



Sex Trafficking in Nepal: Process and Context.

Background

Many women who become involved in sex work in Asia do so because they are compelled by economic circumstances and social inequality. While some enter sex work voluntarily or are coerced into the situation, others enter sex work by force or deception, which may involve migration across international borders. The subgroup of women who become involved in sex work via trafficking are the focus of this paper. The United Nations Protocol on Trafficking in Persons (2000), signed by 80 countries, officially recognizes human trafficking as a modern form of slavery and forced labour that relies on coercion, fraud or abduction in order to flourish. (United Nations 2000).

Globally, it is estimated that between 700,000 and four million (UNFPA, 2000) people are trafficked each year. There is no accurate figure of the scale of trafficking girls from Nepal. Despite published figures suggesting that between 5,000 to 7,000 Nepali girls are trafficked for sex work each year, and that 200,000 Nepali girls are working in the sex industry in India, the actual magnitude of trafficked girls from Nepal is unknown (O'Dea 1993; Human Rights Watch 1995; Rozario and Rita 1988).

The overall objective of this study is to understand more fully the process and context of trafficking young women from Nepal to India for sex work. The more specific aims are to

investigate; a) the characteristics of trafficked women; b) the routes of entry and exit from trafficking; and c) strategies for reducing the risk of trafficking to women.

Methodology

Data are collected from 42 in-depth interviews with trafficked women returned to Nepal and with key informants; quantitative data were also collated from health records of 206 trafficked women at rehabilitation centres.

Findings

The key findings showed:

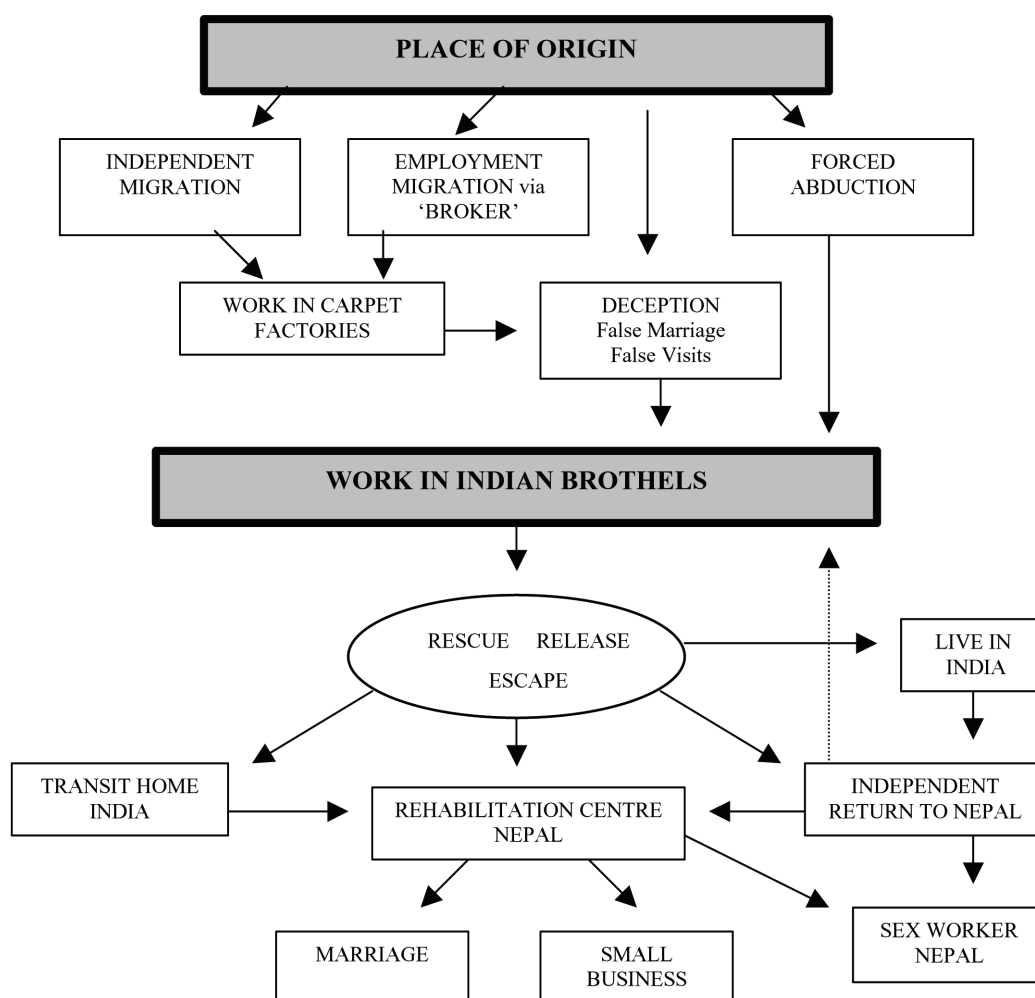
- Girls trafficked from Nepal to India are typically unmarried, illiterate and very young. The majority of trafficked girls are in the narrow age band of 13-18 years.
- The key routes into sex trafficking are shown in Figure 1 below and include; employment-induced migration to urban areas; deception (through false marriage or visits); and abduction.
- Half of traffickers were persons familiar to trafficked girls and 22% were relatives.
- Exit from trafficking was through rescue, escape or release; the majority of girls (80%) were rescued in police raids on Indian brothels.
- One of the outcomes of sex trafficking is a return to sex work upon return to Nepal.

Policy Implications

Past initiatives towards the needs of trafficked women have adopted a welfare approach; however, such initiatives alone are inadequate as they ignore the importance of empowerment of women in the migration process and skill development in community re-integration of trafficked women. The conceptual framework developed in this research provides a clearer understanding of the stages of movement through the trafficking process and highlights the

need for a range of anti-trafficking interventions at various levels which reflect the migration process of trafficked girls. Awareness of trafficking and empowerment in urban migration is required at the community level and a focus on urban carpet factories is particularly critical; during the transit phase, interception and rescue activities are required; while at the post-trafficking stage activities focusing on both community integration and fostering social independence are required.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Entry and Exit to Sex Trafficking.



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