



# COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Church and Law Enforcement in Partnership

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## Protecting Vulnerable Communities

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**The four major issues stated in the background note are:- (1) Prevention, (2) Victims support in the country of rescue, (3) Victims support in the source rehabilitated country and (4) Network of agencies including religious congregations and priests. Accordingly the speaking points are prepared and presented below:**

1. Human Trafficking is a borderless organised crime with the grave human rights violations. It is the combination of several crimes in itself like physical, mental, sexual exploitation, debt bondage, commoditization human beings, deprivation of human dignity etc.
2. Though, the human trafficking is distinct from illegal migration, both have certain common under currents. Whereas in human trafficking the person does not give informed consent, in illegal migration the person's consent is distinct. However, an illegal immigrant can be eventually trafficked too. The recent series of cases of trafficking from Kerala being investigated by CBI is a clear example of human trafficking taking place in the facade of illegal migration.
3. Human trafficking has not been understood appropriately across the globe. However, in India, the National Human Rights Commission had undertaken a comprehensive research in 2002-04. This action research cum survey has brought out the dimensions of human trafficking, the deficiencies in the response system, the methods of improving the same etc.
4. The findings of this research were implemented by UNODC in a mega project, which was run in partnership with Government of India and US Government. In this project, several outstanding achievements were made.
  - (a) Anti-Human Trafficking Units were set up for the first time in the country. Anti-Human Trafficking Unit is a comprehensive system wherein law enforcement agencies along with NGOs are brought together, trained together, empowered and assigned the task of preventing trafficking, investigating and prosecuting trafficked crimes as well as rehabilitating trafficked persons. AHTU has made tremendous impact in India. Based on the findings of external evaluators and taking cognizance of the fact that AHTU has made tremendous impact in the country, Government of India has replicated AHTU to more than 220 Districts in India.
  - (b) Capacity building of all stakeholders was undertaken in a comprehensive manner, leading to qualitative improvement and attitudinal changes.
  - (c) Innovative programs were undertaken for preventing human trafficking at the source area, in partnership with local agencies.
  - (d) Concerted efforts were taken in addressing demand, whereby trafficking would be contained in an effective manner.
  - (e) Professional and user friendly tools including handbooks, standard operating procedures, etc. were brought out in this project and were put to use.
  - (f) It is worth to mention here that Dr. P.M. Nair was the Principal Researcher-cum-Investigator of the NHRC Project and he was again appointed by the UN as the Project Coordinator for the above said project. This is the first time in the country where an organised crime was well researched and the findings of the research implemented on ground. This shows that there is a need for in-depth research into all organized crimes like this and taking appropriate steps based on the research.

5. In India several innovations were adopted and implemented in various aspects of anti-human trafficking. A few of them are listed below:

(i) Tele-Conference across the borders. A girl child trafficked from Nepal was rescued in Mumbai and was rehabilitated to Nepal. Since he was reluctant and unwilling to come to the court of law at Mumbai, for various reasons, it was decided to conduct the judicial trial through teleconferencing. The examination of the girl child sitting in Nepal, as a crucial witness was conducted through camera. The case was eventually convicted by the Mumbai court.

(ii) Government of India and State Governments have come up with several victims' support systems and programs. This includes financial support, legal support, psychological/emotional support, administrative support, providing counsellors and child-minders etc.

(iii) In order to undertake best prevention strategies, several measures have been taken. This includes mapping vulnerability factors and addressing these factors in a comprehensive manner.

(iv) An important initiative in preventing trafficking in the source area and in containing demand is involvement of religious priests. An Inter Religion Priest Forum (IRPF) was set up in several States in India, like Bihar, Jharkhand, etc. These forums had religion priests from different communities and religions in India. It is known that India is a country of different religions and that the beauty of India lies in unity in diversity. Taking cue from this principle, IRPF was set up and they have made tremendous impact in preventing and combating human trafficking. Certainly this is a good practice nodal which could be replicated elsewhere in the world.

(v) One important issue in trafficking is the issue of missing persons especially missing children. On an average in India, more than 1,10,000 children are reported missing and out of which more than 40,000 remain untraced. The scenario is more or less the same in adjoining States of

Nepal and Bangladesh except that the total numbers may be little less, nevertheless the gravity remains the same. Considering the fact that these three countries have issues in common and that there is need for technological integration in addressing the issue of missing children and thereby trafficking, an international agency by name PLAN International has come out with a project titled "Missing Children Alert (MCA)". This project is in the beginning stage. It envisages providing technology to the law enforcement and other agencies on ground so as to locate missing children immediately on report of missing, facilitating repatriation and rehabilitation and thereby preventing trafficking.

6. What we can do in the given context? This conference can indeed make tremendous impact across the globe in several ways. Some of the suggestions in this context are as follows:

(a) The best practices and commendable initiatives could be institutionalized and replicated (for example IRPF, AHTU, capacity building program of law enforcement agencies etc. mentioned above).

(b) Congregation of religious priests from different communities and religions can be organized across the globe in taking their support in addressing the issue of human trafficking. It could generate a "Global March of Religious Priests against Human Trafficking".

(c) There are several NGOs on ground doing commendable work. Many of them remain unnoticed and unsung. Only few NGOs are able to project their work. These are the ones who get financial and other support from Government agencies as well as international agencies. There is a need for channelizing funds to the unknown NGOs on ground. A mechanism can be devised by which this is made possible across the globe. CBI can set up a nodal agency with the help of known experts in India and this agency can be the facilitating body for channelization of funds, if required.

(d) There is a need for political awakening and awareness in the issues of human trafficking. Presently, the scenario across the globe is uneven. If political leaders are aware of the dimensions and consequences of trafficking and are made sensitized and committed to the cause, they can make a tremendous impact in addressing the issues in a concerted manner. This conference can call upon the appropriate world bodies like UNODC to organize conference of political leaders regionally or nationally and elicit their support in addressing the issues.