



CHILD TRAFFICKING IN INDIA – AN ALARM

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KEYWORDS :

DEFINITION OF CHID TRAFFICKING

The action or practice of illegally procuring and relocating children, typically for the purposes of forced labour or sexual exploitation.

PREVALENCE

- The Global Slavery Index estimates that on any given day in 2016 there were nearly 8 million people living in modern slavery in India. In terms of prevalence of modern slavery in India, there were 6.1 victims for every thousand people.
- The most current available data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) indicate that there were 8,132 reported cases of human trafficking across India in 2016.
- In the same year, 15,379 people were trafficked of whom 9,034 victims were below the age of 18. In addition, 23,117 people were rescued from trafficking situations of whom 14,183 people were below the age of 18.
- The NCRB report notes that the number of rescued victims is higher than the number of trafficked people as rescued victims may also include persons trafficked in the previous year.
- Most of the rescued victims reported being trafficked for the purpose of forced labour (10,509 victims), followed by sexual exploitation for prostitution (4,980 victims), and other forms of sexual exploitation (2,590 cases)

CHILD KIDNAPPING INDUSTRY IN INDIA

About 11 children are kidnapped in India every hour of the day of which half of them are never found. Child trafficking is the third largest profitable industry of the world and India seems to be in the thick of it. India is not only the source, but a destination and transit point for this heinous crime.

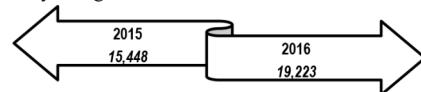
Trafficking for sex and other purposes has always existed in India, but trafficking children for domestic slavery is a relatively new development," says HS Phoolka, a senior advocate at India's supreme court and a human rights lawyer and activist. "This is due to rising demand for domestic maids due to rising income in urban areas and wide scale poverty in rural areas. This trafficking shows the rise of massive inequality in India."

The missing children in Chhattisgarh represent a small percentage of the estimated 135,000 children believed to be trafficked in India every year. Yet the rate at which they are going missing from remote villages in the south of the state is causing alarm.

Discrimination against Scheduled Castes, Dalits, and Scheduled Tribes is still a characteristic of the modern and globalising Indian society, with reports that it is becoming more evident in urban areas. There are reported cases of abductions and coercion of children to join Bal Dasta units which train children in front-line operations, and as couriers and informants against national security forces. The states that fare the worst in terms of the rate of child abductions include Maharashtra, Tripura and Assam—which have witnessed lynchings related to child-lifting rumours—as well as Delhi and Goa. Bihar, Assam, Karnataka and West Bengal saw the highest average annual increase in the rate of child kidnappings between 2006 and 2016. The rise in the reported rates of abduction may be partly driven by a rise in "technical" kidnappings, according to experts.

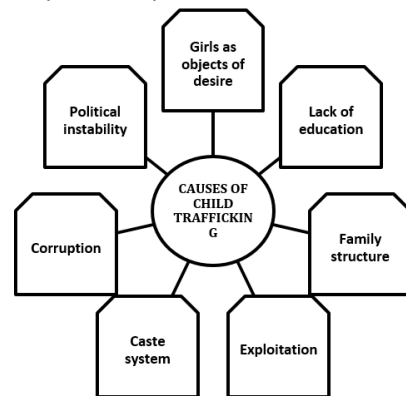
- The statistics of the Ministry of Women and Child Development states that 19,223 women and children were trafficked in 2016 against 15,448 in 2015, with the highest number of victims being recorded in the eastern state of West Bengal.
- People from the lower cast or the tribal communities and the

women and children from the excluded groups of the society are generally lured of a better lifestyle and employment opportunity and sold by the agents.



CAUSES OF CHILD TRAFFICKING

The causes of child trafficking have several faces and it affects the children directly or indirectly.



Girls as objects of desire

Indian society finds sons more 'valuable' than their daughters, simply because they carry on the family name, aren't subjected to dowry and are obliged to take care of them in their old age. Since girls are also seen as weak and only objects of desire, it is clear why most girl victims of child labour end up in prostitution or some kind of sexual slavery. According to a September 2015 report in India Today, girls are "sold openly" in Agra and Patna and auctioned for their virginity.

Lack of Education

While the Right to Education act, supplemented by initiatives of both NGOs and government bodies, attempts to drive school enrolment, the truth is poor school conditions discourage children from being interested in school. This is worsened by teachers who have no incentive in teaching in villages, due to these conditions and low salaries.

Caste system

The caste system is still a contemporary reality. While urban India fights for reservation, it is rural India which reels under caste based discrimination, with reduced access to opportunities for advancement.

Exploitation resulting from sex discrimination

As girls are seen as meek, loyal and submissive, they are trafficked by 'placement agencies' into working as servants. Upon maturity, they can then be used as prostitutes, sold again to brothels, while the unknowing family which hired them as a maid buys yet another girl as a servant.

Political instability

India has seen a series of political parties coming to power. There has been a general lack of will amongst the political class to pass a strong anti-child trafficking legislation. The list of pending cases in Indian courts, including the Supreme Court, goes into the hundreds of thousands. This creates a lack of strong legal precedent against child

trafficking and emboldens the traffickers.

Dysfunctional family and society structure

Dysfunction in Indian family and society structures results from alcoholism and gambling, as well as a rigorous patriarchy which exercises power through the panchayat as well as informal societal norms. This is worsened by poverty and neglect, compelling children to leave home, only to find themselves trapped by traffickers.

Corruption in India

- While the span of corruption, going into thousands of crores, is part of the everyday news, its reach is far more pervasive in rural India, triggering off poverty, human trafficking, inequality and casual bribery.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INDIA

- Increase prosecutions and convictions for all forms of trafficking, including forced and bonded labor, and of officials allegedly complicit in trafficking
- Establish and fully resource anti-human trafficking units (AHTUs) in all districts, including by providing additional dedicated, trained staff and by clarifying the mandate of AHTU
- significantly increase efforts to identify victims proactively to include disseminating and implementing standard operating procedures (SOPs) to harmonize victim identification and referral, and training officials on their use
- cease the penalization of trafficking victims;
- protect victim confidentiality and privacy, including on government-issued identification documents
- improve central and state government implementation of protection programs and compensation schemes to ensure trafficking victims receive benefits, release certificates, and compensation funds
- develop and adopt a national action plan to combat trafficking; eliminate all recruitment fees charged to workers and raise awareness among workers that they are not required to pay for a job
- promptly disburse government funding for shelters and develop monitoring mechanisms to ensure quality of care
- continue to increase the transparency of government efforts to combat trafficking and provide disaggregated data on efforts to criminally investigate, prosecute, and punish sex and labor trafficking

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