



A Newsletter on Refugee and Migratory Movements

# UDBASTU

t h e u p r o o t e d

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## Workshop Demands

### CONCERTED EFFORTS OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE CIVIL SOCIETY IN COMBATING TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN AND CHILDREN

International trafficking of human beings, especially of women, represents the world's third largest form of organised crime. Over the last few decades Bangladesh has become a sending and transit state for trafficking and human smuggling. A UNICEF report states that, so far 200,000 women were trafficked from Bangladesh. In order to combat the growing menace of trafficking government, non-governmental and international organisations have undertaken various projects to raise awareness among the people, especially in the trafficking-prone border areas of the country. In the years 2001 and 2002, International Organization for Migration took up some initiatives to combat trafficking. By involving various partner organisations, it initiated multi-pronged activities to combat trafficking. RMMRU was commissioned with a pilot project titled *Capacity Building for Combating Trafficking in Women and Children*. The project aimed at developing a training module for the trainers for building awareness among the community leaders at the grassroots level.

One essential component of this project was a Training of the Trainers' (ToT) workshop. This was aimed at imparting training to the members of implementing organisations. It is expected that the trainers will provide training to the members and chairpersons of the local Union Councils and thus will build their capacity to prevent trafficking in women and children.

The five-day ToT workshop under the project of the *Capacity Building for Combating Trafficking in Women and Children in Bangladesh* was held at the Bangladesh Institute of Administration and Management (BIAM) from 28 July to 1 August 2002. Participants of the workshop included representatives of Rights Jessore, Association for Community Development (ACD), Rajshahi, IOM, and various NGOs of Bangladesh.

The workshop was designed for five days according to the project plan, comprising of twelve working sessions, apart from the inaugural and concluding sessions. However, organisers were compelled to reschedule the original programme to four days due to a daylong strike on 30 July 2002. On the first day of the workshop apart from the inaugural session, the first working session, titled *Different Kinds of Migration and Trafficking in Women and Children*, was held. *Causes of trafficking, target of trafficking, traffickers' network, methods and routes of trafficking, laws of trafficking and their implementation* were discussed on the second day. On the third day, sessions on *consequences of trafficking, duties and responsibilities of leaders of Union Councils, and rescue and rehabilitation* of the trafficked victims took place. On the last day of the workshop apart from the concluding session, there were two working sessions, featuring anti-trafficking drama and prevention of trafficking respectively.

At the inaugural session Dr. Tasneem Siddqui, Chair of RMMRU, welcomed the participants. Following her introductory statement the participants introduced themselves. They also discussed their expectations

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from the workshop. Mr. M. Shahidul Haque, Regional Representative of International Organization for

Migration and Dr. Tasneem Siddiqui, underscored the objectives and rationale of the project. For group exercises the participants were divided into four groups.

### ***Working Session I***

#### **Different Types of Migration and Trafficking in Women and Children**

The first working session illustrated the relationship between various types of migration and trafficking. Dr. Tasneem Siddiqui conducted the session as the resource person. She used different methods like testing the pre-knowledge, lecture and open discussion by using a matrix. The difference between trafficking, human smuggling and cross-border labour migration was discussed broadly in this session. An important lesson imparted in this session was that all types of cross border migration do not constitute trafficking.

### ***Working Session II***

#### **Causes of Migration**

This included the structural and individual causes of migration and catalytic factors behind trafficking in women and children. Eight case studies were provided to the participants. From the case studies they identified different causes of trafficking which included poverty, sudden death of earning members of the family, practice of dowry, lack of knowledge about trafficking, desertion, lack of social and physical security, porous border, organised traffickers' nexus, demand of women for prostitution and other hazardous work, corruption, lack of access to legal migration and illicit nexus of the law enforcement agencies with traffickers. Rozana Rashid conducted the session as resource person.

### ***Working Session III***

#### **Targets of Trafficking**

This session was conducted by Khandaker Rezwana Karim, Programme Officer of the project. During group work participants identified different categories of women and children who due to their harsh economic conditions fall easy prey to the traffickers. They included poor women and children, unemployed women living in slums, floating women and children, and women and children working in factories.

### ***Working Session IV***

#### **Traffickers' Network**

This session was conducted by Mizanur Rahman of Resource Bangladesh. A short drama about traffickers' network was presented. Trafficking nexus and people involved at different levels were explained to the participants by using overhead transparencies. The difference between 'godfather', broker and their assistant/associates was explained in this session.

Participants learned that the person who designs, controls and conducts the business of trafficking was the 'godfather', while a broker acts as a middleman in the process and collects women and children individually or through assistants. Parents, transport workers, personnel of law enforcing agencies and others who are associated with the work without knowing the consequences, were identified as associates.

### ***Working Session V***

#### **Methods and Routes of Trafficking**

Four short pieces of drama were staged indicating different methods of trafficking i.e. abduction, luring for jobs and marriage, faking love and luring for pilgrimage. After each presentation, participants were asked to comment on the subject matter of the drama. Representatives from Rights Jessore and ACD Rajshahi described the routes of trafficking in their respective areas on map. Dr. M A Jalil was present in the session as resource person.

### ***Working Session VI***

#### **Laws of Trafficking and Its Implementation**

This session was conducted by Dr. Sumaiya Khair. Various national laws, international conventions and agreements were discussed in the session. Emphasis was put on the Act on Prevention against Suppression of Women and Children 2000, which defined trafficking and considered it as a punishable crime. Advocate Masuma Begum, a participant, shared her experience in the complexities in taking legal action against the traffickers according to the law. She presented a case study. Participants expressed keen interest in the practicalities of trafficking laws.

### ***Working Session VII***

#### **Duties and Responsibility of the Union Council**

Ms. Farah Kabir of the British Council was the resource person in this session. Various problems in implementing anti-trafficking awareness building programmes by the UP Chairmen and members were discussed. During open discussion, it was agreed that a successful anti-trafficking programme needs active participation of all members of the Union Council, irrespective of their political and other biases.

### ***Working Session IX***

#### **Consequences of Trafficking**

Participatory method was used in this session also. Participants took part in group-work to identify consequences at different stages of trafficking and return. They identified mental shock, physical problems of girls in prostitution, boys working as camel jockey or in risky manufacturing industry, lack of control over income, lack of human rights and

problem in social reintegration as major consequences of trafficking.

### **Working Session X Rescue and Rehabilitation**

Advocate Salma Ali of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) was present as a resource person in the session. She shared her experiences of rescuing trafficked victims from within and outside the country. As part of the rehabilitation programme, the role of shelter homes and other initiatives of NGOs were discussed. Dr. Jalil discussed the role and current activities of the government on trafficking.

### **Working Session XI Various Steps and Techniques of Conducting Training**

This session took place on the third day of the workshop. Dr. Tasneem Siddiqui described steps to be taken before and while holding a training workshop. Identifying different stages in organising a training, sorting information for providing training, need for making a workshop participatory and use of various techniques of participation were discussed in this session. Dr. Siddiqui also underscored the need for special techniques to be used to motivate UP chairmen and members to launch anti-trafficking programmes.

### **Working Session XII Drama in Prevention of Trafficking**

A 45-minute drama was staged by Theatre Centre for Social Development. It was conceptualised by RMMRU and written and directed by Ms. Rehana Samdani, Director of TCSD. Ms. Rina Sen Gupta of IOM was present as the resource person in this session. After the drama was staged, participants were asked to comment on it. They expressed their view that the drama was comprehensive enough to use it as a tool for creating consciousness among the masses. Nonetheless, suggestions were offered that care must be taken so the human smuggling is not encouraged through the drama. Participants also made the suggestion that the role of village women in social reintegration of the trafficked victim and role of NGO activists in prevention and reintegration have to be incorporated in the play.

### **Working Session XIII Prevention of Women and Child Trafficking**

Four model projects namely use of public address system, premise meeting, rally and meeting at *hat* 'weekly market' were developed and read out. Participants were given the task of formulating the content of use of public address system and rallies. They developed a number of slogans to convey the message. Participants were then divided into two groups. One group was assigned to conduct premise meeting and the other was assigned to conduct *hat* meeting. In the premise meeting, participants took up roles such as NGO activist, woman members of Union Parishad, housewives etc. In the *hat* meeting participants performed the roles of chairman and members of the Union Parishad, teacher, Imam, political leader, common villagers and *ghat* owner. Both the groups made skillful presentations.

In the concluding session, the participants were asked to make comments on the workshop. Valuable suggestions were received from them. Those included incorporation of traditional cultural activities such as *Gambhira*, increasing the allotted time for the session on law, and the techniques of conducting training, incorporation of school meeting as a model project, providing more opportunity for the trainers to conduct sessions of ToT, distribution of the hand-outs after participatory work, assigning participants with the task of writing of drama scripts. On behalf of RMMRU, Dr. Tasneem Siddiqui made an evaluation of the workshop. Dr. Sumaiya Khair spoke on behalf of the sub-committee formed for the project while Dr. C R Abrar for RMMRU thanked the participants and IOM. Mr. M. Shahidul Haque of IOM in his concluding statement underscored the need for the active collaboration of all stakeholders in combating trafficking. He informed the participants that IOM was committed to support the government as well as civil society organisations in rooting out all forms of irregular migration and making migration humane and orderly.

There was a conscious effort to make the workshop participatory. It attempted to incorporate all the issues pertaining to trafficking in women and children. Trainers were provided with innovative techniques for conducting training so that they learned to disseminate information to the UP chairman and members more effectively and persuade them to adopt measures for the prevention of trafficking.

**Reporter:**  
*Syeda Rozana Rashid*

# UNDERSTANDING TRAFFICKING REALITIES AT THE RECEIVING END: A VISIT TO KOLKATA

Syeda Rozana Rashid  
Shahzada M. Akram

The rapidly changing economic, political and cultural situations in the increasingly globalised world have led to new forms, purposes, routes and sources of trafficking in women and children. It has become a major concern to all. Bangladesh shares a long border with India, and thus India has become a receiving as well as a transit country for Bangladeshi trafficked women and children.

So far a few studies have been conducted on the trafficking issue. Most of these studies were based on media coverage or in the source areas of trafficking in Bangladesh. There is a tendency among scholars to confuse trafficking with cross-border irregular labour migration. Consequently, overstated data and information provided in some of these studies create difficulties for mounting anti-trafficking campaign. Secondly, the hard data and information on this issue are not available due to lack of cooperation between the government and non-government functionaries. In this regard, RMMRU felt that there was a need for exploring trafficking realities at the receiving end.

With the support of the British Council under the Higher Education Link Programme with Oxford University, a five-member team of RMMRU visited Kolkata from 24 to 29 March 2003. The team interviewed some of the victims, Bangladesh Deputy High Commissioner in Kolkata, shelter home authorities, counselor and anti-trafficking activists in Kolkata. The primary focus of the visit was to understand the causes, routes, role of intermediaries, rescuing and rehabilitation efforts for trafficked in women and children at the receiving end. The visit also intended to identify the hindrances in exchanging information, views and cooperation to work on anti-trafficking issues among government and non-government institutions in Bangladesh and India. The overall purpose of the visit was to explore possible areas of collaboration in anti-trafficking activities.

From the visit, RMMRU gathered some valuable information and interesting insights about trafficking, irregular migration, rescue, rehabilitation and government and NGO activities on the issue. Some of the key observations are presented below:

## **Lack of Conceptual Clarity**

There is a significant lack of conceptual clarity on the issue of trafficking. Most of the organisations concerned give importance to trafficking in women and children that occur within the Indian states. There is a considerable confusion on overlapping issues of trafficking and informal labour migration from Bangladesh to India.

## **Limited Activities on Combating Trafficking**

Activities on combating trafficking in West Bengal are rather limited. There are very little collaborative activities with Bangladeshi NGOs, such as that of *Sanlaap* with BNWLA. Recently an initiative is planned involving grassroots NGOs along the border in both countries to develop a social network to combat trafficking through raising awareness among local people. It was learnt that hardly any substantive research work on trafficking in women and children has been undertaken in West Bengal. Quite a few related studies were undertaken by UNICEF, *Bhoruka*, *Jabala*, *Sanlaap* and UBINIG of Bangladesh but not specifically looking into the issue of trafficking.

## **End Result of Trafficked Victims**

It was identified through discussions with various organisations and individuals that in most cases, women trafficked to India finally end up in brothels. The team was informed that a good number of Bangladeshi sex workers are in Boubazar and Sonagachhi brothels of Kolkata, Bashirhat, North 24 Parganas in West Bengal, in Kamathipura, Maharashtra, and some other states. The team was further informed that a number of Bangladeshi women are also involved in apartment-based sex work in Kolkata. These women were either trafficked or came to India informally in search of jobs. Moreover, discussions revealed that women coming for jobs in other sectors also have to serve sexual needs of employers or supervisors. Some stated that they willingly take part in such activities, and come knowing that they have to serve in such fashion, while others disagreed. It was further argued that invariably a woman is forced to do such work but gradually she takes it for granted and continues to be involved in sex work to earn a living. Those working on children reported that during *Hajj*, children from Murshidabad

are trafficked to Saudi Arabia and employed in begging. A number of Bangladeshi children are forcibly employed in some hazardous industries in India.

### **Concern over Legalisation of Prostitution**

There was a misconception among some circles in Kolkata that Bangladesh has legalised prostitution. The study team informed them that has not been the case.

### **Kolkata as a Transit for Trafficking**

It was further noted that in most cases West Bengal is used as a transit state for trafficking in women and children. At the shelter homes and custodies that the team had visited they could only meet a few girls who were the victims of trafficking, most others were irregular migrants, all were below 18 years of age. This indicates that (a) only a small percentage of trafficked in girls and women are rescued; (b) irregular cross-border migration takes place at a much higher magnitude; (c) women over the age of 18 are not rescued during raids on brothels in India and therefore remain unidentified; and (d) each and every girl or woman rescued and repatriated is normally labeled as a trafficked victim, which may not necessarily be the case.

### **Legal Impediments**

Regarding Indian law on preventing trafficking, it was stated that the present law does not impose capital punishment. Moreover, real traffickers are not caught, only carriers are arrested. A new juvenile protection board has been created to specifically deal with trafficked in children, but it is yet to start its operation. Many legal reforms are suggested by the concerned NGOs, but the government of India is yet to respond to such demand.

### **Lengthy Process of Repatriation after Rescue: Problems of Separated Children are not Highlighted**

It was learnt from the discussions that trafficked in women and children are rescued through different methods. In some cases Kolkata police rescue girl-children under age of 18 from red light areas of Kolkata. In other cases children accompanied by parents who came to India informally, i.e., without passport and visa for different purposes are apprehended. In these cases, the children are sent to shelter homes while their parents are sent to custody. This is done to keep the children away from the jail environment. However, it was observed that in most cases parents' cases are resolved sooner than the children, and if sentenced, they serve the time and then sent back to Bangladesh, often through 'push back'. If

the rescued female is a victim of trafficking, or any other abuses like rape or torture, her case takes longer time, as she is required by the prosecution as a witness. Thus her repatriation process is slowed down to such an extent that the team found females / girls staying for 7/8 years in shelter homes. Their plights are not highlighted either in the media or in the bilateral meetings.

### **Role of Bangladesh Mission and Concerned NGOs**

It was learnt that in repatriation process, Bangladesh mission plays a very important role. The total costs of rescue and repatriation are borne by the Governments of Bangladesh and India. However, the official data regarding rescue and repatriation of trafficked in victims was not available.

It is the Bangladesh mission, which takes the pivotal role in repatriation of Bangladeshi nationals held or rescued in India. Usually the news of rescue or arrest of 'Bangladeshis' comes from the police department. To verify the truth, officials of the Bangladesh Mission visit jail/shelter homes/ police stations/custody where the person is kept. The mission writes to the Ministry of Home Affairs in Bangladesh to verify national identity of the person. A copy of the letter is also sent to a Bangladeshi NGO running shelter homes, so that the Bangladeshi citizen can find a safe and secure place on his/her return to the country. Parallel to this process, the trial continues. The time, date and place of repatriation is determined after securing permission from the Home Ministry of Bangladesh and judgment of the Indian Court about repatriation of the person concerned. With the help of border security personnel of both the countries, the mission hands over the Bangladeshi national to the concerned NGO, which is generally notified earlier to rescue and rehabilitate the person.

### **Trafficking as a 'Sensitive Issue'**

The Bangladesh mission officials underscored the need that the issue be dealt with a high degree of sensitivity that such humanitarian issue does not become a political one due to wrong handling.

### **Development of Social Network**

Future programmes may include development of better coordination and exchange of information between the border security forces and effective network among local NGOs on both sides of the border. Through establishing such network, sharing information on trafficking, raising awareness in concerned localities, and providing support to each other the challenge of combating trafficking may be better addressed.

## INTERVIEW WITH ADVOCATE ZIA AHMED AWAN

*Zia Ahmed Awan is a renowned lawyer and human rights activist of Karachi, Pakistan. He heads the Lawyers for Human Rights and Legal Aid (LHRLA), an organisation dealing with the issue for the last 15 years. During his visit to Dhaka a RMMRU team met him and discussed issues of trafficking of women and children and irregular migration from Bangladesh to Pakistan 23 June 2003. The interview will provide readers with an idea about the role of government and human rights organisations in Pakistan to combat trafficking. Nahid Alam, Shahzada Akram, Rozana Rashid and Rezwanul Karim held the discussion with Mr. Awan.*

**Udbastu:** *How do you define trafficking in the context of Pakistan? Is there any working definition?*

**Zia Ahmed Awan:** Trafficking is very well defined in the law. We are following the *UN Protocol 2000*<sup>1</sup> and also the definition described in the *Child Rights Convention*.

**Udbastu:** *Can you provide some data about the extent of trafficking in Pakistan?*

**ZAA:** We have no comprehensive data regarding trafficking in Pakistan. There is both internal and external trafficking and it is happening in a large scale. Women are sold and children are trafficked often for camel jockeying through false adoption. Recently LHRLA has conducted a study on the situation of trafficking in Pakistan. The research team talked with some trafficked victims. They stated that they were trafficked through forced marriage, luring for jobs and kidnapping.

**Udbastu:** *What is the main route from Bangladesh to Pakistan?*

**ZAA:** Bangladeshi women mostly go to Pakistan through India. Most of them first go to Binapur-Kolkata-Delhi, then cross the border and go to Lahore, and from there to Karachi by bus or train. Karachi is the main centre and from there they get scattered to other provinces. Some of them end up in the Middle East. This is why Pakistan is at the same time a receiving, sending and transit country of trafficked women. The route from Pakistan to the Middle East is too risky. Many people including Pakistanis die due to cold weather when they take this route.

**Udbastu:** *What are the destinations of Bangladeshi trafficked victims in Pakistan?*

**ZAA:** Trafficked in Bangladeshi women can be found all over Pakistan. For example, LHRLA found some Bangladeshi women in Sui, a remote area at Baluchistan, a place of the Bukti tribe, and where hardly any people go. However, Karachi, by far is the most important destination of Bangladeshi women. Baluchistan and Punjab also host a large number. These women and children are concentrated in some of the slums that exist in Karachi.

**Udbastu:** *What are the main sectors that absorb trafficked in women and children?*

**ZAA:** I would not like to say that in Pakistan trafficked women are working in the formal sector, most of them are kept in households as domestic workers. However, a section of them are working in brothels. Since prostitution in Pakistan is strictly illegal, it is hardly visible. Of course there are syndicates in big cities. Secondly, as there are pretty Pakistan women involved in prostitution, Bangladeshi women are not necessarily high in demand. I would tend to think it is India where Bangladeshi and Nepali women are made to engage in prostitution in large numbers. If we talk about migrant workers from Bangladesh, the picture would be totally different. Most of them are working in fishing, carpet weaving and garment industry, hotels and restaurants. Some of them are working as domestic servants. Hardly you will find trafficked women in this community.

**Udbastu:** *What is the status of Bangladeshi labour migrants in Pakistan?*

**ZAA:** Only in Karachi 20% of the total population are migrants and the majority is from Bangladesh. Most of them are irregular migrants. Only 2% to 3% of the migrants from Sri Lanka and the Philippines are legal. Incidents of trafficking are also occurring regularly. Trafficking of girls of Bangladeshi origin is occurring in the Bangladeshi community within Pakistan. The most common practice is that people go to the girl's house, pay her parents and buy the girl.

**Udbastu:** *Do trafficked women want to go back to Bangladesh?*

**ZAA:** I think an overwhelming number of the trafficked women do not want to go back to their country due to social stigma and discrimination. When these women arrived in Pakistan they were under 18 years, now most of them have children. They just want to meet their family that they left behind, but are not willing to go back forever.

**Udbastu:** *What kind of work LHRLA is involved in?*

**ZAA:** LHRLA works in three-dimensional approach: advocacy at the policy level, awareness building and

providing assistance to migrant community and trafficked victims. We provide legal support to the victims of trafficking, to migrant workers and trafficked women who are kept in jail under the passport law and *Islami Hudood* law. We also provide education facilities and training on empowerment inside the jail. Now we have introduced a back up support programme titled *Women-children Help Line*. Under this programme we are helping both trafficked victims and migrant workers. Recently LHRLA has established a community centre in Korangi area for irregular migrant community. We are providing healthcare services, education for girls and legal assistance.

**Udbastu:** *Are there any other organisation working on this issue?*

**ZAA:** In Pakistan, one would hardly find any organisation working on trafficking issue. Most of the civil society organisations are more concerned about their internal issues. Though not directly involved, some of these NGOs are providing services to the victims in the form of legal aid, food and shelters, and counseling. LHRLA is trying to organise and mobilise these organisations to consider trafficking as an important issue to work.

**Udbastu:** *What role does the Government of Pakistan play in combating trafficking?*

**ZAA:** Recently Pakistan government drafted a law on combating trafficking but the enactment of the law has not taken place yet. Pakistani government is now implementing a project titled *Alien Registration* under which the government is giving foreigners registration for one year, at the cost of Rs 1,000. After registration the illegal migrants can work legally. The police do not harass them. The government spends the money from registration in the slums. However, there is corruption in this process. The migrants and trafficked victims are also reluctant to get registered because they think that if they get registered eventually they will be sent back. The validity of the card is for maximum three years, then the registered person are obliged to leave the country.

**Udbastu:** *What happens to the women who are released from jail?*

**ZAA:** At present most of the Bangladeshi women are released from the jail. However, we have no follow up system where they go after their release.

**Udbastu:** *Is there any rescue and repatriation programme by LHRLA or any other agency?*

**ZAA:** There is no ongoing programme on repatriation of trafficked victims. If anybody wants to be repatriated, LHRLA assists in the process. The repatriation must be processed through the diplomatic missions of both countries. However, Bangladesh mission in Pakistan did not want to hear anything about this issue until few years back. I believe now there has been a shift in that regard. But the main problem is that nobody wants to go back.

**Udbastu:** *Do you have any collaborative studies or programmes with Bangladeshi organisations?*

**ZAA:** There is collaboration between LHRLA and some Bangladeshi organisations such as BNWLA and UBINIG. No collaborative research was conducted between the two countries. NGOs working in two countries just share some information and experiences from both ends. Therefore, there is a great scope of collaborative action research in this respect.

**Reporter:**

*Khandaker Rezwanaul Karim*

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<sup>1</sup> **Definition of trafficking under the UN Optional Protocol**

(a) Trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or 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 at a minimum, mean the *exploitation* of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, *slavery* or practices similar to slavery, *servitude* or the removal of organs.

The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used.

(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 subparagraph (a) of this article.

(c) ‘Child’ shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.

*(Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime, 2001)*

## TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS FROM BANGLADESH

Syeda Rozana Rashid

Over the last few decades Bangladesh has been used as a sending and transit country for trafficking and human smuggling. In the past, the word ‘trafficking’ generally meant procurement of women or girls for prostitution. The term later received a wider connotation as the nature and scope of such activities increased. Today, ‘trafficking’ entails all acts involved in kidnapping, abduction, capture, acquisition, recruitment and transportation of persons, specially women and children, within and across national boundaries with an aim of selling, exchanging or using 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 threats of violence.

A huge network of traffickers are involved in procuring persons from different corners of the country to take them at their desired place for profit making. At the source end, the victims are trapped with the promise of better employment and marriage. But in most cases when the victim realises the grim consequences, s/he has no other alternative but to surrender to the machinations of the human traffickers.

### Trafficking: A Global Problem

International trafficking of human beings, especially of women who are then forced into prostitution, represents the world’s third largest form of organised crime, and a business producing seven billion dollars annually. The Helsinki Foundation points to Brazil as the largest Latin American source of women engaged in the sex trade in Europe, as the country is responsible for 15 percent of the region’s ‘human exports’ (*The Independent*, 3 Dec 2000). The foreign office of the USA published their annual report on trafficking on 5 June 2002. It said that each year approximately 40,00,000 to 70,00,000 people fell prey to trafficking. Among those, 50,000 are trafficked into USA alone (*Daily Sangbad*, 18 June 2002).

### Bangladesh: A Source Country

The south-western districts of Bangladesh continues to experience unabated incidence of human trafficking across the porous border with neighbouring India. According to a report of UNICEF, so far 200,000 people were trafficked from Bangladesh (*The Independent*, 29 June 2002). A survey of Centre for Women and Children Studies (CWCS) found that a total of 3,391 children were missing and 3,397 others were trafficked out of the country in the last decade. Among them 1,683 were boys and 1,714 girls (*The Independent*, 8 January 2001). At a consultation meeting between India and Bangladesh organised by

the Rights Jessore – a local NGO reported that on an average 100 children and 50 women from Bangladesh become victims of trafficking every month (*Dainik Sangram*, 26 October 2002).

It has been alleged that Indian enclaves in Kurigram and Lalmonirhat of Bangladesh have become a safe haven for women and child trafficking. After procurement from different parts of Bangladesh the procurers bring the women and children to these enclaves and the administrators issue special passes or certify them as Indian nationals in exchange for money. It is difficult for the law enforcing agencies to operate in these regions. In the year 2000 more than 1000 people have been trafficked through these enclaves, suggests the report (*Daily Sangbad*, 17 January 2001).

### Rescue, Repatriation and Rehabilitation: Beginning of a New Episode

The print media covered a large number of cases regarding rescue of trafficking victims. It is interesting to note that all women and children rescued from bordering areas are portrayed as ‘trafficking victim’ by the media and others involved in rescue operation. However, that may not necessarily be the case. Cross border irregular movements of population between Bangladesh and India has a long background and people tend to move voluntarily, willingly and with adequate information for a number of reasons. Labeling all rescued persons as ‘trafficked’ thus generates misleading statistics on trafficking, creating problems in conceptualising the phenomenon ‘trafficking’.

According the news published in the *Daily Jankantha*, 41 women and children were rescued in November and December of 2002. 12 members of a family including eight women and children were rescued from Godagari border when they were being trafficked to India by a boat. These children were on their way to be trafficked to Saudi Arabia for camel jockeying. 8 men were also held along with these children who were pretending to be the fathers of the victims (*The Independent*, 16 June 2001). The BDR personnel of Benapole BOP rescued a six-year-old girl and arrested a human trafficker from Kathaltola border area on 3 February. BDR sources said human trafficker Jimmy (40) abducted Shahana Akter (6) of east Barandipara area in Jessore town and took her to Kathaltola border to traffic her to India (*The Independent*, 9 Feb 2002). On 21 May, one Uttam Kumar was seen to roam around in the bordering area of Hili carrying a baby named Pia. Police apprehended

him as suspected trafficker (*Daily Sangbad*, 4 June 2001). Over the last two years 16 women and 7 children were trafficked through bordering district of Dinajpur (*Dainik Sangram*, 22 November 2002).

A section of trafficking victims are rescued at the receiving end or in a transit country. Generally, the administrations of the sending and receiving countries and NGOs are involved in this the rescue process. In one such incident Indian police rescued 2 minor boys and arrested 4 traffickers from Kochbihar (*Daily Sangbad*, 25 May 2001). However repatriation of the victims becomes a lengthy process.

Rehabilitation of the repatriated victims is also a complex process. On March 17, 2002 *The Daily Star* published the story of a 18-year-old trafficked woman, Bali Khatun, who used to work at a garments factory in Gazipur. On September 12, one of her colleagues, Baby made her unconscious by putting substances in soft drink and took her to Tongi, near Dhaka. Three days later she found herself at a brothel in Kolkata where she was sold for Tk 20,000. At the brothel, she was forced to entertain four to five customers a day. Unable to bear the ordeal she decided to escape from the brothel and managed to do that on 28 February 2002 with the help of a customer. On her arrival in Bangladesh she made a passionate appeal for providing her with a job for social rehabilitation.

### **Trial: Light of Hope**

Newspaper coverage on the arrest and prosecution of traffickers are not small in number. However, incidences of trial and punishment of alleged traffickers are relatively low. The anti trafficking law contains rigorous punishment for human traffickers. A court in Jessore convicted and sentenced three people to imprisonment for life and fined Tk 10,000 in default to suffer RI for another two years on the charge of trafficking of a woman to India. It was found during prosecution that the accused on July 4, 1999 abducted the women and trafficked her to India (*The Independent*, 10 February 2001). In another incident police arrested traffickers Nazma and Champa on charge of alluring the adolescent girls with the hope of getting a job in Dhaka. A court in Jessore convicted and sentenced an Indian national to rigorous imprisonment for life in a child trafficking case. A man was prosecuted for trafficking a boy named Sohel Rana (10) son of Babul Shaikh of Khejurtola village in

Najirpur Upazila of Pirozpur District from Pukhali border point on December 4 1997 (*The Independent*, 12 December 2001).

Above are some of the examples of punishment of trafficking. However, in many instances the accused get released due to the loopholes in the law.

### **Prevention: Awareness against Trafficking**

Assuming the importance of trafficking, government, non-governmental organisations and international organisations took up various projects to raise awareness among the people, specially in the

trafficking-prone bordering areas. The Women and Children Affairs Ministry of GoB has also identified trafficking as an important area to be addressed. Some NGOs such as Bangladesh National Women's Lawyers' Association (BNWLA), Center for Women and Children Studies (CWCS), Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum, ASTEC etc. are also working on developing awareness among general people, providing legal aid and shelter to the victims of trafficking. In the years 2001 and 2002 the International Organization for Migration (IOM) took up initiatives to combat trafficking. It commissioned several

organisations to develop training modules for the trainers who work for building awareness among the community leaders at the grassroots.

As part of the awareness building programme, a dialogue meeting on *Trafficking in Women and Children: Its Prevention*, was organised by Rights Jessore in Jessore on July 23 (*The Independent*, 1 August 2001). Another day-long workshop on human trafficking was held at the conference room of NGO Forum in Jessore on December 20 jointly arranged by CWCS, Dhaka and Rights Jessore (*The Independent*, 27 December 2001). Dhaka Ahsania Mission has established a countrywide Information Hotline to help prevent child and women trafficking (*The Independent*, 4 March 2002). Action against trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children (ATSEC) Bangladesh Chapter organised a seminar on *Draft Treaty for Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children* on 5 June 2002. The seminar assessed the need for political commitment, coordination among agencies and the enactment of laws to combat the menace (*The Independent*, 6 June 2002).

International organisations such as IOM have also expressed commitment to take the necessary steps to stop camel jockeying (*Prothom Alo*, 1 June 2002). It also identified HIV/AIDS and trafficking in women as a crosscutting issue, as trafficked women are more often deceived or coerced into situations of sexual exploitation, and therefore more exposed to HIV infection. Therefore they called for total integration of HIV/AIDS in counter-trafficking activities (*The Independent*, 10 May 2001). At a meeting the Commanders of BSF and BDR expressed their commitment to combat trafficking in Bhurungamari Upazila (*Daily Sangbad*, 25 May 2001).

## Conclusion

The problem of women and child trafficking should not be seen as in isolation. The political, economic, social and cultural factors that contribute to such irregular movements of people have to be explored. There is a need for coordinated efforts between the government, international agencies, NGOs and people at the grassroots. There should be bilateral and regional cooperation and commitment to combat trafficking. A combination of all these may bring in positive result in substantially curbing trafficking.

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# RIVERBANK EROSION

Arifur Rahman

Riverbank erosion is a common phenomenon in Bangladesh. Among other things, it contributes to internal displacement. Over the last few decades the situation has increasingly worsened and millions of people have suffered by riverbank erosion. The last year was no exception. In this paper we will depict the losses and sufferings of people who become internally displaced and their vulnerability due to riverbank erosion.

## Rivers Causing Erosion

Usually bank erosions take serious turn with the advent of the rainy season. But recent reports suggest that bank erosions are taking place even during the lean season, leaving many people homeless. The reports further inform that 50 rivers are active in eroding the banks. Mainly the big rivers along with their tributaries have been responsible for such continued disaster. In Dhaka division the rivers Padma, Jamuna, Kaliganga, Dhaleswari, Ichhamoti, Brahmaputra, Arial Khan, Mogra, Kangsha, Dhanu, Someswari, Ushakhali, Netai and Dhalai; in Rajshahi division Teesta, Dudhkumar, Jamuna, Padma, Dharla, Korotoa, Jinjiram and Pagla; in Barishal division Kirtonkhhola, Kocha, Panguchi, Suganda, Sandha, Lehukhali, Biesdia, Agunmukhi, Paira, Jayanti, Arial Khan, Meghna, Maskata, Tetulia, Lota, Ilisha, Kala Badar, Baleswar, Bishkhali, Tushkhali, Sreemonta, Pandab, Rangamutia, Ghop, Noya Bainsi, Baushia, Satla, Rajgura, Jahapur, Gozaria, Gaguria; in Sylhet division Surma, Kushiara, Paniguchi; and in Chittagong division Sangu, Karnaphuli, and Dakatia have so far been responsible for serious erosion. In all the five divisions of the country people are displaced by river erosion.

## Districts Affected

Nearly 30 districts have been found to be seriously affected by river erosion, which includes Manikganj, Mymensingh, Tangail, Rajbari, Madaripur, Sariatpur, and Netrokona in Dhaka division; Bagerhat, Sathkhira and Kushtia in Khulna division; Nawabganj,

Nilphamari, Rangpur, Pabna, Sirajganj, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Panchagarh and Jamalpur in Rajshahi division; Bhola, Patuakhali, and Barisal in Barisal division; Noakhali, Comilla, Chandpur, and Chittagong in Chittagong division; Sylhet, Moulvibazar and Sunamganj in Sylhet division. Inadequate response from the authorities to combat such disaster in these areas was also reported.

## Displaced Families and Population

Unabated erosion by the river Padma left some 571,802 people homeless in Sariatpur over the last three decades (*The Independent*, 6 July 2001). According to officials 60 percent of the district's total population has become landless due to riverbank erosion. The scale of the displacement can be assessed from the following figures: Naria 51 percent, Jajira 57 percent, Gosairhat 60 percent, Damuda 45 percent, and Bhedarganj 57 percent. In Kurigram 1,600 people became homeless due to the erosion by the river Dharla (*The Independent*, 7 September 2001).

According to Barisal district administration sources, over one lakh people of 12,115 families of the 10 upazillas of the district have been rendered homeless by erosion in last one year. A total of 637 families of Barisal Sadar upazilla have lost their property and belongings due to river erosion last year, 2,175 families in Bakerganj upazila, 631 families in Babuganj upazila, 467 families in Uzirpur upazilla, 378 families in Gournadi upazila, 207 families in Agoiljhara upazila, 3,705 families in Mehendiganj upazila, 1,806 families in Muladi upazila and 472 families in Bananipara (*The Independent*, 23 June 2002).

## Economic Loss

Indira Kulenovic, sub-regional reporting delegate of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) observed that riverbank erosion is one of the biggest natural disasters in

Bangladesh. It is a slow and silent disaster and causes huge damage to socio-economic condition of the country. Among the damages loss of arable land is significant. It has been thought that the erosion of the rivers has engulfed more than 50,000 acres of land. More than 25,000 houses have been devoured along with hundreds of villages (*The Independent*, 31 March 2002).

Erosion by the river Meghna has taken a serious turn in Damudda upazilla of Sariatpur. Local people said five villages in the upazilla have already been washed away during six month period by the river. Some 2,500 people were rendered homeless due to the erosion and four rural markets were destroyed by the river. About 200 dwelling houses of these villages and 100 acres of crop and other lands were devoured and a child was killed during the period (*The Independent*, 30 April 2002). A survey conducted locally revealed that the Meghna devoured 14 villages in the island during the last two years rendering over 8,000 people homeless. The report stated that erosion in the island started in 1972 and since then three unions out of the total nine have completely been vanished. Some 80,000 people of about 25,000 families became homeless. Most of the affected families migrated to other parts of the district. The thana headquarter was shifted to Naria in 1985 to avoid erosion. But local people said the new thana headquarter was also under threat due to the approaching river.

Erosion by the 17 major rivers in the Barisal region has rendered about 10,000 people homeless in the region during the last few months. Vast tracts of arable, dwelling houses, business establishments, educational institutions, hats and bazaars have been washed away by erosion during the period. Erosion by the river Kirtonkhola has badly hit Barisal town recently (*The Independent*, 23 June 2002). Barisal DC ghat, launch ghat and BIWTA marine workshop have been threatened by the Kintonkhola. Erosion by the rivers Sandha, Sugandha, Arial Khan and Meghna has threatened Sherpur Bazar, Kazir Char, Kaliganj, Alimabad, Memania, Badurtuni and Main Bander under Hizla upazila, Mulad, Shafipur and Patarchar under Muladi upazila, Doanika, Mirganj and Rahimganj under Babuganj upazila, Shikarpur, Dasherhat under Uzirpur upazila and Bananipara Sadar of the district.

In Sirajganj every year a large number of people are rendered homeless. Educational institutions like high schools, colleges, primary schools, and madrasas have been washed away by riverbank erosion. A number of hat-bazaars, market places, mosques, temples, culverts, sawmills, small industries became victims of the eroding rivers. In a study it has been found that the traditional handloom industry of Shajadpur fell victims of erosions and of 5 unions about 25,000 handlooms have been washed away and 150000 people become

unemployed (*Daily Sangbad*, 5 October 2001). A number of flood protection embankments and irrigation projects have also been washed away. In Faridpur 2 high schools of Gazirtek union, 4 primary schools, 5 RCC bridges, 11 culverts, 7 km road, 2 km barrage, 1 health complex, 8 mosques and 2 temples have been washed away by the erosion of the Padma (*Daily Sangbad*, 21 June 2002).

Bank erosion by the rivers Meghna and Dakatia has threatened Chandpur and it has already devoured 200 year old Chandpur port, BIWTA launch ghat, railway security station, steamer ghat, railway station adjacent fish ghat, ice mills, 100 shops and vast areas (*Daily Sangbad*, 25 September 2001). Locals said the river is devouring about three kilometer areas stretching from Puran Bazaar to Bhoria belt in sadar upazila. Meanwhile, unabated erosion threatened the Chandpur Irrigation Project Embankment at Sakua and Bagadi and Balla unions in Sadar upazila.

Telipara Irrigation Project in Panchagarh appeared to be devoured by Korotoa (*The Independent*, 20 July 2001). Erosion by the river Paira has changed the scenario of Dhumki upazilla of Patuakhali. Many rich people of the region became impoverished and made to lead a miserable life. The Paira has eroded Lebukhali and Angaria union and consequently the highway that linked Dhumki and Baufal has disappeared. The electric line was disconnected due to the erosion and it has devoured some primary schools, government school, Labukhali bazaar and a few villages (*Daily Sangbad*, 24 January 2002).

### **Present Condition of the Homeless People**

The uprooted families are going through major hardships in the affected areas. No food, cash or goods have been supplied to them. The affected families have been suffering from severe lack of fresh water. Most of the erosion victims are marginal farmers. They are living from hand to mouth by doing odd jobs. Sometimes they have to remain half-fed and even unfed. They cannot send their children to schools because of extreme poverty. On the other hand their children are to work as child labourers to help supplement the family income. They cannot access medical services if need be.

The erosion-hit families have been forced to change their profession. Most of them have turned into day-labourers, while the very old and disabled have been forced into begging. A number of families, well off only a few months ago, are now working as day-labourers, others have turned into rickshaw-pullers.

### **Government Initiatives**

In order to protect the communities threatened by riverbank erosion, the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) took some initiatives through a number of projects. A project has been taken by the BWDB in two upazilas of Chapainawabganj to protect

from erosion by the river Padma. According to the BWDB, 8 spurs, 16 kilometres of embankment, two cross dams and 1.40 km of alternative canals will be constructed to check continuous erosion by the river Padma at a cost of Tk 750 million (*The Independent*, 14 November 2001). In Chandpur the BWDB has taken another project involving Tk 120 million to check devastating erosion by the Meghna (*The Independent*, 1 October 2001). On the other hand, ADB will give US\$ 80 million for Jamuna-Meghna erosion mitigation project to Bangladesh Government (*The Independent*, 29 June 2001).

In another report the BWDB officials quoted World Bank-funded studies on Brahmaputra (Jamuna) River Training informing that the consultant groups have identified ten locations to be very prone to bank erosion. The locations are Kamarjani, Fulchari, Hatsorpur, Hasnapara, Sariakandi, Mathurapara, Candanbaisa, Kazipur, Shimla-Sailabari, Sirajganj and Betil-Jalalpur. It was reported that with assistance from the World Bank, the BWDB has implemented several projects under River Bank Protection Project (RBPP) that include strengthening the existing Kalitola Groyne

and construction of two hard points in Sariakandi and Mathurapara apart from construction of the fish-pass regulating structure linking Bangali and Jamuna rivers and creation of resettlement village for project affected people. They said more resource is needed for operation and maintenance of the existing structures. New engineering interventions are badly needed for making the project sustainable in the long run (*The Independent*, 31 March 2002)

There are several other projects involving affected areas to combat erosion but these projects could not be fully implemented due to some shortcomings and various irregularities and fund constraints. It has been learnt that so far over Tk 500 million has been spent for Chandpur town Protection Scheme since 1973 on different occasions and for temporary works through lump sum allocations by previous government. It was alleged that a section of people and corrupt officials have also made their fortunes by resorting to malpractice in the works of the town protection scheme since Ershad regime.

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## ACTIVITIES OF THE UNIT July – September 2002

**Workshop:** A five-day workshop for Training of the Trainers (ToT) under the project of the *Capacity Building for Combating Trafficking in Women and Children in Bangladesh* was held at Bangladesh Institute of Administration and Management (BIAM) from 28 July to 1 August 2002. Participants included representatives of Rights Jessore, Association for Community Development (ACD), Rajshahi, IOM, and different NGOs in Dhaka. This workshop was conducted under the project on *Capacity Building for Combating Trafficking in Women and Children* commissioned by International Organization for Migration (IOM), Regional Office, Dhaka.

**Monthly Meeting:** In the Young Researchers' Forum (YRF) monthly meeting of July 2002, a paper was presented on *Bhutanese Refugees: Inner-dynamics of the Problem* by Md. Obaidul Haque, Assistant Professor, Department of International Relations.

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