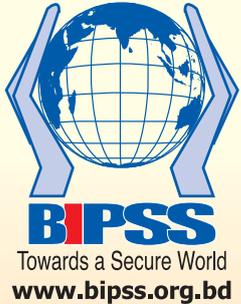




Human Trafficking

A Security Concern for Bangladesh



Introduction

Trafficking in persons, the darkest episode of population mobility, has been widely considered as a major human security issue today. Increasingly, people from the poor families are being forced to this new form of human slavery and the trade of human dignity. Human trafficking has been used to denote a wide range of human rights abuses and crimes that combine the recruitment, movement and sale of people into an exploitative condition.¹ While recognition of its persistence and impact on society has increased over recent years, it is not a new phenomenon rather it continues as a set of activities and effects that is hard to put a figure on.² Some forms of human trafficking have existed for thousands of years, while others take advantage of opportunities presented by emerging economic niches.³

In Bangladesh, human trafficking has gone to an acute condition. Governments, though endowed huge effort, failed evidently to control the trafficking in persons in the country. Activities of the NGOs and Multilateral agencies are also limited to the function of awareness building and advocacy. The complicity of the government with the trafficking nexus has added much doubt whether the government is abundantly willing to address the issue, while the US Department of state included Bangladesh in its trafficking watchlist in the 2 tier ranking that poses the threat of sanctions upon Bangladesh, if the country fails to improve the trafficking condition by next year. Therefore, re-positioning the trafficking as a human security threat would enable practitioners and policymakers to approach this issue more holistically and to ban and combat the practice.

Defining Human Trafficking

Trafficking in persons should be viewed in the context of a wide range of actions and outcomes that involve several stages ranging from the organization of the supply of people vulnerable to exploitation and harm, the process of movement to the demand for the service or labour of trafficked person.⁴ For traffickers, the process is a systematic, well-organized economic phenomenon, involving the displacement and movement of persons solely to profit directly or indirectly from the exploitation of the trafficked person's labor.⁵ Many definitions have been offered to articulate the human trafficking problem. The UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons defines trafficking as follows:

“Trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of

vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation.⁶

On the South Asian regional level, trafficking has also been defined as “the moving, selling or buying of women and children for prostitution within and outside a country for monetary or other considerations with or without the consent of the person subjected to trafficking”.⁷ The Bangladesh Counter Trafficking Thematic Group led by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs has developed a working definition specific to Bangladesh that identifies trafficking in persons as a situation where a person no longer has control over some elements of their life for a given period of time.⁸ The elements involve⁹:

- The type of work they do (their livelihood);
- The work environment and the working conditions;
- Freedom of movement in the context of this work situation.

Trafficking in persons has been a cause of deep anxiety and concern for individuals, societies and economies alike.¹⁰ According to United States State Department data, an estimated 600,000 to 820,000 men, women, and children are trafficked across international borders each year, approximately 80 percent are women and girls and up to 50 percent are minors.

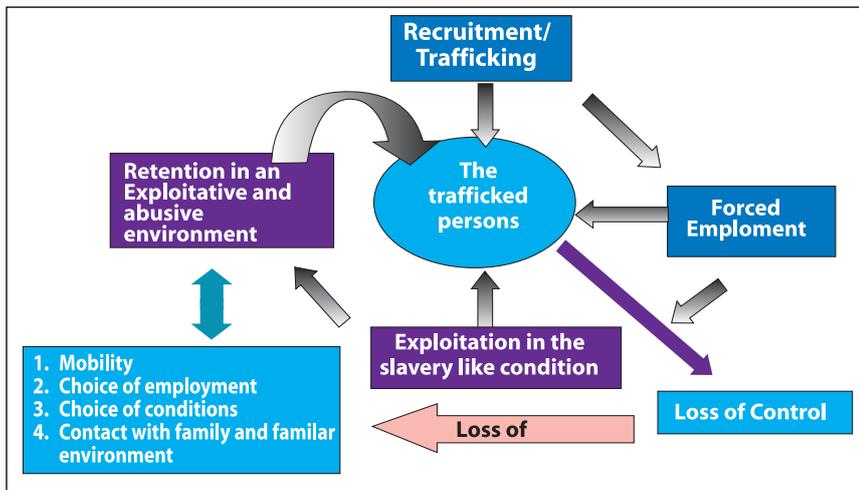
Human trafficking is not considered a traditional state security issue, instead a combination of national security (widener’s approach) in the form of transnational crime, corruption, and women’s rights and human security threatening individuals’ survival, dignity, and livelihood. A human security classification of trafficking intends to protect individual human being from critical and pervasive threats and situations, building on their strengths and aspirations and to integrate human development concerns (such as economic agency, freedom from fear and want and gender equality) with other state security threats.¹¹

Human Trafficking as a Security Issue

The world, its nations, people and environment all face newer threats and challenges from time to time. Accordingly, leaving apart the traditional notions of security, ‘trafficking in persons’ has become one of the nontraditional security issues in the recent decades, mostly due to the unprecedented scale of this phenomenon.

Table 1: Securitization Approach of Human Trafficking

Securitization Approach	Referent Object	Nature of Threat	Source of Threat	Security Challenges
Widener	State	Non military Demographic Legal Economic Social Fabric	Internal, external	Transnational crime, corruption, Law and order Confidence on Government Vulnerability of national boundary.
Deepener	Individual	Non military Physical Psychological Gendered Livelihood Family	Internal, external	Threatening individuals' survival, dignity, and livelihood. Specifically threat and fear, starvation, persecution and physical abuses, sexual abuses, house arrest, forced use of drugs and alcohol.



Source: Remade based on Rapid Assessment on Trafficking in Children for Exploitative Employment in Bangladesh, 2002, February, p.29.

Figure 1: Human Trafficking-Security Linkage

Human Trafficking Scenario in Bangladesh

Bangladesh, a small developing country of South Asia, contains the seventh largest population in the world. In 2011, its population stood at 158.5 million.¹² Limited natural resources, underdeveloped industrialization along with natural disasters such as floods, droughts and cyclones cursed the population mobility and human trafficking is one of the inadvertent consequences thereof. However, trafficking is getting in an acute condition in Bangladesh. Although exact figures on

the scope of the problem vary widely, the consensus is that the trafficking problem is growing rapidly. Though the history of women and child trafficking from Bangladesh goes back to the early 50's when camel race and 'jockey' gained momentum in the Middle East countries, in the course of time, this criminal business has taken an alarming proportion, women and children are being trafficked out of Bangladesh to various countries predominantly in India, Pakistan and the Middle Eastern countries.¹³

Volume and Statistics of Human Trafficking

The volume of persons trafficked in Bangladesh is getting increasingly further. Due to the clandestine nature of trafficking and rare prosecutions, crime statistics presents a very low estimate of the incidence of human trafficking. Consequently figures are estimated and tend to be quoted and cross-quoted in all literature.¹⁴ There is no reliable data concerning women and children who have been trafficked from Bangladesh to other countries. Estimates regarding the number of women and children being trafficked are not only difficult to collect, but also different sources cite wildly different figures.¹⁵ A reported 200,000 Bangladeshi women and children have been taken out of the country in the past 10 years.¹⁶ At least 20,000 Bangladeshi women and children are trafficked to India and Pakistan and to Middle Eastern countries every year.¹⁷ According to another estimate, 50,000 Bangladeshi girls are trafficked to or through India every year.¹⁸ Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA), in a study undertaken in 1997 cited the numbers of children being trafficked as follows¹⁹:

- i. 300,000 Bangladesh children work in the brothels of India 4,700 children were rescued from traffickers in the past five years;
- ii. 4,500 women and children are trafficked to Pakistan yearly (SAARC & UNICEF);

- iii. 1,000 child trafficking cases were documented in the Bangladeshi media press during the year 1990 to 1992; and
- iv. 69 children were reported being rescued at the border during a three months study in 1995.

A UNESCO-sponsored study conducted early in 2000 reveals that some 30,000 women were taken from Bangladesh and sold over the last decade. But the actual figure is probably higher than official figures, because many cases go unreported.²⁰ The study of the Center for Women and Child Studies (CWCS) to determine the magnitude and trend of the problem, a mapping exercise of missing, kidnapped and trafficked children and women from Bangladesh revealed that throughout 1990, the number of trafficked children was 37, the trend increased until 1997, when the total was 927.²¹

More than 14,000 Bangladeshi women are working as maids and domestics outside of the country. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) indicate that more than 40,000 women from Bangladesh are working in the Gulf States alone. Centre for Women and Children Studies in Dhaka, Bangladesh, specifically on Bangladeshi boys, found that during the 1990s, 1,683 boys were victims of trafficking.²² Domestically, it is estimated that there are between 10,000- 29, 0090 children in prostitution in Bangladesh.²³

Table 2: Human Trafficking Statistics

Number of Persons Trafficked	Time Frame	Destination	Mode of Exploitation	Source
15,000 women and children	Every year	India, Pakistan	Sexual abuses, forced labor	"Boys, rescued in India while being smuggled to become jockeys in camel races", www.elsiglo.com, 19 February 1998
200 children and women	February 1998	Indian shelters	Sexual abuses	"Boys, rescued in India while being smuggled to become jockeys in camel races", www.elsiglo.com, 19 February 1998
27,000 women and children	-	Indian brothels	Prostitution	Centre for Women and Children Studies reports, "Women Forced into Indian Brothels", June 1998
200,000 women+6,000 children	1990 to 1997	-	Sexual abuses, Camel Jockeys, Child labor, Domestic servitude	Center for Women and Children's Study report, Zahiduzzaman Faruque, "Women, children trafficking in Bangladesh," <i>Kyodo</i> , 5 May 1998
200,000 girls	1990s	Pakistan, India and the Middle East	sex industry	Tabibul Islam, "Rape of Minors Worry Parents", <i>Inter Press Service</i> , 8 April, 1998
200 women and children	each day	-	Prostitution	"Human Smuggling from Bangladesh at alarming level", <i>Reuters</i> , 26 may 1997
4500 women and children	Each year	Pakistan	Sexual abuses, Domestic servitude	Bangladesh CEDAW Report, 1 April, 1997
30,000 women	-	Calcutta, India	Prostitution	"Human Smuggling from Bangladesh at alarming level", <i>Reuters</i> , 26 may 1997)
10,000 children	-	Bombay and Goa India	Prostitution	Trafficking Watch Bangladesh, "Human Smuggling from Bangladesh at alarming level", <i>Reuters</i> , 26 may 1997

Source: Factbook on Global Sexual Exploitation, Bangladesh.

However, contemporary data on human trafficking is hardly found, because of both the clandestine and illegal nature of trafficking as well the lack of current research on the issue. Form the crime statistics based on the number of registered cases from 2001 to 2010, we found a figure that is much smaller than the original number of trafficked persons in these years.

Table 3: Number of registered cases for human trafficking and some other related crimes.

SL	Name of Offense	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
1	Kidnapping	834	1040	896	898	765	722	774	817	858	870
2	Child Abuse	340	512	475	503	555	662	967	962	1093	1542
3	Burglary	3654	3959	3883	3356	3270	2991	4439	4552	3456	3101
4	Smuggling	3076	4746	4499	4182	4334	4734	5202	7962	7817	6363

Source: Website, Bangladesh Police

Causes of Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is not an automated phenomenon; instead it is a response to a wide range of driving forces. The socio-economic edifice of Bangladesh, like any other country, has colligated this cursed practice as a new form of slave trade intended primarily for sex industry or forced labor. Some of the issues that impel human trading are discussed below in brief.

Actor-Factor Nexus: the Trafficking Chain

The trafficking process operates through chains of events, actors and factors. The nexus between demand side actors-factors and supply side actors-factors forms the chain. While globalization, rise of sex industry, forced and illegal, migration child labor and the demand for women in domestic services stimulate employers to recruit trafficked labours, traffickers and criminal network exploit the demand by supplying the vulnerable people mostly young women and children since the victims are compelled to take dangerous decision due to their economic and family hardship or being deceived by the recruiting agents.

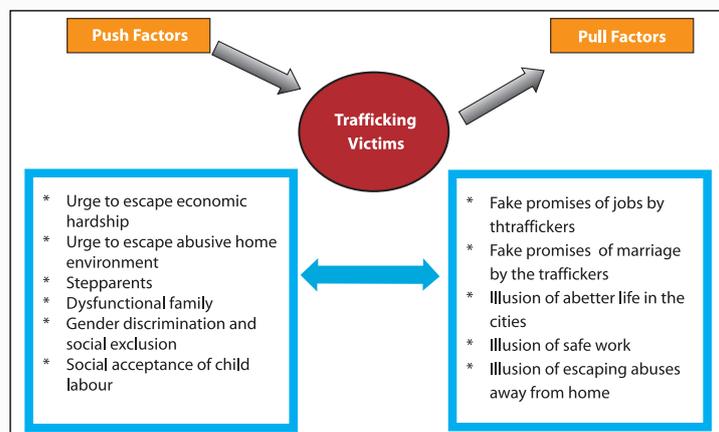
Table 4: Actor-factor Nexus in Human Trafficking Chain

Nexus	Actor	Factor
Demand side	Employers (sex industry, forced labour, domestic work, child labour), consumers of prostitution and child labor	Globalization, rise of sex industry, migration (forced, illegal), child labor and the demand for women in domestic services.
Supply side	Traffickers, criminal network, third party (middle man), victims themselves, victim’s family and neighbours	Dysfunctional family, abuse, poverty, illegal crosscountry migration, or marriage, natural calamity, conflicts and war

A chain of traffickers—a criminal network—exploits the vulnerability and invents opportunities to recruit and traffic people. The trafficking chain works through a corporate syndicate or locally organised service providers, each of which specialises in a part of the process; and the traffickers require the services such transportation, shelter, and the sale and utilisation of a trafficked person from the chain.²⁴

Push Pull Factor

Human trafficking in an actual term is a response to a combination some push and some pull factors. While push factors force the victims to walk on the street of vulnerabilities to trafficking and create trafficking like environment, pull factors usually offer false promises and illusions leading to the exploitative condition at the end. On the micro level, urge to escape economic hardship and abusive home environment, gender discrimination and social exclusion, dysfunctional family or stepparents, social acceptance of child labour and early marriages, and so on push people to be trafficked either willingly or forcibly. On the other hand, fake promises of jobs or marriage by the traffickers, illusion of a better life in the cities and



Source: Rapid Assessment on Trafficking in Children for Exploitative Employment in Bangladesh, 2002, February, p.25.

Figure 2: Push-pull factor in Human Trafficking

safe work and Illusion of escaping abuses away from home serve as pull factors attracting victims into modern slavery. Pull factors encourage young people or those already living in dangerous circumstances to seek out more glamorous or sustaining life options than they feel are available in their

own communities.²⁵ Macro-factors such as the impacts of globalization, employment, trade and migration policies and conflicts and environmental disasters, rise of sex industry and sex tourism, demands for exploitable labor in harsh and criminal working sectors and development induced risks can put into motion to the circumstances that increase vulnerabilities.²⁶

Poverty, Inequality and Discrimination

Poverty, social inequality and deep rooted discrimination particularly against women are the most commonly identified factors to the trafficking process. Who are living under extreme poverty, the promise of a better life, no matter how unrealistic, is worth the risk.²⁷ Poverty provides traffickers with people who have no alternatives for survival; impoverished and desperate who trust the offers of work or marriage abroad, which ultimately lead them to be exploited through trafficking.²⁸ A UNICEF report revealed that most of the guardians of trafficked women and children are landless, and of them 45 percents are farmers and 16 percent day-labourers while the remaining are small traders.²⁹ Similarly, income disparities between regions, countries or job opportunities encourage people out to exploitation.

In addition, gender discrimination and the feminization of poverty are primarily responsible for the massive women trafficking. Deeply rooted discrimination and low status of women within Bangladesh society excluded them from development opportunities disproportionately. They experience poverty more intensely than men as they have fewer assets such as skills, education or resources to remove themselves from these situations, and the incidence of poverty is higher for women which makes them at high risk of being trafficked.³⁰

Economic Motive

Human trafficking has become a profitable industry. Its high-profit, low-penalty-nature makes human trafficking attractive to criminal gangs.³¹ Economic benefit underlies why traffickers tend to smuggle women and children. Trafficking is a big business, primarily with respect to the utilisation of trafficked persons, rather than their actual transport.³² The profits from transporting and handing over trafficked individuals (to brothels, sweatshops, etc.) are shared by many—traffickers, transporters, trafficking facilitators such as shelter provider, members of criminal gang, corrupt government or

security officials, and the employers of the trafficked persons. Traffickers get the price for girls is between Tk. 10,000 to Tk. 30,000 for beautiful and healthy girls; and children are bought for Tk. 7,000 to Tk. 8,000.³³ Usually prices vary according to age, 'beauty', skin colour and virginity. According to another study, the female touts earn about 10,000 to 50,000 takas (167 to 834 dollars) for each victim while the traffickers earn anything from 50,000 to 500,000 takas (167 to 8,334 dollars) after sales.³⁴ Besides, organs trade of the trafficked children and women increases the volume of profit these days.

Poor Law and Order, Porous Border and Corruption

The law and order situation is not at the satisfactory level in Bangladesh. There is little enforcement of the existing laws on trafficking control. Despite the existence of legislation intended to extend such protection, many of the most vulnerable are not aware of or able to access adequate protection. Only few cases of trafficking are registered with the police compared to the number of women and girls identified as missing.³⁵ The expansive and porous borders between Bangladesh and India and between Bangladesh and Myanmar are conducive to the external trafficking.³⁶ Official procedures for exiting and entering Bangladesh are rarely enforced and there is no specific legislation addressing cross-border trafficking.³⁷ Lack of border controls and lax documentation requirements also allows traffickers to freely shuffle people across borders.³⁸ Moreover, corruption and illegal bondage of the security service providers- police, customs and border guards add more layers as rather facilitator of the trafficking process. Women and children are trafficked each year from Bangladesh into bondage in India and Pakistan, often with the acquiescence or cooperation of state officials.³⁹

Targets and Forms of Human Trafficking

The main targets of the smugglers are teenage girls, widows, maidservants and the women abandoned by their husbands, floating women and children, slum dwellers and female garment workers and children from poor family.⁴⁰ Street children living in the capital are among the prime targets of organized child-trafficking rings.⁴¹ Men are also trafficked but their portion in the total trafficking volume is relatively low and they are mostly from labour migration.

Table 5: Targets of Trafficking

No.	Women	Children
1.	Widow	Orphan
2.	Divorced	Broken Family
3.	Deprived of social recognition	Deprived of social recognition
4.	Not beautiful	Absconding from home
5.	Suppressed by husband	Tortured by step parents

Source: Country Paper on "Combating Trafficking in Women and Children in Bangladesh", 2004, p.6

Forms of trafficking include fake marriages, sale by parents to "uncles" offering jobs, auctions to brothel owners or farmers, and abduction.⁴² Trafficking in Bangladesh exists for the purposes of sexual abuses and of forced labor.⁴³ An estimated 90 percent of trafficked women were forced to engage in prostitution.⁴⁴ Besides, some are thrust into pornography, or forced beggary through use of violence, threat of violence, or drugs.⁴⁵ Boys in Bangladesh are abducted or taken on false pretences to work as camel jockeys in the Middle East.⁴⁶ A significant share of Bangladesh's trafficking victims are men recruited for work overseas with fraudulent employment offers who are subsequently exploited under conditions of forced labor or debt bondage.⁴⁷ There have been reports of trafficking in organs in Bangladesh.⁴⁸ A group of anthropologists from the United States claim to have encountered "kidney theft" in Bangladesh.⁴⁹

Recruiting Agents and Origins of Victims

Recruiting agents are known as the traffickers who can be anyone involved in the recruitment and transportation of trafficked persons.⁵⁰ Traffickers can be people known in the community including: family members, friends, neighbors, community representatives, employers, gang members or strangers.⁵¹ In Bangladesh trafficking is carried out by well-organized regional gangs that have links with the various law enforcement agencies.⁵² There is a close nexus between agents, smugglers, and traffickers, all agents having good rapport with the BGB, BSF and police. Traffickers take advantage of Bangladesh's sizable borders to transport the women, often using large criminal networks and deceptive tactics to avoid detection and prosecution.

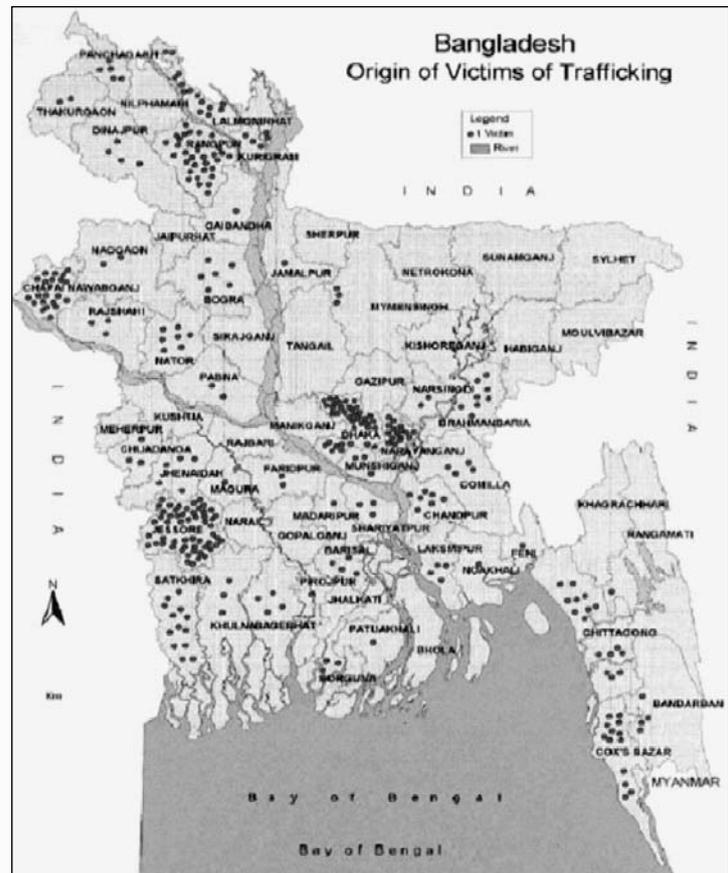
Though the local communities are not prime perpetrators of irregular migration and trafficking, they participate directly or indirectly in the processes

by providing transit shelter and other services, and at the very least, remain silent observers.⁵³ Those families who provide transit shelter charge anywhere between Rs 50 to Rs 500 per migrant, according to the area, condition of stay, services provided and the security situation at the border.⁵⁴



Figure 3: Recruiting Agents Cycle

The origins of trafficking victims are mostly from the capital city, Dhaka and the 30 border districts of Bangladesh. During the period of 1990-2010, most of the cases of trafficking of women occurred in Dhaka, Jessore, Bagerhat, Chapai Nawabganj, Rangpur and Barisal followed by Chittagong, Comilla and Dinajpur. Most of the children are from Dhaka, since it



Source: GCRC, May 2000. http://www.childtrafficking.com/Docs/bangladesh_trafficking_routes.pdf

Map 1: Origins of Trafficking Victims

is the most densely populated area in the country, having three million slum dwellers with more and more people arriving everyday from the villages seeking better livelihoods.⁵⁵ Comilla, Kurigram, Chittagong, Narayanganj and Jessore, Mymensingh and Rajshahi are also identified as common places of origin of trafficked children.⁵⁶

Destination, Trafficking Routes, and Transit Points

In the region of South Asia, India and Pakistan are the major two countries of destination or transit to other regions, commonly Gulf States or South East Asia for the trafficked persons from Bangladesh and

Table 6: Recruitment place, transit point and destination

Place of Recruitment	Transit Point	Destination
Bagerhat	Jessore, Benapol Border, Shaildha	INDIA +
Jessore	Īkorgacha, Kolkata, Howra Station, Mumbai	
Nator	Shaildha, Fotulla, Shalkia,	
Noakhali	Dhaka, Comilla, Lalmonirhat	
Chapai		
Nowabganj+	Rabgpur Kathalbari, benapol Border, +	PAKISTAN +
Shibganj+	Bongah, Shaildha, Mumbai, Delhi	
Khulna		
Cox's Bazar	Dhaka, Kolkata, Delhi	PAKISTAN +
Dhaka	Alukhad, Pakistan	
Comilla	India	DUBAI
Chittagong	Dhaka, Kustia, Bongah	
Faridpur	Jessore, Benapol Border, Old Delhi,	
	Dhaka, Mumbai	
Bahamman -baria	Dhaka Kamalapur, Benapol Border, Kolkata, Mumbai	

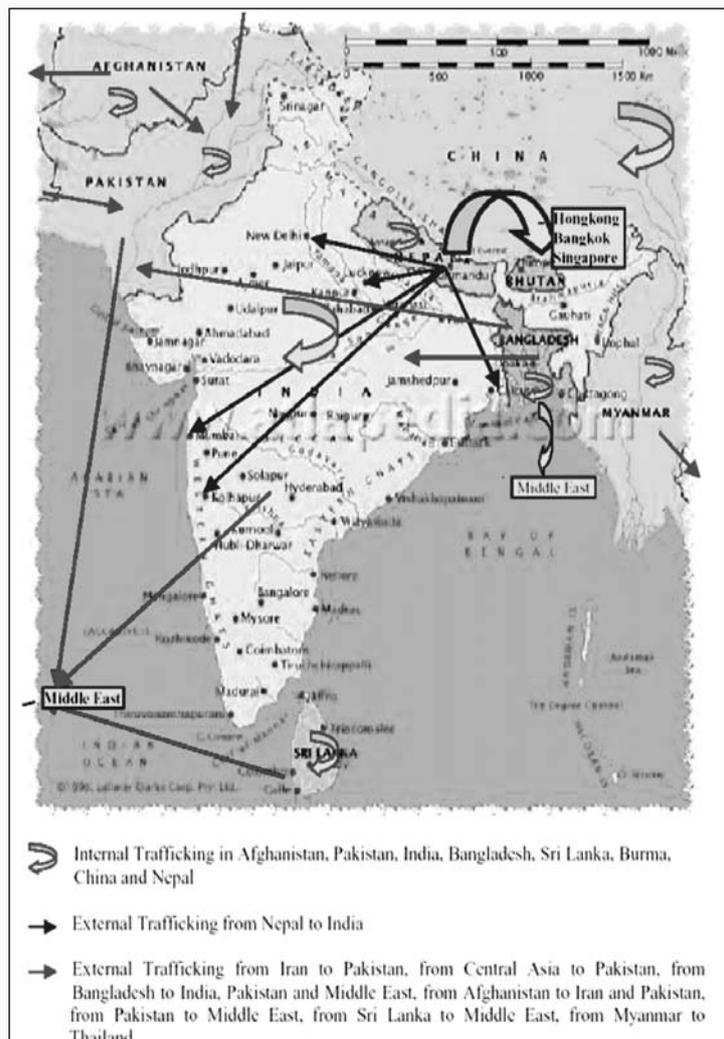
Source: Rapid Assessment on Trafficking in Children for Exploitative Employment in Bangladesh, 2002, February, p.34.

Nepal, Kolkata in India being a major transit point for other destinations.⁵⁷ Besides, Bangladeshi women and girls are trafficked to Middle East particularly Bahrain, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Bangladeshi boys are also trafficked to the UAE, Qatar, and Kuwait for forced work as camel jockeys and beggars.⁵⁸ In addition, considerable numbers of women from Bangladesh are trafficked to Eastern Europe. People from Bangladesh go to Malaysia as illegal immigrants through Thailand as well.

Bangladesh shares 4,222 kilometers border of 28 districts with India and 288 kilometers of two

districts with Myanmar. Thus, Bangladeshi touts build up powerful bases in the border districts and these are now favourite transit points of human trafficking.⁵⁹ There are as many as 20 transit points from districts of Bangladesh bordering India through which women are smuggled out of the country.⁶⁰ Benapole border crossing, known as the southwest transit point, is the most-commonly used and the easiest land route to India. In the northern region, the districts of Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, Panchagarh, Thakurgaon, Dinajpur, Naogaon, Chapai Nawabganj and Rajshahi and in the south Jessore and Satkhira are areas through which trafficked persons are moved to India.⁶¹

There are also transit points on the other side of the Indian border where women and girl children are kept for supplying to various destinations including Pakistan, and Gulf States.⁶² Trafficking to Myanmar and then on to other destinations in South East Asia are being smuggled out and gathered in Cox's Bazaar. Internally, women and children from



Source: <http://www.childtrafficking.com/Docs/1998traffickingmapofso.pdf>

Map 2: Trafficking routs and destination in South Asia

rural areas in Bangladesh are trafficked to urban centres for commercial sexual exploitation and domestic servitude.⁶³ The most advantageous route used by the traffickers is the land route followed by air and waterways. Those using the air routes usually have work permit or a false family visa to travel to the countries of the Middle East.⁶⁴ Some of the most used trafficking routes, as identified by Bangladesh Government are⁶⁵:

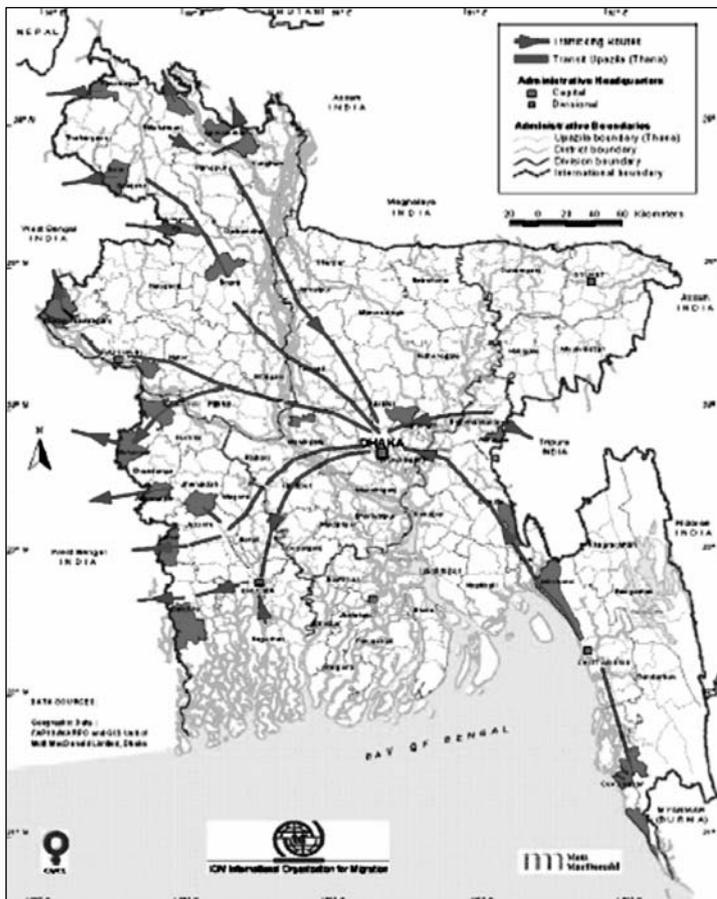
- Route 1:** From Dhaka to Barisal by launch and from there to Jessore, Satkhira
- Route 2:** From Barisal to Benapole and other border areas via Jessore
- Route 3:** From Gabtoli, Dhaka to Jessore and Satkhira via Aricha
- Route 4:** From Gabtoli, Dhaka to Chapai Nawabgang and other border areas via Nagarbari
- Route 5:** From Gabtoli, Dhaka to Darshana by bus and from there to different border areas.
- Route 6:** From Gabtoli, Dhaka to Dinajpur and Lalmonirhat by bus and from there to different border areas.

Human Security Implications of Human Trafficking

Harm Environment: Persecution, Paranoia and Point of No Return

Trafficked victims, both in the process of trafficking and in slave-like exploitative condition, have to face immense maltreatment and threat to their lives. This is called 'harm environment' that exists within the victims' perceived helplessness and lack of control over their freedom and choices. "Harm environments" that exist in brothels, exploitative workplaces, and homes that use trafficked labour usually come out from a combination of physical torture, sexual abuses, and threats of many kinds stimulating fear and sometime long term mental paranoia. Being lured, deceived, deprived of freedom and income, and compelled to engage in work against their will, victims who are trafficked painfully generally have no return to a pre-trafficked situation.⁶⁶ Trafficked persons have often faced extreme psychological stress such as isolation, fear, sexual abuse, rape and other forms of physical and mental violence that in turn leads to trauma, depression and in some cases suicide.⁶⁷ Women in the Indian brothels and Middle Eastern slave-like domestic servitude are used to entertain 10-20 clients against their will and tortured if there is anything that goes against the will of the master or the client. Emotional stress is usually compounded by constant fear of arrest and public stigmatization making the thought of returning home fearful.⁶⁸

There are evidence of mistreatment and torture of child camel jockeys by traffickers and their employers, including depriving them of adequate food and subjecting them to physical harm, for example by burning or beating them.⁶⁹ The mental stress in the early age results in long term effect on their ability to live their life normally. The use of children as jockeys in camel racing is itself extremely dangerous and can result in serious injury and even death.⁷⁰ Rescued children often experience feelings of guilt, low self-esteem and depression.⁷¹ These harms are both short term and long term having the enormous impact of post-traumatic stress over many years that might influence the capacity of the victim to care for her family or negotiate through future emotional challenges once the original harm has stopped.⁷²



Source: Combating Trafficking of Women and Children in South Asia, Country Paper: Bangladesh, 2002, p.23.

Map 3: Trafficking routes in Bangladesh



Source: Revisiting the Human Trafficking Paradigm: The Bangladesh Experience Part I: Trafficking of Adults, 2004

Figure 4: Factors that maintain harm environment

Vulnerability of Women and Children

Trafficking is essentially a gender and age specific phenomenon; it affects particularly women and children.⁷³ Usually, Men are smuggled or illegally transported whereas women and children are trafficked. Gender-based differences and attitudes play an important role in both the supply and demand dynamics of trafficking.⁷⁴ In Bangladesh, it appears that the "worst forms" of trafficking relate to the illegal movement of women and children for the purposes of exploitation in sectors such as commercial sex work, and child labor of all forms, and the low status of women increases their vulnerability as targets of traffickers and limits their options as survivors seeking a new life.⁷⁵ Most of the girls found to be trafficked were adolescent girls, since they can be easily manipulated and frightened into accepting the work, and good money can be got from their fresh youth.⁷⁶ According to a survey conducted by UNICEF at 10 villages of the country 55 percent of the trafficked women are of the 17-24 age group while 25 percent are aged between 25 and 32, and 95 percent of the age groups are illiterate.⁷⁷

The gendered nature of trafficking as well as its age specificity derives from the historical presence of laws, policies, customs and practices that justify and promote the discriminatory treatment of women and girls and prevent the application of the entire range of human rights and constitutional laws to women and girls.⁷⁸ Social values and family bonds that have for so long knotted our society into a solid rock were now partially or fully discarded leaving women vulnerable to trafficking. Importantly, women and girls are also most likely to suffer from stigmatization once they return to their communities and have fewer options for alternative survival strategies; and therefore, the traffickers can increase their control over and isolation of women and girls through fear of such further victimization.⁷⁹

Sexual Exploitation

Sexual exploitation is the foremost human security concern of the trafficking victims. Sexual abuses include injection with sedatives for making them unconscious for days, breaking their resistance to forced sex by means of threat, torture, rape, group rape, keeping them starve, forced drinking of liquor and verbal assault.⁸⁰ Children, both girls and boys, in the trafficked state are forced to experience unsafe sex.⁸¹ For many victims, the first sexual assaults begin with the traffickers as well as border security personnel on either side of the border.⁸² Many of them are either raped by border security personnel or abused sexually by the agents during transit.⁸³ In the brothels, girls as young as 10 to 14 year-old have to serve an average of 10 clients daily⁸⁴ which is extremely risky to their health.

Besides, there are forced 'marriages' whereby women or girls are required to provide domestic labor while being held as virtual prisoners, raped continually by their 'husbands' and often forced to become pregnant for the purpose of providing their 'husbands' with children, while having no control over their own body or sexuality.⁸⁵ For these children,

the gender-biased division of labor makes no other job as accessible as prostitution which makes them vulnerable to sexual abuse, reduce their choice of profession and thereby make them highly vulnerable to prostitution.⁸⁶ Sexual infection and hemorrhage risk is very high since they practice dangerous and unhealthy ways to carry out abortion.⁸⁷

Chronic Diseases

Another substantial security concern derived from the exploitation of trafficked women and children is their susceptibility to chronic diseases. Women and children located in the commercial sex sector face higher risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other diseases.⁸⁸ There is growing link between Aids and other sexually transmitted diseases with the sexual abuses of trafficked girls from Bangladesh in the sex industry of India and Pakistan. In the Indian brothels, the girls and women are made to entertain clients ranging from five to 20 a day; and it does not take long for them to develop various sexually transmitted diseases, especially HIV/AIDS.⁸⁹ 60 percent of the women and children rescued from the prostitution have found with HIV positive.⁹⁰ In addition, the links between trafficking and HIV/AIDS inadvertently conveyed the message to fearful communities that all trafficked persons were infected with the disease leading to further stigmatization of all women returning to their communities.⁹¹ Besides, the trafficked children working as camel jockey, in most of the time, had sustained irreversible damage to both kidneys, probably from being deprived of water in order to make him lose weight.⁹²

High Economic Cost and Wage Exploitation and Family Economic Consequences

Economic losses to communities are also vital source of vulnerability induced from human trafficking. People with limited recourses are usually more prone to go abroad to earn. They have to sacrifice or sell the very last resort of their survival to manage the cost of travel, visa, work permit and the share of the brokers with the hope of a better tomorrow. They borrow money to provide these costs. But in most of the cases, they end up with deception resulting in losses of both the present means of income and the future livelihood options. Since they are poor, the cost of migration is far higher than any other segments.

Besides, most often they face wage discrimination as the owners pay only little part of the amount the trafficked or enslaved persons earn either from forced labour or sexual work. What is grave is that the dependant family becomes largely impoverished due to loss of their means of income, burden of loans and discriminated wages. The situation gets direr, if the trafficked persons or illegal migrants get caught by the police and sent in prison for a long period. It breaks the entire family livelihood.

Slavery and Trade of Human Dignity

Trafficking in persons is a kind of modern slavery. It makes people particularly women and children vulnerable to be sold like commodities and to be consumed breaching their rights and freedoms. The very human dignity for which the civilization of today is fighting is under strain because of this slave trade. It denies the fundamental rights of people and their basic needs. Trafficked people are forced to live like service animal where their vulnerabilities are nothing but things of others profit and enjoyment.

Family Fragmentation and Social Incoherence

Another security concern is the drastic impact of trafficking on the key social organization that is family. The incidents of trafficking and even the forced domestic servitude by the women in most cases lead to the breakdown of family further stigmatizing and victimising women in our society. The resultant consequence is the incoherence within the social fabric and cultural irregularities breaking the bondage on which socio-economic composition depends.

National Security Perspective

Massive Trafficking, Smuggling-Crime Nexus, Destabilized Border and Threat to State Entity

Human trafficking, in addition to its human security colligation, poses substantial national security threat to Bangladesh. It constitutes a threat to national security. It is an acute condition, having a massive, uncontrolled character. Despite increasing investments from government, donors and civil society organizations, an increasing incidence of human trafficking persists. There is a growing nexus between smuggling, human trafficking and terrorism which largely affect the country's security that appears to be very difficult to combat. The

inability of the government reflects the poor status of law and order within the country and people are losing their faith in the ability of the government to ensure public safety. The porous border of the country through which traffickers and illegal migrants pass regularly without effective control by the Border Guard of Bangladesh is another source of national insecurity.

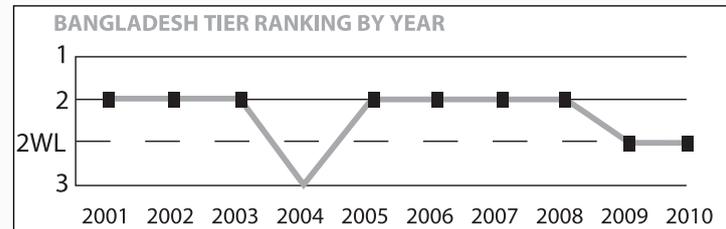
Trans-boundary Migration, Transnational Crimes and Inter-state Conflict

The trafficking of women across into border towns of India forms one part of the larger issue of migration of Bangladeshis into India that stimulates tension in the bilateral relationship between the two countries. The Indian government conveniently overlooks the great demand that exists within its own borders for cheap labour from overpopulated and labour-surplus Bangladesh, and treats all border crossers as undocumented immigrants to be pushed back unceremoniously.⁹³ The frequent claims by India on the issue of illegal migration to India and the accuse of immigrants' involvement in transnational crimes such as terrorism fuel tension between Bangladesh and India that has potential to escalate into conflicts, if not managed effectively.

Enlisting of Bangladesh in U.S. Watchlist and Future Security Concern

Recent increase in the trafficking volume and unsatisfactory performances by the Government of Bangladesh in trafficking control put the country into the US expanded watchlist on human trafficking. The Obama administration included many new countries in the U.S. watchlist of countries suspected of not doing enough to combat human trafficking, putting more than four dozen nations on notice that they might face sanctions unless their records improve.⁹⁴ In the State Department's annual "Trafficking in Persons Report placed 52 countries and territories—mainly in Africa, Asia and the Middle East—on the watchlist. Several previously cited nations were removed from the list, but new countries cited for human trafficking problems include Angola, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Iraq, Lebanon, Nicaragua, Pakistan, the Philippines, Qatar, Senegal and the United Arab Emirates.⁹⁵ Inclusion of Bangladesh on the watchlist means the governments are not fully complying with minimum standards set by U.S. law for cooperating in efforts to reduce the rise of human trafficking—a common denominator in the sex trade, coerced labor and recruitment of

child soldiers.⁹⁶ If Bangladesh appears on the list for two consecutive years, it can be subject to U.S. sanctions which can include a ban on non-humanitarian and trade-related aid and U.S. opposition to loans and credits from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.⁹⁷



Source: Country Narratives, Trafficking in Persons Report, 2010, US Department of State, p.76

Figure 5: US State Department's Tier Ranking of Bangladesh

Human Trafficking Control in Bangladesh

Legal Aspect

Trafficking in people is strictly prohibited in Bangladesh. The Government also recently adopted a National Plan of Action (NPA) on the sexual exploitation of children and trafficking.⁹⁸ The country has now some tough laws against women and child trafficking, but due to lack of awareness and cumbersome process those are hardly practised.⁹⁹

Special laws for combating trafficking in women and children were enacted from time to time. These laws are¹⁰⁰:

- Cruelty to Women (Deterrent Punishment) Ordinance 1983, which contains specific penalties for trafficking in women with a provision of imprisonment that could extend up to 14 years;
- Women and Children Repression Prevention (Special Provision) Act 1995- this contains specific penalties for trafficking in women and children with a provision for life imprisonment;
- Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000- this contains specific punishment for trafficking in women and children with a provision for death sentence or life imprisonment; and
- Amendment to Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2003- in this revision a child has been defined as a person of the age of 16. At present all offences relating to trafficking in women and children are tried under the Act of 2000, as mentioned up to 2003.

The Oppression of Women and Children (Special Provisions) Act 1995 and the Suppression of Violence Against Women and Children Act 2000 (which replaced the 1995 Act) both outlaw trafficking for prostitution and other forms of unlawful exploitation.¹⁰¹ These Acts provide for the punishment of trafficking with maximum penalties of life imprisonment or the death penalty. Besides, the Suppression of Immoral Trafficking Act, 1993, that provides stringent penalties for forcing a girl into prostitution and the Anti-terrorism Ordinance of 1992 that makes all types of terrorism including the abduction of women and children a punishable offence¹⁰² are promulgated at the national level which deal either directly with trafficking or related offences. In January 2002, Bangladesh signed the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Convention on Prevention and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution.¹⁰³

Government Initiatives and Limitations of Its Actions

The government of Bangladesh has prioritized trafficking as one of its key social issues and pledged to combat it with urgency.¹⁰⁴ Towards that end, in 2000 the Government of Bangladesh took a ground breaking step initiating a 3 year project to combat trafficking in children.¹⁰⁵ As a result, a countertrafficking framework report was published to help the Bangladeshi government with its future countertrafficking plan of action.¹⁰⁶ The National Task Force for Anti-Child Trafficking was formed under this project. The task force is comprised of the representatives of 10 ministries and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).¹⁰⁷

Besides, as a part of the National Plan of Action for Children, the government established mechanisms to regularly review the situation of trafficking in people and of programs to prevent child trafficking and punish the perpetrators.¹⁰⁸ What makes it difficult to implement government initiatives is that reliable data on both internal and cross border trafficking of women and children do not exist. MWCA operates support centers at six divisional levels that offer shelter and training for rehabilitation and also hosts a rehabilitation center for destitute children and a home for boys.¹⁰⁹ Recently, the Government of Bangladesh through Ministry of Home Affairs has undertaken a number of measures and initiatives to deter trafficking in women and children. The measures include the establishment of a monitoring cell at the police Headquarters; screening of persons at the Airports and Land ports; training of officials

like prosecutors, immigration officials, border security officials and the like; regular flow of timely and correct information from the districts to the Ministry of Home, establishment of a mechanism for recovery and repatriation of children used as camel jockeys and apprehension of traffickers; and the prosecution of officials having complicity in trafficking in women and children.¹¹⁰

Despite efforts by the Government of Bangladesh to eliminate trafficking, the growing volume of trafficking in persons strongly indicates that legislation has not been effectively implemented to prevent the trafficking of children from Bangladesh.¹¹¹ However, Bangladesh does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; government did not demonstrate evidence of increased efforts either to prosecute and convict labor trafficking offenders, particularly those responsible for the fraudulent recruitment of Bangladeshi workers for the purpose of forced labor overseas or to prevent the forced labor of Bangladeshi workers overseas through effective controls on high recruitment fees and other forms of fraudulent recruitment.¹¹²

The Role of International Organizations and NGOs

On the non-governmental level, there have been many efforts to raise awareness and reduce trafficking volume in Bangladesh. The Bangladesh chapter of Action against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children (ATSEC) which is a coalition of 15 NGOs working in Bangladesh to prevent trafficking in children and women for sexual exploitation established a national resource center for information dissemination on trafficking issues and has worked on a program to sensitize and mobilize policy planners on the issue of trafficking in Bangladesh.¹¹³ ATSEC, in March 2004, organized a daylong workshop jointly with Bangladesh Forum against Human Trafficking on anti-trafficking Issue for Media Representatives.¹¹⁴ Resource Bangladesh, an NGO, organized the Children's Congress, a platform from which disadvantaged children can speak about the conditions of their lives.

Multi-national NGOs also have, though limited to advocacy and awareness campaign, definite role in the human trafficking control in Bangladesh. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) undertook regional technical assistance in July 2001 in India, Bangladesh, and Nepal aiming at increasing its understanding of how its existing country programs and regional policy could be used to support and strengthen anti-

trafficking initiatives in the region.¹¹⁵ In November 2001, the Bangladeshi government and UNICEF jointly organised a 3-day South Asia Consultation for the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. UNICEF again in September 2004, sponsored another 3-day long meeting between representatives of South Asian governments, UN agencies, and NGOs that took place in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The Government of Bangladesh along with other South Asian countries signed a five-point joint statement, agreeing that children in South Asia deserve better protection from traffickers and sexual abusers.¹¹⁶ On February 8, 2004, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Dhaka, MWCA, and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation jointly organized a conference to review the Bangladeshi government's efforts to combat trafficking in women and children that eventually resulted into a permanent task force to be established within the MWCA.¹¹⁷

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Human trafficking is becoming gradually a grave concern for human rights and security in Bangladesh. Government efforts could not prove to be effective mechanism in addressing the issue. Since trafficking in persons is both a national and human security threat, it requires a great deal of attention and actions.

To break the trafficking network and to reduce the volume of trafficking, Bangladesh is required to¹¹⁸:

- draft and enact legislation criminalizing the forced labor of men;
- integrate anti-labor trafficking objectives into national anti-trafficking policies and programs;
- significantly increase criminal prosecutions and punishments for all forms of labor trafficking, including those involving fraudulent labor recruitment and forced child labor;
- consider establishing special courts to prosecute labor trafficking offenses;
- fortify border control particularly in the trafficking hotspot areas; establish more police checkpoints in the border areas;
- greatly improve oversight of Bangladesh's international recruiting agencies to ensure they are not promoting practices that contribute to labor trafficking;

- provide protection services for adult male trafficking victims and victims of forced labor, including improving consular assistance in embassies abroad;
- increase awareness campaigns targeted at potential domestic and international migrants and,
- ensure that all law enforcement officials who deal with trafficking cases receive comprehensive human rights training specifically on trafficking issues.

Besides, the government has to¹¹⁹—

- Strengthen understanding and competencies of linkages between and among mobility, human trafficking, and HIV through evidence-based research and analysis of statistical data, informing policies and programs accordingly in order to mainstream HIV issues into migration and human trafficking sectors.
- Develop mechanisms for registration of all migrant workers, including those from rural areas and crossborder points, in order to check undocumented migration and combat human trafficking.

Repositioning and reprioritizing the human trafficking in women and girl children as a human security threat so as to provide more effective and systemic elimination measures can help to escalate both governmental and nongovernmental- NGOs, international campaign to ban and combat this inhuman practice and to give the issue more international gravitas and national prioritization. Equal emphasis should be placed upon the capture and prosecution of locals, foreigners, and government officials alike, which contributes to the atmosphere of impunity. Prosecution of crimes related to violence against women, including rape, must be increased along with the stiffening of sentences for those persons convicted.¹²⁰ We have to promote and fund more community outreach programs to educate the entire population about gender equality, human rights, violence against women, economic development, and physical security. Media should come up forward with coverage, campaign and advocacy against these slave-like exploitations.

Nongovernmental and international community should give clearer funding priorities to the issue and ensure that women and girl children receive the physical and psychological protection. In addition, more coordination is needed between the national and international humanitarian, human rights, anti-trafficking, and anti-corruption movements to avoid repetition, wasteful spending, and confusing mandates.

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