



NJ: NUTA

## Socio-Economic Impact on Trafficking of Girls/Women for Sexual Exploitation: A Study in Sindhupalchowk District

**Anila Shrestha**

Lecturer, Padma Kanya Campus

Bag Bazaar, Kathmandu

Email for correspondence: shresthaa@gmail.com

---

### Abstract

*Nepalese society is male dominated society where male holds primary position and female holds secondary position. Many rural poor women/girls work hard at home but their work doesn't give economic value. They are deprived of education, health, property right and other basic needs. The majority of women are working in informal sector with low paid and even unpaid jobs. So their socio-economic status is very low. The open Nepal-India border is also a responsible factor for girl/women trafficking. It has made traffickers easy to travel across the border and there are several short-cut roads that help traffickers to transport the innocent girls and women because there aren't security officer in each and every path. But there is a safe environment for the traffickers. Some politician saves them protection if they are arrested. The legal provisions are inadequate in Nepal. There is lack of specific laws related to prostitution and body trade. Lack of political commitment and effective action programs trafficking as a serious crime is increasing day by day. Another factor is low female literacy rate.*

---

**Key words:** Trafficking, girl, women, economic impact, India, gender discrimination and sexual discrimination.

### Introduction

Trafficking means all acts involving recruitment and/or transportation moving, selling and buying of women and girls with in and or across border through coercion and or deception, for sexual service or work or the purpose of profit (Bhattacharjya, 1998). Trafficking of Nepalese women/girls for sexual exploitation is a long time and serious problem in Nepal. Trafficking takes place within Nepal and from rural to urban areas and from Nepal to other countries such as India and Middle East countries even in Western countries. Thousands of women and children have been sold to the brothels of India. While there are no reliable data on the magnitude of the trafficking problem in Nepal, the most widely quoted sources estimated that 5000 to 7000 girls are trafficked from Nepal to India and other neighboring countries every year, primarily for prostitution, and 2,00,000 Nepalese girls and women are currently working in the sex industry in India (UNIFEM, 1998). Women and girls who are sold to the brothels initially struggled against involvement in prostitution. They are tortured, brutally beaten, and or raped in the brothels. They were compelled to accept the profession because of fear of being raped or killed.

This has become a cause for the spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexual diseases in Nepal. Similarly According to Aengst the prevalence of girl trafficking in Nepal is estimated that between 7,000 and 10,000 girls, between the ages of 9-16, are trafficked each year from Nepal to India. Same way coated by Chandra Kant Jha & Jeanne Madison on Journal of International Women's Studies reported that 600,000 to 800,000 people are trafficked across borders around the world of which two-thirds are found to be compelled into prostitution or sex-slavery.

GAATW (Global Alliance against traffic in women), 1994 has defined the term "Trafficking of women". "All acts involved in the recruitment and/or transport of a women with in and across national borders for sale, work or service by means of direct or indirect violence or threat of violence, deception or other forms of coercion". Trafficking in person means the recruitment, transportation, purchase, sale, transfer, harboring or receipt of person by threat or use of violence. Abduction, force, fraud, deception or coercion (including the abuse of authority), or debt bondage, for the purpose of placing or holding such person, whether for pay or not, in forced labor or slavery- like practices, in a community other than the one in which such person lived at the time of the original act described (Coomaraswamy, 2000). To summarize these definitions, trafficking is a process in which a person is transferred from one place to another with lure, threat, fear and violence and is forced into work against one's wish. Nepal NGO report on Beijing +15 in 2009 reported result of the violence; women encounter enormous social consequences and increased risk for both short and long term mental sexual and reproductive health outcomes. The 1,000 mile border between Nepal and India is largely open with only 14 checkpoints along its entire route. It is no wonder that the trafficking of women and girls as young as 12-14 occurs more than 30,000 times annually. This intolerable violation of human rights most often results in trafficked girls from Nepal finding themselves in the prison of sexual slavery in the brothels of Mumbai, Bangalore , Delhi or Kolkata.

### **Research Objectives**

- To identify the influential factors of girl/women trafficking.
- To assess the social factors like lack of education, awareness and economic factor like poverty.

### **Review of Related Literatures**

The studies that try to explore something new are, strictly speaking always rooted in the previous studies. This study is also no exception to this fact. This is necessary to borrow the ideas from the previous literatures, which are concerned to such avoiding unnecessary things and including the most relevant ones. In this chapter many literatures were analyzed. In many families girls were traditionally not sent to school or allowed to go out of the house after they were 10 or 11, and were often married at puberty. But now things have changed. So too, the education, roles and responsibilities of men have changed, although perhaps not as much. This is what is meant when we say that gender is variable; it is or may be different in different families or communities and at different times in the same family (Bhasin, 2000)

### **Trafficking and Prostitution**

Trafficking and prostitution are increasingly being used interchangeably. This falsely and dangerously equates the two. Although closely interlined the two must be distinguished as below. Prostitution is one of the areas into which women and children are trafficked. Different countries

however have different experiences-while participants from Nepal felt that most trafficking was done for prostitution participants from Bangladesh saw trafficking for camel jockeying.

Trafficking is the coercive and exploitative process or mechanism of which prostitution is one of the possible areas to which process takes the trafficked.

### **History of Girls/Women Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation in Nepal**

Nepal has a long history of trafficking of girl and adult women. During the Malla regime and continued through the Rana regime. At that time, girls from the hills were brought to the palaces for entertainment and domestic services. After the abolition of the Rana regime in 1950, most of the Rana families migrated to different cities of India and took some of the girls with them for longer periods because of their economic situation. The girls then came into the contact with the people involved in prostitution in Indian cities. The girls were probably compelled to adopt this profession for their survival. It was the heart breaking beginning of sexual slavery for Nepalese girls in Indian brothels (Rajbhandari and Rajbhandari, 1997). However against this trafficking, NGO's are working on this related area. Maiti Nepal was established in 1993 and is working hard to prevent trafficking of women for forced prostitution, and rescuing flesh trade victims and rehabilitating them.

### **Gender Discrimination and Trafficking**

Gender is the socially constructed roles and responsibilities assigned to men and women in a given culture/location and the societal structures that support them. Gender is a non-permanent, learned behavior that changes over time. Kara (2008), nearly twenty thousand Nepalese girls are trafficked to India each year. Many men in Indian brothels prefer the small, thin figures of Nepalese females while Nepalese prostitutes are more timid because they speak broken Hindi at best. After speaking to many Nepalese prostitutes, Kara found that many *dalals* were bringing hundreds of Tamang girls from Sindhupalchowk. After visiting Sindhupalchowk, Kara found that "females were systematically beaten, raped, denied basic rights, and brutally exploited by men. Desperation to escape this tyranny delivered them to slave traders. [He] encountered similar dynamics in every developing country [he] visited, but in the isolated villages of Sindhupalchowk, the injustices against females transcended imagination" (Rajbhandari, 2012).

### **Research Methodology: Here it is Presented**

A discussion was held to collect qualitative and quantitative data for the study. Different methods are used for the validity and reliability. Since the study of women/girl trafficking is very complicated, all data collection tools and techniques could be used. The researcher has chosen Sindhupalchowk district for this study because it is one of the prominent areas for girls/women trafficking. Most of the literature used in this article covering the discourse of sex trafficking and the issues of sex. The researcher hopes that these efforts would attract some attention in the neglected areas of Sindhupalchowk. Tamang community of Sindhupalchowk district are targeted as specific group for trafficking. The majority of the articles are from the point of view of high-caste Hindus and all the information is seen through their lens. Therefore, exploring sex trafficking through the lens of rural women/girls, and see how low socio-economic status affect the trafficking of women/girls among Tamang community of Sindhupalchowk district. The sample size for the study is 30. This research is based on explorative as well as descriptive research design. The study is exploratory because it attempts to explore the influential and pushing/

pulling factors that encourage the girl/women trafficking of the study area. It is also descriptive because it has attempted to describe the socio-economic characteristics of the victims at the time of trafficking. Both primary and secondary data have been used in this study. However, more emphasis has been given to primary data. The primary data have been collected through interview schedule for respondents and interview with key informants. The secondary data have been obtained from the various published and unpublished sources, literatures, journals and research reports. Different data collection tools and techniques have been used to collect the primary data. In this study, both unstructured and structured questionnaire were used in order to obtain essential information. The interview of rescued girls and women has been taken. Through this methods, the information of ethnic background, age, religion, marital status, economic status of the family, occupation of the victims, monthly income, relationship with the family, educational status, cause of being victims who are involved in trafficking and who lure forced them to be trafficked etc. have been gathered. To collect this information, both open-ended and close-ended questionnaires have been used. To obtain both type of data, which is related to girls trafficking, key informants were interviewed with NGOs staff in Sindhupalchowk, Maiti Nepal and Nepal police of Kathmandu. Formal interview has been taken at different times with key informants. Both the primary and secondary data have been processed and tabulated, analyzed and interpreted on the basis of percentage distribution.

### Data Analysis and Interpretation

In this study caste/ethnic composition is found heterogeneous, respondents with different caste and ethnic background like Brahmin, Chhetri, Tamang, Sherpa, Gurung, Damai and Kami are found.

**Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Caste/Ethnicity**

Caste/Ethnicity	Frequency	Percentage
Tamang	9	30
Sherpa	8	26.66
Kami	4	13.33
Damai	3	10
Chhettri	3	10
Gurung	2	6.67
Brahmin	1	3.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.00</b>

(Field Survey, 2012).

Most of the respondents (30%) are found to be Tamang. The table 2 shows that 26.66 percent belong to Sherpa and 13.33 from Kami caste. Similarly, 10% of respondents of Damai and 10% of respondents are found to be Chhettri caste. A total of 6.67% of respondents are from Gurung caste. A few of respondents 3.33% are found to be from Brahmin caste.

### Religion

The Hindu population in the country has been consistently over 80 percent since 1950s. The second largest religion in Nepal is Buddhism; practiced by about 11 percent, while Islam constitutes about 4.2 percent of the population. Kirat religion accounts for nearly 3.6 percent of the population (CBS, 2002).

**Table 2. Distribution of Respondents by Religion at the Time of Trafficking**

Religion	Frequency	Percentage
Hindu	10	33.33
Buddhist	20	66.67
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

(Field Survey, 2012).

The table 2 shows that majorities of the respondents were Buddhists, that is 66.67% of total respondents and 33.33% of the respondents were Hindu by religion. Mostly victims were from Buddhist background.

### Marital Status

Many researches claimed that the majority of the trafficked girls were found to be unmarried. The demands of virgin girls are very high in sex market. Often the daughter in law remains slave in the home while her husband continues his studies, leaves the village for higher studies or work in the city and meets like minded women and settles down with her. But his wife faces a lot of problem of most. She wants to live comfortable life so she wants to work outside. Then these innocent girls become the victims of trafficking.

**Table 3. Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status at the time of Trafficking**

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	4	13.33
Unmarried	24	80
Divorced	1	3.33
Separated	1	3.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

(Field Survey, 2012).

A total of 80% of respondents were found to be unmarried. The Table shows that 13.33% of total respondents are married. Similarly, the percent of divorced and separated were 3.33% and 3.33% respectively.

This result shows that majority girls who were trafficked to be lie unmarried. It may be because of religious of the value rooted in our society.

### Economic Status of Family

Several researches have revealed that economic status of a family force girls and women into trafficking. In Nepal Most of the people are depended upon agriculture. They are poor, they do not have access to education and unemployment is rising day by day so economic statuses of the people are so worse. So, most of the girl and women want to go out to improve their economic condition. In such condition it is easier for trafficker to convince the illiterate girls/women to put in good job.

**Table 4. Respondents by the Economic Status of the family at the time of Trafficking**

Economic class	Frequency	Percentage
Lower (not enough food)	28	93.33
Middle (just enough food)	2	6.67
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

(Field Survey, 2012).

The result of the research shows that among total respondents 93.33% of victims were in below poverty line. They didn't have sufficient food in order to survive. Among the total victims, 93.33% were belonging to lower class. A very few population 6.67% had a good economic condition. Therefore, this result explore that poverty is one of the many influential factors, which promote girls/women trafficking.

### Occupations

Agriculture, the only source of livelihood for most of the people of Nepal is not only an occupation but also a way of life. In other words agriculture doesn't sufficient life. So women and girls are always in search of other economic opportunities. In this situation the trafficker can easily lure the women and girls with the prospect of employment outside the country.

**Table 5. Distribution of Respondents by their Earlier Occupation at the time of Trafficking**

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Agriculture	20	66.67
Carpet Factory	3	10.00
Sewing	2	6.67
Wage labor	5	16.67
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

(Field Survey, 2012).

The above Table shows that 66.67% of the respondents were practiced agriculture for their survival. Some of them helped their parents in agricultural works. 16.67% respondents were depended in labor work for their living. Similarly, 10% of total victims were worked in carpet factory. A very few percentage 6.67% of the respondents were engaged in sewing works.

### Monthly Income

Nepalese society is a patriarchal society where male holds primary position and female hold sub-ordinate position. Gender discrimination is deeply rooted in our society. Women's earning is substantially lower than men because of the household division of labor, which assigns domestic work mostly to women. Work is generally given on the basis of biological differences. Women are paid low in comparison to male though they work equal as men.

**Table 6. Distribution of Respondents by Monthly Income at the time of Trafficking**

Amount in NRs	Frequency	Percentage
450	3	10.00
500	1	3.33
750	1	3.33
800	1	3.33
1000	1	3.33
1500	3	10.00
Don't know	20	66.67
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.00</b>

(Field Survey, 2012).

Monthly incomes are found different. Above Table shows that 66.67% of the total respondents didn't know about their monthly income because they were unmarried and they stayed with their families and helped their parents in agricultural works. 10% of them earned NRs. 1500 per month. Similarly, 3.33% earned NRs. 1000, 3.33% earned NRs. 800, 3.33% earned Rs. 750, 3.33% earned Rs. 500 and 10% of total respondents earned Rs. 450 monthly. This result shows that most of the girls are from agricultural background and don't know about their income because their parents didn't gave them money except food and cloth. As we know that agriculture is backbone of the economy but agriculture is not sufficient to solve hand to mouth problem. Even though some of the respondents were engaged in low paid works which made them to become the victims of trafficking.

### Lack of Awareness

Lack of awareness, many Nepalese girls and women are trafficked to Indian cities for sexual exploitation. In Nepalese society, generally girls don't have access to education. Lack of education they don't have knowledge about the result of trafficking and the diseases like HIV/AIDS, which can spread from sexual relation with many people. Lack of awareness, they can't think what is wrong and what is right and believe what other say. So they are lured to prostitution by means of various attractive promises like money employment and prosperity.

**Table 7. Distribution of Respondents by Awareness of Girls Trafficking**

Awareness	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	8	26.67
No	22	73.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.00</b>

(Field Survey, 2012).

Table 7 shows that lack of awareness, 73.33% of the respondents were trafficked. Only 26.67% of respondents have awareness about trafficking. It is clear that most of the victims were from poor class, they didn't had television and radios. The means of their awareness are friends and teachers, interviews with victims of trafficking reveal that at the outset most of the girls or women enticed for food in Indian cities, and when on arrival there sold at brothels. Although the inducement to leave home is caused by poverty created hardship, the accompanying ignorance is the principal factor for putting themselves into a trap of traffickers or sex traders. The result shows that one of the causes of trafficking for prostitution is lack of awareness. So we must aware the girls/women if we want to stop trafficking.

### Discussion and Conclusion

From the study it is found that, in Sindhupalchowk, majority of trafficked girls/women (30%) are from Tamang, 26.6% are Sherpa from ethnic group, 13.33% from Kami caste. Similarly, 10% are Damai, 10% are Chhettri, 6% are Gurung, 3.33% are from Brahmin caste. The study shows that 93.33% of victims are from lower class. They don't have enough surpluses to eat and survive and 6.67% are from middle class. There is an assumption that bad relation with their family forces the girls onto prostitution. But it was found wrong in my study because majority of the girls, 86.67% of total respondents are trafficked having good relation with their families, 10% had not so good relation



and 3.33% had somewhat good relation with their families. From the study it is found that female educational status is very low. About 66.66% of the total respondents were illiterate. Similarly, 23.33% had studied up to primary level and 10% had studied up to lower secondary level. From the study it is cleared that lack of education, poverty, money border, and appropriated media mechanisms are the major socio-economic causes of girl/women trafficking for sexual exploitation in Sindhupalchowk district.

To conclude, the open Nepal-India border is also a responsible factor for girl/women trafficking. It has made traffickers easy to travel across the border and there are several short-court roads that help traffickers to transport the innocent girls and women because there aren't security officer in each and every path. There is a safe environment for the traffickers. Some politician gave them protection if they are arrested. So they again rejoin the same profession. The legal provisions are inadequate in Nepal. There is lack of specific laws related to prostitution and flesh trade. Lack of political commitment and effective action programs trafficking crime is increasing day by day. Trafficking of girls and women is found highest in Sindhupalchowk district particularly among Tamang community. This is due to poverty, lack of education awareness, attraction towards money, nice clothes food etc. So traffickers easily pick them by giving such hopes.

### **Possible Suggestions**

No single individual or organization can put a stop to this problem. It is enormous and growing by leaps and bounds. This is not a problem of a particular class or a particular area. It is rather the concern of the whole society. Therefore, everyone's participation is of paramount importance to do away with this evil once and for all. To solve this problem, many NGOs, INGOs and GOs have operated different kinds of programs. However, it was/is still questionable. That is why this study tried to highlight some fruitful suggestions listed below:

- Since the burden of poverty is more servers in women, income generating activities should be intensified in areas where women are more vulnerable to trafficking. They should be provided self employment and job opportunities.
- More important is to generate awareness among the public so that they acknowledge and accept the fact that girls/women are being trafficked for commercial purpose and that they become sufficiently concerned to act on the issue. In addition to that, women/girls themselves should be made aware to stop trafficking.
- Public awareness is also necessary to know about consequences of trafficking such as HIV/AIDS and STDs.
- Girls and women should be empowered so they are not tricked into prostitution or exploited in anyway. In addition to that, informal education, vocational training should be provided to all rural girls/women.
- Government should not only formulate policies but also implement effectively.
- Government should control the open border strictly so that the traffickers can't traffic the women and girls for prostitution easily to India.
- Trafficking should be strictly punished by reforming legal laws.
- Family members should be made aware and educated in these issues.



**Reference**

- Aengst, J. (2001). *Girls Trafficking in Nepal*, INTS 4945 Human Rights Advocacy Clinic.
- Bhasin, K. (2000). *Understanding the Gender*. New Delhi.
- Bhattacharjya, M. (1998). 1998. Trafficking in South Asia: A Conceptual Clarity Workshop (29th July to 1st August). Anandagram, New Delhi:
- HMG/MOWCSW (2000). *Combat Newsletter, Vol. 3, No. 2*. Kathmandu: Ministry of women, children and social welfare. Retrieved from <http://3angelsnepal.com/human-trafficking-in-nepal-and-india-women-girls-and-children-in-sexual-slavery-suffer-needlessly/>
- Kara, S. (2008). Sex Trafficking: Inside the Business of Modern Slavery. *Journal of International Womens' Studies*, 12 (1).
- Maiti Nepal (1999). *Politics and Trafficking: Role of Parliamentarian to Combat Trafficking*. Report based on Maiti Nepal Organized Interaction. Retrieved from <http://nepaliaustralian.com/2011/12/10/maiti-nepal/>
- Nepal NGO report on Beijing +15 (2009). *National Network for Beijing Review*. Kathmandu: Nepal.
- Rajbhandari, P. B. (2012). *Annual Report, WOREC*. Kathmandu: Nepal.
- Rajbhandari, R. & Rajbhandari, P. B. (1997). *Girls trafficking: the hidden grief of himayas* (1st ed.), WORCE.
- Thapa, P. (1990). *Keti Bechbikhan: Lukeko Aparadh.*, Kathmandu: Published in Chelibetiko Abaidh Vyapar: Yaksa Vivid Paksha