Invisible Traffic Jam: Women and Children

By Farah Kabir

Introduction:

Sexual trafficking of women and children has received increasing attention by the government, NGOs and international communities during the 1990s. The trafficking of women and children for prostitution and forced labour is the fastest growing areas of international criminal activity. An estimated 1 to 2 million people are trafficked each year worldwide and an overwhelming of them are women and children. Trafficking is now considered as the third largest source of profits for organized crime, behind only drugs and guns, generating billion dollars annually.

Numerous studies/surveys have been done on women and children trafficking in Bangladesh in recent years. But question have been raised regarding the validity of the estimates being shown in some of the reports. However, newspaper reports and anecdotal information indicate that trafficking in women and children has been on the increase during the last decade. Widespread poverty especially feminization of poverty, massive unemployment and underemployment, frequent natural calamities, rapid globalization and spread of information technology have contributed to the increasing trend of human trafficking.

Reports of women and children being trafficked within and across national borders by organized networks is alarming. Women and children are typically recruited
from poor, rural, male dominated, patriarchal communities with low levels of education in which children are expected to contribute to the family income and have little say in decisions that affect their lives.

Trafficking is related to economics because poverty causes women and children to be more vulnerable to being trafficked. It is a human rights concern; victims of trafficking are abused and denied their freedom. It is a health issue because trafficked persons suffer from many health problems, including HIV/AIDS. Trafficking is a gender concern as well because it is related to the low status of women in society.

**Definition of Trafficking:**

The United Nations General Assembly defines trafficking as “the illicit and clandestine movements of persons across national borders with the end goal of forcing women and girl children into sexually oppressive and exploitative situations for profit of recruiters, traffickers and crime syndicates, as well as other illegal activities related to trafficking such as forced domestic labour, false marriage, clandestine employment and forced adoption.” Trafficking, according to this definition, has three distinct components of movement (across national borders), conditions of forced (sexually oppressive) labour, and third party profits arising out of movement, forced labour, or both.

The definition of trafficking in persons that has been adopted in the Vienna Protocol of the UN Crimes Commission in October, 2000 runs as follows:
(a) Definition: The definition of Trafficking in Humans may vary in subtle manners and there is no one global acceptable definition however, all definitions encompass a the idea of transportation and use of force, or coercion. All acts involving the transportation, harbouring, or sale of persons within national or international borders through coercion, force kidnapping, deception or fraud.

Professor Ishrat Shamim (1993), defined trafficking in women and children as; which include all acts involved in capture, acquisition recruitment and transposition of children within and across national borders with the intent to sell, exchange or use for any illegal purpose such as prostitution, servitude in the guise of marriage, bonded labour or sale of human organs by means of violence or threat of violence.

For the purpose of this (Vienna) protocol “trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power, or of a position of a vulnerability (1) or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation (2), forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal or organs.

(b) The recruitment, transportation, transfer,
harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered “trafficking in persons” even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in sub-paragraph (a) of this article.

(c) “child” shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.

The Vienna Protocol expands the earlier definition in the following ways:

Firstly, it defines “movement” in much greater detail. Movement, in the context of trafficking, now clearly comprise any one or more of recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring and receipt;

Secondly, the definition states, with greater clarity than before, the means those can be adopted by the traffickers to induce movement of the trafficked person. Those are the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse power, or of a position of vulnerability, or of giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another;

Thirdly, it defines a child to be one under 18 years of age; and

Finally, it defines a broader range of sites to which trafficking can lead.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), trafficking occurs when: “a migrant is illicitly engaged (recruited, kidnapped, sold etc.) and/ or moved, either within or across international border; “intermediaries (traffickers), during any part of the process, obtain economic or other profit by means of
deception, coercion and/or other forms of exploitation under conditions that violate the fundamental human rights of the migrants.

It is opined that the increase in the trafficking of women and children can be attributed as the consequence of two related phenomena in the last two decades: feminisation of poverty and feminisation of migration.

Recent trends of globalisation has seen atomised structure of the family, and the increase in demand of women and children as service providers to fulfil the demand for a vast array of personalised services in the entertainment and sex industry, labour market and marriage market. The situation has been compounded with the awareness of HIV/AIDS and myth such as that sex with a child or virgin will cure HIV/AIDS and they are less likely to be infected.

Factors contributing to Trafficking of Women and Children:

The Centre for Women and Children Studies organized a Consultation Meeting on “Trafficking and Prostitution in the Context of Violence Against Women and Children” in April 1997. The factors identified were-

- Break up of traditional joint family systems and the emergence of nuclear families
- Unequal power relations and discrimination in the family by gender and age
- Negative attitude towards the girl child
- Socialization which devalues the girl child
- Social stigmas against single, unwed, widowed girls
- Misinterpretation of religion regarding girls/women
- Child marriage, polygamy, incompatible marriages
- Pseudo marriage, easy divorce
- Dowry demand

These are some of the factors identified in the context of Bangladesh and are very likely to be true for other countries in the region. The few studies available do indicate that they are applicable in the context of India, Nepal or Pakistan.

**Causes of Rise in Trafficking:**

The reasons for the increase in trafficking are many in general, the criminal business feeds on poverty, despair, war, crisis and ignorance. The globalization of the world economy has increased the movement of people across borders, legally or illegally, especially from poorer to wealthier countries. International organized crime syndicate has taken advantage of the freer flow of people, money, goods and services to extend its own international reach.

**Other contributing factors include:**

- The continuing subordination of women in many societies, as reflected in economic, educational and work opportunity disparities between men and women. Many societies still favour sons and view girls as an economic burden. Desperate families in some of the most impoverished countries sell their
daughters to brothels or traffickers for the immediate payoff and to avoid having to pay the dowry to marry off daughters;

- The lack of opportunity and the eagerness for a better life abroad have made many women and girls especially vulnerable to entrapment traffickers. With the weakening of law enforcement, criminal organizations have grown and established themselves in the lucrative business of international trafficking;

- The high demand, worldwide, for trafficked women and children for sex tourism, sex workers, cheap sweatshop labour and domestic workers. Traffickers are encouraged by large tax-free profits and continuing income from the same victims at very low risk;

- The inadequacy of laws and law enforcement in most origin, transit, and destination countries, hampers efforts to fight trafficking. Penalties for trafficking humans for sexual exploitation are often relatively minor compared with those for other criminal activities like drug and gun trafficking;

- The priority placed on stemming illegal migration in many countries has resulted in treatment of trafficking cases as a problem of illegal migration, thus treating victims as criminals. They are accused under the Passport Act in Bangladesh. When police raid brothels, women are often detained and punished, subjected to human rights abuses in jail and swiftly deported. Few steps have been taken to provide support, health care and access to justice. Few victims dare testify against the traffickers or those who hold
them, fearing retribution for themselves and their families since most governments do not offer stays of deportation or adequate protection for witnesses;

The lack of enforcement of existing laws and provisions compounded by disinterest and in some cases even complicity of governments is another big problem. Many law enforcement agencies and governments ignore the plight of trafficking victims and downplay the scope of the trafficking problem. In some cases, police and other governmental authorities accept bribes and collude with traffickers by selling fake documentation. In addition, local police often fear reprisals from criminal gangs so they find it easier to deny knowledge of trafficking.

Notwithstanding the shortcomings the Government of Bangladesh has prioritized trafficking as one of its key social issues and pledged to combat it with urgency.

**Nature and Extent of Trafficking in Bangladesh:**

Bangladesh is an agro based economy and one of the world's poorest countries. More than 48 percent of its population lives in extreme poverty, and extreme density of population compounds this problem. With an average of 755 persons per square kilometre, Bangladesh is also one of the most densely populated countries of the world. Forty-four percent of the country's 137 million persons are under the age of 15 years. Population boom in Bangladesh has placed tremendous pressure on existing resources and together with, political and civil unrest, natural disasters and a non-vibrant economy, has resulted in landlessness and large scale external migration, both
internal as well as cross border. External migration, particularly to India, as well as smuggling of persons and goods is facilitated by the fact that Bangladesh shares an accessible and easily traversable land border with India which extends over 4,222 kms. In most cases, border crossings are illegal. Border guards from the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) are sparse, poorly equipped and under-resourced. It is reported that BDR and police in the border areas are involved in facilitating illegal migration through a well organised, underground bribe system. Research indicates that agents who traffic women and children make use of the same routes as those used for illegal migration and smuggling of goods, and that the enclaves and camps of stranded individuals may be used as collection points by trafficking and their brokers. (CWCS, 1998 Child Trafficking and the Underlying Dynamics and Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association, Survey in the area of Child and women Trafficking, 1998).

External Migration in Bangladesh to urban centres within the country as well across the border is the norm rather than an exception today. Although approximately 80 percent of the population still lives in the countryside, this profile is rapidly changing with an estimated 6 percent of migration to urban centres annually. Cross border migration has escalated enormously in the recent years. According to the Government of Bangladesh estimates in 1996-97,227,584 Bangladeshi's were legally employed overseas (Bangladesh Bureau of manpower and Employment). Export of labour overseas or private migration is becoming a mainstay of the Bangladeshi economy. It is reported that allegedly for each person who
migrates legally, several cross the border illegally. Figures of illegal border crossing is close to impossible to procure but according to the BDR records, 577 men, 399 women and 90 children were arrested on charges of illegal border crossing between January to November 1997. Once again, it is important to remember that for every person arrested; hundreds cross the border unintercepted.

Countries in the South Asian region, particularly Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan are experiencing rapid change in economic, political, demographic and labour trends. The wide diversity of labour and population profiles in the region encourages migration, either legal or illegal. Such migration is in response to the dynamics of supply and demand. Usually women and children from poorer countries like Bangladesh and Nepal are thus most at risk for exploitation and trafficking to neighbouring countries particularly India, Pakistan and beyond.

The deepening vulnerability of women and children in Bangladesh or any other South Asian country are connected to trends highlighted above. The gender biased vulnerability of women and girl children have been a concern for long but many have expressed that there have been intensification in recent years and the manifestations are becoming severe.

The vulnerability of women and children may be linked to the following;

- Serious insecurity of food and livelihood for women and children, especially in the rural areas
- Break down of traditional family structure
- Women and children coming from disaster prone areas or victims of development programmes/projects
- Widowed, divorced, or abandoned women and girls
- Women and girls who are victims of abuse and violence including state sponsored and political
- Women and children whose families are facing a severe financial crisis such as loss of income, serious illness, indebtedness, etc.

Trafficking in women and children are considered an invisible problem as none of the official sources refer or acknowledge it. In most cases, persons known to the victims are the procurers. Once they gain confidence, they can easily entice or lure young girls and children to leave home with the promise for better jobs and marriage. There are networks of traffickers and brokers, mostly Pakistani and Indians, but Bangladeshi as well, with links that extend from Bangladesh, through India into Pakistan and apparently beyond. In the South Asian countries it is reported that the corrosive practice of slave trade goes unchecked. These young girls and children are sold as commodities at high rates, ranging from one thousand to two thousand dollars, depending on the age, beauty and perceived desirability of customers.

Trafficking in women and children take place by a variety of means such a promise of jobs or marriage, and at times, even by physical violence with kidnapping. Trafficking entice young girls that they would provide them with jobs and better prospects in neighbouring countries of India and Pakistan and the Middle East. Mostly these young girls come from poor and illiterate
families where they suffer from malnutrition, poverty and problems at home. Also the early involvement of children and girls of acutely poor families in economic activities for quick and easy money leads to trafficking. It is also reported that some of them have been sold by their own parents, guardians and husbands to evade poverty and hunger. But the employment is usually not of the kind they had anticipated. They often become unwittingly and unwillingly victims of commercial sex work.

Such sexual exploitation of girls result in serious, life-long, even life threatening consequences, including the threat of early pregnancy, maternal mortality, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. Moreover, stigmatization leave girl children as social outcasts. Often the children do not want families to know what has happened to them. And if their families know, it often happens that the victims are condemned not only by the community, but also by their families.

Young girls are procured through false marriages. Men employed abroad sometimes return to their home villages to get married. A migrant is considered as a good life partner as they are often well off. After marriage the young wife accompanies the husband and might be sold. Even the police cannot arrest husbands who are travelling with their legally married wives to other countries. After a year or so, they may come back again to remarry for the second time. There exists no religious bar against having more than one wife, villages, overlook the fact that these men are married. Poor parents even agree to such marriages, with the hope that their daughters will have better prospects in future. Only when several of these incidents happen, villagers become suspicious of the
whereabouts of the girls. But then it is too late either to punish the procurer or to rescue the girls being victimised. Kidnapping is another way of procuring young girls. By the time they are aware of what happened. Most of them are either sold within the country or to agents in India, Pakistan or on their way to the Gulf countries.

Sexual exploitation of children is virtually the most threatening abnormal and unacceptable behaviour in everybody’s standard. Without a doubt, child sexual abuse and exploitation wraps the minds of the children involved, and to one degree or another, the result is likely to be an adult with a warped sense of his/her own sexuality. Sexual violence, both in the streets and in the family affirms that children are merely an object.

Hundreds of thousands of young girls are believed to end up in brothels or as cheap labour in homes and sweatshops in towns and cities in India, Pakistan and the Gulf countries. More than one million children, the majority of whom are female, are forced into prostitution every year. In the wake of the AIDS epidemic, younger children are being sought in the belief that they are less likely to be infected.

Girls are most often trafficked from countries or regions suffering from poor economies and environmental stress, which force families into urban areas and generate the feminization of poverty. Moreover, the AIDS epidemic has accelerated recruitment of girls from more remote, rural areas, since extreme poverty makes recruiting easy and profitable. Poor migrant children particularly girls moved to urban areas are easy targets.
Prostitution and pornography are visible throughout the world although many people are not aware of the degree to which children have been pulled into these businesses. Sex trafficking, on the other hand, is a lesser-known business of the sex trade. Often times children who are sexually abused are seen as victims while children in commercial sex business are considered perpetrators of criminal acts.

To be fair, the scarcity of comprehensive public assistance for commercially sexually exploited children has hindered repatriation. Political, religious leaders and members of the civil society often hold the opinion that prostituted women and children, not their abusers, are the criminals. As a result, the “reintegration” efforts suffer and amount to nothing more than revictimization of these children.

Girls who have worked as prostitutes may face legal and moral isolation. Many laws and official polices and practices fail to distinguish between prostitutes and victims of forced trafficking, treating the latter as criminals rather than persons who deserve temporary care. Fear and shame lead many girls to remain silent about their experiences of abuse and thus they fail to warn others who might be vulnerable. Exploitation destroys a girls trust in others and makes her vulnerable to further exploitation or becoming an exploiter herself.

Although Bangladesh has ratified the international conventions prohibiting slavery, prostitution and trafficking, it has been unable to curtail exploitative practices involving children, particularly young girls. There is the general lack of enforcement of legislation
against trafficking and prostitution, rather the border security personnel and the police who make considerable profits through prostitution of girl children. In the absence of adequate interventions by the government, the families of the victims try and trace out their children.

The process of repatriation, however, is long drawn out and often results in the child being held in safe-custody only to be released on bail which their families can scarcely afford. Sometimes, the children, especially the girls stigmatized and unacceptable by their own families who regard them as ‘spoilt’ through prostitution and trafficking. Therefore, despite adequate legislation having the severest penalties, trafficking and sexual exploitation of children continued unabated.

The governments of the sending, receiving and transit countries have made little progress in eradicating trafficking. Action has often been directed at punishing the victims rather than the traffickers, whether it is in the sending or receiving countries. The girl child in Bangladesh is born and raised in cultures, which associate negative value towards her as an entity. This can be attributed to age-old norms and customs related to patriarchy, religious beliefs, political culture, taboos and ethnic practices.

- Women and Children hailing from areas where there is serious insecurity of food and livelihood
- Women and Children hailing from regions suffering from natural disasters or environmental crises including modern development schemes resulting in en masse displacement and dispossession of local population
- Women and Children with limited education and income generating skills
- Widowed, divorced or abandoned women and children
- Women and girls who are victims of abuse and violence
- Women and girls whose support systems and families have disintegrated through death, disease, displacement or migration
- Women and children whose families are facing a severe financial crisis such as loss of income, serious illness, indebtedness, etc
- Women and children who are seeking all kinds of shadow work in the underground economy

These are all women and girls who would like to improve their living conditions and that of their families. It is important to note that in all of the above instances the vulnerability of women and children is connected to deepening crisis at their home base on the one hand and the subsequent acute need to find alternate and viable means of livelihood on the other.

Reliable data on both internal and cross border trafficking of women and children do not exist in Bangladesh. However, anecdotal evidence and estimates based on media coverage and reports by NGOs and activists working on the issues confirm the fact that there is trafficking and it is indeed a growing problem in Bangladesh.
The government of Bangladesh has prioritized trafficking as one of its key social issues and pledged to combat it with urgency. Towards that end, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs had submitted a national level, three-year project on behalf of the Government of Bangladesh to the Norwegian Government for financial support, this project has been recently approved and will therefore commence shortly. UNICEF and ILO-IPEC are providing technical and other substantive support to this project.

In view of the increasing incidence of trafficking in women and children, the government passed the Oppression Against Women and Children Act 1995 (Special Act) and amended in 2000 which provides penalties for violence against women and children, including trafficking and kidnapping. Section 14 on the issue of accomplice liability states that accomplices to any offence listed in the Ordinance (e.g. trafficking, kidnapping) are subject to the same penalties as the principals.

However we find the implementation of the above law is questionable in the present state of trafficking in children mainly due to the fact that trafficking is a regional problem, involving different countries. As such, it has to be solved regionally.

**Conclusion:**

**The Ultimate Price/Irreparable Damage:**

Women and children who are trafficked are extremely vulnerable to further victimization. In addition
to the trauma of isolation from their families, they often find themselves as illegal immigrants in places unknown to them and of which they sometimes do not even understand the language. They are pushed into a situation where they become stateless. In these circumstances, they can rarely access any services or child protection institutions even where they exist. Any attempt to refuse demands, disobey, protest or escape may result in their being punished, arrested, detained or deported. Long working hours, heavy loads, exposure to dangerous tools and toxic substances, violent punishment and sexual abuse combine to permanently impair their health and make them prone to depression. The mental and physical trauma that trafficking entails for the victims, their families and communities makes it one of the most degrading forms of exploitation requiring immediate, effective and time-bound action.

Women and children are continuously being sacrificed by the abusive power of unfeeling and unscrupulous individuals. They are subjected to violence and serious health hazards. For children with their childhood denied and all aspects of their development undermined, their life prospects are seriously damaged. These are the tragic and ugly manifestations of the neglect and failure of societies, communities and governments to deal with the underlying social and economic causes of women and children trapped in the sex trade.

**Rejection by Society:**

In many instances, women and children who have been forced to work as prostitutes are not accepted back
into their families or communities because of the stigma associated with this type of work. This is particularly true if they are HIV+. It is vital that, once rescued, women and children should not be put into a similarly vulnerable position, especially if they have no family or community support, no means to earn living, illegal status in a country or poor health. They require shelter, psychosocial support, training skills which will allow them to earn a living and support themselves, empathy and assistance to be reintegrated into society and find new meaning and purpose in their lives.

Traditions of migration for labour, land or fodder and that of placement of children in the care of urban-based relatives make communities prone to traffic. Dysfunctional families and domestic violence are factors that increase vulnerability. Ethnic minorities, migrant workers and other socially marginalized groups are more at risk. The contrast between rural and urban areas in providing access to education, health care, shelter and employment opportunities exerts a pull on populations facing economic hardship. Situations of political unrest, civil war and natural disasters are often taken advantage of by traffickers.

Women and children, especially girl children face violence like rape, incest, sexual harassment and are forced to sexual abuse for pornographic photography and films. They are also used for sex tourism and offered as mail order brides. Prostitution begins on the premises of male sexual privilege and violence against women. It commodifies and dehumanizes the bodies and persons of women and children and works for the profit of men. Apart from these, political turmoil and upheavals,
eviction in the name of development, globalization effects on countries, force families to move in search of shelter and food. Need of work forces young women to move around in the hands of organized Mafia and are mostly forced or coerced into prostitution and sexual slavery.

It is important to take note that a recent trend observed is the attempts of countries to curb independent female migration, which is seen as a natural corollary to the process of globalization, by using the example of trafficking. It is being criticized that the dangers women and children face by being trafficked into these countries are disproportionately magnified, and it is argued that trafficking occurs because of lax law enforcement in the countries of origin. A number of countries have tried to shift the burden of curbing trafficking entirely on the sending country. At the same time there are not enough provisions in the law for the protection of the trafficked person in the destination countries. Such measures and legislation not only curb women’s mobility and the right of self-determination but also the north south divide. Therefore it is important to take practical intervention strategies.

**Action Needed**

Overarching areas:

1. Information and data

- Improve information sharing between state agencies at the local and national levels.

- Establish a data bank on trafficking including incidence rates, trafficking patterns in countries of origins, transit,
and destination, and investigation information as well as number of cases prosecuted.

- Standardize statistical data on trafficking at the national, sub-regional, regional and international level
- Promote exchange of information, best practices, and lesson learned among the countries of South Asia and Asia-Pacific Region.
- Develop anti-trafficking information materials for dissemination to diplomatic and consular missions in concerned countries, including information on where to seek assistance.
- Consider the importance of establishing national task forces for local points.

2. Cooperation with international organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, civil society and media-

- Promote cooperation and partnership among governments. Non-governmental organizations, the private sector and civil society in the prevention, protection, prosecution, repatriation and reintegration aspects of trafficking in persons, especially women and children.
- Gender greater public awareness on human costs of trafficking in women and children.
- Provide comprehensive and immediate assistance for trafficked persons.
- Sensitize major media outlets (print and electronic) to the issues and, encourage them to write articles about
trafficking, to publicize hotlines and services for victims, including NGO and governmental agencies.

- Promote regional cooperation particularly South-South cooperation among countries of the region in building networks and anti-trafficking capacity.
- Ensure coordination with parallel regional initiatives to avoid duplication.

3. Gender Mainstreaming

- Incorporate gender mainstreaming issue into national, sub-regional, regional and international plans for economic cooperation and development.
- Strengthen existing mainstreaming issue into national, sub-regional, regional and international, to promote gender mainstreaming

Strategic Areas for action

Prevention

1. Education/training-

- Promote education (formal, informal and non-formal)/vocational training/scholarship programs for children and women to minimize their susceptibility to be trafficked.

- Encourage and support training of professionals in physical and mental health and other related areas and therefore enabling them to recognize and treat trafficked persons appropriately.
- Strengthen where appropriate national/regional centres for training of law enforcements agents, caregivers and related personnel.

- Encourage a gender and child sensitive perspective in the training of law enforcement agents, prosecutors, lawyers and community leaders, among others

2. Legislative Framework-

- Examine the need for and adopt, as appropriate, additional legislative and other measures to prevent trafficking including the promotion of the security and integrity of travel documents.

- Provide or strengthen, where necessary, training for law enforcement, immigration, consular and other relevant partners to combat trafficking, in cooperation with the appropriate national, sub-regional, regional and international organizations and non governmental bodies.

Protection

1. Human Rights/ Enabling Legal Environment

- Provide witness with special support to report and file complains designed to protect their safety and reduce official procedures and their traumatizing efforts

- Promote efforts to ensure that national laws/ regulations provide sufficient and substantial information and assistance and adequate protection of the human rights of trafficked persons including in the repatriation process.
- Endeavor to forge bilateral, sub-regional and international agreements against trafficking including on mutual legal assistance and cross-border cooperation.

2. Safety and Assistance of Trafficked Persons

- Provide as appropriate shelter, economic, psychological, medical and legal assistance for trafficked persons.

- Provide physical safety for trafficked persons and appropriate consideration to humanitarian and compassionate factors including in the process of determining their status should equally be provided.

- Establish hotlines/complaint lines and establish relationships with NGOs in order to increase reporting and identify trafficking situations.

Prosecution

1. Rule of Law

- Endeavor to adopt laws and measures, as maybe necessary, to criminalize trafficking in person, taking into account the grave nature of offense.

- Examine the need for and adopt, as appropriate, laws and other legal measures to impose penalties on all aspects of trafficking, including the seizure and confiscation of gains obtained by criminal organizations.

Repatriation and Reintegration

1. Repatriation and Monitoring programs

- Establish bilateral, multilateral, sub-regional or regional agreements related to repatriation process aimed at humanitarian assistance of the trafficked persons.

- Facilitate and accept without unreasonable delay, including the expeditious issuance of travel documents, the safe, orderly and dignified return of a national who is a trafficked person.

- Encourage countries of origin to ensure the safe and effective reintegration of trafficked persons.

- Endeavor to provide adequate programs for the reintegration of trafficked persons in to their respective families and communities, including medical, legal and economic assistance.

- Ensure that legislative frameworks provide trafficked persons access to adequate procedures of redress.

Follow up and Progress Review

- Ensure the full and active participation of trafficked persons, especially women and children, in the process of follow up

- Encourage follow up action and periodically assess the progress of implementation of the various measures in the areas of prevention, protection, prosecution, and repatriation and reintegration.

- Stress the significance of sub-regional, regional and international collective efforts in the implementation of
this plan particularly in making available, necessary
resources and facilities towards a more comprehensive
approach to combating trafficking in persons, especially
women and children.

- Promote the participation of the state and non-state
  actors and stakeholders in the implementation of this
  plan.
- Emphasise the significance and role of responsible
  media reporting for general public awareness in support
  of this plan.
- Eradicate poverty so children are not forced to work.
- Reduce children’s working hours so that they can attend
  school.
- Aware and mobilize the private sectors and the civil
  society for supporting the cause of prevention of child
  trafficking.
- Make education more relevant to children’s needs.
- The lack of statistics and data concerning the scope and
  scale of commercial sexual exploitation of children and
  trafficking in children should not be an excuse for non-
  implementation of both preventive and curative measures.

Constant monitoring and supervision of places where
children at risk, and implementation of programmes for
their protection, are necessary. The role of the national
system for the integral development of family should be
enhanced through uniform programmes, addressing and
eradicating the main causes of child abuse, especially
intra-familial violence and sexual abuse.
References

Professor Ishrat Shamim and Farah Kabir, (15 January 1998) - *Child Trafficking: The Underlying Dynamics*

Ishrat Shamim, Centre for Women and Children Studies, Bangladesh - Mapping by Mott Macdonald (2001) - International Organisation for Migration - *Mapping of Missing, Kidnapped and Trafficked Children and Women Bangladesh Perspective*

Dr. Joyoti Sangeeta, India (November 21, 1999) - *Trafficking of Women and Children in South Asia: Taking Stock and Moving Ahead - A broad Assessment of Anti-Trafficking Initiatives in Nepal, Bangladesh and India.*

Regional Seminar on Child Prostitution and Trafficking, 16-18 November 1998, Siliguri, West Bengal, India


Natasha Ahmed, Bangladesh, International Organisation for Migration (August 2001) Counter Trafficking Programme - *In Search of Dreams: Study on the Situation of the Trafficked women and children from Bangladesh and Nepal to India*

Annex A

News Report from Pakistan:

KARACHI, 4/12/2001 (IRIN) - After admittance to engineering college in Karachi, southern Pakistan, Ahmad and two college-friends rented a comfortable apartment for the duration of their studies. On moving in, they realised they needed to find a cleaner. Unsure as to how to arrange this, they approached a senior student, who offered a solution. "Why don't you buy a woman who could cook, clean the house and then be used for physical comfort as well?" he said, and explained how to obtain one. They agreed to the idea, pooled the equivalent of US $500 and bought a young Bangladeshi girl in her early twenties.

Zeenat (name changed by IRIN), from Sherpur, Bangladesh, worked for the students for five years. During this period, besides cooking and cleaning, she was made to "entertain" all three boys and many of their friends. She thought that her ordeal would be over once the boys had completed their education, but, to her dismay, after their graduation, she was sold to the incoming group of students. As happens with many of her compatriots, Zeenat was bonded for life.

The scale of trafficking from Bangladesh is sobering. According to a report released by the NGO Action Aid Pakistan last year, 200,000 women and girls between the ages of 12 to 30 have been trafficked from Bangladesh to Pakistan in the last 10 years. Unfortunately for thousands of Bangladeshi women, Pakistan is perceived as an escape from dire poverty. Those involved in fuelling the trade offer only encouragement. They promise wealth, fancy
clothes, big cars, and homes with fresh water and ceiling fans, and an escape from hunger pangs.

The Edhi Trust, run by its founder Abdul Sattar Edhi, has set up two women's shelters - one in Karachi and the other in Islamabad. Edhi told IRIN that persuading women to leave Bangladesh was very easy. "Traffickers can easily entice these women, as most live below the poverty line and are helpless. They have nothing to eat, have no clothes to wear and no money to buy medicine," he said.

The ordeals for women like Zeenat starts when they attempt the 3,000-mile journey across India to Pakistan. According to women in the Suhrab Goth shelter in Karachi, many women are attacked and even shot while trying to cross the two borders. Many give up en route. Noor Bano, from Dhaka in Bangladesh, crossed into Pakistan some 12 years ago. She told IRIN: "We managed to sneak over the Pakistani border near the Thar Parkar desert in southern Sind, but halfway to Karachi, we saw a police unit. We tried to hide in the mango gardens, but the police trapped us. There was a teenage girl, Zareena, in the caravan I was in. The police said they wanted her. They raped her in front of us and then they took her away. After a beating, they released us, but warned of severe consequences if we ever made a fuss about the incident," she said. Impoverished and illiterate, these women are easy targets for exploitation when they arrive in Pakistan. Noor Aga, president of the International Human Rights Alliance, has been working to counter human trafficking from Bangladesh. She said border police and local feudal landlords often worked in collusion with trafficking agents, demonstrating that illegal immigration was
fuelling an entire industry in parts of the country. Aga said women arrested on the border were often sold to agents.

So far, there has been little success in stopping a trade that has become so profitable. President of a legal aid society, Zia Awan, said in Karachi alone there were 20 brothels where the services of women could be taken for a night or purchased for life. The local authorities were unlikely to intervene. "The police are party to this, and manage to extort huge commissions from the brothels," said Awan. According to a local social worker, Faisal Edhi, many trafficking agents is from within the immigrant community. "Illegal immigration is a golden fish for the Bangladesh community, so being an agent is a booming business," he said.

There are strong vested interests in the trade. On 2 May last year, a local journalist and reporter for the Urdu-language daily 'Ummat', Sufi Mohammad Khan from Bad District in the southeastern Sind Province, was shot dead by local landlords for exposing their involvement in female trafficking. Naziha Syed Ali, a journalist in Karachi told IRIN: "Sufi was murdered to warn fellow journalists to behave."

In the absence of legislation to decriminalise victims of trafficking, Bangladeshi women are particularly exposed to arbitrary arrest. Women unable to pay for their release end up languishing in jail on charges of adultery. "These women are arrested under Zina [adultery] and Hudud [Islamic punishments] ordinances," said Awan. With prostitution illegal under Pakistan's Islamic code, these
women are charged with adultery, which is punishable by stoning to death.

Anware Bibi, currently in an Edhi Trust shelter, is one such woman awaiting trial. A middle-aged woman who came to Pakistan when she was hardly 10 years old, Bibi said she had been sold to different people in Lahore and had two children in the process. "I was married to a Pakistani truck driver, but he did not come to my rescue after the police arrested me," she said. Now, she has no documentation to prove that her marriage was valid, and hopes to be acquitted by the courts. If she is, her future is uncertain in Pakistan, and she has no desire to return home to Bangladesh. "I was a child when I came here. How can I even locate my family if go back to Bangladesh?" she asked.

Shaheen Burney, vice-chairperson of the Ansar Burney Welfare Trust, said that despite the government's recent pledges to defend women's rights in Pakistan, little note seemed to be taken of the fact that women were being sold like animals in Thar Parkar District in Sind Province. She said that buyers took the opportunity to humiliate, molest and harass women in the open market.

Few solutions were offered by the Bangladesh Embassy in Pakistan. A spokesperson for the Edhi Trust shelters said she had approached the Bangladesh Embassy to discuss how women could be returned home. Officials at the embassy said they could help women to return home to Bangladesh, but not their children born in Pakistan.

The Pakistani Home Office maintains that human trafficking from Bangladesh is intractably linked to illegal immigration. Chief Secretary of Sind Province Javed
Ashraf said that in Karachi’s Bangladeshi communities, men and children were being trafficked, as well as women. "We cannot think of preventing female trafficking without addressing the entire issue of Immigration," he said, although he acknowledged that women were a more "tradable commodity".