**Prevention of human trafficking through Surveillance Groups in Makwanpur and Parsa, Nepal**

**Summary:**

Human Trafficking is one of the serious problems in Nepal. It is a means of exploitation of women and children by forcing them into the sex industry, domestic and factory labor, organ transplantation and illegal adoption. The majority are children, some as young as eight or nine years of age (TDH, 2010).The biggest number of trafficking exists in the form of cross-border trafficking in young women and children from Nepal to India, Bangladesh, Hong Kong and to the gulf countries. As stated in a research report of Child Reach Nepal (2014) around 20,000 Nepali children are trafficked every year where many are forced to work in the commercial sex industry. This number is estimated to have gone up significantly after a devastating earthquake struck Nepal on 25 April 2015. On the other hand, women constitutes 53% of all Nepali trafficking victims, girls 33%, men 11% and boys 3% being women and girls therefore make up 86% of the total number of trafficking in persons 2012 (The UNODC Global Report in trafficking 2012). According to Nepal Police, majority of trafficking victims are from Janajati (48%), followed by 29 percent for Brahman/Chhetri, 15 percent for Dalit and 8 percent for Madeshi groups.

In this context, Makwanpur, historically one of the districts from where many Tamangs women and girls trafficked and with a higher unsafely work migration rates, has different ethnic group living in the district including Tamang, Brahmin, Newar, and marginalized group such as Chepang and Bankariya. Until a few years back, trafficking of girls to brothels in India and children sent to work in circuses were the largest problems in Makwanpur. After the decade-long armed conflict in Nepal, a new trend of trafficking has emerged, as women and girls are trafficked to Gulf and other countries for sexual and other exploitative jobs. Most cases of trafficking are seen amongst poor, ignorant and rural girls who are lured away with promises of better jobs, money, marriage and better lives. Similarly, sending children to work in the circus through traffickers is another major problem in Makwanpur. Trafficking is higher among the marginalized groups and Dalits. Ignorance, lack of awareness, poverty and low literacy rate are major causes behind these groups being victims of trafficking. An NHRC/ONRT report shows that 149 children were rescued from Indian circus companies from 2004-07 in Makwanpur (Source: Trafficking in Person Especially on Women and Children in Nepal, National Report 2006-07, NHRC/ONRT, Page: 13).

**Challenge:**

There are many factors that explain the high level of trafficking in the country and most specifically in the two districts we want to work: Makwanpur and Parsa. Factors like poverty, lack of education, social discrimination and exclusion, non-functional family structures, open border, archaic laws and ineffective law enforcement and policy implementation mechanisms, have been identified as the main causes for the increasing of trafficking in human being in Nepal. Source: (Dr. Ram Krishna Timalsena, National Law College, Kathmandu). For example, the survey report of missing and migrated children conducted by HimRights in 2011 revealed that most of the children have migrated due to poor economic condition of their families. 125 children have migrated from 81 households of ward no. 5, 6 and 7 of Handikhola VDC of Makwanpur district. Another socio-cultural factor include low socio-economic status of women and girls in the society, gender discrimination, domestic violence, early marriage, religious practices, changing life style and cultural norms, lack of job opportunities, increasing consumerism and globalization.

On the other hand, a lack of education or viable employment opportunities will also result in families struggling to earn adequate income to support themselves, and often children are forced to drop out of school altogether to go out to work to bring in food or money for their families leaving the children with little education and prevents them from getting well-paid jobs in the future leaving them vulnerable to exploitation (UNICEF, 2009). Nepal is a patriarchal society with discrimination against women and girls highly institutionalized, which it means that girls are more affected by push and pull factors than men as they faced fewer employment and vocational training opportunities (Terre des Hommes, 2003). Similarly to those in other Central Tarai districts, women in Bara face unequal relations and barriers due to a patriarchal social structure and the exploitative nature of the socio-cultural system, which tolerate many instances of gender based violence and sexual exploitation. According to Sangita Puri (coordinator of Maiti Nepal, Birgunj), they rescued 120 women and eight children as they were trying to enter India from Birgunj border this year. The rescued victims were from Parsa, Bara, Makawanpur, Sarlahi, Dhading, Sindhupalchok and Kavre districts. (Published: The Kathmandu Post, 01/01/16)

Children under 18 years (both girls and boys) and young people between 18-25 from the most marginalized and vulnerable communities and excluded such as Dalits and disadvantaged ethnic groups victims and survivors and those who are vulnerable to trafficking or those trafficked and rescued from the two intervention districts: Makwanpur and Parsa.

**Solution:**

HIMRIGHTS has been implementing programs on prevention of human trafficking, unsafe migration, and violence against women and children in the Makwanpur, Bara, Parsa, and Rautahat districts since 2000. Taking this into account and to prevent human trafficking at a grassroots level, HIMRIGHTS formed *"Nigarani Samuha"* (Surveillance Groups) in 2003. There were 76 and 33 surveillance groups in Makwanpur and Bara districts respectively with 1088 members. They play a key role as a watchdog in the community to prevent girls and women from being victim of trafficking or unsafe migration and gender based violence. HIMRIGHTS provided education scholarships to 320 circus returnees, vulnerable, conflict-affected, and marginalized girls; 750 women survivors of armed conflict, gender-based violence, vulnerable to trafficking were provided with income-generation, skill development training, and seed money.

During the project, 52 children were rescued from different places of Nepal-India in coordination with different GOs and NGOs. Another of the achievements were the creation and strengthen of 19 Village Child Protection Committees (VCPC) for effective and efficient work to combat child trafficking and human rights issue and also more than 80 vulnerable children got educational support from different Village Child Protection Committees with the financial support of local governments.

Due to the open cross border between Nepal and India is the biggest problem to control human trafficking. Systematic monitoring system should be placed in each cross border point of Nepal and India. Awareness is very crucial addressing human trafficking and unsafe migration in Nepal. Income generation activities for the survivors and families could be the effective activity to reduce trafficking at grassroots level. Most women and girls are trafficked due to lack of education and awareness, employment opportunities and poverty. This project aims to contribute to reduction of trafficking of women and children through enhancing capacities of community-based surveillance groups and support rehabilitation of survivors in coordination with local governments.

Border Police and Prayash of India stressed for the systematic and effective monitoring mechanisms at open border areas to reduce human trafficking issues. Similarly, regular consultations between Nepal Government and India Government should be conducted to identify the gaps and problems to address human trafficking issues. They also suggested conducting awareness activities at grassroots level to district level massively to make community aware on these issues. Poverty is biggest challenge to all. Income generation programs for most marginalized and vulnerable society would be another effective mechanism to reduce vulnerability of human/child trafficking. Local stakeholders and community also demanded for the capacity building programs to enhance the capacity to work against human trafficking. (Based on the field assessment of Open Border and India, November 2017)

*Core target groups*: Women and children who are vulnerable and survivors of trafficking

*Frontline workers*: Surveillance groups, Village Child Protection Committees, protection groups, women's groups, district level groups, child and youth clubs networks, Women’s cooperatives, community and media.

**Activities**:

1. **Strengthen the capacity of surveillance groups**

HimRights will conduct one-day coordination meeting for formation and strengthening of VDC level surveillance groups. 6 surveillance groups will be formed and strengthened in Parsa and Makwanpur. Seed money support will provide to each surveillance group to conduct the program on awareness raising, prevention and protection against human trafficking and unsafe migration.

6 surveillance groups will be formed and/or strengthened in two districts.

1. **Capacity building trainings for surveillance groups**

We will organize a 3 daystraining to 30 members from 6 surveillance groups. The training contents will include the following: human trafficking; causes and effects of human trafficking; ways to combat trafficking and protection of individuals; status and rights of women and children; rights of the victims; national/international conventions on trafficking; legal provisions; new trends of internal and international trafficking to cities, India and other countries; increased vulnerability in earthquake context; and community people’s roles in addressing these issues. The groups will be linked with local governments to access government fund through annual planning process.

1 capacity building trainings will be conducted.

1. **Support for survivors**

We will provide support for skill/vocational trainings to 5 survivors of trafficking. The survivors will be identified in coordination with government and non-government agencies. The possible areas of training could be tailoring, candle making, beauty parlor, mobile maintenance, motorcycle and vehicle repair, plumbing, electrician, driving etc. that will be identified later based on the best interest of the survivor.

Total support: 5 trafficking survivors

1. **Mass awareness on prevention and protection:**

*Hoarding Boards*: We will install Hoarding Boards in the most vulnerable areas and transit points to raise mass awareness against human trafficking and unsafe migration. 6 Hoarding Boards will be installed in two districts.

*Graffiti Painting*: We will collaborate with local government schools to paint graffiti in school walls with social messages and art to raise awareness against human trafficking and unsafe migration. 6 graffiti will be painted in two districts.

*Artwork competition in schools:* We will conduct artwork competition with 300 children from 6 schools. The artworks will be focused on human trafficking, unsafe migration and their impact on family and the community.

**Long Term Impact**

Formation of surveillance groups and their capacity building activities will have long term impact in prevention and protection of women and girls from trafficking and unsafe migration. They will actively work in their community in close collaboration with local government, local police and community organizations to access the local government fund to raise mass awareness through different activities.

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