

Human Trafficking: Preventive Approach

Introduction and Background Scenario

Trafficking in women and children within the territory and across the border has become an everyday event now a day in Bangladesh like some other countries within the South Asian Region. Due to long open border with India and clandestine nature of trafficking determining of the number of trafficking events in a given period of time very difficult. BNWLA carried out a study few years back at 250 villages under different districts in Bangladesh and it was revealed that approximately 7000 women and children are trafficked every year. This gives us a rough estimation of the magnitude of the problem, which does match with that of the estimation made by the State Department of USA i.e. 10K - 20K persons are trafficked each year.

In recent year it seems that the trend of trafficking has been increased. Women and adolescent girls are being trafficked for being used in prostitution, pornography, sex work, domestic work, and bonded labor. Besides, small boys are trafficked to be forcibly engaged as camel jockeys and other hazardous works.

Mainly, socially and economically disadvantaged and vulnerable women and children are trafficked from Bangladesh to India, Pakistan, Middle East and some other countries around the globe. The victims are either abducted or allured with false promises of better life by providing lucrative job or marriage offer or false proposal to visit holy places. But consequently they become victims of trafficking.

Trafficking Scenario in Bangladesh

Trafficking in women and children within the territory and outside Bangladesh is a common phenomenon. Uneducated and vulnerable women and children who are deprived from financial, social and legal support and opportunities easily become victims of internal and cross border trafficking. The organised gang of traffickers are targeting the poorest of the poor and disadvantaged children and women and traffic them within the country and outside country. The nature, type and technique of trafficking may differ from place to place and country to country but ultimate consequences are same. In south Asia, Bangladesh is the high risk zone of trafficking. The women, adolescent girl and minor children are being trafficked from Bangladesh to India, Pakistan and Middle East for engaging in forced prostitution and various kinds of bonded labour such as, slavery and camel jockeys etc.

But most of the victims are trafficked to the neighbouring countries like India and Pakistan. Factors facilitate the cross border trafficking in Bangladesh include long and open borders, demands of Bangladeshi girls in the brothels/prostitution in India and Pakistan, ignorance

about the consequence, poor economic condition, lack of legal support, disregards towards girls and above all greed. On the other hand male children (age 3-12) are being trafficked to UAE where they use as camel jockeys.

The victims are either abducted or allured with promises of better life by providing lucrative job or marriage offers and false proposals to visit holy places. But practically they become victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation and eventually embrace the lives of agony and torture. Most of the Bangladeshi women and children victims of cross border trafficking are sold in the brothels or forcibly engaged in prostitution.

There are two common types of trafficking one is internal and the other is cross border trafficking. It has been found that women and children are often taken away from their homes through abduction, or false promise of better life with good employment, by traffickers who in turn sell them in brothels within the country in the case of internal trafficking. Besides, they are also smuggled by gang of traffickers across the border to further destinations where their crucial fate is a life of sexual exploitation and abuse and other forms of bonded labour. Tiny boys who traffic to UAE are engaged in camel jockey which is very precarious and hazardous game.

The gang of traffickers recruit/collect women, adolescent girls, minor male child (age about 3-7 years) from different part of Bangladesh. Some of them are engage in prostitution inside the native country and other are try to cross the border for India, Pakistan and UAE. We have no evidence that the victim is traffic to Nepal. But sometime traffickers chose Nepal as their safe transit and travel document preparation point.

The trafficker collect/recruit male child and trafficked them mainly to UAE. As per our experience we have identified few of our districts including Norsingdhi, Moymensingh and Sylhet, which are, treated as recruiting area for camel jockeys. Sometime traffickers take these ill fated children in guise of their parents and sometime the real parents are also sent to the countries of destination for making the whole process easier for traffickers.

Prevention Approach:

Recently a group formed in Bangladesh to determine various aspects of trafficking in women and children has identified some important points. According to the group there is more than one factor that can be seen as motivations for cross border trafficking that include basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, health etc., security, increase of income or status etc.

On the other hand vulnerable situation caused by stigmatisation such as rape, former sex worker, divorce, widow etc., social considerations such as marriage, dowry, polygamy, child marriage, adventure/desire to experience life and explore the world, emotional stability such

as dysfunctional family situation, seeking an emotional support system etc. are also found as favourable situation that lead towards trafficking. The group also has identified different actors who influence or make decision that eventually lead to trafficking situation. The decision makers as identified are family members, guardians etc., victim herself/himself, recruiter, smuggler, trafficker, returnees and others, community leaders, neighbours, returnees (migrants) etc.

In order to adopt a doable prevention approach in trafficking in women and children the aforementioned aspects need to be taken into consideration and accordingly appropriate remedies to these situation or vulnerabilities have to be explored. To that end the group involved in combating trafficking in women and children have pointed out some pragmatic suggestions for prevention and protection of trafficking by taking the regional aspects into consideration. For initiating sustainable prevention against trafficking life options should be created. The life options include development of programs that offer livelihood options within the community to keep people in country.

Initiatives Taken by Different Groups in Order to Prevention of Human Trafficking

Government's Initiatives: The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) is implementing a pilot project titled "Child Development: Coordinated Program to Combat Child Trafficking" to reduce child trafficking in Bangladesh. The project covers 25 Upazilas of 14 border districts through out the country.

Meanwhile, the government of Bangladesh has formulated a National Plan of Action (NPA) against the Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children including Trafficking. The NPA is based on the data collected at different level through the initiatives of government, NGO, INGO and UN Agencies. BNWLA has been one of the members of the core group formed by the government comprised of representatives from relevant government departments, UN bodies, INGOs and NGOs working in the field of child rights in one way or the other.

Formulation of the National Plan of Action includes not only thorough analysis of child sexual exploitation but also suggestions and recommendations from all relevant groups. In this connection, three sub national consultations were held at Chittagong, Rajshahi and Khulna and one national consultation at Dhaka on September 2, 4, 11 and 16, 2001 respectively. BNWLA was responsible for organizing the sub national consultations at Chittagong and Rajshahi. The objective of these sub national and national consultations was to elicit information and recommendations from the local level people from different professional groups including government officials, lawyers, journalists, doctors, engineers, NGO representatives etc.

Currently the NPA is at the stage of implementation. A National Monitoring and Implementation Committee on National Plan of Action against sexual exploitation and abuse of children including Trafficking (SEACT) has been formed in which BNWLA is active member. The committee has also developed a TOR for developing a working group to implement the NPA. BNWLA provides the committee with expert opinion and specialised support in terms of providing information, data and suggestions on legal aspects relating to the issue.

The NPA describes the main problems in the areas of child sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking. The major areas of intervention within the range of the NPA are Prevention, Protection, Recovery and Reintegration etc.

Initiatives of other Non-government Organisations: NGOs like BMSF, ATSEC, BSAF, BNWLA, DAM, ACD, NUS, CM, SUPK, CRD, CEC, MKP, INCIDIN, BITA, CWCS, KKS, CAT, UDDIPON, RB, ASSASH, PRODDIPON, MNSKP, etc. are implementing various action programmes to combat trafficking and sexual exploitation & abuse.

In recent time a very few NGOs have started taking initiative in combating sexual abuse of children. But a little work has been done in combating commercial sexual exploitation of children in Bangladesh. Presently some of the NGOs in Bangladesh are working closely with different UN Agencies including UNICEF and ILO to address children's issues including sexual exploitation and abuse of children and trafficking. A few NGOs are also lobbying with government departments to establish partnership among the concerned groups to address the issue in an effective manner. Unfortunately the parties involved in the process have not been able to create substantial changes in the statistics concerning sexual exploitation and abuse of children.

Lessons learned and Obstacles Encountered

Lessons learn: During data gathering from rural areas field level staff learned few interesting things about trafficking issue as below:

- i) Poverty plays a vital role in encouraging traffickers at the one hand and created conducive environment on the other. In some cases the entire family members of many families need to work with their adolescent girls/boys to survive themselves. As a result poor people as well as poor family are always deceived in different ways and allow their boys/girls to go with the trafficker.
- ii) Few years back, many tiny and adolescent boys/girls used to work in garments industries to provide financial support to their poor parents. But now-a-days using of children in garments sector is restricted. So a cross section of the poor parents seeking alternative options to earn through their sons/girls. Consequently they are sometime sending their own children abroad to earn money for their survivals.

- iii) Most of the trafficking cases are being occurred in poor family. If these people had any option to fulfill their basic needs (e.g. food, safe shelter, education, medical treatment etc.) as human being, the trafficking in person would not have occurred.
- iv) More attention should be given on internal trafficking
- v) Involvement of community/leaders reduces incident of trafficking
- vi) Community vigilance may reduce trafficking (*experience of ILO*)
- vii) Popular theater is an effective tool to awareness creation on trafficking prevention & stigma (community) reduction.
- viii) Education and Vocational training is requiring to reintegration.
- ix) Authentic & adequate study on number of victims required.

Obstacles

- i) Most of the victim's family is under privileged and either illiterate or little educated. As a result, they can not provide exact information to the interviewer about trafficking incidents. So the organization like us can not take any proper action at the right moment.
- ii) In many cases victim family are frightened by the trafficker. As a result human rights organizations are facing problems to rescue victims of trafficking and they also fail to provide proper legal aid against traffickers.
- iii) Since we have no birth registration program we could not find out the actual age of trafficking survivors which is essential for some of our actions.
- iv) There are scope of strengthening intra and inter country networking which is very important for collective effort in combating human trafficking.
- v) Lack of capacity of the government institutions on the issues of trafficking
- vi) Lack of support from the government institution
- vii) Lack of adequate knowledge & skills of the services provider is limited
- viii) Lack of political commitment
- ix) Lack of resources in combating human trafficking.
- x) Lack of program information shearing and networking

Recommendations for Prevention of Human Trafficking

Advocacy and Awareness: Advocacy and awareness is one of the best ways of prevention of trafficking. A long-term organized awareness raising and advocacy program might be initiated throughout the country as well as within the region. Apart from the traditional campaign materials like leaflet, brochure, poster, video etc. there has been proposal to

incorporate the issues of trafficking in person in our text book, which might be circulated among the students free of cost both in formal and non-formal education program.

Education and Vocational Schooling: Standard of education in Bangladesh and in some of the SAARC countries is not very high therefore, not very helpful in raising level of awareness and level of earning as well. Due to enormous rate of illiteracy and low quality of education, people of this territory are unconscious, jobless/workless and under poverty line.

Subsequently economic growth is decreasing and above all people are become more vulnerable in trafficking. So it is necessary to implement a mega program on compulsory education up to secondary level including vocational training in all levels including at grassroots to face the emerging challenge of the new millenium.

Some of our NGOs are trying to provide non-formal education and vocational schooling which is not planed and sufficient. So it is imperative that educational and need based vocational training are made compulsory up to a certain level so that this education makes people self-reliant.

Community Policing: The basic idea of community policing originated from the felt need that police along with the community people should work together to suppress the crime in the society. Various types of crime such as trafficking in women and children, abduction, illegal marriage of minor girls and boys etc. can be prevented through community policing.

By community policing method every police officer in the police station is assigned to set up a Vigilance and Law and Order Committee in each village with people from amongst the community who know better about almost every household of their community. The committee remains vigilant about suspicious movement; new arrivals in the village; recruitment/collecting of people especially women and children with promise of jobs in foreign countries or in other towns within the territory. Community police can also oversee local level marriage with any foreigner or stranger, marriage without registration and child marriage.

The idea of community policing service is voluntary one. People are motivated out of their feeling of good citizenship or being indulged in social service in establishing community policing to prevent heinous crime like trafficking which is difficult to prevent through conventional policing.

Different groups within the community should be mobilized for establishing effective community policing such as teachers, religious leaders, political party leaders, youth group members, NGO, social and cultural organizations, business community, women group members etc.

Conclusion

To end or at least reduce the incidence of trafficking which is a curse on human society, a concerted effort from all the key actors both at public and private sectors within the region has to be undertaken. Many aspects discussed could be taken into consideration while going for a collective plan towards combating human trafficking in South Asia.

Reference: ILO-IPEC, BNWLA, ATSEC, BSAF, CPCCT-MOWCA, IOM

Compile & prepared by: Khairuzzaman Kamal
Executive Director
BMSF, Dhaka, Bangladesh
E-mail: bmsf@dhaka.net
