

## **A STUDY ON THE HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN NORTH EAST INDIA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ASSAM**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Human trafficking has been around for a long time. It was official and exchanged human beings on the open market from an early age, which was referred to as slave trade. Despite the fact that it is illegal at the moment, it is a worldwide sector that earns an estimated five to seven billion dollars every year. Human trafficking poses a hazard to both human security and development. In recent years, millions of women and girls have been trafficked across borders and inside countries. According to a UNDP research, 300,000 to 450,000 persons are trafficked within Asia each year, with more than half taking place in South Asia. Women and children, particularly girls, are trafficked inside nations, across borders, and across regions and continents outside South Asia. Over the last decade, the rising problem of human trafficking in South Asia has been acknowledged and has become a significant concern. It may be described as a modernised version of the centuries-old slave trade. A big number of women and female children have gone missing in Assam, and it has been claimed that a large number of them have been found in various regions of the nation. Furthermore, the number of missing persons cases is on the rise, particularly among young women and children. Every year, hundreds of young girls and women are recruited by individuals and brought to various regions of India to work as slaves, with the most of them ending up in brothels. Domestic workers who are sexually exploited are more vulnerable to sexually transmitted illnesses, such as HIV, and unplanned pregnancies. Persons in Assam's conflict and danger porn regions seek jobs elsewhere, even if the offers come from shady people, putting them at risk of falling prey to human traffickers. This study will look at the hidden causes of human trafficking and how victims become victims of traffickers. For this report, data was gathered from NGOs in Assam that were fighting human trafficking at the grass-roots level. It is hoped that the report would motivate policymakers and other important stakeholders to look at the relationship between human trafficking and livelihood.

**KEYWORDS:** Human Trafficking, Women and Children, North East India Poverty, Sex Industry, Labour, Livelihood, NGO, Assam

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Human trafficking is the world's third most lucrative criminal enterprise. It is a problem that affects not just one state or country, but the entire world. After the arms and drug trades, it has gotten a lot of attention all over the world. "Trafficking" is defined by the United Nations as "any action that leads to the recruitment, transportation, harbouring, or receiving of individuals by the threat or use of force or a position of vulnerability." Human trafficking is one of the most serious issues in Russia and the former Soviet republics, particularly among women and children. Women in Russia are finding it difficult to obtain work and provide food and shelter for their families due to the present economic crisis, and as a result, they are putting themselves in danger. Following the fall of the Soviet Union, the trafficking of women and children from Eastern Europe has escalated. Human trafficking is a severe problem in Ukraine, although the nation's legislative statute introduced safety measures to combat the crime in 1998, making Ukraine the first country in Europe to explicitly declare

human trafficking a criminal offence. Poverty, government corruption, economic instability, a lack of strict legal systems, and the easy money tendency or high financial gain in the trade are all factors that contribute to human trafficking. This is a problem that affects the whole globe today, regardless of caste or faith. However, North East India is rapidly becoming a hotspot for human trafficking from all over the world. Because of the declining conventional societal value and high levels of corruption, human trafficking has lately arisen in India's North Eastern area. Many law enforcement officers are involved in the drug trafficking industry because of the widespread corruption. When women and children are trafficked, they frequently have no other alternative. Young girls and women from North East India are abducted from their homes and transported to distant states in India or abroad for bonded labour and sex business. According to government of India statistics, a child went missing every eight minutes in India in 2011, with the majority of them coming from West Bengal and North East India. Jharkhand has the highest rate of human trafficking cases among Indian states. According to a First Post storey, Delhi is the centre of India's human trafficking trade, with India housing half of the world's slaves. Illegal traders in Delhi sell girls and women from the North Eastern region, luring their parents with promises of a better life for their children. Roti, kapra, and makan are in short supply in most of the North Eastern states. As a result, poverty is the leading source of illicit human flash business. Sexual exploitation, bonded labour, cross-border trafficking, and trafficking for human organs are all examples of human trafficking. It's become a well-organized industry across the country. Despite its sixty-nine years of independence, India's economic progress has been lacklustre. The poorest people in India are still living in poverty, surviving on food, shelter, and clothing, all of which are fundamental human requirements. Women and children are more vulnerable to human trafficking when they are poor and hungry. Because of a lack of action, human trafficking continues to be a concern. Corruption is very prevalent in neighbouring nations where commerce is done. Customers and equal partners with the traffickers are frequently law enforcement and municipal police. Various NGOs give much-needed help and aid to victims of human trafficking, but their capacity to have a significant effect is typically limited by high levels of corruption. Occasionally, rescued victims are left damaged and unable to obtain the psychological assistance they require. Many people are drawn back into human trafficking. There are numerous major traffickers' exporters and importers. Russia, Ukraine, and Moldova are the top human-exporting countries. These nations are regarded as being readily accessible, with little legal implications. However, human trafficking may be found wherever. The main importers are Sweden, Finland, and Israel. Human trafficking is a complicated subject in Russia and the former Soviet republics. Much more has to be done to combat human trafficking, but it will persist as long as economic disparities and local corruption feed it. Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, and Sikkim are the eight states that make up India's North Eastern region. This region has a geographical size of 2, 62185 square kilometres, accounting for roughly 8% of the country's overall geographical area. This area lies between 29- and 22-degrees north latitude and 89.46- and 97.5-degrees east longitude. The region has a total population of 3.9 crores, according to the 2001 census estimate. Despite having abundant natural resources like as biodiversity, hydro-potential, oil and coal deposits, and dense forest cover, the area nevertheless lags behind all of India's states economically. The fact that it is bordered by international boundaries such as China in the north, Bhutan in the west, Myanmar or Burma in the east, and Bangladesh in the south is the most crucial element in fuelling human trafficking in this region. As a result, issues such as human trafficking grow complicated, with the threat of child and female trafficking reaching worrisome proportions. Despite the fact that child trafficking is pervasive throughout the country, it is particularly prominent in the North-Eastern area. The majority of human trafficking instances in Assam occur on the

tea estates, where the majority of the inhabitants are uneducated and alcoholic. Human trafficking occurs in the North Eastern area of India, both inside the states and over the borders of Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Nepal, due to poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and traditional views of women. Mushalpur, Baska, Dumni chaki, Lakhimpur, Arunachal Pradesh, Dhubri, and other locations in the North Eastern region are particularly prone to human trafficking. According to data from the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in Ulubari, Assam, 42.03 percent of children were trafficked to the states of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, and West Bengal between 2005 and 2010, with 31.88 percent going to metro cities like Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata, 14.49 percent going to unknown destinations, 7.25 percent going to the North Eastern region, and 4.35 percent going to other states. In the state, women and children are still at risk. In 2015, more than 20,000 cases of violence against women were reported. Similarly, through October 2015, around 1,386 minors, including females, were reported missing from across the state, compared to 1,577 juveniles who went missing the previous year. Human trafficking has become an insurmountable problem in North East India due to open national and international borders and a lack of security.

## **2. AREA OF THE STUDY**

Assam is the gateway to the North East states, which are located in the north-eastern section of India and are divided into 27 districts, two of which are hill districts. Its state borders touch seven states, and its geographical position makes it accessible from Bangladesh and Bhutan. Assam has served as a source, transit, and destination for women and children trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation, forced labour, forced marriage, and domestic slavery, among other things. Sonitpur, Nagaon, Silchar, Dhubri, Kokrajhar, Kamrup, and others are sources of trafficking in Assam, whereas Siliguri, Mumbai, Goa, Chennai, Haryana, Punjab, Delhi, Guwahati, Silchar, and others are destinations. Guwahati, Kokrajhar, Bandardewa (on the Assam-Arunachal border), Silchar, Siliguri, and others are key transit points. The only way to go to the North East is through Assam's Guwahati. All of the States are connected to the rest of India through Guwahati; hence road transit alone must cover more than 95 percent of the area's transportation demands. At addition, the railhead in Guwahati serves as a gateway to the rest of India. As a result, trafficking routes include the Guwahati-New Jalpaiguri railway line and the Guwahati-Siliguri Road.

## **3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of this study are as follows-

- To learn more about the causes of human trafficking in the North Eastern United States.
- To learn more about what it means to be a victim of human trafficking.
- To present human trafficking remedies.
- The goal of this project is to learn more about the causes and repercussions of women trafficking in Assam.
- The purpose of this meeting is to debate the government's plans for combating human trafficking.
- To investigate why human trafficking of women is a socioeconomic issue.

## **4. METHODOLOGY**

Qualitative research is used to perform the investigation. In addition, the study uses a descriptive and exploratory technique to evaluate and analyse the rising trend of human trafficking in the North East region (NER), with a focus on Nagaland. The study's qualitative data was primarily gathered from both primary and secondary sources. Interviews, academic

journals, books, research papers, press stories, and international documents are among the sources.

**SECONDARY DATA COLLECTION METHOD:**The study drew on records from the Indian government and international organisations. Statistics on the scope of human trafficking were among the data examined. These are taken from the National Crime Records Bureau of India (NCRB), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (UNODC). Human trafficking documentation and research studies were also obtained from international organisations such as the United Nations and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Academic literature was also used in the research. Scholarly publications and books on the topic of human trafficking in NER are included. Newspaper articles were also included in the data analysis.

**PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION METHOD:**As far as feasible, official records and reports from state authorities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were examined. Informal talks and interviews with police officers and NGOs in Nagaland were used to complement primary data gathering. In-person discussions and interviews were held. The author first reached out to potential interviewees in Nagaland by email and phone. The goal of the study was explained to the participants. In Dimapur, Peren, and Kohima, focus groups with important participants were held. Police officers from Dimapur, Peren, and Tuensang Districts, as well as NGOs from Kohima and Dimapur, are among the participants. During the interviews, I asked my interviewees for reports and statistics. The Peren police department, the State Child Protection Society in Kohima, and the School of Social Work NGO in Dimapur all provided case studies on human trafficking in Nagaland. Similar complaints and statistics were obtained from the Dimapur-based NGO Prodigals' Home and the Dimapur Police.

## **5. CAUSES OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

Around 80% of human trafficking occurs for sexual exploitation, with the remaining 20% being for bonded labour and other reasons. The need for commercial sex is one of the reasons of human trafficking in India, which is regarded as Asia's centre. Because of the strong demand for their Mongolian appearance, the majority of the females in the North Eastern area are trafficked to Thailand, Singapore, and Japan as bonded labour or sex workers. Poverty and economic difficulties, along with drinking, has rendered most parents vulnerable to the offer of money in return for their daughters' children being sold into slavery over state lines. Another notable component in this illegal commerce is the tea estate management's indifference to these operations.

Human trafficking occurs for a variety of causes all around the world. However, the basic reasons are the same in all countries –

**ECONOMIC CAUSE:**Poverty, environmental degradation, unemployment, economic inequality, climate change, migration, environmental degradation, or despair are all examples of economic causes.

**SOCIAL CAUSE:**Gender inequality, violence against women and girls, rising demand for cheap labour in the construction, agriculture, and mining industries, and a lack of social protection are some of the socioeconomic factors.

**POLITICAL CAUSE:**Political causes are corruption inside the country and international level, terrorism, war, increased armed conflicts, etc.

## **6. SOLUTIONS FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

Human trafficking is a worldwide problem and one of the world's fastest-growing illicit businesses. To put a stop to this horrible crime, every citizen must be vigilant and engaged. There are a few options listed below to help you get rid of this annoyance:

- The government should make it illegal for traffickers to operate in the country. The traffickers should be severely punished so that they never do another crime.
- Human trafficking's most susceptible areas should be identified, and awareness programmes should be launched with the support of non-governmental organisations and local residents.
- All of the North-East states should unite to combat this threat in a coordinated manner.
- The rate of political corruption should be reduced, and the border area should be closely monitored by the relevant authorities.
- To combat this threat, the government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and other social organisations should spread education in remote areas, particularly about these types of crimes, because without proper knowledge, most uneducated women and girls, including those who are educated, become easy prey for traffickers.
- On the other hand, the responsible authorities should take the report of a missing person seriously and take immediate action.
- Women and girls' children are treated as second-class citizens and sold at a cheaper price as commodities as a result of their loss of social worth. This occurred only as a result of the girl child's indifference. The Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi Ji, has created a programme for girls called "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao," which, if implemented properly, would help to eliminate this type of threat from society.
- Because the sex ratio in Haryana, Rajasthan, and other regions of the nation is so low as a result of female child foetal death, girl child trafficking has become a common practise in these states. To combat this unlawful activity, a march should be organised to raise awareness of women's empowerment among the general public.
- Adequate rehabilitation centres should be established in a systematic manner to ensure that trafficked women and girls receive appropriate treatment and counselling.
- Human trafficking is mostly caused by poverty, gender prejudice, increasing urbanisation, and a lack of knowledge in North East India, hence an action plan should be implemented to eliminate this threat.
- The Supreme Court of India ordered the Central government to operationalize the Organized Crimes Investigating Agency (OCIA) on December 1, 2016, in order to combat state and international human trafficking of girls. If this agency takes swift action, such crimes may be eradicated one day.
- A comprehensive bill on human trafficking will provide law enforcement authorities the much-needed authority to combat the illegal activity.

## **7. POLICIES ADOPTED BY GOVERNMENT FOR ANTI HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century's, governments took steps to combat this threat on a global scale, including the International Anti-Slavery Convention, International Anti-Prostitution Convention, International Labour Law, International Human Rights Law, and the Rights to Children Act, among others. These are only a few of the many steps taken by governments throughout the world. In India, the government has adopted a number of anti-trafficking steps to protect women and children from being exploited as a result of the threat of human trafficking. Article 23 (1) of the Indian Constitution states that "trafficking in human beings is forbidden, and any violation of this prohibition will be a crime and penalised." Article 39 (1) puts a duty on the state to orient its policies toward ensuring "that

children are provided opportunity and facilities to develop in a healthy way, in a context of freedom and dignity, and that children and adolescents are safeguarded from exploitation..." The immoral Traffic Preventing Act of 1956 is the country's primary legislative tool for combating human trafficking. A National Plan of Action to address human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of women and children was adopted by the Indian Prime Minister in 1998.

Assam's government has made a number of initiatives to prevent human trafficking. The following are the important steps:

- The Anti-Human Trafficking Cell has been established at CID headquarters, with the Nodal Officer being the IGP CID.
- With the current manpower, 14 Anti-Human Trafficking Units have been established at district headquarters in accordance with Ministry of Human Affairs guidelines.
- At the district headquarters, 26 Juvenile Justice Board Districts have been established.
- In each district, a total of 26 child welfare committees have been established.
- In Assam's 30 police districts, 30 Special Juvenile Police Units have been established.
- In each district, three advisory boards have been established. IT(P) Act, Section 13(3)(b)
- On the national level, as well as at the CID headquarters, a continuous process of training and sensitization on human trafficking is underway for officers and personnel.
- Increased collaboration between the police and other government and non-government agencies
- 7 Observation and Shelter Homes have already been built in districts.

District SPs are obliged to ensure the following in order to prevent the trafficking of women and girls:

- a) At the PS/OP level, the investigation of crimes against women will be prioritised.
- b) Enhanced vigilance in areas where human trafficking is likely to occur, such as train stations and bus stops.
- c) Prompt investigation/verification to distinguish cases of human trafficking from kidnapping, abduction, and missing entries.
- d) Senior police officers will carry out successful raids with the help of anti-trafficking NGOs.
- e) Organised rackets and its members must be recognised in order to face serious legal consequences.
- f) Apart from that, immigration authorities and police officers from Assam's bordering districts have been notified to maintain a high level of vigilance in order to prevent trans-border trafficking.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

The goal of this article was to put together an integrated framework for revealing and characterising women's and children's human trafficking in India. To build a thorough understanding of the process followed during the commission of this crime in India, variables from current foreign theories were gathered. The underlying idea is that, because human trafficking includes such a large number of people from various backgrounds, there can't be a single explanation for its origins. In order to successfully prevent, punish suspects, and protect victims of human trafficking of women and girls for involuntary prostitution, human trafficking remedies should address the value of an integrated framework. For a remedial remedy, many people believe that legalising prostitution is a solution to women's trafficking, however data suggests that licenced sex businesses instead promote trafficking to fulfil the demand for women to work in the legal sex industries. Increased trafficking is accompanied

by increased activity of organised criminal networks. Because the ideas suggest that human trafficking of women and children is not just a criminal, but also a source of societal strife and unrest. In light of the current situation and theoretical foundation, the Indian political system should enact some severe punitive measures against the perpetrators of this crime, which can lead to the total eradication of this social problem.

Human trafficking is fast becoming a raging scourge on our society. In Assam, human trafficking is mostly a concern in border areas where people are largely uneducated and isolated from mainstream culture. The media can raise public awareness about these atrocities and motivate individuals to help stop them. The media may also help with prevention by alerting vulnerable groups and dispelling the myths that make individuals vulnerable to human trafficking. It may also improve knowledge by gaining a deeper understanding of the nature of trafficking through increased data collecting and analysis, as well as taking part in joint research initiatives and producing an evidence-based report on global trends. Most importantly, a balanced perspective is critical, with journalists and media professionals providing both causes and solutions. The need of news follow-up is critical in this situation. Officers must be educated how to spot victims of human trafficking, especially in sectors other than the commercial sex business. It is necessary to raise knowledge and sensitivity about the trafficking of their own countrymen. (Aronowitz,2009). The study's focus group discussion revealed a number of difficulties, including a lack of shelter homes for rescued people and inadequate facilities for their rehabilitation. The media should pay attention to such matters as well, and the rescued individual is frequently socially avoided. Because media has enthusiastic readers, audiences, and viewers who follow media in every step of their lives, it is also the responsibility of media to shatter such taboos.

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