



# Trafficking of Women and Children in Bangladesh

## An Overview

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**Cover**

Upper left: A family from a rural area has just arrived at Sadarghat Lauch Terminal, which is being used as one of the significant trafficking transit routes within the country. Upper right: An anti-trafficking gathering of men and women from the two neighbouring countries, India and Bangladesh, organized by PROSHIKA. Lower left: A group of vulnerable/floating women at Kamalapur Railway Station. Lower right: An awareness-raising campaign at village level, organized by PROSHIKA.

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## Abbreviations

ACD	Association for Community Development
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ASK	<i>Ain O Salish Kendro</i>
ATSEC	Action Against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BDHS	Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey
BITA	Bangladesh Institute of Theatre Arts
BNWLA	Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association
BSAF	Bangladesh Shishu Adhiker Forum
CPD	Community Participation and Development
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSW	Commercial Sex Worker
CWCS	Centre for Women and Children Studies
GAATW	Global Alliance Against Trafficking of Women
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
INCIDIN	Integrated Community and Industrial Development Initiatives
MOWCA	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
NGO	Non-Government Organization
RTI	Reproductive Tract Infection
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
SUF	Society for Under-privileged Families
TWB	Traffic Watch Bangladesh
TWB-YN	Traffic Watch Bangladesh Youth Network
TWSA	Traffic Watch South Asia
UBINIG	Policy Research for Development Alternative
UDDIPON	United Development Initiative for Programme Action
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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## **Executive Summary**

### **Introduction**

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in trafficking of women and children in Bangladesh. Very little work has been done to understand the local dynamics of the problem meaningfully. This review was undertaken to produce a comprehensive summary of available information concerning trafficking of women and children in Bangladesh. Information on the magnitude of the problem, underlying factors that foster trafficking, modes of trafficking, major trafficking routes, and consequences of trafficking has been compiled. The review also highlights the current activities of different local non-government organizations (NGOs) to address the problem.

### **Methodology**

Research reports and publications of various organizations working in the area of trafficking, journals, reports, booklets, newsletters, photographs, and newspaper clippings were reviewed. Existing information was extracted from various sources to enable readers to understand the problems relating to trafficking from various perspectives. Several key informants selected from NGOs and research organizations were interviewed to add an additional perspective on trafficking and to increase the range of activities and interventions on trafficking covered in this report. Some convicted prisoners, rescued women and children were also interviewed.

### **Context**

The report includes a discussion on the context of trafficking from the global, regional and Bangladesh perspectives. South Asia is one of the most vulnerable regions for trafficking because of its large population, large-scale rural-urban migration, the large population living in conditions of chronic poverty, and recurrent natural disasters. Women and children are sold, traded, and exchanged for sexual slavery and prostitution, and bonded labour across borders, such as from Bangladesh to India, Pakistan, and the Middle East; from Nepal to India; from Burma to Thailand; from Vietnam to Kampuchea; and from the Philippines to Japan.

The causes and consequences of trafficking in Bangladesh cannot be understood in isolation from its historical, cultural, geographical and socioeconomic perspectives, and the present condition of women. After the independence from British colonization in 1947, the Indian subcontinent was divided into two countries: India and Pakistan. Pakistan had two distinct geographic regions--East Pakistan and West Pakistan--separated by 1,200 miles. Thus, many cross-border families were formed. During separation, many Muslim families from India migrated to Pakistan, particularly to East Pakistan. Again, many Hindus living in East Pakistan moved to India. On both sides of the newly-drawn border between India and Pakistan and India and Bangladesh, there are many 'enclaves.' These enclaves are pockets of land belonging to a nation other than that which surrounds them. There are 111 Indian enclaves in Bangladesh and 51 enclaves of Bangladesh in India. Research carried out by the Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) has shown that these enclaves have been used as recruitment and collection sites by traffickers.

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. The present population of the country is about 129 million. Despite the achievements of some poverty-alleviation programmes through micro-credit and other development initiatives, the vast majority of the population in Bangladesh still lives in poverty. Recurrent natural disasters make the situation more critical for the entire population. During distress situation,

lack of shelter for girls is a great problem. All these factors make people vulnerable and an easy target of traffickers.

Legal provisions to protect women and children from exploitation are also not enforced due to organizational inefficiency and inadequate capacity of the law-enforcing agencies. As a result, some social practices, which are detrimental to a woman's status in society, still continue for many decades after their legal abolition. A case in point is the practice of dowry which continues despite national legislation in 1980. The inability to fulfill dowry commitments affects a young bride's treatment by the relatives of her husband and increases her vulnerability of being abandoned and trafficked for immoral purposes or bonded labour.

### **Concept and Internalization of Trafficking Problem**

The Bangla equivalent of the word 'trafficking' is *pachar*. It has a mild connotation which means transfer from one place to another. If the term *pachar* is used in reference to women and children, in Bangla the phrase *nari o shishu pachar* means illegal transfer of women and children from one place to another. Trafficking, which is a serious problem and is considered a violation of human rights, is yet to be internalized emotionally by society at large in Bangladesh and also in other South Asian countries. It is yet to be emotionally internalized regarding what happens when an adolescent girl is abducted and taken to a brothel, threatened, beaten, and raped, and is compelled to submit for sex with men, seven days a week. Eventually she can become ill which may sometimes result in death.

The crux of the issue is that civil society in Bangladesh is yet to internalize the mindset that trafficking and flesh trade are as bad as *hatta* (murder), *dharshan* (rape), or *chhintai* (mugging). When one hears or reads news about trafficking, it does not create the same reaction as other criminal activities create, such as, rape, murder, or mugging.

International organizations use various definitions for describing trafficking. The definitions tend to focus on gender, age, reason for trafficking, and the issues of coercion and violence that are often associated with trafficking. Although the dimension of sex work is an important element, trafficking activities are not only carried out for sex work or prostitution, but also for other purposes. Thus, definitions tend to be general and encompass not only the sex and age of trafficked persons, but also the different purposes for which people are trafficked.

The countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) adopted a definition in their Convention for Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children. Nevertheless, a consultation workshop, organized by the Resistance Network in Bangladesh in August 1999, made suggestions for changes in the convention. The following definitions were proposed in the workshop:

"Trafficking in women consists of all acts involved in the procurement, transportation, forced movement, and/or selling and buying of women within and/or across border by fraudulent means, deception, coercion, direct and/or indirect threats, abuse of authority, for the purpose of placing a woman against her will without her consent in exploitative and abusive situations such as forced prostitution, forced marriage, bonded and forced labour, begging, organ trade, etc."

"Trafficking in children consists of all acts involved in the procurement, transportation, forced movement, and/or selling and buying of children within and/or across border by fraudulent means, deception, coercion, direct and/or indirect threats, abuse of authority, for the purpose of placing a child against her/his will without his/her consent in exploitative and abusive situations such as commercial sexual abuse, forced marriage, bonded and forced labour, begging, camel jockeying and other sports, organ trade, etc."

## **Magnitude of the Problem**

Human rights activists estimate that 200-400 young women and children are smuggled every month from Bangladesh into Pakistan. Most of them end up in prostitution. A large number of Bangladeshi women work in brothels in India, mostly in Kolkata (former Calcutta), Mumbai, and Delhi. According to newspaper reports, 165,000 Bangladeshi women were engaged in prostitution in Pakistan in 1992. There is no reliable estimate of women and children who have been trafficked from Bangladesh to other countries.

## **Modes and Causes of Trafficking**

Most reports reviewed suggest that, in recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of Bangladeshi children and women being trafficked into India and other countries. The causes of trafficking and the factors leading to this apparent increase are multiple and complicated. These factors are embedded within the socioeconomic structure of the country and require an in-depth analysis. However, for the present purpose the factors have been categorized into two groups. The 'push' factors, the first group: there are the conditions in the environment of the 'sending' communities or countries that ensure a supply of people for trafficking. These factors include low employment opportunities, low social status of women, economic and social vulnerability of women and children, urbanization, migration, etc. The second group refers to the set of 'pull' factors that support the demand for trafficking activities. These include wage employment and bonded labour, labour migration and prostitution, and cultural myths. All these factors have been explained in this report.

Traffickers adopt different strategies and tricks to allure and enroll young children and women (and their families) into the trafficking process. The procurement process for trafficking in women in the sex industry in Bangladesh involves the entrapment of women to be sold to brothels nationally or to neighbouring countries, especially in India. Inside Bangladesh, the procurers' places of hunting are the river ports, especially the Sadar Ghat area of Dhaka, bus stations, and the railway stations across the country. The traffickers at these locations look for migrants who come from rural areas for job or poor young people abandoned by their families; they allure them with false promises of wealth and better prospects. The victims from these spots are usually sold to Bangladeshi brothels. Procurement of victims from villages and towns in the border areas of the country is more frequently associated with the purpose of supplying sex workers for the sex industry of India or Myanmar. Several case studies incorporated in this report explain the trafficking and procurement processes.

## **Trafficking Routes**

Review of different literature showed that some 18 transit points along the India-Bangladesh border are used for smuggling children and women out of the country. The border areas of Khulna, Jessore, Satkhira, Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Mymensingh, Comilla, Brahmanbaria, and Sylhet are frequently used as land routes for trafficking. In the northern region, the districts of Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, Panchagarh, Thakurgoan, Dinajpur, Naogaon, Chapai Nawabganj, and Rajshahi, and in the south, Jessore and Satkhira are the areas in which women and children are most susceptible to trafficking. Cox's Bazaar is also a common site for recruitment of children and women to be trafficked, because there are three Muslim Rohingya refugee camps in this district from where the traffickers collect victims. Usually, the traffickers use different routes at different times to avoid police and other law-enforcing agencies. However, for entering India through Kolkata, the two most common routes are the Benapol borders in Jessore through which almost 50% of the trafficking take place and Satkhira.

## **Consequences of Trafficking**

Trafficking is a violation of human rights, which has various consequences at the level of the individual, family, community, and country. It is a form of exploitation of the weaker members of the society. It can be argued that trafficking is part of a continuum of sexual exploitation that perpetuates and continually reinforces the subordinate status of women.

Trafficked people work under conditions which are hazardous to their mental and physical health. Nevertheless, there were no specific reports on the health consequences of trafficking, although a number of problems were quoted repeatedly. Perhaps, because of the link between trafficking and the sex industry, the singular most frequently-reported health consequence was the role of trafficking in HIV-associated epidemics. Children and women trafficked for purposes other than commercial sex. For instance, domestic and industrial work may also have an increased risk of HIV infection because of their exposure to instances of forced sex and perhaps also the potential initiation into substance misuse, including contact with intravenous drug users. However, a search for printed documents and a search on Internet for relevant references on this issue were unsuccessful.

## **Rescue, Rehabilitation, Repatriation, and Reintegration**

Rescue is a thorny issue. It has its limitations and unacceptability, largely due to the attitude and violent behaviour of the law-enforcing agencies. Although the police rescue many women and children but what happens to them is largely unknown. Often the rescue processes are violent, aggressive, and 'male dominated.' Sometimes the minors are sent either to state-run remand homes or to an NGO shelter. Most are unable to go back to their home because of a whole series of problems, and when they are released, they are again at risk of being picked up by the traffickers. 'Repatriation' means voluntary return to the country of origin of the person subjected to trafficking across international frontiers. The minors have no choice; they have to be taken back to their place of origin, but an adult woman has the right to choose to stay in the country if she so wishes. The choice of women is not even considered, because the focus has always been to protect the interest of State over and above the interest of women. 'Reintegration' means social and economic integration acknowledging her right to self-determination.

## **Organizations Involved in Preventing Trafficking**

Both government and NGOs have been working in combating trafficking in Bangladesh. Bangladesh has ratified many international laws and conventions. For example, Bangladesh has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women with Reservations of Article 2, 13(a), 16.1, and 16.1 (9c) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). It has also played an effective role at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 and endorsed the Plan of Action. In addition, in recent years, the government has promulgated a number of laws, and has approved various policies and regulations to ensure equal rights of women in all spheres of life and also to eliminate violence against women. According to Article 34.1 of the Constitution of Bangladesh, "All forms of forced labour are prohibited and any contravention of this provision shall be an offense punishable in accordance with law." Other available statutes with direct implication to trafficking in women and children are: (1) The Penal Code 1860, (2) The Children (Pledging of Labour) Act 1933, (3) The Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act, 1933, (4) The Children Act, 1974, (5) The Cruelty to Women (Deterrent Punishment) Ordinance, 1983, (6) The Women and Children Repression (Special Provision) Act, 1995 (Resistance Against Trafficking in Women and Children in South Asia, 1997), and (7) Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000. Nevertheless, it is also widely acknowledged that no

sufficient steps have been taken to implement these laws effectively to protect women and children from trafficking. Therefore, it is important for the policy-makers to distinguish between eliminating violence against women and also combating trafficking women and children.

Currently, the government has undertaken a project, "Child Development: Coordinated Programme to Combat Child Trafficking." The programme will start as a pilot project in 12-15 high-risk areas for trafficking. The project will establish a system of multisectoral task forces at the national, district and upazila levels to conduct motivational programmes and support the efforts of organizations working in the area of prevention, rescue, repatriation, and rehabilitation of trafficking victims.

### **NGO Activities and Intervention**

NGOs participate in anti-trafficking activities through raising awareness, advocacy, research, networking, rescue, repatriation, and rehabilitation. Two most important NGOs working in these fields are BNWLA and CWCS. The BNWLA mostly involved in rescue, repatriation, and rehabilitation, manages a shelter-home for both male and female rescued victims. They assist the victims to get reintegrated with the society by helping them to find jobs and also in locating their family and relatives. The CWCS is mostly involved in research, training, and advocacy.

Recently, the ATSEC has prepared a "Preliminary Directory of Non-government Organizations (NGOs) involved in combating trafficking in, and sexual exploitation of children and women". The directory includes information on 130 different local and national-level NGOs. The directory shows that the NGOs are involved in awareness raising, information dissemination, advocacy, repatriation, rehabilitation, etc.

NGOs face many constraints in dealing with the issue of trafficking. Lack of a fully-equipped investigative cell has been the most outstanding one. NGOs get information about cases either through the media or when they initiate a special study/research. Sometimes they also receive information through local partner NGOs/organizations. Whenever a case is reported in the media, they try to follow it up and usually retrieve those children from jail or police custody.

NGOs organize national, regional and international networks to share information and experience and through cooperation and coordination; they work to rescue, repatriate, and reintegrate victims. NGOs also include the trafficking issue in their awareness-raising programmes to build public opinion and encourage community involvement. To prevent trafficking, NGOs work together with the government and try to develop national (and regional) policies and programmes.

### **Conclusions**

In recent years, the trafficking of women and children has already acquired a global dimension. For South Asian countries, the issue is already considered a serious regional problem, which demands a concerted response. Accordingly, trafficking was high on the agenda of the Ninth Summit of heads of governments of the SARRC countries held in the Maldives in 1997.

Trafficking is a human rights issue with important ramifications in the area of health, law enforcing, and socioeconomic development in general. Poverty, attitude toward women and deeply-entrenched gender discrimination, unemployment, cultural norms about marriage, well-organized national and international networks of traffickers, and weak law-enforcement are the critical factors relating to trafficking of women and children in Bangladesh.

Tougher laws alone cannot address this criminal activity. Several acts, including the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000, have provisions for penalties for violence against women and children, including trafficking and kidnapping. Yet, their proper implementation remains a formidable challenge.

We observed that many research reports are based on information gathered through anecdotes, and from secondary analysis and unreliable data. But we relied on a few good reports that collected field information describing the trafficking practices and that mapped out the trafficking routes.

Although more studies need to be conducted to shed light on trafficking antecedents, there are already several reports documenting the trafficking issues in Bangladesh. There is, however, a need for studies which can generate first-hand information on social, economic, political and health implications of the problem. It is critical also to identify the current and potential roles of the government and NGOs in eliminating this immoral practice.

Given the regional nature of trafficking and the international implications of this problem, reports on the nature, magnitude, trends, and forms of trafficking in the SAARC countries are needed. The advantage of establishing cross-regional teams and resource centres to help identify the dynamics of trafficking, both from local and regional perspectives, has also been highlighted in reports included in this review of the literature. A uniform plan of action on the issue of trafficking of women and children involving the governments and NGOs of the region needs to be developed, so that a coordinated approach toward the conviction of traffickers is possible. This regional approach implies the development of a legal framework that ensures arrest, conviction, and extradition of traffickers, and that also enables prosecution of traffickers and abusers even when crimes are committed in foreign soil.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, the trafficking of women and children has increased in Bangladesh and in other Asian countries (1-5). But little efforts have been made to gain a meaningful understanding of the local dynamics of the problem. The task is difficult and involves delving into a complex area of legal issues, social attitudes, economic interests, and illicit activities. Nonetheless, a better understanding of the causes and consequences of trafficking is essential for any future interventions to combat this human problem, both nationally and internationally.

Despite a large number of reports and considerable media coverage on trafficking, very few systematic research studies were conducted on trafficking. The available information on community members' perceptions of trafficking and on the underlying determinants of trafficking, for example, is limited. Similarly, the experiences of organizations working to prevent trafficking and to assist trafficked people have not been adequately documented to identify appropriate interventions for improving the effectiveness of current efforts.

This review was undertaken to produce a comprehensive summary of available information concerning trafficking of women and children in Bangladesh. Information on the magnitude of the problem, the underlying factors that foster trafficking, modes of trafficking, major trafficking routes, and consequences of trafficking has been compiled. The review also highlights the current activities of different non-government organizations (NGOs) to address the trafficking problem. This document is expected to contribute to the greater understanding of the trafficking issues, and provide a framework for future studies on programme needs and research gaps on this issue.

## 2. Methodology

Research reports and publications of various organizations concerned with trafficking, and journalistic reviews and newspaper clippings were considered. The review organizes the existing information to enable readers to understand the problems relating to trafficking from various perspectives.

The search for original research findings relating to Bangladesh did not meet with success. A very few research reports are available on the trafficking issues in Bangladesh. Of these, the following nine reports can be considered the major sources of information on trafficking of women and children in Bangladesh:

- **Child trafficking: the underlying dynamics** by Ishrat Shamim and Farah Kabir, Center for Women and Children Studies (1998) (1)
- **Survey in the area of child and women trafficking** by Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (1997) (2)
- **Child trafficking and sale** by Ishrat Shamim (1993) (6)
- **Situation analysis on trafficking of women and children in Bangladesh** by Mahmuda Rahman Khan (undated), a report prepared for Action Aid; (7)
- **Bangladesh country report on trafficking in children and their commercial, sexual exploitation and other intolerable forms of child labour** by Salma Ali (1998) (8)
- **Preliminary directory of non-government organizations (NGOs) involved in combating trafficking in and sexual exploitation of children and women** by ATSEC Bangladesh Chapter, 2000 (9)

- **Misplaced childhood: a study on the street child prostitutes in Dhaka city** by INCIDIN, 1997 (10)
- **Study on the socio-economic dimensions of trafficking in girl children** by INCIDIN, (undated) (11)
- **Trafficking and sexual exploitation of children: Bangladesh perspective (Workshop paper)** by Center for Women and Children Studies, 1998 (12)

The reports prepared by Shamim and Kabir (1998) and BNWLA (1997) are outstanding contributions to knowledge on this problem. In addition, the inventory of member organizations of the Bangladesh Chapter of Action Against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children (ATSEC) network is an important reference list of agencies involved in preventing child trafficking and in rehabilitating victims in the country. This review contains numerous quotes from these documents. Although focused on Bangladesh, the review also considered reports and publications on trafficking from other countries in the region, made available by Mr. Matt Friedman, USAID/Bangladesh.

Several key informants selected from NGOs and research organizations were interviewed to add an additional perspective on trafficking and increase the range of activities and interventions on trafficking covered in this report (Annexure A). All interviews were tape-recorded. Photographs, booklets, newsletters, and research reports from local organizations were also reviewed.

The Popline and Medline databases were consulted to find literature on trafficking. Studies done in Bangladesh by various NGOs on trafficking of women and children were also consulted to understand the emotional, mental, physical and developmental implications of trafficking.



Courtesy: Mr. Farkul Alam, ICDDR,B

ICDDR,B researchers interviewing the shelter home officials of BNWLA (Counsellor and superintendent)

### 3. Organization of Report

The report has been organized into 13 sections. The first three sections contain the introduction, methodology, and organization of the report. This is followed by a discussion of trafficking in the global, regional and Bangladesh contexts. In Section 5, a discussion of the definitions, concepts, and conceptual framework has been included. In the next section, the nature and magnitude of the trafficking problem in Bangladesh has been elucidated. Causes of trafficking, including push and pull factors, modes of trafficking and procurement process, trafficking routes, consequences of trafficking, and trafficking and development have been highlighted in Section 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 respectively. A brief description of activities of the government (GoB) organizations and NGOs working on trafficking has been included in Section 12. The report ends with conclusions and research gaps, including possible future activities, presented in Section 13.

## **4. Context**

This section briefly describes the context of trafficking from the global, regional and Bangladesh perspectives.

### **4.1. Global Context**

Trafficking of persons into bonded sweatshop labour, forced marriage, forced prostitutions, domestic servitude, and other kinds of work is a global phenomenon that takes place within countries and regions and on a transcontinental scale. Trafficking in women is one of the fastest growing criminal activities in the world with an estimated one to two million young women being trafficked annually for the purpose of forced labour, domestic servitude, or sexual exploitation. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that, in 1995, about 500,000 women were trafficked to the countries of the European Union from poorer regions of the world (13). So, it is not a problem of developing countries alone.

Although the concept of trafficking is often used for describing kidnapping and enslavement of women for the commercial sex industry, different government and international agencies have adopted much broader definitions of the term to include other forms of trafficking and affected groups, such as children trafficked for child labour and organ donation. The problem is usually under-reported because of the difficulties involved in tracking such clandestine activities.

In recent years, the issues relating to trafficking have become more prominent and are being discussed more openly. There are more efforts also to understand the underlying dynamics of trafficking of women and children. This may be related to increase awareness and concerns about human rights, violence against women, and about the role of commercial sex in human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)-related epidemics. The question of trafficking has figured prominently in the agenda of recent international meetings, such as International Conference on Population and Development in 1994, World Summit for Social Development in 1995, and Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing in 1995. Accordingly, there is also a growing interest among the policy-makers and programme managers to identify effective options for preventing such exploitation of women and children and in designing appropriate interventions for them.

### **4.2. Regional Context**

Trafficking in Asia accounts for a large share of the global volume of trafficked women and children. In the last two decades, the number of trafficked women and children in Asia has increased alarmingly. Trafficking across borders was included as an important issue in the ninth South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Summit in May 1997. In its 27<sup>th</sup> paragraph, the Declaration of the 9<sup>th</sup> SAARC Summit says, "Expressing grave concern at the trafficking of women and children within and between countries, the Heads of State or Government pledged to coordinate their efforts and take effective measures to address this problem." They decided that the existing legislation(s) in Member States should be strengthened and strictly enforced. This should include simplification of the repatriation procedures for victims of trafficking.

Trafficking of women has been the part of the tradition in this region. In his review, Joardar found that the problem of prostitution is directly related to trafficking of women, and this institution has been in existence in this region in the nineteenth and early twentieth century (14). Mukherjee reported that, during village *melas* (fair), many village girls were lost and misled into brothels (15). A second study titled 'Prostitution in historical and modern perspectives', based on fieldwork was conducted in eight brothels in and around Kolkata by Joardar, who observed that prostitution was related with low castes. Also, the findings of Joardar on many women originally belonging to Bangladesh and other neighbouring countries indicate the existence of a regional 'circulation' of prostitution, and the regional trafficking of women was historical (16). In another study, Khan and Arefeen also observed some unique features in Jessore brothel, which are specific to a border town that has various kinds of business and cultural links with the adjacent Indian region (17).

South Asia is considered the most vulnerable region for trafficking because of its large population, large-scale rural-urban migration, large populations living in conditions of chronic poverty, and recurrent natural disasters. Women and children are sold, traded, exchanged for sexual slavery and prostitution, and bonded labour across borders, such as from Bangladesh to India, Pakistan, and the Middle East; from Nepal to India; from Burma to Thailand; from Vietnam to Kampuchea; and from the Philippines to Japan. Table 1 shows distribution of Asian countries between which trafficking takes place. The table shows the major sending and receiving countries in the Asian region. Some sending countries are as well receiving countries and vice versa.

**Table 1.** Trafficking in Asian countries

Country of origin	Country of destination
Bangladesh	Hong Kong
Burma	India
India	Japan
Korea	Kampuchea
Laos	Malaysia
Nepal	Pakistan
Philippines	Taiwan
Sri Lanka	UAE
Thailand	
Vietnam	

**Source:** Shamim I, editor. *Proceedings of the Fact-finding Meeting and the National Workshop on Trafficking in Women and Children. Dhaka: Center for Women and Children Studies, 1997 (18).*

Table 2 includes information on the source, transit and end points of people who are being trafficked from the South Asian region. Table shows that, of the four Asian countries two are only receiving countries, whereas the other two are both sending and receiving countries. These two countries also act as a transit point for final destinations mostly in the Middle East.

**Table 2.** Patterns of trafficking in Asia

Source	Intermediate	End point
Nepal	→ India	→ India
	→ India	→ Middle East
India	→ India	→ Middle East
Bangladesh	→ India	→ India
	→ India	→ Pakistan
	→ India	→ Middle East
	→ India	→ Pakistan
	→ India	→ Middle East
Pakistan	→ India	→ Middle East

**Note:** This table is prepared with the help of Matt Friedman, USAID, Bangladesh who has extensively researched on trafficking in the region.

It is very difficult to estimate the exact number of women and children who have been trafficked from one country to another country in the Asian region. Estimates on the number of women and children trafficked are based on sources of varying reliability from newspaper reports to cases reported to the police and other law-enforcing agencies.

#### **Box 1. Some estimates of trafficking in Asia**

- ❖ About 200,000 women and girls from Bangladesh were trafficked to Pakistan in the last 10 years, continuing at the rate of 200-400 women per month. The total number of prostitutes in India is 7,936,509. UNICEF estimates that there are at least a million child prostitutes in Asia alone with the greatest numbers in India, Thailand, Taiwan, and the Philippines (19).
- ❖ Each year 5,000-6,000 Nepalese women and children are trafficked across the border into India. About 100,000 Filipino women and girls are annually trafficked as 'entertainers' into the booming sex industry in Japan (20).
- ❖ Japan hosts the biggest sex industry market for Asian women, and many of them are Filipinos and Thais (20). The sex industry accounts for 1% of the GNP, and equals the defense budget of the country.

### **4.3. Bangladesh Context**

Causes and consequences of trafficking in Bangladesh cannot be understood in isolation from its historical, cultural, geographical and socioeconomic perspectives and the present condition of women.

#### **4.3.1. Historical and geographical contexts**

After independence from British colonization in 1947, the Indian sub-continent was divided into two countries: India and Pakistan. Pakistan had two distinct geographic regions, East Pakistan and West Pakistan, separated by 1,200 miles. Thus, many cross-border families were formed. During separation, many Muslim families from India migrated to Pakistan, particularly to East Pakistan. Again, many Hindus living in East Pakistan moved to India.

In 1971, East Pakistan became independent from West Pakistan and a new nation, Bangladesh, was born. During this time, many non-Bengali Pakistanis (who were originally from India) wanted to go back to West Pakistan and are still awaiting repatriation to Pakistan. They live in 66 camps scattered in 14 districts of Bangladesh. As repatriation of these people has been delayed, many cross land-borders illegally. Often with these groups, other women and children are trafficked (2,8).

On both sides of the newly-drawn border between India and Pakistan and India and Bangladesh, there are many 'enclaves' which are pockets of land belonging to a nation other than that which surrounds them. There are 111 Indian enclaves in Bangladesh and 51 enclaves of Bangladesh in India. Usually, these areas are not patrolled or controlled by any law-enforcing agencies. Research by the BNWLA has shown that these enclaves have been used as recruitment and collection sites by traffickers (2,8).

#### **4.3.2. Socioeconomic context**

Bangladesh, one of the most densely-populated countries in the world, has 147,570 sq km of land and a population density of 755 per sq km (21). The present estimated population of the country is about 129 million.

Despite the achievements of some poverty-alleviation programmes through micro-credit and other development initiatives, the vast majority of the population in Bangladesh still live in poverty. Illiteracy and unemployment are quite high.

Recurrent natural disasters make the situation more critical for the entire population. During distress situation, lack of shelter for girls is a great problem. All these factors make women and children vulnerable, and make them easy targets of traffickers.

#### **Box 2. Indicators of vulnerability of population**

- ❖ 20% of the total land experiences annual flooding
- ❖ 50% of the total land periodically experiences severe flooding
- ❖ A similar proportion suffers from dry season drought in the north of the country
- ❖ Eleven million people, living along the coast, are potential victims of cyclones
- ❖ One million people are affected every year by riverbank erosion
- ❖ Population per hectare of arable land is 14
- ❖ In rural areas, 2.10 million households are landless
- ❖ About 10% of households are female-headed
- ❖ GDP per capita at the current market price: Tk. 12,240.00
- ❖ 26.7% of the population live in hard-core poverty
- ❖ 29% of children aged 6-15 years do not go to school

**Sources:** Rahman A. *Disaster and development: a study in institution building in Bangladesh*. In: Hossain H, Dodge CP, Abed FH, editors. *From crisis to development: coping with disasters in Bangladesh*. Dhaka: University Press Ltd., 1992:352-371 (22).

#### **4.3.3. Cultural and political contexts**

If socioeconomic conditions present a context of persisting poverty and if underdevelopment affects large numbers of the population, this situation is most acutely felt by women, because they additionally face strong religious, historic and cultural forces that tend to shape every aspect of their lives. Legally, both women and men have the same rights and are entitled to equal treatment under the law. Nevertheless, cultural norms often act as barriers to the implementation of egalitarian legislation. For example, due to male preference, females suffer not only nutritional neglect, but also receive less attention during sickness than males. Arranged marriages are the norm, and young women are still married relatively early in life (23). The most recent Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS) reported that about 60% of women aged 10-49 years were married by the time they were aged 15 years (21).

Legal provisions to protect women and children from exploitation are also not enforced due to organizational inefficiency and the inadequate capacity of law-enforcing agencies. As a result, some social practices, which are detrimental to a woman's status in society, still continue many decades after their legal abolition. A case in point is the practice of dowry, which continues despite national legislation against this, which was signed in 1980. The inability to fulfill commitments of dowry affects a young bride's treatment by her husband's relatives and increases her vulnerability of being abandoned and trafficked for immoral purposes or bonded labor (2,23,24).

## 5. Definition and Concepts

International organizations use various definitions for describing trafficking. The definitions tend to focus on gender, age, reason for trafficking, and the issues of coercion and violence which are often associated with trafficking.

In the case of children, in 1998, a research report by Archavanitkul (3) titled “Trafficking in Children for Labour Exploitation including Child Prostitution in the Mekong Sub-region”, compared definitions used by the UN General Assembly, Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW), International Organization for Migrations (IOM), and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). After considering these definitions, the authors concluded that important dimensions of child trafficking include the performance of a profitable act by person(s) other than the children themselves who transport a child within or across the national borders usually using false or deceptive information for the purpose of work or services in destructive and exploitative work conditions by means of violence, abuse, or other forms of coercion. For their study, a trafficked child refers to “A child who is recruited and transported from one place to another across a national border, legally or illegally, with or without the child’s consent, usually but not always organized by an intermediary: parents, family member, teacher, procurer, or local authority. At the destination, the child is coerced or semi-forced (by deceptive information) to engage in activities under exploitative and abusive conditions” (3).

In the case of women, the same dimensions seem to be important. For instance, the US President’s Interagency Council on Women, defines trafficking as: “All acts involved in the recruitment, transport, harboring or sale of persons within national or across international borders through deception or fraud, coercion or force, or debt bondage for purposes of placing persons in situations of forced labor or services, such as forced prostitution or sexual services, domestic servitude, or other forms of slavery-like practices”.

Similarly, the Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women considers that trafficking of women refers to “all acts involved in the recruitment and/or transportation of a woman within and across national borders for work or services by means of violence or threat of violence, abuse of authority or dominant position, debt-bondage, deception or other forms of coercion” (3).

Friedman, USAID, referred the following definition “The recruitment of girls/women by means of violence or threat, debt bondage, deception or coercion to act as sex workers under menace of penalty and for which the individual has not offered themselves voluntarily” (interview with Friedman).

Although prostitution is an important outcome of trafficking activities, there are many other exploitative outcomes and events relating to trafficking. Thus, definitions tend to be general and encompass not only the sex and age of the trafficked persons, but also the different purposes for which people are trafficked.

The countries of SAARC have a definition in their Convention for Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children. Nevertheless, a consultation workshop organized by the Resistance Network in Bangladesh in August 1999 made suggestions for changes to the convention<sup>1</sup>. The workshop proposed the following definitions:

“Trafficking in women consists of all acts involved in the procurement, transportation, forced movement, and/or selling and buying of women within and/or across border by fraudulent means, deception, coercion, direct and/or indirect threats, abuse of authority, for the purpose of placing a woman against her will without her consent in exploitative and abusive situations such as forced prostitution, forced marriage, bonded and forced labour, begging, organ trade, etc.”

“Trafficking in children consists of all acts involved in the procurement, transportation, forced movement, and/or selling and buying of children within and/or across border by fraudulent means, deception, coercion, direct and/or indirect threats, abuse of authority, for the purpose of placing a woman against her will without her consent in exploitative and abusive situations, such as commercial sexual abuse, forced marriage, bonded and forced labour, begging, camel jockeying and other sports, organ trade, etc.”

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<sup>1</sup> Suggestions for changes in the draft SAARC/SUMMIT. 10/CM.23/3 Annex III. Proposed by the Regional Consultation on the SAARC Convention, organized by Resistance Network, Tangail, Bangladesh.

Shamim internalized trafficking in children in its broad perspective, which included all acts involved in capture, acquisition, recruitment and transportation of children within and across national borders with the intent to sell, exchange, or use for any illegal purposes, such as prostitution, servitude in the guise of marriage, bonded labour, or sale of human organs by means of violence or threat of violence (1,6).

### **5.1. Operational Definition**

In the context of Bangladesh, the BNWLA adapted the definition of the Global Alliance against Trafficking in Women, so that it could be applied to situations involving both women and children. Thus, the BNWLA defines trafficking as "All acts involved in the recruitment and/or transport of a woman (or child) within and across national borders for work or services (or marriage) by means of violence or threat of violence, abuse of authority or dominant position, debt bondage, deception or other forms of coercion" (3,8). Arriving at an appropriate definition of the phenomenon of trafficking is essential for identifying the magnitude of the problem and ways to address it.

### **5.2. How is the Trafficking Problem Internalized?**

The Bangla equivalent of the word trafficking is *pachar*. It has a mild connotation, which means transfer from one place to another. If the term *pachar* is used in reference to women and children, in Bangla the phrase *nari o shishu pachar* means illegal transfer of women and children from one place to another. Trafficking, which is a serious problem and is considered a violation of human rights, is yet to be internalized emotionally by society at large in Bangladesh and also in other South Asian countries. The term itself does not capture the total implications for an adolescent girl to be abducted and taken to a brothel; threatened, beaten, and raped; and forced to submit to having sex with men, seven days a week, for several years until she eventually becomes ill which may sometime result in death.

The crux of the issue is that civil society in Bangladesh has yet to internalize the mind-set that 'trafficking' is as bad as *hatta* (murder), *dharshan* (rape), or *chintai* (mugging). When one hears or reads news about trafficking, it does not create the same reaction as other criminal activities, such as rape, murder, or mugging. Newspapers are replete with news of rape and murder, but there are few reports on trafficking of women and children. It may be because trafficking happens behind the scenes and is hard to detect. Both print and electronic media could be used for playing a more effective role in depicting different facets of trafficking in Bangladesh.

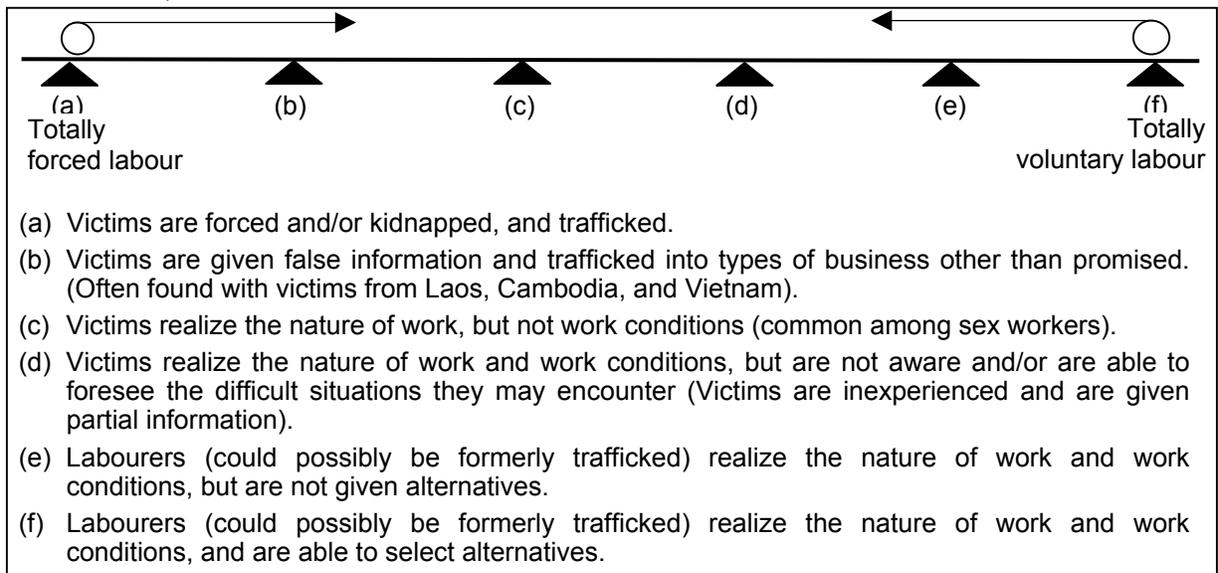
At the NGO level, it has been observed that, although there is no disagreement regarding the seriousness of the problem, there are differences on how they internalize the problem. Some NGO representatives think that awareness about trafficking issues in Bangladesh is different when compared to other crimes. The expression was as follows: "generally, people are not treating trafficking equally with other types of offences, those who are conscious can easily relate trafficking with murder and rape, since murder and rape are crimes of such a nature which has an urgency, the reaction is quick and immediate, whereas trafficking takes place through a process behind the scenes and occurs over a period of time, so people do not have any immediate reaction" (Interview with Fawzia, PROSHIKA).

Another respondent representing an NGO looked at trafficking as a part of migration process, but was bothered by violence and illegal activities associated with trafficking. She stated, "trafficking is a kind of migration. One can go anywhere s/he likes. It is a fundamental human right. People are going from one place to another for a long, long time. But when people are taken illegally through deception and are tortured, it becomes an issue. So, violence and illegal activities associated with trafficking should be stopped" (Interview with Natasha Ahmed of UBINIG).

Shamim pointed out that the word trafficking does not carry the sense of violence, such as murder or rape. She thinks that people are yet to incorporate this, although trafficking should be considered the worst form of exploitation. She highlighted another facet of the problem which is that the outcome of traffickers is not well-understood, since there is little documentation of what happens to women and children after they are trafficked to a place (Interview with Prof. Isharat Shamim, CWCS).

Archavanitkul conclusively analyzed from various research projects on combating trafficking and from various studies on transitional migration that trafficking should be looked at as a continuum rather than put into a narrow definition (3). Figure below illustrates this. He suggested that studying victims over a longer period of time provides a more complete picture of trafficking. For example, a 25-year old voluntary prostitute could have been forcibly trafficked into prostitution during her childhood. Archavanitkul further suggested that trafficked victims are not always forced or kidnapped and to some extent they may be aware of what is happening (3).

Archavanitkul pointed out that the most abusive method for trafficking is to force victims out of their normal life or kidnap them and force them into the workforce (a) (see below). The least abusive method is at the opposite end (f). A trafficked victim usually starts being trafficked at a young age from point (a) and moves to points further right on the line as trafficking experiences accumulate. The movement is usually from the most abusive form of trafficking to the least abusive form and also apparently made step by step, for example from (c) to (d) rather than from (c) to (e) or (f). A movement from the right to the left side of the continuum is also possible. For example, a woman could voluntarily enter the sex industry but be trafficked into types of work she did not anticipate (from f to e, or from e to d).



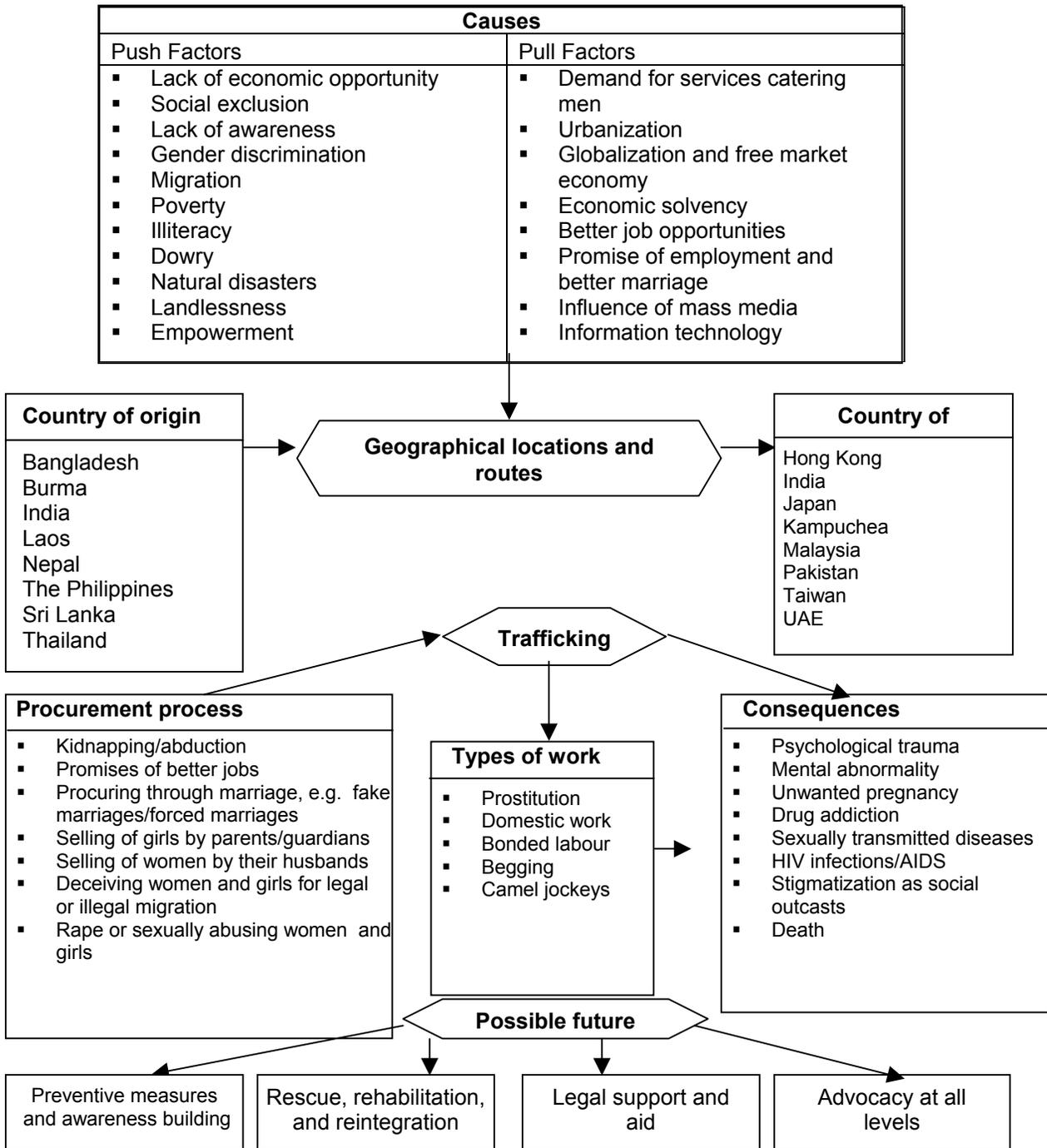
**Fig. Trafficking continuum**

In an empirical study among prostitutes, Khan and Arefeen also reported that many respondents joined this business on their own after experiencing certain cruel circumstances which compelled them to do so, such as divorce, desertion, widowhood, deception by men, allurements by pimps, and sexual abuse in the work place or in the street (25). This finding is contrary to the common notion that prostitutes are mostly sold or forced into this business.

Trafficking can be looked at from different points of view. One respondent stated, "trafficking is about a breach in trust. Trafficking takes place, because an individual who has trust with either an individual girl, or family makes false promises of a better future to another individual and that is believable and offers them to say, I, as an individual, may decide to go or may allow a family member to go. It really comes down to that misconception whether it is trafficking or migration. A trafficker lies, provokes, offers promises, offers opportunities, and says here is a better future for you. Not a year from now but immediately your future will suddenly get better. That is what trafficking is all about" (Interview with Friedman, USAID). Mr. Friedman made a suggestion to broaden the present 'trafficking' concept to include more emphasis on the outcome of trafficking and develop a new framework that has new terms, including both sides of the 'equation trafficking' (recruitment and transport) and the outcome (slave-like conditions a person is trafficked into). He further stated that such a revised framework would concentrate more on identifying the bilateral activities to address the overall problem, e.g. what research is needed to better understand the outcome, what police-related activities might be needed to go after the buyer and those who 'exploit' women/girls, etc.

It can be said, therefore, that trafficking as a human and social problem has yet to be internalized in the same manner as murder, rape, and other socially reprehensible acts. Unless this happens, it may not be possible to organize concerted resistance by civil society and also to take appropriate steps to combat trafficking by the government, NGOs, and the international community.

**Diag. 1.** Conceptual framework of the trafficking process



**Source:** Adapted from Proceedings of the Fact-finding Meeting and the National Workshop on Trafficking in Women and Children. Dhaka: Center for Women and Children Studies, 1997 (18).

## 6. Nature and Extent of the Problem in Bangladesh

### 6.1. Magnitude of the Problem

There is no reliable estimate of women and children who are being trafficked from Bangladesh to other countries. According to estimates by human rights activists, 200-400 young women and children are smuggled every month from Bangladesh into Pakistan. Most of them end up in prostitution. A large number of Bangladeshi women are involved in sex trade in India, mostly in the brothels of Kolkata, Mumbai, and Delhi. The BNWLA and the CWCS made the below-listed estimates (Box 3) from different sources, such as newspaper reports, literature reviews, and information from the law-enforcing agencies (2,8,12).

#### **Box 3. Estimate of children trafficked from Bangladesh**

- ❖ 13,220 children trafficked out of Bangladesh in the past five years
- ❖ 300,000 Bangladeshi children work in the brothels of India
- ❖ 200,000 Bangladeshi children work in the brothels of Pakistan
- ❖ 4,500 women and children trafficked to Pakistan
- ❖ 1,000 child trafficking cases documented in the Bangladeshi media in 1990-1992

## 7. Causes of Trafficking

Most reports emphasize that, in recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of children and women being trafficked from Bangladesh into India and other countries. The causes of trafficking and the factors leading to this apparent increase in recent years are multiple and complicated. These factors are embedded within the socioeconomic structure of the country and require an in-depth analysis. However, for the present purpose, the factors have been categorized into two groups. The first group, the 'push' factors, includes the conditions which are responsible for trafficking of people from one country to another country. These factors have been outlined in the previous discussion about Bangladesh and its regional context (Section 4) and will be expanded further below. The second group refers to the set of 'pull' factors that support the demand for trafficked victims (5).

#### **Box 4. Causes of trafficking**

- ❖ Break-up of traditional joint family and the emerging nuclear families
- ❖ Pseudo-marriage
- ❖ Dowry demand
- ❖ Unequal power relations and discrimination in the family by gender and age
- ❖ Negligible decision-making status of women in financial matters
- ❖ Negative attitude toward women and female children
- ❖ Socialization which devalues female children
- ❖ Social stigma against single, unwed, or widowed women
- ❖ Misinterpretation of religion regarding women
- ❖ Religious fundamentalism
- ❖ Complications out of conditionalities and fraudulent practices in marriages/after marriages
- ❖ Child marriage, polygamy, or incompatible marriages
- ❖ Easy divorce
- ❖ Incest
- ❖ Physical and mental illness, and contagious diseases turning women as outcasts
- ❖ Frustration in love and failure in conjugal life
- ❖ Enticements for better life, e.g. job and prospect of marriage
- ❖ Globalization and export-oriented growth model and consumerism
- ❖ Increased dependency of guardians on the income of their female children
- ❖ Natural disasters making families homeless and disintegrated
- ❖ Acute poverty forcing parents to abandon their children
- ❖ Lack of shelter for women in distress
- ❖ Inadequate government policies in favour of women
- ❖ Inadequate rural development projects for women and unemployed
- ❖ Lack of social security and safety
- ❖ Inefficiency of the law-enforcing agency
- ❖ Corruption amongst the members of law-enforcing agencies
- ❖ Women released from jail/hazat are given to guardians/custodians without proper/legal verification
- ❖ The malpractice of providing affidavit for women entering into the profession of prostitution without verification of age
- ❖ Complications of restoring to law are both expensive and time-consuming for women victims
- ❖ Non-registration of female domestic help

**Source:** *Proceedings of the Consultation Meeting on Trafficking and Prostitution. CWCS, 1997 (20).*

## **7.1. Push Factors**

### **7.1.1. Low employment opportunities**

In Bangladesh, due to increasing landlessness and inadequate investment in rural industrialization, the scope for employment opportunities and skill development, particularly for rural women, is less. Women have traditionally worked as unpaid family labourers in the society. Employment opportunities, access to land, and credit facilities have traditionally been limited for women. However, in recent years, there have been increasing demands on the labour of women and children in the urban informal sector, garments industry, and as domestic servants, and a growing number of women and children are involved in the workforce in the cities (26). Data of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) show that, in general, the female labour force had reached 21.3% in 1996 compared to 6.1% in 1980 (27). Again, among adolescent girls aged 10 to 14 years, the labour force increased to 22.4% in 1996 compared to 11.1% in 1989 (28). Thus, low employment opportunity for women in the rural areas and growing demand for workforce in the informal sector in the urban areas push women to migrate from rural areas to urban areas. This trend of migration creates vulnerable conditions for women and children and provides opportunities to traffickers to exploit women and children.

### **7.1.2. Social vulnerability of women and female children**

Khan and Arefeen have looked at women's subordinate position in our society from a feminist-anthropological perspective (17,25). The authors observed that patriarchy with all its ideological manifestations plays a crucial role in creating a vulnerable situation for women in a changing socioeconomic setting. Patriarchy defines an asymmetrical role and relationship for men and women in the society, which has been termed as gender class by the feminists. In our society, men are considered economic providers and women their dependents whose role is related to biological reproduction. This creates specific gender roles with strong values and norms attached to each. On this again is built the ideology of sexuality whereby women's sexuality has to be controlled by men. Again this notion of control and of protection of women leads to vulnerable exploitative situation for women in which the slightest sexual deviation or social dislocation makes them 'polluted' and object of social degradation.

The socialization process in the family determines the role of a girl child as a future mother and wife. The girls grow up with a mentality of dependency in a male-dominant environment where their contributions toward the family are unrecognized as they perform the role of unpaid family help. Participation of girl children in household chores, both in rural and urban setup, is seen as a process of preparing them for marriage by teaching them of becoming efficient 'house wives'. The girls are exposed to the risks of being victimized even at the family. Sometimes the girls' living places pose threats to their safety. Often in rural areas and urban slums, they have to live in fragile huts. In a community-based study on socioeconomic dimension of trafficking of girl children, one girl who was from rural areas of Rajshahi expressed,

*"I sleep in a room with my mother along with my two sisters. The condition of our house is not at all good. The fences and the bamboo-made walls of room have almost broken down. Therefore, my mother always worries about our safety and keeps watch throughout the night. I can not sleep well out of fear and anxiety as well"(11).*

In the urban slums, the risk of abuse of girl child(ren) within the family by the stepfather or the other family members is most fatal. For economic survival and social protection, the girls need to be submissive in such a family environment. They are exposed to constant threat of becoming sexually active not only because of the sexual aggression of men, but also by other provocative factors. For example, in urban slums, joint families comprising parents, daughters, sons, and daughters-in-law live in a tiny single room which is embarrassing for the adolescent girls, because there is no privacy. A girl of an urban slum expressed,

*“As we are now old enough to understand, we feel very embarrassed to sleep in the same room where my parents and my brother with his wife sleep. I feel disgraced and ashamed, but there is no way out. After my brother got married, he did not have the ability to find a separate room for himself. If I had the ability to rent a separate room, I would have left this disgraced situation as early as possible”(11).*

In rural communities, early marriage, dowry system, and polygyny are commonly- practised phenomena. Young girls and women are often the victims of gender oppression due to their low status in society. To avoid social pressure and stigma regarding the delayed marriage of women, parents try to arrange a marriage for their daughters at an early age, even before the legal age of 18 years. Often these marriages are unregistered, because the parents are ignorant about the importance of registration of marriage. Thus, it is impossible to validate many marriages, and men are easily able to remarry.

Dowry is also a common practice. Parents are often unable to marry off their daughters, because of their inability to pay a dowry. Sometimes the girls are married off to much older men to avoid the payment of dowry. This may lead to early widowhood, failure in conjugal life, or separation. Divorce and desertion frequently on grounds of non-payment of dowry or post-marital demands for dowry are encouraged by the sanction of polygamy. According to the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance, 1961, men are required to obtain permission from the Union Parishad Chairman on the basis of consent from the first wife for remarrying. Men generally ignore this requirement, and if women resist, they are frequently abandoned (24). It has been found that both polygyny and dowry have led to an increased incidence of domestic violence and desertion (24). Sometimes physical and mental illnesses and contagious diseases result in women and girls becoming outcasts. In many instances, communities and families treat these single, widowed women as outcasts and as a social and economic burden. Hence, offers of marriage or employment prospects are tempting for them. Often frustration in love or failure in conjugal life pushes women toward the allure of a better life. A study of two unions in Rajshahi, conducted by the Association for Community Development, found that many young girls trafficked over land border were treated as a burden by their respective families, because they were unable to find paid work after they were deserted by their husbands (29).

### **7.1.3. Economic vulnerability of women and children**

In Bangladeshi society, women get the smallest share of resources. When resources are stretched thin, it is women, the most marginalized in the first place, who suffer first and most. The state policy intervention in the agricultural sector has resulted in strong polarization of classes. The new technologies introduced became the property of the rich. The poorest section of the population was marginalized. Men were forced to look for jobs outside agricultural labour, and women were left without any work at all. Consequently, women are being pushed to extreme marginal position. The general pauperization necessitated them to work for survival. Thus, they entered the highly competitive labour market where they are forced to compete with the dominant male labour force. In the process, they are left with little choice but to take up extremely low paid, exploitative work as domestic servants, garment factory workers, prostitutes, etc. A study reported that sometimes the parents forcefully engaged their girl children in odd jobs due to extreme economic hardship in urban slum areas (11). This study also found that the girls who earn in the slum are given ‘higher value’ as prospective brides, although they had little or no role in the process of deciding about their future (11).

### **7.1.4. Urbanization and migration**

The population growth rate of urban areas is three times higher (6-7%) than the national population growth of 2% per year (30). At present, about 20% (25 million) of the country’s total population of (129 million) live in the urban areas (27). The growth of urban slums and the homeless population are some of the gravest challenges that the country is now encountering. The environmental and socioeconomic conditions in the slum and squatter settlements are extremely poor and, in fact, very hazardous. These conditions are health hazards to the residents of these settlements and to those living outside. The densities are very high (up to 2,000 persons or more per acre or 5,000 persons per hectare). The per-capita living space is terribly low, even down to 10 square feet (or 1 sq. meter) in some settlements (31). Again, due to continuous in-migration of the illiterate rural poor and the increase in

the number of the urban poor, the urban literacy rate has actually been declining and the total number of urban illiterates has also gone up from 1,389,000 in 1961 to 3,218,000 in 1974 and 5,429,000 in 1981 (31). People are continuously migrating from rural to urban areas for economic and social reasons. A study, conducted by the Research Evaluation Associates for Development among vulnerable and floating groups of people in four cities of Bangladesh, reported that social factors are as important as economic factors for their vulnerability (32). However, this study observed that acute financial crisis, limited or no access to resources, unemployment, and crisis due to natural calamities are important economic factors for vulnerability. This study also identified that social factors, such as torture by husbands and other family members, torture (including rape in some cases) by miscreants and deception at the community level, deception regarding property by relatives, neighbours and influential men, deception by lovers and agents (*dalals*), remarriage of husband/wife, pressure of dowry, and infertility, including son preference, might have attributed in trafficking. When the rural poor migrate to cities, traffickers take chances and lure women and children for money and jobs (1).

## **7.2. Pull Factors**

### **7.2.1. Wage employment or bonded labour**

There is an increasing demand for child labour for the sex trade, domestic work, and other exploitative events, because child labour is cheap and easily controlled. Bangladeshi children are engaged in construction sites, carpet trade, and glass bangles industries in Kolkata, Uttar Pradesh, and Karachi (2). In large cities, such as Karachi, it is not uncommon to find Bangladeshi women and children recruited as housemaids. Due to lack of identity papers, these women and children are often exploited and abused.

Camel racing is a profitable sport in some middle-eastern countries, particularly in Dubai. This requires lightweight jockeys, and has led to an increased trafficking of Bangladeshi boys, as young as five years old.

### **7.2.2. Labour migration and prostitution**

Very little information is available on labour migration of Bangladeshi women. Although women's claim to work and to migrate transitionally is a legitimate human right, it is not officially recognized in Bangladesh. However, migrations of men and women have completely different dimensions because of differences in its implications and consequences. When men migrate and return to home country they are easily reintegrated. But, women are at risk of being stigmatized, particularly when they migrate alone. On the other hand, continued migration of men seeking employment in big cities within and outside the country leads to an increased demand for cheap and available sex. Often male migrant labourers desire sex workers who share a common linguistic and cultural background. This involves the migration of sex workers from the home country.

### **7.2.3. Cultural myths**

There are reports that one of the main causes of the increasing demand for young girls is the myth that intercourse with a virgin can cure a man of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and rejuvenate him. It is also a widely prevalent belief that sex with a female child does not expose a person to STDs and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

## **8. Modes of Trafficking and the Procurement Process**

Traffickers adopt different strategies and tricks to allure and enroll young children and women (and their families) into the trafficking process. The procurement process of women for trafficking in the sex industry in Bangladesh involves their entrapment for selling them to brothels nationally or to neighbouring countries, especially to India. In Bangladesh, the traffickers hunt for their clients at the river ports, especially the Sadar Ghat area of Dhaka, bus stations, and the railway stations across the country. At these locations, the traffickers look for migrants who come from the rural areas for jobs or for poor young people abandoned by their families and allure them with false promises of better life. The victims collected from these spots are usually sold to Bangladeshi brothels. Procurement of victims in villages and towns in the border areas of the country is more frequently associated with the

purpose of supplying sex workers for the sex industry in India and the Middle East. The following case studies provide examples of strategies adopted by the traffickers involved in the national and international human trade in Bangladesh.

### 8.1. Employment Prospects

Traffickers look for girls from poorer and vulnerable families in villages and tempt them and their parents with offers of lucrative jobs and a comfortable life in neighbouring countries, such as India and Pakistan. At times, the girls are so motivated by promises of the trafficker that they leave home without consulting their parents. A study from Nepal on the factors that influence victims of trafficking in deciding to migrate from their place of origin concluded that the majority of trafficked people were deceived by relatives and village men (33). Another review on trafficking of the Nepalese women and girls found that the women and girls who were victims of trafficking were deceived by someone they trusted. This study reported that pimps and brokers persuaded them with alluring assurances of happy and married life, a secure and better income job, the life of an actress and other false promises (34). In addition to economic vulnerability of the family, the traffickers also look for families in which factors, such as domestic abuse and violence, are occurring. Two case studies quoted in Shamim and Kabir (1) and Ali (2) are illustrative of common situations:

#### Case Study 1. Employment prospect

Monowara Khatun (16), daughter of Islam Sarder, Mazeda (19), daughter of Alam, and Khatun (14), daughter of Ali, were taken from the village Mrigedanga, Sathkhira district. They were allured with promises of well-paid jobs, marriages, and a better life in India by a female trafficker, Jahanara. They never returned to their home village. Villagers believe that they were sold to brothels or to trafficking gangs in India (1).

#### Case Study 2. Employment prospect

Titu was one year old when his mother died, leaving him in the care of his father and grandmother. Titu's family was very poor--his father was a rickshawpuller, and his grandmother worked as a maid. "So he was left alone and without much care," said his grandmother. When Titu was seven, his grandmother was approached by an elderly village woman who offered to take Titu to Dubai for employment. "Everyone knew Shonai Bibi in the area. She had taken many children to Dubai. So, we immediately accepted her offer." Shonai Bibi promised that after three months, Titu's family would begin receiving monthly remittances of about Tk. 2,000.00. Titu says that, in Dubai, he and a number of other children (some from his home village) were put under the care of a woman. They were instructed to call her 'mother.' He reported he was well-fed and well-taken care of, but forced to race camels. "I used to get frightened when the camels ran very fast. They trained me for hours together."

Titu was quite successful as a camel jockey, and was given a colour TV and gold jewellery by the man whose camels he rode. (These were, however, subsequently taken away from him by the woman whose care he was in.) However, during one race he fell and was trampled. He suffered a head and leg injury, the extent of which is not known. He was treated in a Dubai hospital. Shortly after his injury, Titu was escorted back to Bangladesh and returned one night to his home village by an unknown man who left when they reached Titu's house.

Titu is now living with his father and grandmother again. He exhibits symptoms of shock and trauma, and others believed to be related to the head injury sustained during his fall in Dubai (2).

## 8.2. Love Affair

Traffickers also pretend to be in love with young girls and asking them to elope. The girls believe them and leave their parents/home with their boyfriends full of illusions about a happy married life. Sometimes marriage is proposed, the girls are taken to India, and then they are sold to traffickers. In some cases, traffickers marry the girls after crossing the border, enjoy family life for a month or so, and then sell their young brides to other traffickers or to brothels. The following case studies have been collected by Shamim and Kabir (1).

### Case Study 3. Love affairs

Abdul (age 32 years) maintains a close relation with Helal, who stays in Hakimpur, India. He often comes to Bangladesh with the intent to take women and children to India. Helal proposed Abdul to leave the smuggling business and, in return, offered him a large amount of money if he would help him in the trafficking business. He offered him Tk. 30,000.00 for collecting a fair and good-looking young girl. Abdul was very tempted by the offer and discussed the matter with his friend. Both of them planned to traffic Nasima with the help of Helal. Abdul posed as a lover and proposed to marry Nasima. Eventually, Nasima was allured with false promises and trafficked to India (1).

### Case Study 4. Love affairs

Jahanara (16) from Magurkhali village in Keshabpur comes from a poor family. Her old and sick father was unable to work. For survival, she started to work as a housemaid in Jessore where she met a hotel boy and fell in love. The young man suggested that if she went to India with him they would get married after finding a good job.

They first went to Bongoan in India after crossing the border through Benapole. Then they travelled to Darjeeling and got married. They stayed there for one and a half months.

She was later brought to Kolkata to visit the city. They stayed in a hotel where some strangers came to see her husband. He introduced them as friends, talked with them for some time, and left the hotel saying that something had come up suddenly. After some time, the strangers came back and informed Jahanara that her husband had sent them to collect her. When she inquired about her husband they informed her that he had gone to buy tickets as they are going to travel to another city by train. Unfortunately, she did not find her husband on the train, and in the evening she was told that he was in a different carriage. After a long time when her husband did not come, she became suspicious of their company and ultimately realized that she was trapped. At about midnight when they were asleep, she escaped from their clutches. Later, she learnt that the train was bound for Bombay. Somehow, she managed to return to Bangladesh via Kolkata (1).

### 8.3. Promise of Marriage

In addition to the strategy of alluring girls from poor families with love affairs, promises of marriage and a better future, the traffickers also take full advantage of the cultural practice of arranged marriages by parents. Sometimes they gain the confidence of parents, and manage to develop a close relationship with them before offering to marry their daughters. The poor parents agree, because the offer may appear to be a good opportunity for the family because of low or no demand of dowry. Thus, some parents innocently hand over the girls to the traffickers and find out their real motives too late.

#### Case Study 5. Promise of marriage

Fatema (14) is one of the three daughters of Rupchand, a rickshawpuller from Satkhira. Last year, he met an Indian woman who introduced herself as 'Pakhi's mother' of Doharkanda villages in Chabbis Pargana, India. She used to visit Rupchand's house frequently. Once she proposed a marriage arrangement for his daughter in India. Rupchand was poor and did not have enough money for the wedding of his daughter. So, he readily agreed to the proposal considering the chance of a lifetime. Pakhi's mother took Fatema to India, and since then Rupchand does not know anything of her whereabouts. After a few months, Pakhi's mother again came back to the village but by that time Rupchand had passed away. When Fatema's mother inquired of her daughter, she was assured that Fatema was doing fine, without providing any further information. After then whenever she wanted to know about her daughter's well-being, Pakhi's mother tactfully avoided her. She is now convinced that Fatema is a victim of trafficking and was sold in India. She did not report it to the police, because she is poor and vulnerable (1).

#### Case Study 6. Promise of marriage

In October 1996, in the village of Tuzulpur, villagers caught a trafficker accompanying a young girl named Hasina aged 15 years. She had studied up to class VIII. Her father Hazrat Ali hailed from Altapur village, Keshabpur upazila of Jessore district. Samad of Satkhira allured her with the promise of marriage. So, she came to Satkhira with him hoping that her fate would change. But she soon found out that his intention was to traffic her to India and sell her to a brothel. She then told her story to the villagers who got hold of Samad and sent Hasina back to their father's home in Keshabpur. However, the trafficker was not handed over to the police (1).

### 8.4. Kidnapping

Kidnapping, one of the methods for trafficking, is normally done by deception and by force. The number of kidnapping cases has increased significantly. One such example is given below.

#### Case Study 7. Kidnapping

A trafficker, named Shahidul, was caught red-handed by the people of Rishipara village, Keshabpur upazila of Jessore district. In Swapon's custody, the police found a boy named Rubel of 10 years old and rescued him. The boy is the son of a shopkeeper Abdus Salam from Khadimpur village at Keshabpur.

People of Bejdanga village, Keshabpur, caught another trafficker, Hajera. She was carrying Rupa across the border to India. She was also handed over to the local police (1).

## 8.5. Tourism

### Case Study 8. Tourism

The people of Labsa village rescued Anita and Nupur, two young girls, from the hands of the traffickers. These girls were brought to Satkhira to be trafficked across the border. They were trafficked by known persons pretending to take them for a tour. The girls, believing them, went with them. The villagers, with the assistance of the local police, rescued them and handed the girls over to their parents (1).

### Case Study 9. Tourism

Sumi (11), daughter of Moharuddin, is from the village Khanbari of Mymensingh district. Sumi is the daughter of a day laborer. She is the youngest of seven brothers and sisters. She proceeded toward Dhaka in search of work. When she was wandering aimlessly at Kamalapur Railway Station, a woman took her home, assured her work, and told her not to flee away from the place of work. The woman sold her to a brothel in Dhaka. She was allowed to go and visit her parents after seven months on the condition that she would return to the brothel. When she returned home, her parents and others in the village suspected that all was not well but she had no alternative but to return to her work in Dhaka.

**Source:** *Tales of the girls recovered.* [URL: http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/grhf/SAsia/repro2/fleshtrade.htm](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/grhf/SAsia/repro2/fleshtrade.htm)

To understand the procurement process, it is important to know the purposes of trafficking. One of the major outcomes from the trafficking of women for traders is a large profit. A special target of traders are young girls, because, among customers of commercial sex establishment, there is a perception that young girls are virgins and are less likely to be infected with HIV.

Poverty, inadequate jobs, migration for jobs, fake marriage, abandonment by the family or husband, and kidnapping are just a few issues related to trafficking of women. The procurers take advantages of the misfortunes of women.

## 8.6. Interview with Rescued Traffic Victims

A team of three researchers from the Operations Research Project (ORP) of ICDDR,B: Centre for Health and Population Research visited the BNWLA shelter home at Mirpur to interview a rescued traffic victim. The interviews followed a checklist, which tried to cover the following information:

- Family structure/pattern
- Age
- Socioeconomic condition
- Education
- Address or place from where he/she was trafficked
- Route of trafficking
- End designation

### Case Study 10. Rescued camel jockey

A little boy, aged 6-9 years, all he can now remember about his family is that he had a father, a mother, and two siblings. The father was a school-teacher, and the mother raised chickens and ducks. One day he was playing outside all by himself, two strange men came and took him away from his family.

In Dubai, he was employed as a camel jockey. One day while riding a camel he fell down and was seriously injured, and was taken to a hospital. (Interviewed in September 2000)

When this boy was hospitalized, an international news media broadcasted this case. The BNWLA later got involved in repatriating this boy back to Bangladesh from Dubai. Usually, after the rescue the victims are sent back to the family, if possible. But in this case he has been living in the shelter home for a year now; as he does not have a little memory about his family, how he was abducted or where his village was. However, the people in the shelter home tried to locate his parents. Now a new problem has evolved. Three different people are now claiming to be his guardian. The counsellor suspects that one of them could be a trafficker.

The following case is about a mother and a daughter who were trafficked from Chittagong. The BNWLA rescued them from *Eidhi home* in Karachi, Pakistan. In this interview, the mother is the main respondent.

### **Case Study 11. Rescued mother and daughter**

The mother is aged 25 years, and her daughter is aged 8 years. They are from Teknaf, Chittagong. The father was alcoholic and abusive. Poverty was a part of their life. One day he divorced her mother. With a little daughter, the mother had no place to go and take refuge. She had to return to her parent's home with the little child. Because of the poverty she could not live with them too long either. So, she along with her little daughter moved back to the first husband's village. There she came to know that people were going to Pakistan for better living and decided to go along with a group.

Then one day she started her journey for better living into the unknown future. With a group, she left her people and her village. She further revealed that, in the group, there were 6-7 children and 10-12 women, and the rest were men. They all were travelling in the same bus. From Chittagong they came to Gabtali, a bus terminal in Dhaka. But people around them did not suspect that these people were being trafficked. She did not have to pay her bus fare or for the food that she and her daughter had, while they were travelling. It took several days to reach the border. She cannot remember the name of the border.

After crossing the border, they stayed with a Hindu family for few days. There she saw a friend of her previous husband. If she knew that that the person would be here, she would have decided not to come. Because he proposed her to remarry him. Now in this situation he started to threaten her saying, "You are alone. You do not have anybody to save you. You have to marry me or I will kill you." So, she was left with no choice but to marry him.

After the marriage, she started the second part of the journey to Pakistan. They had to walk miles after miles. Sometimes they took bus or boat. She can not recall how she went to Pakistan. But she remembers that they walked mostly after dark and slept during the day. They had to sleep in graveyard or under a tree or simply on the street side. She remembers that when they were crossing the border the police did not harass them. Because the person she got married had enough money to satisfy the police and was also known to them.

When she reached Pakistan she found herself locked-up in a room with several other women, also from Bangladesh. Later, she learnt that her husband sold her to a Bangladeshi trafficker living in Pakistan. In exchange, he took Tk. 90,000 and eight kg of gold.

One day when a person came to serve food she pushed him and forced open the door. When other people in the neighbourhood saw that there were several women locked up in one small room they called the police, and they were taken under the police custody. (Interviewed in September 2000)

#### **8.6.1. Interview with traffickers**

To understand the traffickers' perspective, two researchers from the ORP went to Jessore jail to interview the convicted trafficker on 26 September 2000. One inmate was interviewed for the study. The respondent is indicted under the Women and Children Act 1995, Section 8(2) and sentenced to 14 years of rigorous imprisonment. For the privacy and confidentiality, fictitious names and identities are adopted.

A broad guideline or a checklist was developed for the interview. The purpose was to look at trafficking from a trafficker's point of view and to know the reasons for trafficking, how the targets are selected, route of trafficking, network of trafficking, and how a person became a trafficker.

### Case Study 12. Convicted 1

Suruj Mia has been arrested and convicted under the Women and Children Oppression Act 1995, Section 8(2). He is 24 years old. His mother died when he was very young. He doesn't remember his mother. After the death of his mother, his father remarried. The stepmother was very wicked. The stepmother and the stepmother's brother abused him physically and did not feed him properly. So, he was constantly in misery, and always missed his mother. The father was not affectionate either. So, he got frustrated and started taking phensydil and addictive substances. At the same time, he stopped going to school. Then his father sent him away to a nearby district to his uncle's house, so that he will be away from this bad association and will learn some trade which will help him in the future.

After staying in his uncle's house for several months, he came back again to his previous place. In that place he worked for his uncle with a lathe machine. He used the lathe in making fire arms. After a while, the stepmother and her brother wanted him to move out of the house. They also proposed him that he would get his share of the property if he decides to leave the house. But Suruj Mia did not agree to move out. So to punish Suruj Mia, the stepmother and her brother filed a case as an offender under the Women and Children Oppression Act 1995.

One day while he was playing cards with his friends in a place of the town, the stepmother's brother and his friends came and took him to house and tortured him. Then they handed him to the police as the police already had a case against him. The uncle in his statement to the police mentioned that he has abused a girl sexually and committed a violation.

His first contact with clandestine activity started when he worked with the lathe machine for his uncle making firearms. His uncle initiated the process and established the contacts, and he maintained and continued. The first time he used firearms was to help a friend. His friend had a girlfriend whom he wanted to marry. But the girl's parents did not agree and forced her to marry somebody else. One day Suruj Mia and his friend abducted the girl while she was visiting her parents' home. This time the friend got angry and planned to kidnap the girl and sell her to the brothel and kill the husband.

They kidnapped the girl and sold her to a brothel for Tk. 25,000. Several years ago, Suruj Mia went to another district for an operation. They were not successful on that trip. But from Madaripur brothel he bought an 11 years old girl with Tk. 18,000. He doesn't know where she is from. But now she lives in brothel. He waited for *Rehana* to reach her puberty to have sexual relationship. Now she is 18 years old and is exclusively his. Even now, he being in jail she is his and does not go to anybody else. If she does she will be punished, because he gets all the news. The brothel owner and other residents of the brothel are taking care of all her expenses.

Tania is the only person who comes to visit Suruj Mia in the jail. She is the second daughter of her parents, and has a brother and a sister. Her father lives abroad. They know each other since childhood. They plan to get married one day. The last time she came to visit him she brought him a pair of shoes. She is one of his girlfriends or lover as he termed. He had multiple relationship, and most of them are in the brothel, except Tania. But Tania does not know about these activities. She is helping him and contacting the lawyers and doing the necessary for him to get out of the jail. Her parents do not approve of her association with Suruj Mia. Because he has several lawsuits against him beginning from drug smuggling to rape to murder to trafficking. He also plans to be a Member of Parliament sometime in the future. Although he only has primary education, but he thinks that education is not important to become an MP. Anybody with money can become an MP these days.

*Case Study 12 contd...*

### **Case Study 12 (contd.)**

Suruj Mia was one of the members of the organized crime groups in his district. This group had contact with different political persons, such as Ward Commissioner, Union Parishad (UP) Chairman, UP Member and also paid regular tax to the law-enforcing authority at all levels.

He remembers that, in one operation in child trafficking, their group got Tk. 300,000. He with his gang collected children from one of the local schools. These schools have a fixed rickshaw-van-puller to pick-up and drop school children. Sometimes these children are taken to parks for recreation with the school's permission. The gang contacted one of the rickshaw-van-pullers to bring few children when he will take them to the park, and he will get Tk. 60,000. So, one day when the rickshaw-puller found suitable conditions to abduct the children he took them to the other side of a river. Meanwhile he also informed Suruj Mia's group to meet him at certain spot to collect the children. Getting this information Suruj Mia quickly organized a car and his associates to go to the spot to collect the children. After collecting the children they were trafficked to India through Bhomra border, Kalignaj upazila, Shatkhira. Different groups were involved in this act to distract people and police.

These children were trafficked to India where their organs, such as kidney and brains, will be used for transplant. According to Suruj Mia, trafficking has a positive impact on the society. Suppose somebody needs a kidney from where the person will get it. If prostitution is abolished, it will be a problem for young girls to be out in the street.

There were different techniques and strategies to collect girls. The main attributes to be a target are physical beauty, age, and relationship with boys. Most girls they trafficked are from middle-income group. To select their target, they usually observed girls going to schools. After observing a girl for few days, they decide to kidnap her. So, one day during the lunch time, this group was waiting with a car near the school. After the lunch break when all the girls were returning back to school, they called her to take her away from the rest of the girls. Then they created an agitation with her and forced her to get into their car.

Sometimes they used veteran commercial sex workers (CSWs) as traffickers. A man is hired to pretend to be her husband. Then as a couple they will rent a house. While living in that house they will become friendly with the community, particularly with the young girls. Then one day this CSW will ask one girl if she would like to go out with her to a movie or to a park. Most parents do not allow young girls to go out, except to schools. So, these girls will lie to the parents and go out with the CWS not knowing that this person is a CSW or where she is being taken and what lies in the future. The CSW takes the girl into the brothel as planned. As soon as the CSW takes the victims into the brothel, other residents of the brothel surround her, and it is too late for her to come out of the situation. Among this crowd there are young boys too. They start to tease her and touch her, and the boys ultimately rape her. They know that after this act the community will not accept her.

To collect girls, Suruj Mia and his group also went to other districts, especially to Madaripur. In Madaripur, they stayed in hostels and developed relationship with the local males. They try to learn personal stories, especially stories about romantic encounters. This group lured the young boys and promised good job and marriage if they went to his district with them. Suruj Mia and his group were able to convince some boys. As soon as they arrived to his own town, they separated the boys from the girls, and the girls were sent to the brothel, whereas the boys were threatened to leave the town. If the boys refused to do so, they were threatened to be killed. (Interviewed in September, 2000)

### 8.7. Procurement Process

From a review of the literature and case studies, one may discern the following features of the procurement process (Box 5):

**Box 5. Features of procurement process**

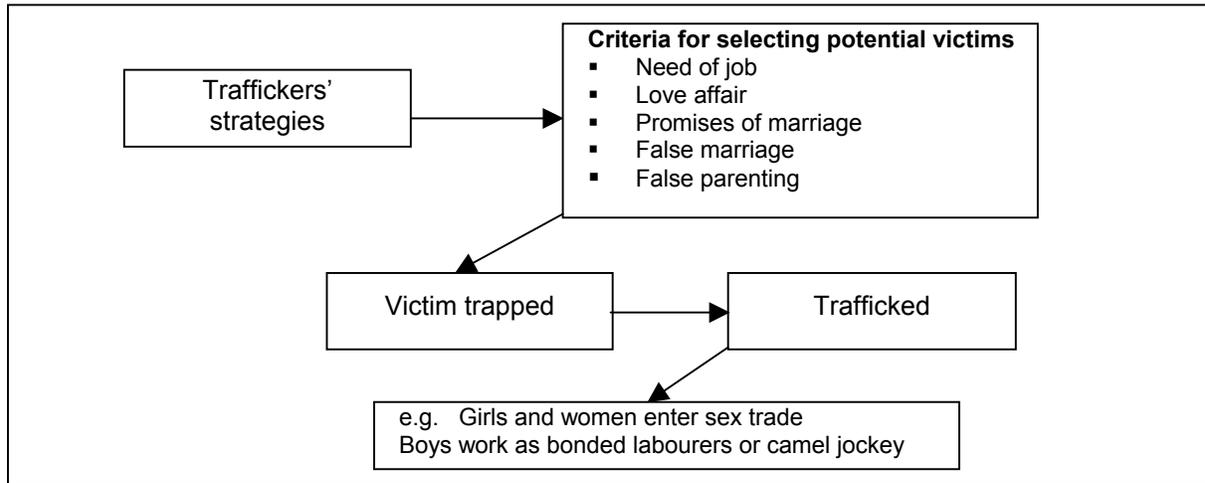
There are large networks of traffickers working at the national level and across borders. Normally, a group of traffickers collects victims from Bangladesh, and hands them over to their counterparts in India or Myanmar. From there, these agents take them to the brothels or to other countries.

Both men and women are involved in the procurement process. Although it is possible to guess from various sources that a large proportion of trafficked persons are sent out of the country, but there is no dependable data on it.

Prevailing poverty, fake dreams of a good life, prospect of a job, attraction of city life, and existing conditions at the border areas of Bangladesh help the traffickers find victims easily.

The following diagram summarizes the procurement process illustrated by the case studies presented.

**Diag. 2.** Procurement process





Floating adolescent girls walking at the Saidabad bus terminal



Floating adolescent girls very commonly seen at the Sadarghat launch terminal



A group of small children playing at the Saidabad bus terminal



A group of women at the Kamalapur railway station

Courtesy: Mr. Farkul Alam, ICDDR,B

## 9. Trafficking Routes

Bangladesh has a 4,222-km long border with India and a 288-km common border with Myanmar. Twenty-eight of the 64 districts of Bangladesh have common borders with India, and two have borders with Myanmar. Monitoring and policing any unlawful activities, be it trafficking of humans or smuggling, is a gigantic task, and the traffickers take advantage of this situation. The most preferred route, used by them, is the land route followed by air and waterways.

There are as many as 18 transit points along the India-Bangladesh border through which children and women are smuggled out of the country. The border areas of Khulna, Jessore, Satkhira, Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Mymensingh, Comilla, Brahmanbaria, and Sylhet are frequently used as land routes for trafficking. 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 the areas where women and children are most susceptible to trafficking. Cox's Bazaar is also a common site for recruiting children and women to be trafficked, because there are three Muslim Rohingya refugee camps in this district from where the traffickers collect victims (1). Although reports and studies identified these border routes, the traffickers use different routes at different times to avoid the police and other law-enforcing agencies. Therefore, for entering India through Kolkata, the two most common routes are the Benapol border in Jessore from where almost 50% of the trafficking takes place and Satkhira (35).

In Rajshahi, the Ganges-Padma river is easily crossed during the winter when water levels are low. In Nawabganj and Rajshahi, the most frequently-used points for crossing the border illegally are Nawabganj, Shibgonj, Bholahat, Godagari, and Rajshahi. In the north, Dinajpur is considered the district through which most women and children are trafficked. This region is connected to what is now West Bengal by both road and rail link. Rail links connect a number of other districts



Sadarghat river port used as significant transit trafficking route



Kamalapur railway station used as significant transit trafficking route

Courtesy: Mr. Fakrul Alam, ICDDR,B

throughout the northwestern Bangladesh (Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Rangpur, Nilphamari, Thakurgoan, and Panchagarh). The Parbatipur Railway Station in Dinajpur brings people from all over the north. Other points through which people regularly cross the border illegally from Dinajpur and Naogoan include Hili, Nitpur, Aihi, Ciroti, Hutshaul, Nirmail, and Agradigon. The most commonly-used border points for crossing in the north are Hili, Singimari, Mogolhat, Burimari, Durgapur, Villabari, Ramkhana, Vurungamari and Batrigach (1).



Courtesy: Mr. Fakrul Alam, ICDDR,B

Gabtoli Bus terminal: The potential transit land route for trafficking

A detail description of internal routes leading to crossing the border from different districts of Bangladesh is given in Box 6.

#### Box 6. Internal and cross border routes

- ❖ Sadarghat of Dhaka and Narayanganj to Barisal, Patuakhali by launch, then to Satkhira or Jessore border through land routes.
- ❖ Gabtoli bus terminal of Dhaka by road, from there by bus to Satkhira, Jessore, Kaliganj of Jhenaidah, Darshana, Meherpur, Pragpur of Kushtia, Rajshahi, or Dinajpur.
- ❖ From Saidabad to Khulna through Maa road and Moilapota Bus terminal, to Satkhira or Jessore.
- ❖ Launch from Mongla to Khulna, Vandaria to Khulna, Takerhat to Khulna, Khepupara to Khulna, then by bus to Satkhira or Jessore.
- ❖ From Chittagong and Chandpur by train to Akhaura border areas.
- ❖ From Gabtoli Bus Terminal of Dhaka to Doulatdia Rail Station by bus via Aricha Ghat, from there by train to Poradah, then to Darshana border.
- ❖ From Poradah to Rajshahi by train and then by bus to Charghat, Bagha, Godagari or the border of Chapai Nawabganj district.
- ❖ From Poradah and Shantahar railway junction to Kurigram and Lalmonirhat.
- ❖ From Poradah to the border areas of Joypurhat, Dinajpur, Thakurgaon, and Nilphamari.
- ❖ From Sylhet to Dawkibazar via Tamabil, then across the border to Shilong.
- ❖ From Sylhet to Jokiganj, then to Manikpur, Chabria, or Loharmol, across the border and through India via Karimganj, Shilchar, or Goahati.
- ❖ From Moulvibazar to the border at Dharmanagar, through Kulaura and Fultala, then to India.
- ❖ From Moulvibazar to the border at Kailashahar via Kulaura and Chatla.
- ❖ Thakurgaon, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Rangpur, Nilfamari, Panchagarh via rail to Parbatipur Rail Station in Dinajpur, to Hili and across the border to either Raiganj or Balurghat in India on the highway leading south to Kolkata.

**Source:** Ali S. Survey in the area of child and women trafficking. Dhaka: BNWLA, 1997 (2).

Shamim and Kabir provided an elaborate description of the different routes and sites of trafficking (1). Their description is based on a meticulous analysis of newspaper reports, interviews with personnel from the law-enforcing agencies, and direct observations at places of procurement. The land routes of trafficking to the neighbouring countries are presented in Table 3 and 4.

**Table 3.** Land routes for trafficking

District in Bangladesh	Transit upazila	Trafficking route or last transit point in Bangladesh	First transit point in India/Myanmar
Brahmanbaria	Akhaura	Gopinathpur	Agartola
Chittagong	Mirsarai	Karerhat Jorwarganj	Western borders of Jessore, Rajshahi, and India
	Sitakundo	Barobkundo	
Chuadanga	Jiban Nagar	Darshana	Belonia
Comilla	Chouddagram	Chouara	Agartola
	Burichang	Rajapur	Agartola
Cox's Bazar	Teknaf Ramu	Teknaf	Mongedaw (Myanmar)
Dinajpur	Hakimpur	Hili (Bangladesh)	Indian Hili
	Birol	Ranipukur Vandaria	Raiganj
Jessore	Sarsa	Shalkuna Shikarpur Benapole Goga Chanduria Putkhali Bahadurpur	Bongaon Kurulia Kurulia Jointipur, Kalini Haridaspur Jhoudanga Bonabari Paspota, Gopalpur Angrail Porano Bongaon Shutay
	Jhikorgacha	Kashipur	Boyra
	Chougacha	Kabilpur Mashila Ansolia Boyra	Boyra Laxmipur Bagdha Bagdha
Jhenaidah	Maheshpur	Jadabpur Porapara Talsar Mandartala Samkur Jololi	Krishna nagar Shantipur Birnagar Ranaghat Shibnagar

*Table 3 contd...*

**Table 3 (contd.)**

District in Bangladesh	Transit upazila	Trafficking route or last transit point in Bangladesh	First transit point in India/Myanmar
Joypurhat	Panchbibi  Akkelpur Dhamurhat	Baghjana Ratankanda Kaya Farshipara Damurhat	Balurghat Balurghat Balurghat Balurghat Devinagar
Kushtia	Daulatpur	Pragpur Dhotarpara	Baharampur (Murshidabad) Beldanga
Lalmonirhat	Lalmonirhat Sadar Patgram	Mogholhat Dahogram Angurpota Burimari	South Gitaldaha Berubari Chengra Bandha
Meherpur	Meherpur Sadar	Mujibnagar Shalika Sholmari	Batai
Naogaon	Nazirpur	Shimultali	Balurghat
Nawabganj	Shibganj	Biswanathpur Chowka Monakosha Kiranganj Radhanagar Zaminpur	New Farakka Station
Nilphamari	Dimla	Chatna	Jalpaiguri
Panchagarh	Atwari	Dhamur	Raniganj
Rajshahi	Charghat	Kakramari	Jalangi
Satkhira	Kalaroa  Kaliganj  Shymnagar	Hijaldi Damdam Bhadli Chanduria  Bhomra  Bhomra	Hakimpur Gunnaspur Panchpota  Ghozadanga Itendia  Ghozadanga Itendia

**Source:** Shamim and Kabir. *Child trafficking: the underlying dynamics*, 1998 (1)

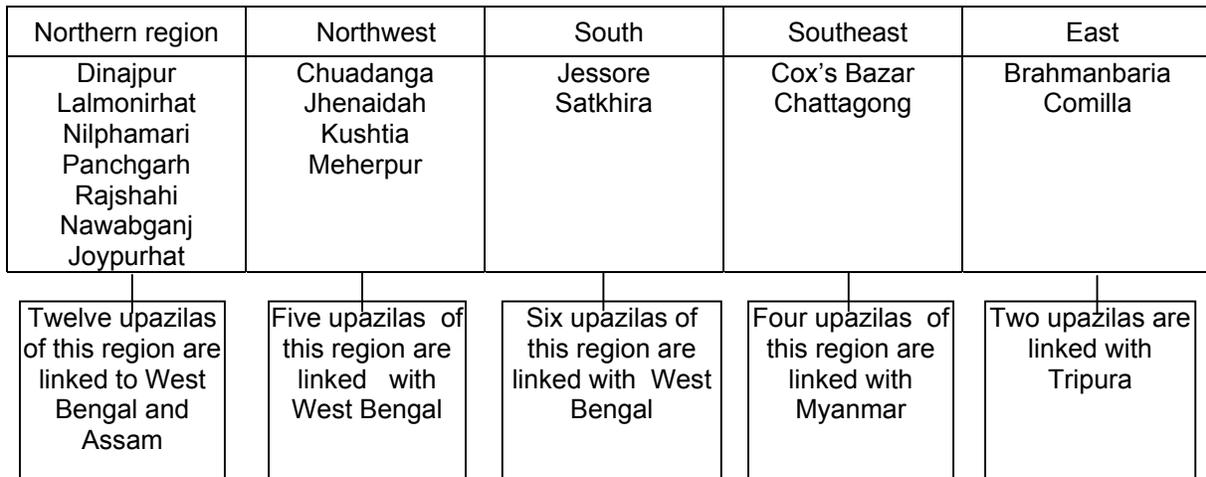
**Table 4.** Trafficking routes: Jessore and Satkhira

District in Bangladesh	Transit upazila	Trafficking route or last transit point in Bangladesh	First transit point in India
1. Jessore	Sarsa	Chanduria Bhulat Putkhali Doulatpur ICP Benapole Sadipur Rogunathpur  Bhadurpur Salkuna	Gopalpur Jaw Dhanga Bannabaria, Angrail Kalini Petrapole ICP Jaintapur Haridaspur Ramchandrapur Sutia Bazidpur
	Jhikargacha	Shikarpur Kashipur	Bassgata, Mustaqpur Meherani, Boyra
	Chowgacha	Shazadpur Mashilia Hizli Andulia Borni Jadabpur Zaluli Samanta	North Boyra Boyra Pasbaria Mama Vagne Musaumpur Kulia, Modhupur Zitpur Pasti Gata, Chawhali Singamari
2. Satkhira	Debhata Kolaroa	Vomra Madra, Vadli Hizaldi, Sultanpur	Bashirhat Hakimpur Gunnaspur, Bhitnari

**Source:** Shamim and Kabir. *Child trafficking: the underlying dynamics, 1998* (1)

The findings of the study by Shamim and Kabir indicate that the Northern region is the most vulnerable area for trafficking with a large number of upazilas and districts having common borders with India (1). The next most vulnerable area is the area south of the Ganges-Padma with 11 upazilas having a common border with India and its proximity to Kolkata (Diag 3; Map 2).

**Diag. 3.** Traffic-prone districts and upazilas of Bangladesh



Adapted from: Shamim and Kabir. Child trafficking: the underlying dynamics, 1998 (1)

## 10. Consequences of Trafficking

Trafficking is a violation of human rights, and has various consequences at the individual, family, community and country levels. Trafficked migrant children are among the most severely-affected victims of exploitative child labour. Living in a foreign country with foreign customs and a language they do not speak, they are easily deceived and forced to work as bonded labourers, often treated like slaves. These victims are deprived of education, are stigmatized, and are alienated from their communities of origin. In their isolation, they do not know where to go for comfort or assistance due to inaccessibility of the existing services to them. Since they are illegal migrants, some experience racism from police, authorities, and the communities where they stay (3).

### 10.1. Health: Physical and Psychosocial

“The body mends soon enough. Only the scars remain...But the wounds inflicted upon the soul take much longer to heal than wounds to the body (36).”

Victims of trafficking work under conditions which are hazardous to their mental and physical health. Nevertheless, there were no specific reports on the health consequences of trafficking, although a number of problems have been quoted repeatedly. Perhaps, because of the link between trafficking and the sex industry, the singular most frequently reported health consequence is the role of trafficking in HIV epidemics.

“Recently, however, growing concern about violence against women worldwide has put trafficking on the international agenda, and its connection with the sex industry that is such a driving force of HIV epidemics has added urgency to global anti-trafficking efforts, particularly in Asia. The trafficking of young women into prostitution has a formidable impact on HIV transmission. Studies have shown that brothel sex workers are most likely to become infected during the first six months of work, when they probably have the least bargaining power and, therefore, have more customers and fewer customers who use condoms (5). Another study reported that about 80% of the street child prostitutes were suffering from problems relating to reproductive organs, such as vaginal oozing, vaginal itching, and purulent discharge from vagina (10). Such symptoms are highly suggestive of having reproductive tract infection by the street child prostitutes.

Children and women trafficked for purposes other than commercial sex, for instance, domestic and industrial work, may also have an increased risk of HIV infection because of their exposure to instances of forced sex and perhaps also the potential initiation into substance misuse, including contact with intravenous drug users. However, a search for printed documents and Internet references on this issue was unsuccessful.

The health consequences of trafficking may also be more serious for young women than for men. Young women are at a greater risk of contracting HIV/AIDS than young men for physiological and social reasons, which include gender discrimination, lack of formal education, poor negotiation skills, and economic dependency (29). Female sex workers usually get involved in this business before they are physically mature (10). This early sexual initiation, coupled with malnourishment and poor health, has a direct impact on reproductive health, including adolescent pregnancy, exposure to sexually transmitted diseases, a higher risk of neonatal and maternal mortality. A study, done by the Population Council, found that sexually-abused children were at a higher risk of early initiation of sexual encounter, multiple partners, unprotected sex, substance abuse, depression, and low self-esteem (37). The study done on street child prostitutes in Dhaka city, found that more than 20% of the street child prostitutes died before/just reaching adulthood. The study also reported that about 22% of them became physically invalid and fitted only as beggar (10). Despite vulnerability to diseases, medical services to sex workers in particular and trafficked people in general are poor.

There are obvious psychosocial dimensions to the health consequences of trafficking. Children, who are employed in child labour, are deprived of the joys of childhood and usually are low paid. Sex work is part of a vicious circle of exploitation and harassment by clients, managers and, at times, law-enforcing personnel themselves (29). Sex workers experience prejudice from their family and community. Exploitation, extortion, negative self-perception, and societal condemnation ultimately disable many sex workers and lead them to drug abuse, thereby reducing their chance of adopting other roles in society (29). Trafficking may be associated with psychosocial consequences that are commonly linked to victims of violence. Results of research suggest that victims of violence often suffer from depression, anxiety, psychosomatic symptoms, compulsive and obsessive disorders, low-esteem, eating problems, sexual dysfunction, and post-traumatic stress disorders (37).

## **11. Trafficking and Development**

Bangladesh, like other neighbouring countries, is at risk of entering into the HIV/AIDS era. Prostitution of Bangladeshi girls in foreign countries, with a background of trafficking, is one of the major reasons for a great threat of this pandemic disease in the country. The association between trafficking and the threat of HIV/AIDS conjures up a picture of a looming disaster that can affect the whole direction of development in such a less-developed country, like Bangladesh, and can have a significant impact on economic and social structure. Labour-intensive work will be affected due to the shortage of a healthy and productive workforce. A study in Africa found that, in areas with a high prevalence of HIV, crop yield is less. Soil fertility is declining. Pest and plant disease is spreading which results in a lower yield. Crops of low-nutritional value are replacing labour-intensive traditional crop (38). Support systems will falter with growing high demands, overburden of caregivers will aggravate the situation, and the society will have to bear the economic burden of caring for orphans (38,39).

Trafficking also deprives the trafficked population of the opportunity to pursue education and develop socially and psychologically to achieve their full potential. Thus, it deprives a nation of vital human resources for development and contributes to the persistence of a vicious circle of exploitation and poverty that generates a mal-distribution of wealth and results in feminization of poverty (38).

Most studies outline the health consequences of trafficking and the physical and emotional aspects of violence, human rights abuse, and sexual exploitation. Further research on morbidity and mortality effects of trafficking and its impact on overall national productivity is needed. There is also very limited and inconclusive information on the consequences of organ transplant and employment of children in sports, such as camel races.

## 12. Current Approaches to Address the Trafficking Problem in Bangladesh

Both government and NGOs have been working in combating trafficking. Their current activities can be grouped as follows: targeted research, strengthening anti-trafficking network capacity-building, prosecution and protection, and anti-trafficking prevention activities (Annexure B; Map 3).

### 12.1. Targeted Research

For a better understanding of what can be done to reduce the problem of trafficking, appropriate and targeted research is needed. Although some research reports on the trafficking issues are available, very little is known about the deep-rooted causes and antecedents of trafficking. We also do not know much about the impact of our work on trafficking. A systematic research agenda that includes both qualitative and quantitative methods is mandatory. Also an information system needs to be developed for getting updated information. However, some national NGOs, e.g. UBINIG, CWCS, BNWLA, ACD, Human Rights Journalists Forum of Bangladesh, INCIDIN, and UDDIPAN, undertake research for advocacy on trafficking in women and children by identifying the causes, mechanisms, trends, high-risk areas, and routes of trafficking. The present reviews identified some research needs (Box 8).

#### Box 7. Type of research done

- ❖ Literature review and situation analysis
- ❖ NGO inventory
- ❖ Mapping exercises
- ❖ Victim database
- ❖ Documentation of practices

#### Box 8. Research needs

- ❖ Community-based qualitative research on trafficking antecedents
- ❖ Market research for nationwide awareness campaign
- ❖ Indicator development review
- ❖ Impact assessment

## 12.2. Networking

Networking activities are essential for standardization of messages, materials, and interventions on a particular issue. Networks also act as a focal point for information, dissemination, and referrals. NGOs working on trafficking in Bangladesh have been organizing national, regional and international networks to share information and experience through cooperation and coordination. These NGOs work as a combined front to rescue, repatriate, and reintegrate victims. The NGOs have also been covering the trafficking issues in their programmes to raise public awareness and encourage community involvement. To prevent trafficking, NGOs have been working together with the government and trying to develop national (and regional) policies and programmes.

### Box 9. Type of activities being done through networking

- ❖ Establishment of focal points for moving the national anti-trafficking agenda forward
- ❖ Establishment of a resource centre to provide data on the subject when requested
- ❖ Collection and dissemination of information
- ❖ Training and advocacy to increase awareness
- ❖ Technical support to grassroots level organizations



Courtesy: Mr. Pronab Nandi, ATSEC

Signing ceremony of the project “Nation-wide campaign and prevention of trafficking in children and women”



Courtesy: Mr. Pronab Nandi, ATSEC

ATSEC organized a round table meeting with the US delegates on anti-trafficking

The Action Against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children (ATSEC) is one of the major anti-trafficking networks. The ATSEC Bangladesh Chapter is the historical emergence as a coalition of 12 local NGOs, one international NGO (Save the Children Denmark), and British Council. The ATSEC came into being after a consultation meeting held between the members of Red Barnet Partners Coordination Body (RBPCB) and experts on the issues of child trafficking and prostitution both from Bangladesh and West Bengal, India. ATSEC Bangladesh Chapter is now working as a subgroup of RBPCB, particularly dealing with trafficking and sexual exploitation of children. The other three regional secretariats of ATSEC are ATSEC of West Bengal, Delhi, and Nepal. The following national NGOs of Bangladesh have been brought within the purview of ATSEC network (Box 10).

#### Box 10. National NGOs

- ❖ Association for Community Development (ACD)
- ❖ Bangladesh Institute of Theatre Arts (BITA)
- ❖ Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF)
- ❖ Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA)
- ❖ Centre for Women and Children Studies (CWCS)
- ❖ Community Participation and Development (CPD)
- ❖ Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM)
- ❖ INCIDIN, Bangladesh
- ❖ Karmajibi Kallyan Sangstha (KKS)
- ❖ Nari Unnayan Shakti (NUS)
- ❖ Resource Bangladesh
- ❖ United Development Initiative for Programmed Action (UDDIPAN)

### 12.2.1. Objectives of ATSEC

- Capacity-building of NGOs and the government to combat trafficking of children and women and sexual abuse
- Establish contacts and facilitate networking and linkage among individuals, organizations and agencies, both non-government and government, concerned with the issues of trafficking and sexual exploitation of children in Bangladesh, India, and Nepal
- Facilitate advocacy, social mobilization, research, technical assistance, and programme-support activities at the grassroots, sub-national, national and regional levels for the prevention of trafficking of children and women and sexual abuse

### 12.2.2. Activities undertaken by ATSEC

- Finalized the Action Plan and distribution of work responsibilities
- Submitted a memorandum to the Honourable Prime Minister of Bangladesh with an appeal to make public the draft Convention of Child and Women Trafficking, which was placed before the SAARC Summit, held on 29-31 July 1998 at Colombo, Sri Lanka
- Conducted advocacy meetings, regional cooperation meetings, and sensitization workshops with funding agencies and stakeholders
- Initiated capacity-building for ATSEC Chapter Members, development of training manuals, and conduction of training on trafficking issues, such as training on psychosocial counselling
- Exchanged visits for disadvantaged children and NGO representatives to West Bengal, India
- Undertook a nationwide campaign for the prevention of trafficking of children and women (NCPTCW)

The ATSEC has recently prepared a “Preliminary directory of non-government organizations (NGOs) involved in combating trafficking in, and sexual exploitation of children and women”; it contained information on 130 different local and national-level NGOs (9). It is revealed in the directory that the NGOs are involved in awareness-raising programmes, information dissemination, advocacy, repatriation, rehabilitation, etc. The activities listed in the directory are given on Table 5.

**Table 5.** Distribution of organizations working on trafficking by activities

Activities*	No. of organizations (n=130)
Awareness raising	115
Community mobilization	83
Rescue/repatriation	22
Rehabilitation and reintegration	27
Advocacy/policy	77
Information dissemination	90

\* Multiple activities

**Source:** Gupta TD. *Preliminary directory of non-government organizations (NGOs) involved in combating trafficking in, and sexual exploitation of children and women, 2000* (9)

To identify the activities and discern perceptions of some major NGOs involved in combating trafficking, several interviews with some key informants (Annexure A) were conducted. The interviews revealed that there was a difference in perception of the problem and also in the ways different programme people interviewed internalized trafficking as a heinous crime. Despite the difference in perceptions, there is a general agreement to combat it. NGOs face many constraints in dealing with the trafficking issue; a fully-equipped investigative cell has been the most outstanding one. NGOs get information about cases either through the media or when they initiate a special study/research. Sometimes they also receive information through local partner NGOs/organizations. Whenever a case is reported in the media, they try to follow it up and usually rescue those children from the jail or police custody. Some problems faced by these NGOs are presented in Box 11.

**Box 11. Problems faced by NGOs in intervention**

- ❖ Need of more primary information regarding the process of trafficking so as to design intervention strategies
- ❖ Harassment in the process of rescuing from the police custody
- ❖ Difficulties in dealing with pimps and 'godfathers', because they are more powerful and try to get victims out of prison on bail
- ❖ Lack of space and facilities in rehabilitation centres. Rescued girls and children do not like to stay there and, at times, try to escape from these centres
- ❖ Lack of skilled personnel for providing psychological support and professional counselling
- ❖ No central information cell

In promoting advocacy campaigns, the CWCS undertook an initiative aimed at building networks of NGOs in Bangladesh and South Asia. It successfully launched three networks to combat trafficking of women and children at the local, national and regional levels.

- Traffic Watch Bangladesh (TWB), a network of 160 national and grassroots-level organization
- Traffic Watch South Asia (TWSA), a South Asian NGO network of 55-member organizations
- Traffic Watch Bangladesh-Youth Network (TWB-YN), a network of 86 youths to campaign against trafficking of women and children nationwide.

The BNWLA has also established a network with SAARC countries, European countries, and government and non-government agencies (40).

The PROSHIKA has recently formed a network of NGOs located in the northern part of Bangladesh. This network, known as the Network Against Oppression of Women (NAOW), includes 26 NGOs. They organized this network in this part of the country, because, although the area is vulnerable, little work has been done in combating trafficking. They also felt that it is not possible for a single organization to work on this problem individually.

The Resource Bangladesh is also doing advocacy and lobbying against trafficking through its Children Congress, which is a network of disadvantaged children working to establish their rights. The child leaders develop posters, conduct rally, arrange press conferences, and submit memoranda to the concerned authorities.

### 12.3. Capacity-building

Many organizations lack skills in planning, implementation, and evaluation, and in not reaching their full capacity. For better planning, management, and implementation, these organizations need to build capacities to be able to reach more of their inherent potentials. Some NGOs are working on capacity-building. ATSEC Bangladesh Chapter is committed to enhance the capacity of its member organizations. With the financial support of USAID and with the help of Save the Children Denmark (Red Barnet), the ATSEC launched a project on "Capacity-building and Networking to Combat Child and Women Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children." Under the project, two training modules-- (a) Sensitization Workshop for Policy-planners and (b) Training for Field-level Development Activities-- have been developed. A team of senior consultants, who have a wide range of experience in the field of research, training, and advocacy to combat trafficking of women and children, developed these modules. The modules contain situation analysis of trafficking, relevant laws and its implications, and various interventions undertaken, and finally, to get the commitments of participants to address the issue.



Courtesy: CWCS

Center for Women and Children Studies organized a training programme for the police and the community representatives on women and child rights

### **Box 12. Type of activities being done for capacity-building**

- ❖ Workshops and seminars to improve skills
- ❖ Monitoring of field activities
- ❖ Lessons-learned exercises
- ❖ Development of training modules
- ❖ Mapping exercise

### **Box 13. Example of mapping exercise by CWCS**

The CWCS conducted a mapping exercise of missing, kidnapping, and trafficking of children and women. It is based on news clippings for a period of ten years (1990-1999). Numbers, routes, and rescued persons from both within and outside the country were documented, and data were presented in maps, indicating the numbers and districts from where children and women are missing, kidnapped, and trafficked during the ten-year period.

#### **12.4. Prosecution and Protection**

Bangladesh has ratified many international laws and conventions. For example, Bangladesh has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women with Reservations of Article 2, 13(a) and 16.1 (9c) and 16.1 and Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Bangladesh has also played an effective role at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 and endorsed the Plan of Action. In addition, in recent years, a number of laws have been promulgated, and various policies and regulations have been approved to ensure equal rights of women in all spheres of life and also to eliminate violence against them. According to Article 34.1 of the Constitution of Bangladesh, "All forms of forced labour are prohibited and any contravention of this provision shall be an offense punishable in accordance with law." Other available statutes with direct implication to trafficking of women and children are: (1) The Penal Code 1860, (2) The Children (Pledging of Labour) Act 1933, (3) The Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act, 1933, (4) The Children Act 1974, (5) The Cruelty to Women (Deterrent Punishment) Ordinance, 1983, (6) The Women and Children Repression (Special Provision) Act 1995 (Resistance Against Trafficking in Women & Children in South Asia, 1997), and (7) Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000. Nevertheless, it is also widely acknowledged that no sufficient steps have been taken to ensure the effective implementation of these laws to protect women and children from trafficking. Therefore, it is important for the policy-makers to distinguish between elimination of violence against women and also combating the trafficking of women and children (Annexure C).

Currently, the government has undertaken a project called "Child Development: Coordinated Programme to Combat Child Trafficking." The programme would start as a pilot project in 12-15 high-risk areas for trafficking. The project will establish a system of multi-sectoral task forces at the national, district and upazila levels to conduct motivational programmes and support the efforts of organizations working in the areas of prevention, rescue, repatriation, and rehabilitation of trafficking victims. The project will be based at the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, and the Steering Committee will also include representatives from the Ministries of Home and Foreign Affairs, Youth, Education, Local Government, Information, Health, Labour and Manpower; and from the Police, Ansar

VDP, Bangladesh Rifles, Planning Commission, UNICEF, ILO, and NORAD. The features of the proposed pilot project are given in Box 14.

**Box 14. Features of the GoB pilot project**

- ❖ Improved coordination of different stakeholders
- ❖ Strengthening of the existing cells (units) relating to child trafficking (CT) issues
- ❖ Strengthening of the existing unit of Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
- ❖ Development of training programmes on preventive measures against child trafficking
- ❖ Institutionalization of routine training
- ❖ Creation of anti-child trafficking awareness amongst stakeholders
- ❖ Modifications of the existing laws and introduction of new laws relating to anti-child trafficking
- ❖ Practice of the existing laws by the law-enforcing agencies in a better way
- ❖ Provision of shelters for rescued children within communities
- ❖ Rescuing and repatriation of trafficked children
- ❖ Reintegration of rescued children into society

*Source: Child development: coordinated programme to combat child trafficking (pilot project). Prepared by Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Government of Bangladesh, 2000 (41).*

Summarized measures and steps, undertaken by the government, are given in Box 15.

**Box 15. Measures taken by the government**

- ❖ Endorsement and ratification of international laws and conventions
- ❖ Provision of equal opportunities for participation in economic activities
- ❖ Specific provisions within the criminal justice system
- ❖ Police intervention
- ❖ Formation of an inter-ministerial Coordination Committee
- ❖ Formulation of a special inter-ministerial programme
- ❖ Specific provisions within the criminal justice system
- ❖ Raising of awareness through media

**Box 16. Activities needed for prosecution**

- ❖ 'Watchdog' activities to monitor the legal system
- ❖ Training for legal professionals and judges
- ❖ Support to the victims to bring their cases to the courts
- ❖ Repatriation support and establishment of a system/policies to sustain these activities
- ❖ Documentation of legal procedures/approaches to educate those within the system on how to move these cases forward

Some national NGOs, e.g. BNWLA, ACD, Dhaka Ahsania Mission, UDDIPAN, Srizony, Proshanti, Mukti, etc., have been working in rescue, repatriation, and rehabilitation. Some NGOs manage shelter-home for both male and female rescued victims. To some extent they help the victims to get reintegrated with the society by helping them to get job and also in locating their family and relatives. The BNWLA is a leading organization involved in repatriation, rehabilitation, and reintegration. In recent months, the Association has done some commendable work in the rescue and repatriation of trafficked women and children. Examples of rescue and repatriation and also helping the police to arrest one trafficker are given below.

#### **12.4.1. Rescue**

Rescue is a thorny issue, and has its limitations and unacceptability, largely due to the attitude and violent behaviour of the law-enforcing agencies. Newspapers often carry items about “many women and children are rescued by the police”, but what happens to the rescued persons is largely unknown. These rescue processes are often violent, aggressive, and ‘male-dominated’ (42). Sometimes the minors are sent to the state-run remand homes or an NGO shelter. Most are unable to go back home because of a whole series of problems, and when they are released they are again at risk of being picked up by the traffickers.

##### **Case Study 13. Example of rescue**

On 10 November 1996, the BNWLA received information about the activities of child traffickers. The information was immediately passed onto the Special Branch of the city police. The lawyers of BNWLA along with Special Branch officers went to the spot, but the initial attempt to apprehend the traffickers failed as the local people were non-cooperative. The two children were actually on their way to Duabi to be employed as camel jockeys. The BNWLA lawyers and the police learned that two children were actually taken to Tongi by one Nargis. The BNWLA faced an obstacle as the police of Gulshan thana needed permission to enter Tongi thana area. After completing the formalities, the Gulshan police entered Tongi but Nargis had fled with both the kids, but the police was able to arrest another woman named Anwara Begum, a member of the trafficking ring. The investigation team found that several children were trafficked by Anwara Begum. The team rescued two boys from her custody. Later, two other boys were also found near a slum where Nargis had abandoned them. As a follow-up action, the BNWLA lawyers had opposed the bail petition of traffickers, and the remand was granted under section 12 of the Women and Children Repression (Special Provision) Act, 1995 (39).

##### **Case Study 14. Example of a rescue and arrest of a notorious trafficker**

The BNWLA repatriated 10 boys from India. Once the boys are taken across the border, their names are changed and they travel to Duabi via India with their new names. In this way one notorious trafficker Fitu Miah took seven boys from village Hangamy and Raninagar under the Sibganj Police Station in the district of Chapai Nawabganj. When the boys were repatriated, the BNWLA investigated and discovered the chain of network. The alleged ringleader of child-trafficking racket Fitu Miah was identified and arrested with the help of the police. Fitu Miah collected children openly, but the police did not act. Fitu Miah used to say that give me a boy weighing below 15 kilos, he will bring 2,000 Taka per month for you (39).

**12.4.2. Rehabilitation**

Rehabilitation is the most challenging activity that requires a pragmatic programme of action to restore the trafficked women and girls in their social life. Various papers have mentioned the need of rehabilitation programmes with proper employment opportunities. However, the prevailing norms and value systems of our society do not easily accept the returnees in family and social life.



Courtesy: Mr. Fakrul Alam, ICDDR,B

Traffic victims watching TV at the shelter home of BNWLA



Courtesy: BNWLA

Traffic victims at the BNWLA shelter home

### 12.4.3. Repatriation

'Repatriation' means voluntary return to the country of origin of the person subjected to trafficking across international frontiers. The minors have no choice, and they have to be taken back to their place of origin, but an adult women has the right to choose to stay in the country if she so wishes. The choice of women is not even considered, because the focus has always been to protect the interest of state over and above the interest of women.

#### **Case Study 15. An example of unsuccessful repatriation**

A 15-16-year old girl came to Dhaka with her grandmother. One day she had a fight with her grandmother and left the house. She was found near New Market with physical and mental trauma.

The BNWLA team rescued her. She slowly recovered from that condition. The BNWLA counsellor took her back to her home. Her mother was angry and did not want to talk to her daughter. Considering the situation, the daughter asked the counsellor to take her back to the shelter home. Then suddenly the mother started to get concerned and asked where was her daughter all these days, etc. She also shared information regarding her family and husband. She also informed that their financial condition is so poor that it would be difficult for her to sustain the daughter. However, the counsellor convinced the mother to keep her daughter for few days. After few days, the girl was back to the shelter home in Dhaka with a relative. Neither her father nor her mother wanted to take her responsibility.

### 12.4.4. Reintegration

'Reintegration' means social and economic integration acknowledging her right to self-determination. It is a better alternative to rehabilitation and implies a far less judgmental. Most importantly, it incorporates the notion of social acceptance and the reclaiming of dignity for women. However, often the societies become judgemental in re-integrating the victims into the society.

#### **Box 17. Problems of rehabilitation, repatriation, and reintegration**

There are many problems in rehabilitating and reintegrating the trafficked victims as reported by the BNWLA which are stated below:

- ❖ The rescued victims cannot recall their name of native village, upazila, and/or district properly. They cannot even remember the name of their parents
- ❖ Neither they remember their mother tongue nor they could learn the language of the new country (The country where they have been trafficked to)
- ❖ Cost of repatriation is difficult to manage or sometimes it is impossible to manage
- ❖ Stigma at the family and social level
- ❖ Bureaucratic (administrative) complexity in terms of repatriation
- ❖ The right address and documents are sometimes unavailable from the place they were rescued and which are also very inadequate to prove their citizenship
- ❖ The communication of the rescuing staff between the sending and the receiving countries is very weak and not helpful for rescue operation
- ❖ There are no laws regarding repatriation of trafficked victims



Courtesy: BNWLA

Boys at the shelter home receiving non-formal education

### 12.5. Anti-trafficking Prevention Efforts

Most NGOs which work on anti-trafficking-prevention activities have awareness-raising activities. The important NGOs working in these fields are BNWLA, CWCS, Resource Bangladesh, Theatre Centre for Social Development (TCSD), BITA, UDDIPAN, PROSHIKA, and UBINIG (Annexure D).



Courtesy: BNWLA

Leaders of Network Against Oppression of Women at a gathering against trafficking



Courtesy: Proshika

Women activists of India and Bangladesh demonstrating against trafficking in border area of Hili, Dinajpur

**The CWCS** is involved in advocacy and awareness-raising to combat trafficking of women and children at the local, national, regional and international levels. In recent years, campaigns and advocacy programmes with local government agencies, NGOs, community leaders, police, journalists, teachers, doctors, lawyers, parents, guardians, adolescents, and children and particularly with community people at the grassroots level were undertaken. The CWCS also acts as a pressure group to lobby with the policy-planners and decision-makers. It organized awareness-raising workshop and dialogues and also police training. The description of these activities carried out by CWCS is given in Box 18 and 19.

#### **Box 18. Example of advocacy and awareness-raising activity**

As part of the advocacy programme of CWCS, a series of Awareness-raising Workshops and Dialogues were organized in collaboration with the TWB member organizations. With the collaboration of TWB organizations, the CWCS has organized 15 upazila-level two-day campaign workshops in traffic-prone areas of the country. The first day of the campaign workshop at the community level started with introducing CWCS and TWB followed by experience-sharing by the participants as individual and representatives of organizations on the issues of trafficking of women and children. The Awareness-raising Campaign Workshops aimed at bringing together relevant persons working at the upazila administrative units, professionals, and NGOs who are committed to combat trafficking in their respective areas. At the national level, the CWCS organized a one-day dialogue with journalists on “Combating Trafficking in Women and Children: Role of Media in Creating Awareness”, and another two-day dialogue with the police officials was organized at Jessore and Khustia.

### Box 19. Example of police training

The CWCS conducted training sessions with the police on the issue of trafficking of women and children. It was part of its pilot project for police training and community sensitization on rights of women and children. Two case studies on trafficking of women and missing children who were assumed to have been trafficked were presented based on which the police did role plays and were subsequently divided into groups to work on police action and identified gaps/loopholes in the existing laws relating to this issue. It was followed by the community sensitization workshop on the same issues with members of the community to suggest their roles/responsibilities and to identify the difficulties in implementing the existing laws. Four training sessions were conducted with the police officials and members of the community from all 11 upazilas of Bogra.

**The BNWLA**, one of the leading organizations, works on the area of prevention of trafficking. An example of how public awareness can prevent trafficking is given below.



BNWLA organized an awareness-raising campaign against trafficking in border area

### Box 20. Example of how public awareness can prevent trafficking

The BNWLA public-awareness meeting in the premises of local NGO, known as Own Village Development (OVA), with a slogan that awareness-raising is the first and foremost prerequisite of preventing trafficking. When the local people rescued five young women and informed the police, they did not respond. The police station wanted a written complaint. Then the local people considered the matter and were able to put the traffickers under bar with the help of OVA and local Pourashava Chairman. All the five rescued women were from the Bahra village under Bochagang thana of Dinajpur district.



A group of women waiting to go back home, returning from India

**PROSHIKA**, one of the largest national NGOs in Bangladesh, purports that the root cause of trafficking is poverty and patriarchal ideology. According to them, patriarchal ideology has constructed the mindset of the people in such a way that women are treated as a 'commodity' who can be sold and bought. PROSHIKA believes that, in general, people are not aware of trafficking, and even the issues relating to trafficking of women and children have not been seriously considered at the individual and organizational levels. Due to lack of this seriousness, the problem did not get priority. PROSHIKA does not have a separate programme on combating trafficking. They treat this as a part of their activities against women's oppression. The main thrust of PROSHIKA's approach is to treat trafficking as part of the problem of women's oppression and to mitigate it through training, conscientization, and advocacy. One recent example of this approach was organizing a *samabesh* (gathering) of people, mostly women, near the Hili Checkpost in Dinajpur and the group of people from the other side of the border. The purpose of this *samabesh* was to create awareness among people of the border area for resisting trafficking. A brief description of the *samabesh* from PROSHIKA's source is given in Box 21.



Courtesy: Proshika

Community people at a gathering against trafficking organized by Network Against Oppression of Women

#### **Box 21. Example of awareness-raising at Hili Samabesh**

The territorial division has not made the condition of the poor people of one country better than those on the other side of the barbed wire fence. They are equally backward. This is more true of women. Everyday thousands of women are being oppressed and humiliated on both sides of the border. Poor women from Bangladesh are crossing the border posing as wives of other people, sometimes looking for jobs, and sometimes even trying to sell their bodies. It is now being increasingly felt that the Hili border should no more be used as a centre for trafficking of women. To stop Hili being used as a springboard for this dirty trade, a *samabesh* of men and women from both the sides of the border was organized on 8 March 2000 by a PROSHIKA-facilitated network called Network Against Oppression of Women (NAOW). There were speeches and slogans calling for united efforts to stop trafficking. At one stage, members of the border security force allowed a group of 20 women to cross the border from the Bangladeshi side and join their friends on the other side of the border. They together sang against all the warmongers and promised to unite. All those present pledged to stop trafficking.

**UBINIG** looks at the trafficking problem from a different angle. They consider trafficking a kind of migration, but are concerned about the violence and illegal activities associated with it. UBINIG believes that women are being trafficked for different purposes, such as forced labour, domestic worker, and begging, and sometimes are allured through marriage. The whole process of trafficking is linked with violence, which should be stopped. UBINIG also views the problem of trafficking of women differently from trafficking of children. UBINIG believes that when the children are being trafficked they do not have any opinion on choosing any job, whereas women do this consciously and have the freedom to choose an occupation. It was thought that the border areas of Bangladesh are only shopping spots where unscrupulous persons assembled women from different parts of the country to be trafficked to other side of the border. It was expressed by one respondent from UBINIG that people lack livelihood and food security. If one can provide livelihood and food security, people will not seek other options, such as choosing to search for a job and livelihood.

UDDIPAN, TCSD, BITA, and the Resource Bangladesh have been continuing their efforts to raise awareness among the mass people through local committees, Children Congress, and drama campaign. Recently, the TCSD and the Resource Bangladesh have organized anti- trafficking campaign in the border areas of Chapai Nawabganj. However, for elimination of the trafficking problems, anti-trafficking prevention activities, such as launching of national media campaign, and school-based programmes, are very crucial.

**Box 22. Further prevention activities need to be done**

- ❖ Development and testing of materials for a national campaign (all media)
- ❖ Launching of this media campaign
- ❖ Conducting awareness-raising workshops/meetings (all levels)
- ❖ Launching of school-based programme
- ❖ Establishment of mobile campaign units

### **13. Conclusions**

In recent years, the volume of trafficking of women and children as a problem has acquired global dimensions. For South Asian countries, the issue is already considered a serious regional problem that demands a concerted response. Accordingly, trafficking was high on the agenda of the Ninth Summit of SAARC heads of governments held in the Maldives in 1997.

The trafficking issue is closely linked with the human rights issue with important ramifications in the area of health, law-enforcing, and socioeconomic development in general. Poverty, attitudes toward women and deeply-entrenched gender discrimination, unemployment, cultural norms about marriage, well-organized national and international networks of traffickers, and weak law-enforcing agencies are few critical factors relating to trafficking of women and children in Bangladesh.

This criminal activity cannot be addressed through tougher laws alone. Several legislations, including the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000, already provide penalties for violence against women and children, including trafficking and kidnapping. Yet, implementation of these legislations remains a formidable challenge.

This review found that many research reports are based on information gathered through anecdotes from secondary analysis and unreliable data. The review also quoted extensively from a few good reports that collected field information and described the trafficking practices and mapped out the trafficking routes.

Although more studies need to be conducted to shed light on trafficking antecedents, there are already several reports documenting the trafficking issues in Bangladesh. There is a need for studies that can generate first-hand information on social, economic, political and health implications of the problem. It is critical also to identify the current and potential roles of the government and NGOs and also in what ways civil society contributes to this immoral practice. Recommendations from these reports often fall within the categories listed below.

### **13.1. Awareness-raising Programme**

Recent studies indicate that advocacy efforts are needed to make people aware of trafficking and its consequences (8). Some reports suggest that appropriate messages linking the issue of trafficking and HIV/AIDS, for example, should be developed and popularized through song, drama, or any other simple media. It has also been suggested that publicity is made in public places, such as bus terminals, train stations, and ferry ghats. Another suggestion is for grassroots-level community mobilization to combat trafficking by, for example, involving law students in high-risk trafficking areas where they could conduct paralegal training for the community people or organize free mobile legal clinics (1).

### **13.2. Monitoring and Support Services**

All reports on trafficking indicate the need to set up a strong system of legal response to this criminal activity. A special police unit or a commission has been suggested to monitor and provide prompt police action and legal aid, as well as ensuring safe protection to victims (1,2).

The large networks of NGOs in Bangladesh and in the region that are active and have gained experience on the trafficking issue cannot be ignored. These NGOs and their established networks can contribute significantly to the initiative for conducting research and in the design of new activities to combat trafficking, rehabilitate victims, and provide appropriate shelter to people fleeing from traffickers. In addition to this, the NGOs may create a databank on the trafficking routes, transit points, modes of trafficking, methods of recruitment, and other relevant issues, and may encourage and facilitate the sharing of data among the government, police, and media.

The implementation of the government-coordinated programme to combat child trafficking represents a good opportunity to learn how to monitor the problem through a multisector mechanism at various levels and how to address relevant issues in high-risk localities.

The review of the literature has also led to some suggestions for greater involvement of trafficked victims themselves, so that their opinions, needs, and knowledge are incorporated on efforts aimed at suppressing of trafficking. Reports also argue for a greater emphasis on rehabilitation of trafficked victims, including counselling services, to help them overcome psychological trauma and skill training to enable them to adopt different roles in society (1).

### **13.3. Regional Approach**

Given the regional nature of trafficking and the international implications of this problem, country reports on the nature, magnitude, trends, and forms of trafficking are needed from the SAARC countries. The advantage of establishing cross-regional teams and resource centres to help identify the dynamics of trafficking, both from local and regional perspectives, has also been highlighted in reports included in this review (1,2).

A uniform plan of action on the issue of trafficking of women and children involving the governments and NGOs of the region needs to be developed, so that a coordinated approach toward the conviction of traffickers is possible (Interview with Ishrat Shamim). This regional approach implies that there is a need to develop a legal framework to ensure arrest, conviction, and extradition of traffickers and to enable prosecution of traffickers and abusers even when crimes are committed in foreign soil (2). In Box 23 a list of future research agenda on trafficking of women and children in Bangladesh has been provided.

**Box 23. Possible areas of future research**

- ❖ Historical evolution of trafficking activities
- ❖ Strategies for raising community awareness in high-risk areas
- ❖ Development of monitoring systems volume of trafficking, routes, purpose, and destinations
- ❖ Evaluations of NGO interventions to prevent trafficking and rehabilitate victims
- ❖ Strategies to improve coordination among different sectors and to promote government and NGO collaboration
- ❖ The underlying dynamics of trafficking: family and community perceptions
- ❖ Strengthening of law-enforcing agencies
- ❖ Effect of globalization on trafficking
- ❖ Economics of trafficking: effect on development activities in high-risk areas
- ❖ Health implications: local, national, and international
- ❖ Trafficking and prostitution
- ❖ Rescued women and children
- ❖ Lessons learnt from various interventions

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## Persons Interviewed

Name of person	Organization
Mr. Mominul Islam Advocate Shirin Nahar Ms Shaila Tasmina Mahbub Anisa A Khan Rokeya Alamgir	Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association
Natasha Ahmed Coordinator	Policy Research for Development Alternative (UBINIG)
Professor Ishrat Shamim President	Centre for Women and Children Studies
Ms Fowzia Khondoker Head, Gender Cell	PROSHIKA
Ms Hameeda Hossain Director	Ain O Salish Kendra
Mr. Matt Friedman Program Coordinator	Population, Health and Nutrition Team, USAID
Convicted traffickers	Dhaka and Jessore Jails
Trafficked victims	Shelter home of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association

## Activities of Different Organizations

Name of organization	Activities									
	Awareness	Research	Action programme			Advocacy	Media participation	Networking	Training and development of IEC materials	Legal support
			Investigation	Rescue	Rehabilitation/reintegration					
Action Against Child Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children	✓	✓				✓			✓	
Ain o Salish Kendro						✓				
Aparajeyo Bangladesh	✓									
Assistance for Slum Dwellers	✓									
Association for Community Development	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Association for Integrated Development Comilla	✓									
Bangladesh Institute of Theatre Arts	✓									
Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Bangladesh Palli Unnayan Shangstha	✓		✓							
Bangladesh Shishu Adhiker Forum	✓						✓	✓	✓	
Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights	✓			✓			✓			
Benapole Press Club							✓			
Center for Women and Children Studies	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	
Chhinomul Shishu Kishore Shangstha	Un-known									
Christian Commission For Development in Bangladesh	✓									
Come to Work	✓									
Community Participation and Development	✓				✓				✓	
Dhaka Ahsania Mission	✓			✓		✓			✓	
Department of Geography, University of Dhaka	M.Phil. Research									
Gono Jagoron Kendro	✓		✓							
Gono Shahajjo Shangstha	Un-known									
Grameen Unnayan Shangstha	✓									
Human Rights Journalists Forum of Bangladesh	✓	✓				✓	✓			
Integreted Community and Industrial Development Initiative	✓	✓				✓		✓	✓	
Kapotakkho	✓				✓					
Karmojibi Kallayn Shangstha					✓					

Name of organization	Activities									
	Awareness	Research	Action programme			Advocacy	Media participation	Networking	Training and development of IEC materials	Legal support
			Investigation	Rescue	Rehabilitation/reintegration					
Manob Sheba Shangstha	✓									
MUKTI	✓				✓					
Nari Kallayn Samity	✓									
Nari Maitree	✓					✓				
Nari Unnayan Shakti	✓				✓					
Nikushimaz Samaj Kallayn Protishthan	✓				✓					
Prodipon	✓									
Proshanti				✓	✓					
Resource Bangladesh	✓					✓				
Chhinnomul Mohila Samity	✓				✓					
Society for Under-Preveleged Families	✓									
Srizony	✓				✓					
UBINIG		✓				✓		✓		
UCEP	Un-known									
UDDIPAN	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Voluntary Paribar Kallayn Association	✓									
Hotline Bangladesh	✓				✓					
Map Photo Agency Limited							✓			

**Source:** Shamim I, editor. *Proceedings of the Fact-finding Meeting and the National Workshop on Trafficking in Women and Children*. Dhaka: Center for Women and Children Studies, 1997 (18).

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**National Laws, Policies, and International Instruments Relating to  
Trafficking of Women and Children**

*Source: Prof. Ishrat Shamim  
President  
Centre for Women and Children Studies*

**National Laws**

The issue of trafficking of women and especially of children has been incorporated in various acts and laws that have been enacted from time to time. **The Penal Code of 1860**, modified in 1991, contains provisions of kidnapping, abduction, slavery, and forced labour. The Penal Code specifies two kinds of kidnapping from Bangladesh and kidnapping from lawful guardian (Section 359 of the Penal Code). The law relating to kidnapping from Bangladesh is contained in Section 360 of the Code, which lays down that:

*Whoever conveys any person beyond the limits of Bangladesh without the consent of that person or of some persons legally authorized consent on behalf of that person, is said to kidnap that person from Bangladesh.*

From the above, two essential ingredients of kidnapping ensure conveying of any person beyond the border limits of Bangladesh, and such conveying must be without the consent of that person or of some persons legally authorized to give consent on behalf of that person.

The law relating to kidnapping from lawful guardian is contained in Section 361 which lays down that:

*Whoever takes or entices any minor under fourteen years of age, if a male, or under sixteen years of age, if a female, or any person of unsound mind, out of the keeping of the lawful guardian of such minor or person of unsound mind, without the consent of such guardian, is said to kidnap such minor or person from lawful guardian,*

From the above, four distinct and essential ingredients of kidnapping are evident:

- Taking or enticing away a minor or a person of unsound mind;
- Such minor must be under fourteen years of age, if a male, or under sixteen years of age, if a female;
- The taking or enticing must be out of the keeping of the lawful guardian of such minor or person of unsound mind; and
- Such taking or enticing must be without the consent of such guardian.

The punishment of kidnapping in each case is imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to seven years, and shall be liable to fine (Section 363 of the Penal Code).

On the other hand,

*Whoever by force compels, or by any deceitful means induces any person to go from any place is said to abduct that person.*

Besides these two kinds of kidnapping, there are some aggravated forms of the offences of kidnapping:

- Kidnapping or abduction with intent to murder: The punishment in such case is transportation for life or rigorous imprisonment for ten years and fine (Section 364).
- Kidnapping or abduction of a child under the age of ten: The punishment in such case is death or transportation for life or rigorous imprisonment for fourteen years but not less than seven years (Section 364A).

- Kidnapping or abduction with intent secretly or wrongly to confine a person: The punishment in such case is imprisonment of either description for seven years and fine (Section 365).
- Kidnapping, abducting or inducing a woman (which includes girl child) to compel her to marry any person against her will, or to force or seduce her to elicit intercourse: The punishment in such case is imprisonment of either description for ten years and fine (Section 366).
- Kidnapping or abducting in order to subject a person to grievous hurt, slavery or unnatural lust: The punishment in such case is imprisonment of either description for ten years and fine (Section 367).
- Kidnapping a child under 10 years with intent to steal moveable property from the person of such child. The punishment in such case is imprisonment of either description for seven years and fine (Section 369).

In addition, **Section 370 of the Penal Code** relates to slavery,

*Whoever imports, exports, removes, buys, sells or disposes of any person as a slave..... shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for seven years and fine.*

The following **Section 372** relates,

*To sell, and hire of minors under the age of eighteen for prostitution or for other purposes shall be punishable for ten years and fine.*

Although the Penal Code deals with some major aspects of kidnapping, abducting, and slavery, one of the oldest act on the problem is still the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act of 1933 which lays more emphasis on prostitution than on trafficking. However, procreation is dealt with in Section 9 which states,

*Any person who induces a female to go from any place with intent that she may, for the purposes of prostitution, become the inmate of, or frequent a brothel, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine which extend to three years, or with fine which may extend to one thousand taka, or with bolt, and, if a male person, shall also be liable to whipping (The Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act, 1933).*

In view of the increasing incidence of trafficking in women and children, the government has enacted the **Women and Children Oppression (Special Provision) Act, 1995** which provides penalties for violence against women and children, including trafficking and kidnapping. Section 8 and 9 of the Act deal with the penalty of trafficking, kidnapping, and abduction which are:

#### **Section 8. Penalty for Trafficking in Women**

(1) Whoever imports, exports, buys or sells, or lets to hire or otherwise disposes of any woman with the intention of using that woman in prostitution or using for illicit intercourse or for any unlawful or immoral purpose, shall be punished with life imprisonment, and shall also be liable to fine.

### **Explanation 1**

When a woman is sold, let for hire or otherwise disposed of to a prostitute or to any person who keeps or manages a brothel, the person who had disposed of that woman, until contrary is proved, be deemed to have sold or disposed of that woman for using in prostitution.

### **Explanation 2**

Any prostitute, or any person keeping or managing a brothel who buys, hires or otherwise obtains possession of a woman shall, until the contrary is proved, be deemed to have obtained that woman for prostitution.

(2) When a person keeps a woman in his possession or puts under his custody for prostitution or illicit intercourse or import or exports or lets to hire or otherwise disposes of any woman for any unlawful purpose, shall be punished with rigorous imprisonment for fourteen years, and shall also be liable to fine.

### **Section 9. Penalty for Kidnapping and Abduction**

Whoever kidnaps or abducts any women:

- (a) With intent that such women shall be employed or used for the purpose of prostitution or for any unlawful or immoral purpose;
- (b) With intent that such women may be compelled to marry any person against her will; or
- (c) In order that such women may be forced or seduced to illicit intercourse shall be punished with life imprisonment or rigorous imprisonment for ten years but not less than seven years, and shall also be liable to fine.

### **Section 12. Penalty for Trafficking in Children**

Whoever exports, imports, sells or obtains possession of any child with intent to export, import or sell that child or that child is found in possession of any person for such purposes shall be punished with death sentence, or life imprisonment.

The above-mentioned law has been repealed and a new law titled Women and Child Repression Prevention Act, 2000, was enacted with the provisions of more stringent punishment.

Women and Child Repression Prevention Act, 2000

### **Section 5. Punishment for Trafficking in Women**

- Whoever brings from abroad or sends or traffics abroad, or buys or sells, or lets to hire or otherwise disposes of any women with the intention of using that women in prostitution or using for illicit intercourse or for any unlawful or immortal purpose, or for such a purpose keeps a woman in his possession, care or custody shall be punished with death sentence or life imprisonment maximum 20 years but minimum 10 years and in addition be liable to a monetary fine.
- If any women is sold, hired or disposed of in any of her way to a prostitute or to any person who keeps or manages a brothel then the person who has disposed of her in that way, unless proven otherwise will be thought to have sold or disposed of the women for prostitution shall be punished according to the above Sub-Section (1).
- Whoever keeps or manages a brothel buys or hires or gets in their possession by any other way or keeps in their custody any women, then unless proved otherwise, will be thought to have brought, hired or kept in their possession for use in prostitution shall be punishable in accordance with the above Sub-Section (1).

### **Section 6. Trafficking in Children**

- Whoever brings from abroad, sends or traffics abroad or buys or sells or otherwise keeps a child in his/her possession, care or custody with the intention of using the child for any unlawful or immoral purpose shall be punishable with death sentence or life imprisonment and shall also be liable for fine.
- Whoever steals a newborn baby from hospital, child or maternity hospital, nursing home, clinic etc., or from the custody of concerned guardian shall be punishable in accordance with Sub-Section (1).

### **Section 7. Punishment for Kidnapping and Abduction of Women and Children**

Whoever kidnaps or abducts any woman and child except with the intention of using them for any unlawful purpose mentioned in Section 5 shall be punished with life imprisonment or rigorous imprisonment for at least fourteen years and shall also, in addition to that, be liable to monetary fine.

**The Children Act 1974** especially deals with, among other things, special offences in respect of children where the penalty for allowing child to be in brothel and causing or encouraging seduction is given clearly:

- Whoever allows or permits a child over the age of four years to reside in or frequently to go to a brothel shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine which may extend to taka one thousand, or with both; and
- Whoever having the actual charge of, or control over, a girl under the age of sixteen years causes or encourages the seduction or prostitution of that girl or causes or encourages any person other than her husband to have sexual intercourse with her shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine which may extend to taka one thousand, or with both.

### **National Women Development Policy**

This issue has also been highlighted in the National Women Development Policy giving emphasis on the legal provisions, especially the implementation of the laws.

- Implement the laws strictly against early marriage, girl child rape, repression, trafficking, and prostitution
- Enact and ensure stringent enforcement of laws against early marriage, rape of girl child, oppression, trafficking, and prostitution
- Combat trafficking and rehabilitate the victims
- Simplify the trial system to dispose of the cases relating to women and child repression and trafficking cases within 6 months.

## International Instruments and Conventions

### Universal Declaration of Human Rights

**Article 4** states that:

***No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.***

### Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (Approved by the General Assembly resolution 317(iv) of 2 December 1949)

**Article 1** states that:

The Parties to the present Convention agree to punish any person who, to gratify the passions of another:

- Procures, entices or leads away, for purpose of prostitution, another person, even with the consent of that person;
- Exploits the prostitution of another person, even with the consent of that person.

### Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

**Article 35** states that Parties shall take all appropriate national, bilateral, multilateral measures to prevent the abduction of, the sale of or traffic in children for any purposes or in any form.

**Article 36** states that Parties shall protect the child against all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare.

**Article 37** states that Parties shall ensure that:

- No child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Neither capital punishment nor life imprisonment without possibility of release shall be imposed for offences committed by persons below eighteen years old.
- No child shall be deprived of his or her liberty.

### Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Violence against Women (CEDAW)

**Article 6** states that Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women.

## The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, 1995

### Strategic Objective D.3

Eliminate trafficking in women and assist victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking.

#### **Action to be taken**

130. By governments of countries of origin, transit and destination, regional and international organizations, as appropriate:

- (a) Consider the ratification and enforcement of international conventions on trafficking in persons and on slavery;
- (b) Take appropriate measures to address the root factors, including external factors, that encourage trafficking in women and girls for prostitution and other forms of commercialized sex, forced marriages, and forced labour to eliminate trafficking in women, including by strengthening existing legislation with a view to providing better protection of the rights of women and girls and to punishing the perpetrators, through both criminal and civil measures;
- (c) Step up cooperation and concerted action by all relevant law-enforcement authorities and institutions with a view to dismantling national, regional and international networks in trafficking;
- (d) Allocate resources to provide comprehensive programmes designed to heal and rehabilitate into society the victims of trafficking, including through job training, legal assistance, and confidential

healthcare, and take measures to cooperate with non-government organizations to provide for the social, medical and psychological care of the victims of trafficking;

- (e) Develop educational and training programmes and policies and consider enacting legislation aimed at preventing sex tourism and trafficking, giving special emphasis to the protection of young women and children.

### **Strategic Objective L.7**

#### **Eradicate Violence against the Girl Child**

##### ***Actions to be taken***

283. By governments and, as appropriate, international and non-government organizations:

- (a) Take effective actions and measures to enact and enforce legislation to protect the safety and security of girls from all forms of violence at work, including training programmes and support programmes, and take measures to eliminate incidents of sexual harassment of girls in educational and other institutions;
- (b) Take appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the girl child, in the household and in society, from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse;
- (c) Undertake gender sensitization training for those involved in healing and rehabilitation and other assistance programmes for girls who are victims of violence and promote programmes of information, support, and training for such girls;
- (d) Enact and enforce legislation protecting girls from all forms of violence, including female infanticide and prenatal sex selection, genital mutilation, incest, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, child prostitution and child pornography, and develop age-appropriate safe and confidential programmes and medical, social and psychological support services to assist girls who are subjected to violence.

## **World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, 1996**

### **The Commitment**

12. The World Congress reiterates its commitment to the rights of the child, bearing in mind the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and calls upon all States in cooperation with national and international organisations and civil society to:
  - Criminalize the commercial sexual exploitation of children, as well as other forms of sexual exploitation of children, and condemn and penalize all those offenders involved, whether local or foreign while ensuring that the child victims of this practice are not penalized;
  - Enforce laws, policies, and programmes to protect children from commercial sexual exploitation and strengthen communication and cooperation between law-enforcement authorities;
  - Promote adoption, implementation, and dissemination of laws, policies, and programmes supported by relevant regional, national and local mechanisms against the commercial sexual exploitation of children;
  - Develop and implement comprehensive gender-sensitive plans and programmes to prevent the commercial sexual exploitation of children, to protect and assist the child victims and to facilitate their recovery and reintegration into society.

### ***ILO Recommendation 190, 1999***

Recommendations concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor, 1999

12. Members should provide that the following worst forms of child labour are criminal offences:
  - (a) All forms of slavery or practices to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom, and forced or compulsory labour;
  - (b) The use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances.

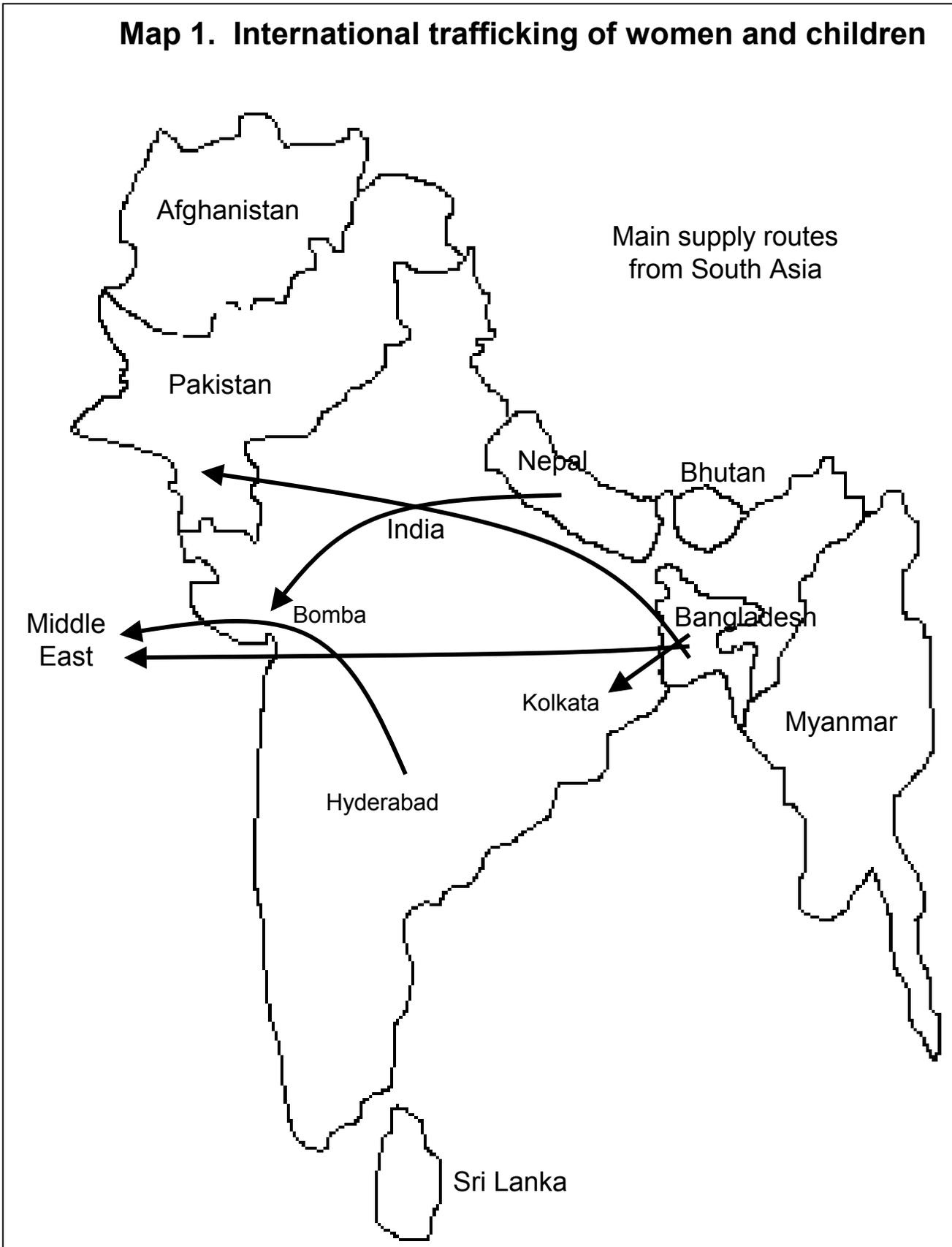
However, the implementation of the above national laws and policy is questionable in the present state of trafficking in women and children mainly due to the fact that trafficking is a regional problem, involving different countries. As such it has to be solved regionally, But so far there had been no uniform law which has been accepted by the countries involved in slavery and trafficking of women and children in the region, especially the sending and receiving countries.

## Geographical Location of Organizations Working on Trafficking

Name of organization	Divisions					
	Dhaka	Chittagon g	Rajshah i	Khulna	Barisal	Sylhet
UBINIG	1					
Action Against Child Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children (ATSEC)	1					
Centre for Women and Children Studies (CWCS)	1					
Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association	4		2	1		
UDDIPAN	2	2		1	1	
Bangladesh Institute of Theatre Arts		1				
Resource Bangladesh	1					
Bangladesh Shishu Adhiker Forum	1					
Association for Community Development (ACD)			4			
Society for Under-Preveleged Families	1					
Nari Maitree	2					
Integreted Community and Industrial Development Initiative (INCIDIN)	1					
Community Participation and Development (CPD)	1					
Karmojibi Kallayn Shangstha (KKS)	1					
Association for integrated Development, Comilla		1				
Aparajeyo Bangladesh	1					
Bangladesh Palli Unnayan Shangstha				1		
Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights				2		
Benapool Press Club				1		
Christian Commission For Development in Bangladesh	36 Upazilas of 5 Divisions					
Come to Work			1			
Department of Geography, University of Dhaka	M.Phil Research					
Gono Jagoron Kendro				1		
Gramin Unnayan Shangstha				1		
Human Rights Journalist Forum of Bangladesh	1					
Kapotakkho				1		

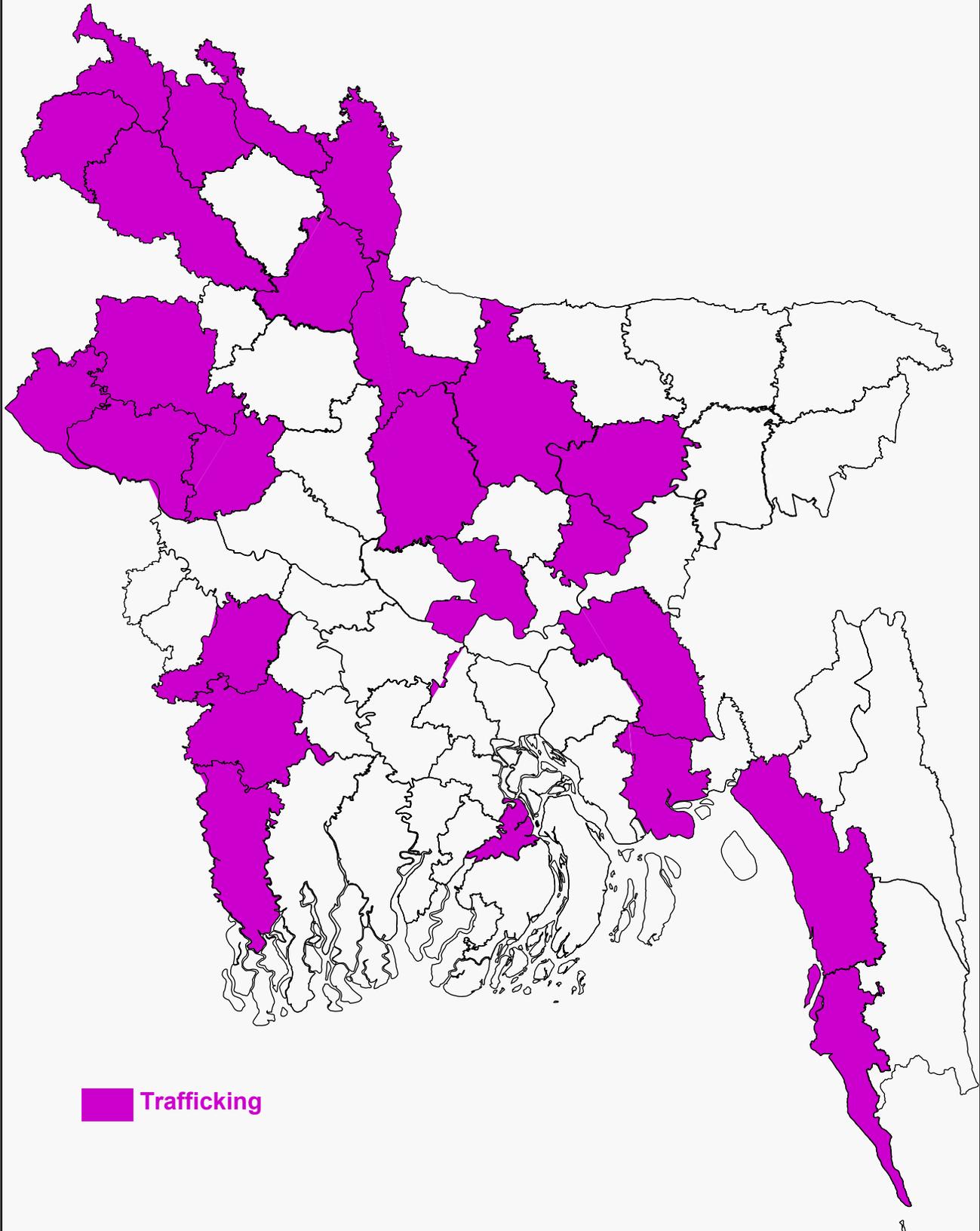
Name of organization	Divisions					
	Dhaka	Chittagon g	Rajshah i	Khulna	Barisal	Sylhet
Manob Sheba Shangstha				1		
MUKTI				1		
Nari Kallayn Samity		1				
Nari Unnayan Shakti	1		1	1		
Nikushimaz Samaj Kallayn Protishtan				1		
Prodipon	2			1		
Chhinnomul Mohila Samity			1			
Srizony				4		
Voluntary Paribar Kallayn Association	1					
Ain o Salish Kendro	1					
Assistance for Slum Dwellers	Unknown					
Dhaka Ahsania Mission	Unknown					
UCEP	Unknown					
Chhinnomul Shishu Kishore Shangstha	Unknown					
Gono Shahajjo Shangstha	Unknown					
Proshanti	Unknown					

# Map 1. International trafficking of women and children



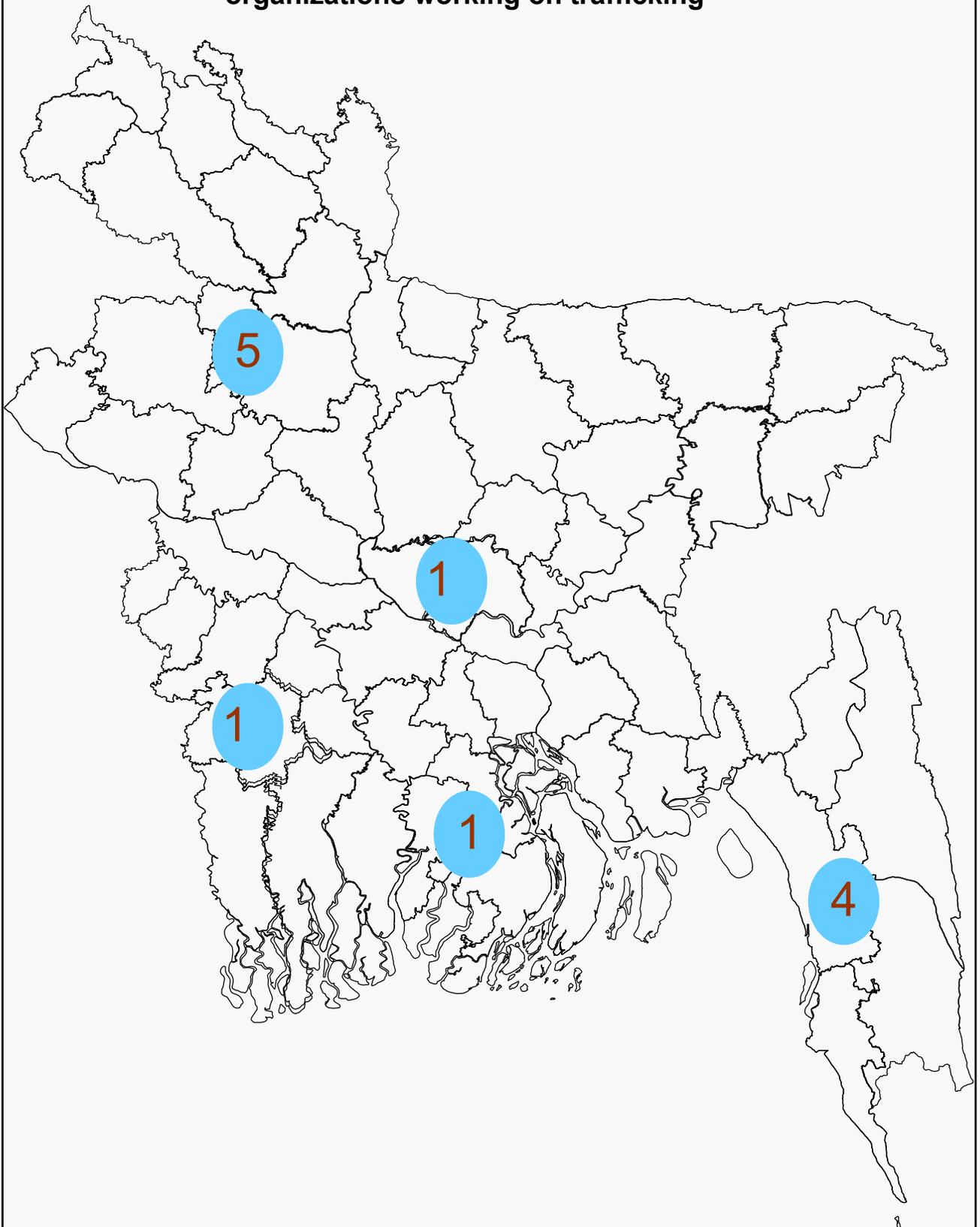
Source: Ron O'Grady. The rape of the innocent. p. 138

**Map 2. Map of Bangladesh showing areas from usually trafficking takes place**



**Source:** Multiple NGOs working on trafficking in

### Map 3. Map of Bangladesh showing geographical organizations working on trafficking



Source: Multiple NGOs working on trafficking in Bangladesh