal near Bangladesh, has witnessed firsthand the impact of these porous borders. While much of our work focuses on rescuing victims along the India-Bangladesh border, we have also successfully rescued numerous women and children trafficked from Nepal and other regions, including Delhi. This highlights the transnational and interconnected nature of human trafficking, underscoring the urgent need for enhanced cross-border

cooperation and stricter monitoring to combat this crime effectively” – Mr. Nishikant, member of Shaktivahini, NGO, India

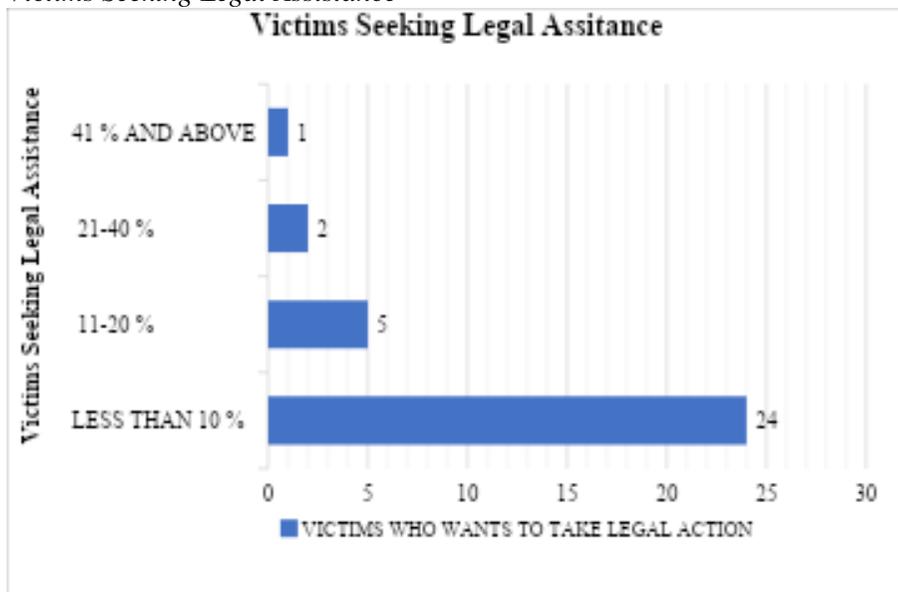
Legal Assistance Required by Victims

Examining the distribution of victims pursuing legal action against traffickers reveals insights based on responses from both government organizations (Govt Org) and non-governmental organizations (NGO). The data is stratified into distinct percentage ranges: Less than 10% (24 organizations): This category combines both government and non-government organizations, encompassing 24 entities that reported less than 10% of victims opting for legal action against traffickers. These organizations may have observed a relatively low percentage of victims choosing legal measures. 11% to 20% (5 organizations) This segment comprises 5 organizations that reported a moderate percentage of victims, ranging from 11% to 20%, seeking legal action against traffickers. 21% to 40% (2 organizations) This category involves only 2 organizations noting a higher percentage of victims, ranging from 21% to 40%, opting for legal action. Above 40% (1 organization): The “Above 40%” segment features 1 organization reporting an even higher percentage, above 40%, of victims actively seeking legal action. This organization may have experienced a relatively higher rate of victims pursuing legal measures.

Figure 1.5 represents the organizational distribution across different percentage ranges of victims seeking legal action against traffickers. It offers insights into the diverse responses of various organizations regarding the legal actions initiated by victims. It is disheartening to observe that only a fraction, less than 10 percent, of victims express a desire to pursue legal action.

One NGO shed light on a prevalent societal pressure, stating that “victims who have managed to rebuild their lives, especially those who are married and leading a peaceful existence, often refrain from engaging in lengthy legal proceedings”. The protracted nature of court processes becomes a significant deterrent, contributing substantially to the limited interest observed in taking legal action. Also, Mr. Nishikant a member of Shaktivahini an NGO running in India stated- “According to our study and observed circumstances, only 1 in 10 victims, primarily women and girls express a desire to seek legal assistance or file charges against traffickers. The majority of victims choose not to pursue legal action, which can be attributed to multiple factors. Key reasons include concerns over the social stigma, pressure from family members, fear of isolation, and anxieties regarding potential retaliation against themselves or their families, as well as the risk of re-trafficking”.

Figure 2
Victims Seeking Legal Assistance



Source: Prepared by Author

Similar experience also shared by Mr. Bibhas Chatterjee who is the Director of an NGO (Gram Niyojan Kendra) in India shared that - “Although hundreds of human trafficking victims have been rescued over the past two decades, providing them with legal assistance remains a substantial challenge. Ensuring victims’ protection and safety throughout court proceedings is particularly difficult due to threats from traffickers, which heighten their vulnerability. As an institution, we encounter these obstacles regularly, and encouraging victims to pursue justice is also complex; many withdraw after a year or two due to prolonged trial periods and the emotional toll involved. Thus, the challenges are twofold: victims seeking justice face prolonged delays, and the judicial system struggles with delays despite fast-track court initiatives, which ultimately affects both victims’ willingness to pursue legal action and the efficiency of the judiciary”. - Mr. Bibhas Chatterjee, Director, GNK, India

The process of seeking justice becomes even more complicated when the area is located along the international border. This situation is further worsened by the recurrent natural disasters that affect the region, creating additional barriers to legal proceedings and hindering effective intervention. As Dr. Rajesh Mani Tripathi, the director of Manav Seva Sansthan ‘SEVA’,

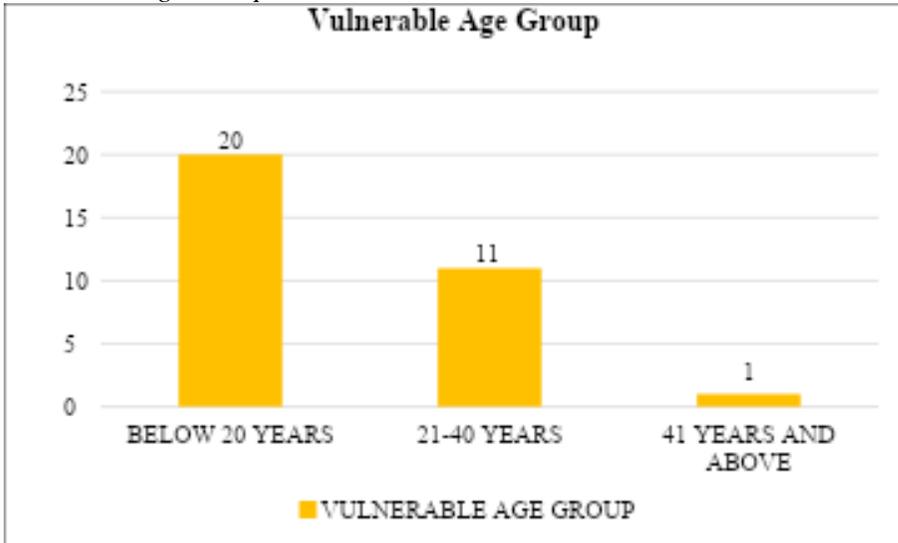
India said- “We are actively engaged in anti-trafficking efforts along the India-Nepal border, where a significant number of trafficking victims belong to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, originating from marginalized communities. Many of these individuals lack awareness regarding available legal recourse and support systems. Recognizing this, we have prioritized raising awareness about human trafficking and its severe consequences, focusing on empowering these communities with knowledge of their rights and legal protections. However, considerable work remains to ensure comprehensive awareness and accessibility to justice for all affected individuals”.

Vulnerable Age Group (According to Government Organization and Non-Governmental Organizations)

The study reveals a consensus among stakeholders regarding the vulnerability of certain age groups to trafficking. Children and adolescents emerge as the most affected by this crime, with the majority of victims falling under the age of thirty. In cases of bonded labour, however, victims may be found up to the age of forty. Specifically, females aged 12 to 24 are most susceptible to sexual trafficking, while those involved in child labour, bonded labour, or domestic servitude typically range from 8 to 30 years (based on interviews).

Figure 3

Vulnerable Age Group



Source: Prepared by Author

Causes of Trafficking

During the fieldwork, different organizations' representatives emphasize the different causes of trafficking.

Table 7

Causes of Trafficking (According to the Representatives of Government and Non-Governmental Organizations)

S.N o.	Causes of Trafficking	Yes, out of 32 Response s	Percent age %	No out of 32 Response s	Perce ntage %
1.	Poverty	30	93.7	2	6.25
2.	Migration	32	100	0	0
3.	Natural Disaster	28	87	4	12.9
4.	A desire for standard life	17	53.12	15	46.87
5.	Low literacy rate	28	87	4	12.9
6.	Marginalized community	32	100	0	0
7.	Lack of job opportunities in the local area	24	75	8	25
8.	Brothel, massage parlor	24	75	8	25
9.	Other	17	53.12	15	46.87

Source: Prepared by Author

Analysing the above table (5.6) provides clear insights into the unanimous recognition among all stakeholders regarding migration (100%), marginalized communities (100%), and poverty (93.5%) as primary drivers of human trafficking. Additionally, a substantial majority of respondents highlight natural disasters (87%) and low literacy rates (87%) as significant contributing factors to trafficking. These findings show the multifaceted nature of the challenges associated with human trafficking, emphasizing the

interconnectedness of socio-economic factors, migration patterns, and vulnerabilities arising from natural disasters.

Poverty

The Terai region of India, with an approximate population of 4 crore, where more than half of the population is male. Despite this demographic composition, the region grapples with a high unemployment rate. A similar scenario unfolds in Nepal. “According to the director of GNK (NGO) Mr. Bibhas Chatterjee, poverty is not a chosen fate but rather a curse afflicting family”. The director emphasized that human trafficking is intricately linked to various reasons, reflecting the multifaceted nature of the challenges faced by communities in the region. Other stakeholders also emphasize that poverty is a primary driver of human trafficking, as it heightens individuals’ vulnerability and creates conditions that traffickers exploit. Poverty exacerbates susceptibility by limiting access to education, employment, and essential resources, leaving individuals more exposed to the risks of trafficking and exploitation. The scarcity of job opportunities in India leads skilled individuals to migrate in search of better prospects, contributing to the complex web of factors driving poverty. Additionally, the consensus among stakeholders, including SSB, Indian and Nepalese police, affirms that “poverty stands out as a major contributing factor to trafficking. Addressing poverty eradication requires a strategic, step-by-step approach, acknowledging the complexity and the need for sustained efforts over time”, as expressed by an SSB personnel Assistant Commandant L. Mohan Dobhal.

Migration

Migration emerges as a pivotal factor contributing to the vulnerability of individuals to trafficking. According to Mr. Bibhas Chatterjee, Director, GNK, India, in the Indian Terai region, “a significant portion of the male population undertakes internal migration to various parts of India in pursuit of economic opportunities. This trend leaves behind the remaining family members, predominantly consisting of females and children. With the male breadwinners seeking employment elsewhere, females are often tasked with managing household chores, including farming activities, to sustain the family in the absence of their primary earners”. Tragically, it is during this vulnerable period of separation that perpetrators keenly observe these families and their activities. The perpetrators strategically target households where females and children are left without the protective presence of male family members. Exploiting the absence of male guardians, traffickers identify these families as susceptible targets and succeed in luring them into trafficking

schemes. This observed pattern underscores the interplay between migration, gender dynamics, and the increased vulnerability of families left behind. The exploitation of this vulnerability by traffickers is a distressing consequence.

In another conversation with a Shakti Vahini representative, prominent differences in migration patterns from Nepal and Bangladesh were highlighted. Migration from Nepal to India is often voluntary, motivated by aspirations for improved living standards and the allure of metropolitan lifestyles. In contrast, migration from Bangladesh is frequently involuntary, driven by adverse conditions such as cyclones, floods, and droughts. These environmental challenges are compounded by Bangladesh's limited capacity to manage disaster events effectively, leaving many migrants with no feasible option to return. Consequently, this forced migration increases individuals' vulnerability, placing them at higher risk for human trafficking and exploitation. So according to him unsafe migration is also a major issue for human trafficking.

Natural Disasters as Cause of Trafficking

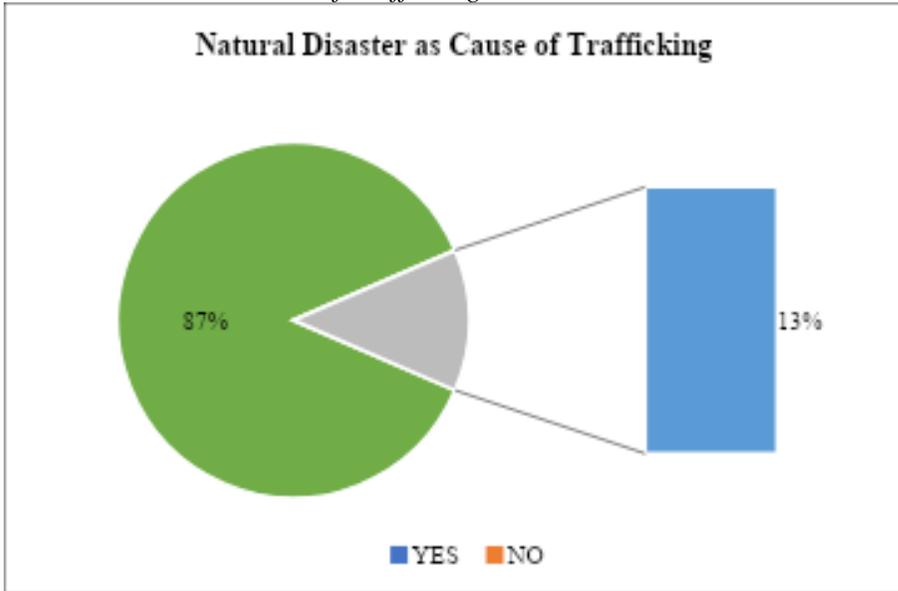
The findings from the survey of 32 diverse stakeholders revealed a substantial consensus, as 27 stakeholders acknowledged that natural disasters in the Indo-Nepal area are a significant contributor to human trafficking. In addition to this, 3 to 4 stakeholders specifically pointed out poverty and illiteracy as notable factors driving human trafficking.

Upon conducting a more detailed analysis, it becomes clear that individuals residing in areas prone to natural disasters, compounded by issues of poverty, illiteracy, and belonging to marginalized communities, emerge as the primary victims of human trafficking. This observation highlights the interconnected nature of vulnerabilities, where multiple factors converge to amplify the risk of exploitation and trafficking. The survey results emphasize the critical importance of addressing these multifaceted challenges comprehensively.

The impact of natural disasters on vulnerable populations extends beyond immediate physical devastation, often creating a breeding ground for exploitative activities such as human trafficking. A director from an NGO shared a firsthand account of the aftermath of the devastating earthquake that struck Nepal in 2015. Specifically, in the Sindhupal chowk district, where the earthquake's epicenter caused significant destruction. Numerous NGOs from both India and Nepal are actively present to provide critical aid during earthquakes, offering essential support and resources in these challenging situations. But they found some shocking revelation, an instance shared by an NGO director- "During their relief efforts, the team of Manav Seva Sansthan

‘SEVA’ observed a disconcerting phenomenon: some of the individuals purportedly offering aid in the relief camps were, in fact, human traffickers.

Figure 4
Natural Disaster as Cause of Trafficking



Source: Prepared by Author

This revelation sheds light on the opportunistic nature of traffickers who exploit chaotic situations, taking advantage of the vulnerability and desperation of those affected by natural disasters. The presence of traffickers among aid providers underscores the challenges faced by affected populations in discerning genuine assistance from potential threats”. This incident has also been corroborated by members of prominent Nepalese NGOs, including Shakti Samuha, Maiti Nepal, Three Angels, Kin Nepal, Care International, ABC Nepal, and PRC Nepal.

Apart from the above concern “The NGO organizers emphasized the tragic reality that the earthquake survivors, already grappling with the trauma and loss caused by the disaster, found themselves in a situation where distinguishing between genuine aid workers and traffickers became a daunting task. This confusion adds another layer of vulnerability for the affected population, as they are left unsure of whom to trust in their quest for support and assistance”.

Effectively combating human trafficking in the region requires a holistic approach that considers the interplay of various factors contributing

to vulnerability. By understanding and addressing the root causes, policymakers and organizations can develop targeted interventions to protect communities and individuals from falling prey to human trafficking in the aftermath of natural disasters and other challenging circumstances.

As discussed in the migration section, natural disasters significantly heighten population vulnerability, often leading individuals into situations where they are susceptible to trafficking. Numerous global studies also identify natural disasters as a primary factor contributing to human trafficking, as these events disrupt livelihoods, displace communities, and create environments where traffickers can more easily exploit affected populations.

Aspirations for Better Standard of Living

The pursuit of a better life often propels numerous young individuals to leave their localities and migrate to metropolitan areas in search of improved living conditions. Unfortunately, this aspiration frequently leads them into the perilous situation of human trafficking, a concern extensively discussed among various stakeholders. As explained here - “An Indian police officer Durgesh Singh, reflecting on the issue, noted that many Nepalese individuals tend to live with a seemingly carefree attitude, driven by a desire for a lavish lifestyle. This mindset, in turn, makes them susceptible to involvement in illegal activities, such as falling victim to trafficking networks, they believe in ‘Khao Kamao’ he added”. This perspective is further endorsed by SSB member Commanding Officer Alok Kumar, currently stationed at the Supaul border in India, who affirms the significance of these efforts in addressing cross-border challenges.

However, the scenario is evolving, marked by various awareness programs along the Indo-Nepal border aimed at educating the population about the deceptive nature of advertisements promising lucrative opportunities in big metropolitan areas. These initiatives strive to empower individuals, especially the youth, with the knowledge needed to discern between genuine opportunities and potential traps set by human traffickers. “It’s not only the younger generation that falls prey to these situations; parents, too, sometimes believe that their child working in a metropolitan environment can provide for the entire family. In the initial phases of trafficking schemes, the traffickers often manipulate families by providing financial incentives, contributing to the family’s financial stability. However, as highlighted by a program manager, Kin Nepal, Padma Ma’am, these seemingly benevolent gestures are short-lived, and the traffickers eventually disappear, leaving families in distress”. This pattern of trafficking was

witnessed also in India and also confirmed by the director of Shambhu Nath Singh Research Foundation Dr. Rajeev sir.

Westernization of thoughts and lifestyle is a major contributing factor. Firstly, the allure of a perceived Western lifestyle, often portrayed through media and popular culture, can influence individuals, especially the younger generation, to seek opportunities in metropolitan areas associated with a more modern and affluent way of life. This aspiration for a Western lifestyle may drive individuals to migrate from their local areas, exposing them to potential vulnerabilities, including human trafficking.

Secondly, the westernization of aspirations can contribute to a desire for higher education, employment, and economic prosperity typically associated with urban centres. As individuals pursue these aspirations, they may be lured by false promises or deceptive advertisements, leading them into situations where they become targets for traffickers.

Other Reasons

Discussing the evolving landscape of human trafficking, “the project coordinator of Kin Nepal NGO emphasized a notable shift in patterns. Traditionally associated with prostitution and sex trafficking, the dynamics have transformed to include activities such as working in massage parlors, engaging in camel jockeying, and domestic servitude”. The increasing influence of social media, particularly the internet and platforms like YouTube and TikTok, has become a significant contributing factor to trafficking.

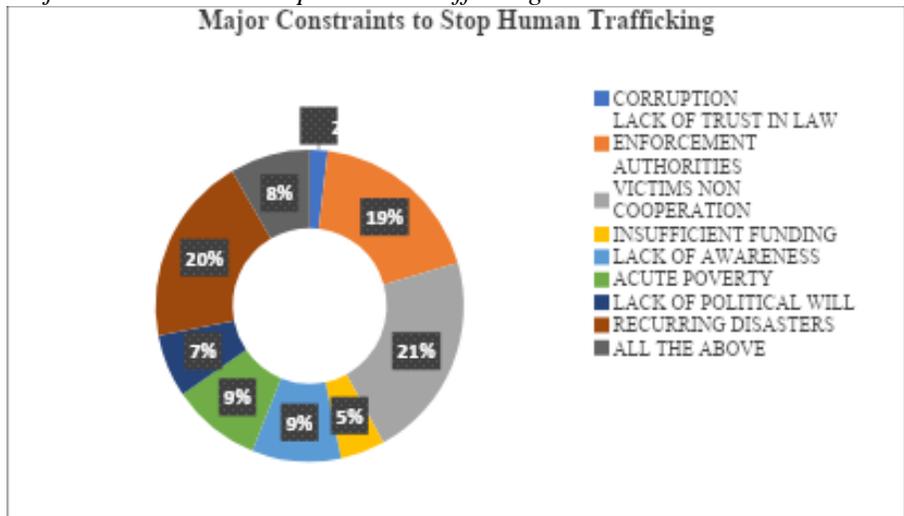
Corroborating this observation, “an Indian NGO worker from Manv Seva Sansthan ‘SEVA’ Reeta Ma’am recounted post-COVID incidents where 7 to 8 cases were registered, involving Nepalese girls befriending individuals on social media platforms and subsequently leaving their homes to live with boyfriends in Delhi, eventually falling prey to trafficking”. Another Ngo of Nepal like PRC and Shakti Samuha also confirmed these incidents. This shift over time reflects the changing nature of causes and methods in trafficking. In ancient times, women were trafficked for roles like becoming court ladies, and traffickers adapted their strategies accordingly. The present scenario underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of these shifts to combat trafficking effectively.

Major Constraints to Stop Human Trafficking

The exploration of the major constraints in combating human trafficking reveals a complex web of interconnected challenges. One notable obstacle, corruption, comprising 2% of the identified issues, significantly

undermines the efficacy of law enforcement efforts. The corrosive influence of corruption creates an environment where traffickers can operate with relative impunity, necessitating systemic reforms to eradicate this insidious barrier. A substantial impediment, accounting for 19%, is the lack of trust in law enforcement authorities. Rebuilding this trust is imperative for effective collaboration between authorities and victims. Initiatives focusing on transparency, accountability, and community engagement can contribute to restoring faith in the justice system. Victims' non-cooperation emerges as a considerable challenge, representing 21% of the constraints. This underscores the importance of adopting victim-centric approaches that prioritize their safety, empowerment, and understanding of legal proceedings. Tailored support systems, trauma-informed care, and legal advocacy are pivotal in overcoming this barrier.

Figure 5
Major Constraints to Stop Human Trafficking



Source: Prepared by Author

Insufficient funding, constituting 5% of the challenges, highlights the financial limitations that anti-trafficking initiatives often face. Adequate resources are crucial for comprehensive victim support, training law enforcement personnel, and conducting awareness campaigns. Advocacy for increased funding and resource allocation is vital to fortify the anti-trafficking infrastructure. Lack of awareness, at 9%, points to the need for robust public awareness campaigns and educational programs. Dispelling myths, fostering understanding, and encouraging proactive reporting are integral components

of addressing this challenge. Public engagement and education are key elements in creating a vigilant and informed society. Acute poverty, also at 9%, is identified as a contributing factor that renders individuals more susceptible to exploitation. Long-term solutions involve addressing the root causes of poverty through economic empowerment initiatives, vocational training, and social welfare programs. Lack of political will, mentioned in 7% of instances, underscores the need for committed leadership at the governmental level. Political will is crucial for enacting and enforcing anti-trafficking laws, allocating resources, and engaging in international collaborations. Advocacy efforts to foster political commitment are essential in overcoming this barrier. The newly identified constraint, recurring disasters, accounting for 20%, amplifies the vulnerability of populations in disaster-prone areas to human trafficking. Disaster response strategies must integrate anti-trafficking measures to prevent opportunistic exploitation by traffickers during times of crisis.

The overarching category of “All the above reasons” at 8% highlights the complex interplay of these challenges. A comprehensive and integrated approach, involving international collaborations, government commitment, financial investment, and community engagement, is imperative to address the multifaceted nature of human trafficking effectively. In conclusion, a nuanced understanding of these constraints underscores the necessity for a multifaceted, collaborative, and sustained effort involving stakeholders at various levels. The fight against human trafficking demands a holistic strategy that addresses corruption, rebuilds trust, empowers victims, secures funding, fosters awareness, alleviates poverty, ensures political will, and integrates anti-trafficking measures into disaster response efforts.

Plan of Action

Personnel were queried regarding the operational strategies employed by their respective organizations at the time of the interview. In the NGO sector, a discernible lack of uniformity in planning emerged, with each organization tailoring its approach to factors such as the nature of activities, geographical scope, community dynamics, accessibility, and the received funding. Responses unveiled a spectrum of planning methodologies, some organizations adopted annual plans, with evaluations conducted every three months to ensure adherence to the devised strategies. In contrast, certain organizations structured plans following the identification of vulnerable areas. Personnel from a specific organization articulated a comprehensive approach to action planning by considering the factors like security, physical

and mental health, provision of food and clothing, counselling services, recreation, education, legal support, and mitigation of social stigma.

Collaborative efforts with local police, SSB personnel, and AHTU were integral components, especially in instances of cross-border trafficking. Interestingly in conversation with a member of Nepal police posted at the border area “concerns arose regarding collaboration with Indian police, with personnel noting dissatisfaction from Nepal police due to perceived protracted processes related to legislation and jurisdiction within the Indian context”. Noteworthy plans disclosed during the survey included initiatives addressing housing challenges for vulnerable girls and women, networking endeavours with both interstate and intrastate NGOs, and activities aligned with Logical Framework Analysis. The majority of personnel attested to adopting a needs-based approach in developing past plans. Additionally, at the Indian border, a collaborative synergy between NGOs and government police officers was observed, reflecting a concerted effort to execute plans successfully and combat human trafficking.

It is important to note that all NGOs expressed positive feedback regarding the efforts of the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) and the mechanisms they have implemented. However, NGO representatives raised significant concerns about the need for a more proactive approach by law enforcement, particularly in cases of cross-border trafficking and trafficking from high-risk areas. NGOs emphasized that police must act proactively in source and transit areas, as this could substantially reduce trafficking incidents. Currently, when victims are located in destination areas, police are primarily reactive, limiting their capacity to disrupt trafficking networks effectively and prevent exploitation.

Modus Operandi

In the initial phase, the modus operandi employed by stakeholders exhibits similarity, with variations emerging in different steps of the process. The shared approach involves gathering information and identifying victims, followed by a strategized rescue process. The rescue operation, a critical phase, often extends over several months due to the gravity of the situation and the potential harm a misstep could cause to victims. Occasionally, successful operations also lead to the apprehension of traffickers.

Both governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a crucial role by first identifying trafficking patterns in a given area or region. Once confident, they engage with local panchayats, informing nearby police officers or thana officers. “Following the rescue, significant challenges arise, particularly when dealing with victims who may not be in the right state of

mind, with some attempting self-harm or suicide, as shared by an NGO counsellor Sunita Ma'am". This proves challenging since victims may initially refuse to communicate, hindering efforts to uncover information about other potential victims still in peril.

Acknowledging this difficulty, "a member of Shakti Vahini stressed the importance of building trust with the victims, who, having been betrayed once, are hesitant to engage with counsellor or law enforcement". However, over time, often after a week or more, victims begin to open up.

Nearly every NGO surveyed reported their active engagement at the grassroots level, focusing on awareness programs and establishing village-level committee teams. These committees maintain records of missing children and analyse patterns by speaking with victims' families, which helps NGOs identify potential times, places, and circumstances in which victims may have disappeared. Subsequently, NGOs share this critical information with various police stations, particularly in high-risk areas with a history of trafficking. This approach has proven highly effective, enabling successful rescues.

In cross-border trafficking cases, NGOs and police collaborate closely, as both are integral to the rescue process. After a successful operation by an NGO, police support is essential for transferring victims across borders to ensure their safe return to their home country. However, a key insight emerged during the interview with Maya Chhetri from Nepal, who stressed that "fully eradicating trafficking would be impossible without NGO involvement". NGOs not only provide essential transit and shelter homes, especially crucial in cases of sexual trafficking where families may refuse to reintegrate victims but also maintain ongoing records of victims to prevent re-trafficking. Police departments often lack shelter facilities, making NGO partnerships indispensable in offering safe spaces and continued protection for victim's post-rescue. Importantly, NGOs from both India and Nepal actively monitor victims' welfare, ensuring they remain safe from further exploitation.

Nepal Police emphasized that, although they are responsible for law enforcement, they cannot keep trafficking victims with them for an extended period. Therefore, the prompt relocation of victims to shelter houses and child care centres is prioritized. It's crucial to note that while there may be a sufficient number of shelter houses, their functionality and facilities must be adequate.

Post-rescue efforts are made to locate the victims' families and relatives. While some victims express the desire to file cases, others may feel confused about their course of action. NGOs have, at times, facilitated the

rescue of additional victims based on the information provided by those initially rescued. Both governments provide a substantial amount of compensation to trafficking victims, underscoring the commitment to addressing the aftermath of such heinous crimes in both countries.

Problems faced by Government Organization and Non-Governmental Organizations

Tackling the issue of human trafficking presents a multifaceted challenge, given the highly organized nature of traffickers' operations. NGO personnel engaged in interventions encounter a myriad of obstacles. The survey sought insights into the specific challenges faced by these personnel. Many respondents highlighted the arduous nature of rescue operations, with the process often extending over several months or even years. While restoration was perceived as a relatively straightforward task, rehabilitation posed a prolonged and intricate challenge. Numerous personnel reported receiving threats from traffickers, ranging from menacing phone calls to direct physical harm, including instances of murder or severe injury. Interestingly, some encountered resistance from parents during follow-ups with restored victims, though an understanding of the families' predicaments was acknowledged. Engaging with broken families proved to be an additional hurdle during the intervention phase. Rehabilitating adult survivors of trafficking posed distinct challenges, as some returned voluntarily to brothels or were coerced by their own family members, as revealed by an NGO director GNK. Instances of uncooperative attitudes from the police, coupled with low prosecution rates of traffickers, emerged as major concerns for many personnel. Government and NON government personnel both have said that age verification of rescued victims before Child Welfare Committees (CWC) was identified as a procedural challenge. Shortages of shelter homes were frequently identified as a challenge, and the pervasive social stigma faced by victims compounded the complexity of reintegration efforts stated by Indian and Nepalese sides of NGOs. The mindset of communities, resistant to rapid change, posed a persistent challenge in addressing societal perceptions.

Government agencies and personnel faced their own set of challenges, ranging from competing priorities and conflicting interests to addressing political considerations, especially in disaster situations. The survey did not overtly reveal political challenges, but issues related to disaster response and program implementation were considered within this realm. From a judicial perspective, an advocate in the Supreme Court acknowledged India's favourable legal framework compared to other developed countries. However, the prolonged resolution of cases, even with the establishment of

fast-track courts, remained a significant bottleneck. Additionally, the Police personnel highlighted the negative public image of the police, contributing to a reluctance among individuals to approach the police with information about traffickers. A critical challenge identified was the ambiguity surrounding the definition of trafficking despite existing laws and policies. The lack of a clear clarification in some cases led to dilemmas, such as distinguishing between missing persons cases and potential trafficking situations stated by an NGO. NGOs emphasized that instances where individuals went missing due to false promises made by pimps should be considered abduction or trafficking cases, reflecting the need for a more precise delineation in existing legal framework.

A pressing concern raised by Indian counsellors working in NGOs is the inadequacy of their salaries, especially when compared to their counterparts in Nepal. The nature of the work demands an unwavering commitment, with counsellors often required to work continuously for 24 to 48 hours in the event of identifying trafficking cases. These professionals play a critical role in supporting victims and aiding law enforcement efforts, and it is essential that the government recognizes and addresses the challenges they face. Former IPS officer Dr. P.M. Nair has “emphasized the unfortunate lack of awareness regarding the ramifications of trafficking as a transnational organized crime”. This underscores the need for increased awareness campaigns and educational initiatives to ensure that the gravity of human trafficking, particularly its organized and cross-border nature, is well understood by the public, law enforcement, and policymakers alike.

Furthermore, a Nepalese NGO has highlighted the impact of social networking sites as contributors to the trafficking problem. The use of these platforms has presented new challenges and avenues for traffickers to exploit vulnerable individuals. This underscores the evolving nature of trafficking and the importance of adapting prevention strategies to address emerging threats, including those facilitated by technology. Collaborative efforts between governments, NGOs, and online platforms are crucial in mitigating these risks and protecting potential victims.

CONCLUSION

Human trafficking is an intricate and multifaceted issue that demands a concerted effort from both governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The legal framework provided by policies and laws forms the foundation for combating this grave problem. Collaborative endeavours between governmental and non-governmental agencies are essential to prevent trafficking, safeguard victims, and hold perpetrators accountable. This unified approach is critical in the relentless battle against

human trafficking, aiming to eliminate this egregious violation of human rights and restore the dignity of victims. Recognizing trafficking in human beings as a global problem becomes especially pronounced in disaster-prone areas, where disasters respect no administrative boundaries. Pimps capitalize on the chaos that disasters bring, intensifying their activities.

The impact of trafficking spans across age, gender, and background, and Dr. Virendra Mishra (IPS Officer) emphasizes the challenge of overgeneralizing terms related to trafficking. Dr. Rajesh Mani Tripathi, the director of an NGO, highlights the absence of Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) programs in the context of the Indo-Nepal border. Dr. Mondiarra Dutta, a renowned scholar, notes the complexity of repatriation in cross-border trafficking due to evolving political boundaries. Anti-trafficking strategies differ globally due to variations in legal systems, cultural contexts, and the scale of the problem. Immigration and border control policies play a role, with some countries strengthening borders to prevent trafficking and others adopting lenient immigration policies to protect vulnerable migrant groups.

The porous Indo-Nepal border and the absence of visa requirements contribute significantly to cross-border trafficking. While robust policies exist for victim protection, there are challenges in their effective implementation. Governments often collaborate with NGOs to provide services, conduct awareness campaigns, and assist in prevention efforts. The effectiveness of these measures varies widely, relying on government commitment, resource allocation, and collaboration among stakeholders, including NGOs and international organizations. Policies are regularly updated to address evolving trafficking trends and challenges. Overall, the fight against human trafficking necessitates ongoing commitment, resource investment, and collaborative action on a global scale.

During the interaction, stakeholders gave excellent suggestions, one of them is worth mentioning here. Dr. P.M. Nair said, “To prevent trafficking in persons, we must act like duty holders” as the effective addressing of the intricate challenges presented by commercial sexual trafficking demands a multifaceted strategy that encompasses various crucial elements. Central to this strategy is the imperative need to raise awareness on the pervasive nature of the issue, promote education to empower communities, and fortify legal frameworks to hold perpetrators accountable. Concurrently, unyielding support for organizations dedicated to rescuing and rehabilitating victims is of paramount importance, acknowledging the crucial role they play in breaking the cycle of exploitation. In envisioning a future liberated from the chains of exploitation and abuse, a collaborative global approach is indispensable. The comprehensive efforts to eradicate commercial sexual

trafficking entail intensified awareness campaigns, the implementation of stringent laws, and the provision of robust support and rehabilitation services for survivors. The significance of international collaboration becomes evident in addressing the root causes and dismantling the networks engaged in this illicit trade. Emphasizing the collective responsibility of society, there is a call for concerted action through heightened awareness and support for organizations offering assistance to victims.

A holistic and comprehensive approach is vital, encompassing legislation, victim support services, and extensive awareness campaigns. Through collaborative endeavours, the aim is to protect and support those impacted by human trafficking, ultimately working towards the elimination of this grave violation of human rights. The importance of international cooperation is underscored, urging member states to collaborate in preventing cross-border trafficking and sharing best practices. Recognizing the need for capacity-building programs, particularly for marginalized communities and specific age groups, emphasizes the potential impact of cross-border services. Enhancing cooperation between law enforcement and the judiciary, both within and across countries, is deemed essential for effective counter-trafficking efforts. “Human trafficking remains a global issue and continues to pose a significant challenge for Nepal. Despite various efforts to combat it, the vulnerability of Nepali citizens to human trafficking and exploitation has not significantly decreased, because it required global and regional cooperation between countries to tackle the problem” Maya Chhetri, Female district coordinator Maiti Nepal.

Acknowledging challenges related to data ambiguity and the lack of research programs, experts like Dr. Rajesh Mani Tripathi and Prof. Mondira Dutta stress the importance of a robust research agenda. Understanding the patterns and dynamics of this crime is crucial, particularly given the intricate linkages between traffickers and pimps. Simultaneously, there is a heightened focus on monitoring and reporting mechanisms to facilitate a more thorough and informed response to human trafficking. While some prevention and awareness programs are already in place, the imperative now is to expand their reach by involving specific individuals with expertise in this field. By initiating campaigns and education programs that inform the public about the risks of trafficking and how to recognize and report it, the goal is to make these efforts more widespread and impactful, ultimately contributing to the collective fight against human trafficking.

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