



Trafficking in Women and Children in India: A Situational Analysis in Maharashtra

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Abstract

The trading in human beings and their exploitation in varied forms by traffickers is the most despicable violation of human rights. This global violation of human rights occurs within countries and across borders, regions and continents. Trafficking clearly violates the fundamental right to a life of dignity. It also violates the right to health and health care, liberty and security of person, and the right to freedom from torture, violence, cruelty or degrading treatment. The present paper is a case study of Save the Children India's (STCI) project titled; "Preventing Trafficking amongst Women and Children through Community Participation", in four rural districts (Latur, Osmanabad, Beed and Nanded) of Marathwada region in Maharashtra. Methodology adopted for developing this case study was discussion with various functionaries implementing the programme, visits to NGOs, and use of secondary data available. Author further developed insight and understanding for the case study while supervising students, who were placed for their field work in NGOs implementing the prevention project. Since the present paper is about internal trafficking, it provides an analytical framework of various factors responsible for trafficking of women and children in India on the basis of available literature. Further the difference between migration and trafficking has also been discussed for the purpose of conceptual clarity.

Introduction

While slavery and slave trade were abolished centuries ago by the French revolution, the British Parliament and the 13th amendment to the American Constitution, human trafficking and modern forms of human exploitation are not part of history. They are a booming international trade, making huge profits at the expense of the exploited victims. Human trafficking has been identified as third largest source of profit for organized crime following arms and then drug, generating billions of dollars annually with very little investment. It is ironic that in a century that started with re-affirmation of the commonality of values based on human rights and fundamental freedoms, such abuses still go unchecked.

Trafficking is defined as a trade in something that should not be treated in for various social, economic or political reasons. Thus, we have terms like drug trafficking, arms

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trafficking and human trafficking. The concept of human trafficking refers to the criminal practice of exploiting human beings by treating them like commodities for the profit. Even after being trafficked, victims are subjected to long-term exploitation. The UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially, Women and Children 2000 gives first internationally recognized definition of trafficking². According to this definition trafficking involves –Movement of persons – recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of a person,

Trafficking must have an element of force, threat or coercion, or an element of deceit or fraud (which vitiates any voluntary movement by the victim). This also includes abuse of power by a person who has the position of authority or control over the victim. The vulnerable position of the victim, whether a child or a woman, is clearly brought out in such situations. A guardian may force a child into marriage or may perform a fraudulent marriage of his ward. He may dedicate a girl child to a deity for prostitution.

The third element in the definition is the element of exploitation which can be sexual exploitation, forced labour or forced services, slavery or practices similar to slavery which may cover activities such as bonded labour, debt bondage, begging or use of children as camel jockeys. Sexual exploitation would also include pornography and paedophilia. One of the activities specifically referred to in the definition is removal of organs.

Migration and Trafficking

Migration is a broad general concept and trafficking is a sub-set or category of migration. Migration is processes of movement of people from one place to another (in case of international migration one country to another) in order to take up employment or establish residence or change their place of residence for various reasons. It applies to various types of movements guided by diverse causes. On the other hand, trafficking in persons as a subset of migration is a movement (either internally or internationally) of a person under a situation of deceit, force, threat, debt bondage or other forms of coercion involving exploitation and violation of human rights. Trafficking in persons therefore mostly results in abusive exploitation and human rights violations. A person, by being in the hands of traffickers, loses control of his/her fate and freedom³ and ends up in a harm situation.

Though the movement or mobility is a common element of both trafficking and migration, it is the presence or absence of coercion, exploitation, abuse, and loss of control on life options could be considered as determining factors. Absence of some or all of these makes a person's movement migration and trafficking.⁴ In simple terms, the difference could be as follows:

Trafficked persons are deceived or forced (actual or by threat) to move. Whereas, regular migrants are not usually deceived or forced to leave their place of residence. But

² “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 vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments of 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, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the removal of organs.”

³ IOM, *Migrant Trafficking and Human Smuggling in Europe: A review of evidence with case studies from Hungary, Poland and Ukraine*, Geneva, 2000.

⁴ *Ibid.*

sometimes it could be difficult to draw a line between the two concepts, as there are grey areas in between blurring a clear distinction.

Both trafficking in persons and migration share the same migratory space as both involve movement. Nevertheless, the two phenomenons have very different reasons behind movement and outcomes, with trafficked persons being exposed to a harm situation and end up in slave like situations. Exploitation, profit and illegality are all central to the idea of trafficking in persons.⁵

Trafficking is viewed as an anti-social and morally degrading heinous event. However, migration is widely considered as a process that could enhance social progress in both the origin and destination countries, if managed properly, it could also be an empowering process for the migrants.

Trafficking in Indian Context

India is a source, transit and destination country for thousands of men, women and children. It receives women and children from Nepal and Bangladesh. It also sends women and children to Middle Eastern countries daily. Of the 74 million south Asian women reported as missing, 20 million are said to be working in Indian brothels. An estimated 25 percent of women trafficked to India are under 18 years of age. In addition, there are several indications of internal trafficking. Internal trafficking of women, men and children for purposes of sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, bonded labour, and indentured servitude is widespread. Internal trafficking of women and girls from rural areas to cities for purpose of sexual exploitation and labor is also noticeable (A Human Rights Report on Trafficking of Persons, Especially Women and Children).

Trafficking from neighbouring countries accounts for only 10 per cent of the coerced migration in India, with approximately 2.17 per cent from Bangladesh and 2.6 per cent being from Nepal. The share of interstate trafficking is estimated at 89 per cent (ADB 2002). Studies by Rozario (1988), CSWB (1996), Mukherjee (1997), Ganthia (1999), Haq (2001) and SAP (2001) provide details about the internal trafficking routes in India and about Commercial Sexual Exploitation centres. These studies also identify geographical belts of exploitation, like for instance, the pink triangle between Agra, Jaipur, and Delhi. Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra appear to be the main states from where trafficked persons are sourced, with the metro cities being the most frequent destination points.

About trafficking in northern India, a report prepared by Shakti Vahini (an NGO) reveals that every year, thousands of young women and girls in northern India are lured or sold for involuntary marriage. They are bartered at prices that vary depending on their age, beauty and virginity, and exploited under conditions that amounts to a modern form of slavery. Though as per the findings and from locally available information there are about 5-10 thousand women forced into marriage by coercion or trade in Rewari and Faridabad district alone in Haryana and about 4-5 thousand women in Mansa district of Punjab alone, the clandestine character of trafficking makes it very difficult to establish definite figures as many trafficked women and girls are kept in captivity, bonded like condition and sexual slavery (Shakti Vahini, 2003). The report further reiterates that Assam, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Orissa, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh &

⁵ Ibid.

Himachal Pradesh are prime supply zones from where the trafficking in guise of migration for coerced or forceful marriage, domestic servants and agricultural labour is taking place.

Why trafficking of women and children?

There are many supply side reasons for trafficking. The first reason is poverty. The primary reason for the increase in trafficking into the global menace it has become is the breakdown of traditional livelihood options. Industrialization and globalization has destroyed the viability of traditional livelihood especially in rural areas. The erosion of livelihood in the source areas and the availability of better livelihood opportunities in other areas initiate migration of poor people towards high-income areas. People migrate all the time for various reasons from personal and professional development, usually middle class professionals to semiskilled, unskilled and low skilled workers. However, the chances of migration turning into trafficking are higher for those who are at the bottom level in terms of skills, who also happens to be poor. Women and children form a large group of poor unskilled labour due to systematic gender and social discrimination against them. Internal and international movement of women into the labour market has exposed them to the vulnerability of sexual exploitation. Women and children amongst migrants are coerced and deceived at the place of their origin, during movement and transit and at their destination.⁶

Coomaraswamy (2000b) has rightly said that:

“traffickers fish in the stream of migration. They prey on the most vulnerable section of the migrants to supply to the most exploitative, hazardous and inhuman forms of work. Traffickers can also create migration situation by capitalizing on the lack of choice of the poor. This very powerlessness of the migrants creates a condition in which they can easily be duped, coerced and exploited furthering their susceptibility to continuance of exploitation” (p.7).

On the demand side, the reasons of trafficking include an increased demand for cheap easily exploitable trafficked labour coming from wide range of sector, topped by the sex industry. A high demand for women and children have been created in the flexible labour markets where women and children are paid much lower wages than men as they are considered a “cheap” labour force and have little or no capacity to negotiate. Women and children are in greater demand within the trade of human labor as the market is segmented on the basis of gender and age, as they are easier to control, intimidate and exploit than other groups and offer a far greater range of services from a very small cost. The gender discrimination they suffer and exclusion from the economic and political arenas makes them socially vulnerable subjects. It is this socially constructed vulnerability of women and children as marginalized social groups that is the key ingredient in their oppression.⁷

While labour migration satisfies demands for labour at all levels of the economic sector, trafficking supplies mainly to the unorganized and exploitative sectors of the economy. Besides all these considerations, the most common purpose for the trafficking of women and children continues to be commercial sexual exploitation (CSE). The trafficked persons are used for beggary, in the circus, or entertainment industry. But even for those who

⁶ Krishnan, S & Vetticatil, J. Role of Livelihood Options in the Migration/Trafficking Paradigm, Paper Presented in Regional Conference on Revisiting the Migration and Trafficking Nexus: The South Asian Scenario, Dhaka Bangladesh, 4-6 April, 2005.

⁷ 2003-2004 Annual Report of Regional Anti-Trafficking Programme, UNIFEM.

have been trafficked for purposes other than CSE, sexual exploitation is a common form of violence that most of them have to face (Coomaraswamy, 2000a).

The available literature also emphasizes the fact that trafficking occurs in the context of increased instances of human rights violations against women. These include the violation of women's reproductive rights, right of female infants and fetuses to life, domestic violence against women, custodial violence and the violation of women's rights to decision-making, land assets and other resources (Sanghera 1999; Karmakar, 2001; Raymond et al, 2002). Early marriage, lack of choice regarding a marriage partner and the socialization of women into persons who remain servile and bear injustice silently are other factors that render women more vulnerable (ADB, 2002; 42).

While analyzing the reasons as to why trafficking occurs, Alison Phinney (2001) rightly puts forward the notion of the trafficking triangle, which refers to the space created by the demand, supply and impunity with which trafficking occurs. According to her, 'trafficking is driven by demand for women's and children's bodies in the sex industry, fuelled by supply of women who are denied equal rights and opportunities for education and economic advancement and perpetuated by traffickers who are able to exploit human misfortune with near impunity' (Phinney, 2001). Insufficient or inadequate laws, poor enforcement, ineffective penalties, minimal chances of prosecution, the relatively low risks involved, corruption and complacency, invisibility of the issue, the failure of governments to implement policies and provide adequate services for victims- all play a role in perpetuating trafficking (Phinney, 2001; UNDP, 2002).

Context: Marathwada region in Maharashtra

Since the present paper is a case study of STCI's Prevention Project in four districts of Marathwada region of Maharashtra, the following pages provide a contextual background of disparities in development in Maharashtra state along with the backwardness of Marathwada region. Further, a background note has also been given about Save the Children India (STCI) and Save Our Sisters (SOS) rural mission, before deliberating on the STCI's prevention project.

Maharashtra is considered to be one of the richest states of India. It has the image of a developed agro-industrial state. It has per capita income of Rs. 28,204, well above the nation's per capita income of Rs. 20,989. It has over 28,000 working factories, accounting for 11.9% of the country's total industrial output, contributes 13% of the nation's GDP, and has a 76.88% literacy rate. The state capital, Mumbai, is the country's financial capital. Yet, Maharashtra has some of the poorest and most underdeveloped regions in the country. One of the PACS programme (Poorest Areas Civil Society) discussion papers highlight that development in Maharashtra is imbalanced and marked by: neglect of agriculture, Inadequate irrigation, inequitable access, Recurrent drought, Poor public distribution system (PDS), Low spending on health care, Islands of development, Inadequate education infrastructure, Problems in the Employment Guarantee Scheme, Increasing levels of malnutrition, Rising unemployment, and Limited women's empowerment.

Overall development indicators of Maharashtra state are misleading because of relatively high attainments on most indicators in cities like Mumbai, Thane, Pune and Kohlapur. Outside these big cities, Maharashtra scores unsatisfactorily on several fronts, as revealed by these observations in Government of Maharashtra's (GoM) Human Development Report (2000 and 2002).

Among all major states of India, Maharashtra has the lowest average yields as per hectare and lowest total food grain production.

A major part of Maharashtra is poor. Though statistical estimate for the state as a whole show a decline in poverty over time, these are not corroborated by estimate of real consumption. Measured by quantity of cereal consumption and calorie intake, the population does not show any marked improvement. Total monthly per capita cereal consumption of the rural population as a whole declined from about 13.5 Kg during the mid-1970s to less than 11.5 Kg during the 1990s. Average calorie intake in rural Maharashtra decreased from 2,280 in 1960-61 to 2,144 in 1983 and further down to 1,939 in 1993-94.

- Over half the married women in rural Maharashtra between 15 and 49 years suffer from anaemia.
- Eight districts, including Marathwada (Jalna, Osmanabad, Nanded, Latur and Parbhani) account for just 11% of the total income generated in the state.
- Data on height-for-age indicators reflects a high incidence (30%) of severe stunting among children in most districts of Marathwada.
- Child marriages are very common in some districts of Marathwada. The proportion of such marriages to total marriages is over 50% in Nanded, Beed, Latur, Jalna, and Aurangabad.

Marathwada region of Maharashtra comprises of eight districts of Jalna, Aurangabad, Parbhani, Hingoli, Nanded, Latur, Osmanabad and Beed. Marathwada was once part of the erstwhile kingdom of the Nizam of Hyderabad. The region is rocky and dry with low and uncertain rainfall, small landholdings and landlessness also. It accounts for 16.84% of the state's population and is home to nearly 30% of the state's Below Poverty Line families. Its per capita GDP is Rs. 10,373- a good 40 per cent below the state's per capita GDP of Rs. 17,029- and contributes just 8% of the state's industrial output. Its literacy rate is the lowest in the state (51.23% according to Census, 2001). The region is least urbanized in Maharashtra with 80% of the population living in rural areas. About 30% of the population in Marathwada region is below poverty level (www.marathwadaprofile.com, October 6, 2004).

Marathwada region lack natural resources and is prone to severe drought. Nearly 32% of its 64,818 sq. Km area comes under the rain shadow region. Annual average rate rainfall in the region is 750mm and drought is permanent feature. Irrigation water, in real terms reaches not more than 50,000 acres of cultivable land. Getting supply of drinking water twice a week is a luxury. About 98% of agriculture is dry land farming and cotton is the major crop. But the inherent susceptibility of cotton crop to pest and the vagaries of nature make its cultivation a risky affair, resulting in many farmers falling prey to debt. Marathwada is the perhaps the most neglected and backward region of Maharashtra. All eight districts of Marathwada figure in the list of the 100 poorest districts in the country (a list of 100 backward districts prepared in 1997 by a committee of the Government of India's Ministry of Rural Areas and Employment)⁸.

Trafficking of women and children in Marathwada

Maharashtra is increasingly known as a source, destination and route for trafficking in women and children. Trafficking of women and children is a deeply entrenched and

⁸ <http://www.empowerpoor.org/background.asp?report=19>.

growing phenomenon in drought-prone districts of Marathwada such as Latur, Osmanabad, Beed and Nanded. These four districts are high trafficking zones in India. Main causes are mixture of environmental and social factors as mentioned above. While poor rainfall and irrigation facilities in Marathwada limit the scope for agriculture, landless farmers, dalits and other minority groups have had to survive here under tremendous pressure. Social injustice and exploitation, both cultural and economic, is common. Recurrent droughts as experienced in the region have resulted in depletion of economic livelihoods creating great pressure for rural masses to migrate in search of economic sustenance. With the erosion of livelihoods in the rural areas, the promise of better livelihood in the big cities (for example, Mumbai and Delhi) becomes for the rural masses an inducement to migrate. The prevailing state of distress in the region combined with poverty and illiteracy makes most migrant persons dependent on agents who show them illusions of all kinds including job, marriage with an end to their misery and deprivation.

In such circumstances, women of marginalized communities easily become commodities. Rendered option-less by the situation and with the challenge of ensuring the survival of the family, women become more and more gullible to be deceived or forced to look at other options for sustenance. Particularly women who are separated from their families are vulnerable. Following are certain alarming facts about trafficking in Marathwada region:

In many cases, close family members such as the father, husband, in-laws, uncles, cousins, stepfathers and family friends or relatives act as trafficking agents. There is growing community acceptance for the fast-growing commercial sex sector. In some cases, the victims themselves or their families took the initiative of contacting traffickers in the hope of gaining a better livelihood.

- Traffickers have strong local presence in this region and there exists strong traffickers-political nexus in the region.
- Traffickers mostly operate in group and are on the constant look out for vulnerable, single, poor, deserted women.
- Traffickers have good connections with operators in distant cities, within the state and outside it.
- Most of the victims are between the ages of 12 to 18 years.
- A number of ways are used to entrap victims, including persuasion, deception, threats and coercion. Fake marriages are another ploy used by recruiters. In many cases, marriage itself was enough to lure a woman away from her home and parents.
- Most of the victims are from families who depend on wage labour and often migrate for work.
- Victims have to live in extremely bad conditions under threats of violence.
- In most cases victims are exposed to sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS.

The future of rescued victims is fragile in the region. Many victims are shunned by the community and family members. They are often abused by local police. Corruption and deep local political contacts of the traffickers or simple bungling renders most prosecutorial efforts ineffective.

Response of Save the Children India (STCI) to the Problem

STCI is a non-profit organization, established in 1988. It works for the holistic development of children in distress, with special emphasis on their social, physical, mental and moral development, fostering, health, education and nutrition.

Save Our Sisters (SOS)

The roots of SOS can be traced to Commitment 2000, an initiative launched by STCI to make India a Child Friendly Nation. This initiative was launched in Mumbai on January 26, 2000. The programme was a platform paving the way for Save Our Sisters (SOS), an initiative with the specific aim to effectively combat trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children at the national and South Asian level.

Soon thereafter, SOS an anti-trafficking movement was officially launched under the auspices of STCI on March 18, 2000 in Mumbai. From January to August, 2001, a series of regional level meetings were held in Delhi, Goa, Aurangabad, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Pune and Kolkata to understand region specific issues and also to network with like minded NGOs. At the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children held at Yokohama in 2001, Save the Children India/SOS was appointed as the focal NGO for India with a view to strengthen regional networking information sharing. SOS, an anti-trafficking movement is now operating at the South Asian level; working strenuously to combat trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation through effective networking with local individuals and groups working on this and other related issues.

SOS Rural Mission

The SOS rural mission commits to “take all the possible measures to combat commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking of women and children by formulating workable preventive programmes in association with rural NGOs and women’s self help groups (SHGs) and with the active support and participation of the village community in all its endeavours”.

SOS is of the opinion that there is concentration of rescue and rehabilitation of trafficked survivors, but efforts at the rural source/supply area or prevention of trafficking is very much lacking. Women’s micro credit system has become a single organized women power which has immense capacity of tackling social issues. SOS believes that the grass root NGOs could motivate women to play the lead role in preventing trafficking and at the same time to generate awareness in source area on implications of trafficking.

In this direction, the first SOS rural meeting was held in Sastur, Osmanabad in Marathwada on 7th July 2001, where 64 local NGO’s were given orientation on the issue of trafficking of women and children, subsequently, 11 meetings were conducted with partners in one year’s time. Issues concerning prevention, repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration of rescued survivors were discussed at length. The specific objectives and programmes of SOS prevention programme emerged as a result of these brainstorming meetings with partner NGOs, which have been reflected in SOS’s rural outreach programme. Since its first meeting in July 2001, SOS rural mission has reached to 13 districts of Maharashtra namely, Latur, Osmanabad, Amravati, Nanded, Beed, Parbhani, Sangli, Raigad, Sindhudurg, Chandrapur, Nagpur, Gondiya, and Bhandara.

Objectives

- To combat trafficking of women and children in source area.
- To empower various stakeholders through training and capacity building.
- To facilitate networking and coordination at local, national and international level with government and non-government organizations, forums, universities/educational institutions, support organizations, banking sector, the media and other sectors.
- To undertake research studies on human trafficking, HIV/AIDS and related issues.
- To mobilize resources to sustain the movement at the grass root level.
- To incorporate the crucial aspect of care and support to victims in SOS programme.
- To review government policies and advocate appropriate changes at all the levels.

SOS Prevention Programme in Marathwada (DFID-PACS-STCI programme in four districts in Marathwada):

In the year 2004, SOS launched three year prevention project titled “Preventing Trafficking amongst Women and Children through Community Participation” supported by DFID-PACS (Department for International Development-Poorest Areas Civil Society) in four rural districts namely Latur, Osmanabad, Beed and Nanded of Marathwada. Presently, the project is in review stage as it was of three years duration.

It is an initiative that encourages and adopts solidarity among civil society organizations through networking as an effective strategy towards preventing trafficking of women and children for commercial sexual exploitation from the rural districts of Marathwada. Since the programme aimed at prevention of trafficking, it therefore comprehensively addressed the correlation between:

- Migration and trafficking
- Poverty and trafficking
- Social customs/norms and trafficking
- Violence against women and children and trafficking
- Lack of awareness and/or low admittance to the occurrence and trafficking.

This programme was an outcome of a Baseline Situation Analysis conducted in 2002 in the mentioned districts to map the vulnerable traffic prone villages as well as the vulnerable families so as to initiate prevention programmes in those areas. The survey revealed the need for awareness on the issue of trafficking, and sexual abuse, family life education and sex education for adolescent boys and girls, health and HIV/AIDS awareness, legal awareness and counseling, gender sensitization, vocational training for women, adolescents and youth. The three year project aimed at:

Undertaking awareness to prevent trafficking amongst vulnerable groups in rural areas of Marathwada;

Minimizing crime against women and children by encouraging community participation and by creating effective vigilance mechanism;

Creating livelihood options through formation of women's groups, youth cooperatives and mobilizing government development programmes.

Organizing gender sensitization training programme for police and other government personnel in order to provide support and legal assistance to women and girls in distress.

Building capacities of the local youth and civil society organizations to prevent trafficking and violence against women.

The project was implemented in 213 villages of four districts through four district-level NGOs and 71 Community Based Organizations, as mentioned below:

Districts	Lead NGOs	Partner CBOs
Latur	SATH	17
Osmanabad	Pride India	16
Beed	Yuvagram Vikas Mandal	23
Nanded	STCI (No lead NGO)	15

Strategies adopted:

To combat trafficking and sexual exploitation in four districts of Marathwada, STCI devised innovative strategies of forming and empowering Women's Self Help Groups (SHGs), Adolescent Groups, and Village Vigilance Committees at village level using participatory methods.

1. Empowerment of Women's SHGs:

Empowering rural women self help groups in source areas has been the cornerstone of STCI prevention programme. These groups have immense potential to handle social issues affecting village populace. Their experience in handling micro credit issues, unity, proximity to village women and their participation in village matters makes them an ideal source of organized woman power to deal with social issues affecting community. Its major focus is on developing self-sufficiency and autonomy among the rural poor women, using a participatory approach. Further women are encouraged to meet and discuss their common problems and come up with their own solutions. In its quest for preventing adolescent girls and women from being trafficked on account of lack of livelihood options, STCI project organized various activities which led to the following:

- Income generation
- Gainful employment
- Inculcation of saving habit
- Enhancement of social status
- Increased opportunities for enhanced credit
- Asset creation and ownership
- Less dependence on other forms of credit

2. Adolescent Groups:

In the hierarchy of gender based power relations, adolescent females occupy the lowest rung. Their opportunities for self development and autonomy are limited due to society's denying them access to education, health care and gainful employment. On the top of this, many are confronted with sexual coercion and abuse, often starting at a very young age. Adolescent girls are relatively powerless when dealing with older partners, increasing

their risk of infection from STIs and/or AIDS. Many older men deliberately seek out young girls in the mistaken belief that their chances of AIDS infection will be reduced.

STCI recognized the importance of shaping lives of adolescents as part of its prevention strategy. In every project village, groups of adolescent boys as well as girls were formed. Regular meetings with adolescents provided them a platform to share, communicate, express their concerns, views on issues such as child labour, trafficking, sexual exploitation and molestation, which in turn help the network in designing innovative and appropriate prevention programmes for this vulnerable target groups.

3. Vigilance Committees:

The project recognized the need for establishing solidarity at the very local level. Bringing together women, youth and adolescents is a medium through which responsibility and accountability is shared by the larger community as a whole. This is in the form of Vigilance Committees at each village and district level. Vigilance Committees could contribute in combating and preventing trafficking at source areas. A Village Vigilance Committee (VVC) is comprised of various members from village, like Sarpanch, Anganwadi worker, School Head Master, Police Patil, NGO representative, representative of parents, representative of (SHGs) and representative of youth group.

4. Sensitization of support groups

The project also gave due emphasis on Sensitization of the Line Departments which include the block and district development officers, Police, Advocates, Academia, Media etc. These are in the form of sensitization workshops on Gender, legal literacy and on the issue of trafficking.

5. A Support System for Prevention of Trafficking envisaged by way of Help Line for instant reporting of cases and tele-counselling as well as Half-way home for the trafficked survivors and the vulnerable girls/women. District rehabilitation home for trafficked and HIV/AIDS survivors was earlier set up in Sanghli district in 2004 and subsequently shifted to Osmanabad district in 2005 after launching of DFID-PACS supported programme.

6. A state steering committee for guidance and mentoring was also established. These committees aimed at networking and cooperation with each other in order to strategize and develop sub-programmes to achieve the project's aim. They primarily serve as pressure lobbies at the village, district and state level so as to assist in combating trafficking and child sexual abuse. A platform for sharing and advocacy established through District and State level Conventions.

It is thus clear that the initiatives undertaken by the mentioned project emphasize on reducing the vulnerabilities of women and girl children by providing them viable livelihood options in the absence of which they are forced to migrate to cities and urban areas whereby they fall prey to the traffickers.

Achievements/Impact

On the basis of discussion with various staff members of implementing NGOs, it becomes imperative to highlight here the achievements of STCI prevention project. STCI project worked towards preventing trafficking of women and children through

community participation, women's empowerment, social cohesion, policy advocacy and self-help in 30 blocks of the four districts of Beed, Latur, Osmanabad and Nanded. With the involvement of SOS network partners, STCI has put in place several measures related to prevention of trafficking of women and girl-children from poor and vulnerable families/communities in four districts in Marathwada. The prevention project carried out following activities during three years:

- Conducting surveys and orientation workshops
- Setting up community and other support groups like self-help groups, youth groups, adolescent girls and boys groups, village vigilance committees, district vigilance committees, state-level steering committees, etc.
- Training and building the capacities of community groups
- Holding gender sensitization programmes for the line department in government
- Building the capacities of district and village-level civil society organizations and community-based organizations
- Setting up support systems in order to combat human trafficking
- Setting up help lines at the district level
- Printing posters and other information material
- Holding district level and state level conventions on trafficking to influence policy makers
- Organizing state level steering committee meetings.
- Legal assistance- STCI had an in-house team to provide legal assistance to women and girls, sold to brothels in Mumbai and other cities after they have been rescued. STCI also conducts home visits which are critical.

The thrust of STCI project is on building community awareness. This was done by information sharing through self-help group meetings, conducting trainings on gender sensitization, the issue of trafficking, vocational skills, personality development, and reproductive health as well as through mobilization and communication.

Apart from this, village level Vigilance Committees were set up to keep track of the movements of traffickers in each of the 213 villages of the four districts where STCI and its partners were working. The VVCs were useful in keeping track of other sex related crimes. In Ganjpur village of Dharur taluka of Beed during a training programme on reproductive health held in December, 2005, participants revealed that the principal of their school sexually abused girls. The local VVC took up the matter with the higher authorities and followed up the case further.

Outreach efforts were undertaken through rallies and the print media. Booklets were circulated in Marathi on trafficking, role of groups and project. Two STCI partner NGOs reached out to commercial sex centres, as a result of which, in kajj taluka of Beed, commercial sex workers vowed not to involve minors in the trade. The outcome of these efforts says *Reena Tete*, is that “individuals are coming out to share instances of abuse and trafficking. They are more alert about such happenings and do not hesitate to take prompt action. Incidences of abuse, missing girls and trafficking, which were not spoken of earlier out of shame, fear or loss of faith in the system, are now slowly but surely being talked about”. For instance, in one of the SHG meetings held in Deglur taluka of Nanded, the women talked about a 20 year old girl from a poor family of construction labourers. The eldest among four sisters, the girl was enticed with the promise of marriage by a mason

from Hyderabad with whom she eventually ran away. Her parents were unaware of her whereabouts. After the SHG brought up the issue, the STCI's NGO partner, Adnan Janjagruti Mandal, followed up the case. Through a series of contacts, it managed to trace the girl who readily agreed to return to her family.

The awareness among SHGs goes beyond trafficking to the larger issue of violence against women. In Bolegaon, Deoni block women member of a self help group swung into action after the sudden and suspicious death of a young woman. They searched for her and found her drowned body in a well. Since the SHG members knew that the dead woman was ill-treated by her in-laws and abused by brother-in-law, they demanded a postmortem in presence of two medical officers. They also urged the police to register a case of death under suspicious circumstances as the death had occurred within six months of marriage. Consequently, victim's husband, mother in-law and father in-law were arrested under charges of murder.

Few other cases (as mentioned in the appendix) came out in discussion with NGOs personnel, revealed as to how traffickers capitalized on the vulnerability of women in rural districts and how timely intervention by STCI partner NGOs in those cases saved women from falling prey to traffickers and also in rehabilitating them back to their families. It is not just the initiatives of implementing NGOs but the development of various community based self-help groups which was primarily responsible in nabbing the traffickers. It is thus clear that the STCI prevention project proved quite successful in fulfilling its objectives of prevention of trafficking both by increasing the economic viability of various livelihood options and also by developing various communities based support groups, which took the lead towards prevention of trafficking in women and girl children in four districts of Marathwada.

Missing links and Suggestions

In the context of Marathwada, trafficking happens mainly because of lack of viable and sustainable livelihood options (as discussed above). Thus, combating this crime becomes possible if such options of livelihood are made available both for the vulnerable communities in the source areas and also for those who have already been victimized. In Marathwada region, economic empowerment can become an important option towards reintegration, rehabilitation and restoration of victims and also in reducing the vulnerability of communities to resort to unsafe mobility for livelihood.

Although, STCI prevention programme has empowerment of the women's SHGs and income generation activities as important strategies for combating the trafficking and reducing the vulnerability of women and girl children but these options are not sustainable enough and do not seem to bring much changes in the lives of women. It is therefore essential that STCI work towards creating sustainable livelihood options in the villages which can be achieved only by building a partnership between different sectors of society-NGOs, government and corporate sector. Such partnership can forge an effective alliance to combat trafficking through creation of alternative, viable and sustainable livelihood options both for those at risk and those who are already victims of trafficking.

Prevention of distress migration remains a key element in any effort to counter trafficking especially in the context of Marathwada. Creation of livelihoods that can provide tangible and long term sustenance remains the only answer to this problem. The two major success stories best illustrate how this becomes possible even in situations and contexts where not many alternatives exist after erosion of traditional livelihoods. Amul

India or Anand Pattern, today the largest co-operative programme in the world and Grameen Bank initiative in Bangladesh which today has become the most successful and the largest micro-credit programme in the world are two enterprises that though not specifically built to counter trafficking, are path-breaking pioneering ventures for the recreation of depleted rural economies as a means of countering both distress migration and trafficking. The millions of households that have been able to gain a viable and sustainable livelihood through these two enterprises is a replicable model of innovative intervention for the creation of sustainable livelihood in the rural areas despite the impact of globalization and liberalization and to counter the need of migration and risk of trafficking.

Conclusion

The case study mentioned above of STCI prevention project reveals effective work being done by this project in combating trafficking in four districts of Marathwada region. The mentioned project undoubtedly provides an important replicable model which can be used in other situations and contexts for the prevention of trafficking in women and children. Community participation and self-help are the two major strengths of programme. Presently, this programme is in review stage and it should be quickly implemented again for building capacities of people and for combating trafficking of women and children from deprived and backward rural districts of Marathwada.

As mentioned above, Marathawada is one of the most backward region of India and four districts in the discussion are high supply zones of trafficking, it is important that not only STCI but all the stakeholders- Government, NGOs, Corporate, and academic institutions forge an effective alliance and provide viable and sustainable livelihood options for the people so that the causative factors are directly addressed which make women and children highly vulnerable to trafficking.

The foregoing analysis clearly points to the fact that trafficking has to be understood and addressed more as an exploitative process in a continuum of events and conditions, and not as a one-off, exploitative situation. What this means is that initiatives aimed at prevention or reduction of trafficking should deal not just with the actual act of trafficking, but recognize and address the causal factors, and more critically, the conditions and circumstances accompanying/preceding the act. Economic aspects like poverty, lack of opportunities, and breakdown of livelihood options are factors, which make people easily fall prey to the exploitation and trafficking. It is also important to deal with issues of gender, age, class and caste dimensions, which have very clear roles to play in defining vulnerabilities.

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Appendix (Cases)

1. Y, from Narsi village in Nanded, was forced into prostitution by her own father at the age of 12. Her father had earlier forced her mother to become a prostitute on national highway no. 9. Y was then told by her father that she would be married to a landlord. Instead she was sold to a brothel owner in Mumbai in January 2005. After around three months in a brothel, she was rescued on March 30, 2005 by the police and housed in a home set up by the Rescue Foundation, Mumbai. The staff of this organization traced Y's home. Based on the investigations of her home conditions by STCI's district coordinator, it was decided that Y should not be sent back—there was a fear that she would be sold again. Y is now in a 'Home of Hope' in Pune, battling HIV/AIDS.
2. In contrast to the terrible story of Y and hundreds of young women like her, there are a few positives, where timely intervention by STCI and its partners has prevented trafficking. One example: In November 2005, 16 year old X of Bori village in Latur was returning from school, when she was followed by a man on a motorbike who claimed to be an acquaintance of her relative in a neighbouring village. The man claimed the relative was in some trouble and insisted that she go with him to the relative's place. He started forcing her on the motorbike. Hearing X's cries for help, members of local self help group swung into action. While they could not nab the man, who was an agent for traffickers, they saved X that day.
3. A, 25, is dark, short and robust from Osmanabad district of Marathwada region. Hailing from a scheduled caste community, she was the only educated member in the family. Both her parents were partially blind. They owned no land and were dependent on the meager income of their son, a school dropout who was working as a farm labourer. A was married in 1998 to a factory worker from Pune. She lived with him for two years. But when she bore no children, the usual story of harassment began. Her husband frequently visited brothels. One day he threw her out of the house saying that he was fed up with her looks. Later he married another woman without taking a divorce from A.
4. A returned home to her parent's village, but as a single woman, she found life difficult. She took a small room on rent and tried to get a job. She was unsuccessful. In October, 2005, before the Diwali festival, two eunuchs befriended A. The eunuchs are connected to trafficking network, but A did not know this. The eunuchs asked her to feed them in return for some cash. In dire need of money, she fed them regularly for more than a week. The eunuchs started frequently visiting her house. She sensed that something was wrong. She locked herself and tried to hide herself from eunuchs. The eunuchs started making inquiries about her.
5. Activists of the Krantijot Samajik Sanstha (KSS), a partner of Save The Children India (STCI), which is implementing a large PACS Programme, anti-trafficking project, heard about this and rushed to Andur to meet A. She revealed her story and together with an activist of KSS, A went to the nearest police station to register a case. The police refused to do so, allegedly because the eunuchs are connected to a powerful woman from Umerga taluka, who is the biggest organizer of the trafficking business there and enjoys political connections.
6. The young workers of KSS together with workers of another STCI partner, Parivartan, then mobilized youth groups and villagers of Andur village and forced the police to register a complaint and nab the eunuchs. The rescuers were threatened with dire consequences by criminals connected to the powerful woman, and A, though secure and safe in her village, is still searching for a way of establishing a firm foundation for her own life.