



EFFORTS OF BIHAR GOVERNMENT ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

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ABSTRACT

Human trafficking is becoming third most lucrative business after arms and drugs trafficking in worldwide including India. The root cause of human trafficking is poverty and unemployment, corruption, lack of education etc. In India especially Bihar poverty and unemployment is a common phenomenon and people are compelled to live in miserable conditions. In search of better life people migrate from Bihar to big cities and pray in the hand of traffickers. Due to poverty and unemployment the vulnerable sections of the people are easily trapped in to the hand of traffickers. The human trafficking situation in Bihar is worst than other parts of India. Although Bihar government has made several efforts to combat human trafficking but due to corruption in judiciary police, half hearted drive of rescue and rehabilitation, the results do not come out in a positive manner. Though the government has made several judicious provisions on the issue but it reflects only on paper not in the ground reality.

This study tries to understand the plan, policies and programmes which has been made till date. It deals with the quest why trafficking is rampant in the state? This paper also tries to examine Bihar government's overall steps to curb the human trafficking and suggests what steps are needed to be taken by the government. Lastly, the paper throw the light on why the trafficking phenomenon has existed in spite of the various steps taken.

KEYWORDS: Human trafficking, programmes, Governance, Corruption, Poverty.

INTRODUCTION

Bihar is the most trafficking vulnerable state across India. The Geographical location as touched northern side with Nepal whereas eastern side West Bengal extended to Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar are fuelled to cross border trafficking. This region is mostly agriculture based economy and people are largely dependent on agriculture and allied sector. After bifurcation of state, the industrial belt largely went to be part of Jharkhand and remaining Bihar got few numbers of industries which are not enough to provide job opportunities to their people. Every year some parts of the state face floods and some are droughts affected which affects livelihood of the people adversely. Industries are in limited numbers so all these factors make a fertile ground for traffickers. Especially in the cases of child trafficking, child is trapped easily in the name of lucrative employment. Girls are trafficked by placement agencies and mislead their parent in the name of better job opportunity in big cities. Once girls are trafficked, they pushed them into slavery, prostitution as well as surrogacy. Most of them are below 18 years. Statistics cited by Human Library Network – an involved in rescue and rehabilitation group of work showed that 2000 children disappear from the state every year.¹ The recent reports reflected that majority of the victims come



from, Araria, Purnia Kishanganj, Katihar, Nawada, Nalanda and Gaya. The governments of India as well as Bihar government and other stakeholders in state try to combat trafficking, with a little success.

PRESENT TRAFFICKING SITUATION: INDIA AND BIHAR

Although it's very difficult to get accurate data on human trafficking cases in India as well as in Bihar due to clandestine nature of problems. It is considered that India is source, transit and destination country for trafficking people globally. Almost ninety percent trafficking taking place internally². The majority of the Indian states are affected by trafficking issues, and Bihar is one of them. According to U.S department report 2004, around 600,000 to 800-000 people are trafficked across the border globally. The child trafficking situation of Bihar is worst as; the data of National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) reflected that the cases related to child trafficking increased from previous few years. The NCRB data indicates that in 2015, 332 cases of child trafficking lodged which is third highest in the country, the first is Assam and the second is West Bengal.³ Bihar is also most vulnerable state due to cross border trafficking from Nepal and Bangladesh, more than thousand women and girls cross the border and enter into the state brothel in a year. In Bihar, Muzaffarpur, Gaya, Saharsa, Munger, Begusarai, Katihar, Purnea, Araria, Kishanganj, Bhagalpur, Champaran, Gopalganj, Siwan, Buxar, Jhanabad, Patna, Madhubani, West Champaran, East Champaran, Sitamarhi, Supal, Madhepura, Khagaria, Darbhanga are the most affected districts from trafficking as reported by Shakti Vahini (Trafficking in India Report,2004). One of the another issues related to trafficking is the false marriage which is very common, especially in seemanchal region. Due to poverty and its location, as border districts, like Katihar, Purnia, Araria and Kishanganj, Madhepura – poorest among all –the children, especially girls are being lured easily in the name of marriage by the traffickers as told by the Shilpi Singh (Director, Bhoomika Vihar an NGO). In 2016, 3000 girls went missing in Bihar and over half of the 1,587 cases were directly related to love affairs. The person of Utter Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab organize false marriages, bring the girls and pushes them into brothel.

Bihar Government efforts to combating Human Trafficking:

ASTITVA-BIHAR:

The Department of Social Welfare, Government of Bihar, has established the ASTITVA-BIHAR State Plan of Action to combat trafficking through an integrated approach. ASTITVA-BIHAR recognises that trafficking is a serious problem in the state and that the majority of victims of trafficking are girls under 18 years of age (Government of Bihar). Moreover, it recognises, the need for an integrated approach involving education, rural development, social welfare and health sectors as well as proactive involvement of the judiciary and police. Rescue, rehabilitation and repatriation have constituted the main strategy of this State Plan of Action. It has instituted help lines and short-stay homes to provide support to women in distress, and these operate in almost every district (MOWCD and UNODC, 2008). It has also established Anti-Human Trafficking Co-ordination Committees at the state and district levels. The State Plan of Action includes provisions to prevent trafficking at transit points and to check cross-border trafficking.⁴

Human Trafficking Prevention Programme 2007

The state government started Human Trafficking prevention programmes in 2007-08 for the purpose of checking illegal business related to women and child labourers and ensure them comprehensive rescue and rehabilitation packages. Under this programmes, state government has established special cells under the supervision of district welfare officer, government officials and NGOs in three districts of Gaya, Muzaffarpur and Patna.⁵

After the state government launched the Bihar Human Traffic Prevention Programme, the police have rescued 350 children and 127 women from human traffickers. All the victims of human trafficking were rehabilitated after being rescued," as told by Bihar's Director General of Police, Neelmani. Most of the rescued victims of human trafficking were minors.

According to Suman Lal, a worker of Prayas Bharati Trust which works against human trafficking, the boys usually end up working in dhabas while the girls are sent to brothels. Further he added that a major shift in approach has now come about with respect of trafficked victims in brothels they are treated as victims not as accused.⁶ In recent years, officials say Bihar has registered an alarming rise in case of human trafficking. While 2007 witnessed 21 such cases, as many as 55 cases were recorded in 2008, 39 in 2009 and 59 in 2010. But till May this year, only 8 such cases have been registered. Such incidents are rampant in the poverty-stricken districts bordering Nepal which have emerged as the hub of human trafficking.

The state government launched the Human Trafficking Prevention Programme in 2007-08 to check illegal marketing of women and child labourers and ensure a comprehensive rehabilitation package, said Bihar Social Welfare Minister Parveen Amanullah. The state government has adopted several programmes with a special focus on trafficking-prone districts like Purnea, Katihar, Kishanganj, Araria, Madhubani, Sitamarhi, East Champaran and West Champaran District-level anti-trafficking cells have been constituted in 26 districts under the supervision of the district magistrates. A state-level anti-human trafficking cell is being headed by the chief secretary.

Special programmes are being conducted for policemen to train them to quickly respond to cases of human trafficking replied by the Additional Director General Rajvardhan Sharma (Police Headquarters).⁷

Ujjawala Schemes:

This is a comprehensive scheme for the prevention of trafficking, rescue and rehabilitation of women and child victims of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation in India. It was launched in 2007 by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. It was launched in 2007 by the Ministry of Women and Child Development- . It consists of certain mechanisms for the reintegration and repatriation of victims including cross border victims.

The Target Group or main beneficiaries of this scheme are women and child victims who have been trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation as well as those women and children who are vulnerable to becoming victims of this crime. These vulnerable sections include slum dwellers, children of sex workers, refugees, homeless, victims of natural disasters and so on.⁸

This scheme is being implemented by various Non Governmental Organizations to provide direct aid and benefit to victims of trafficking. Immediate relief to victims includes the provision of food, shelter, trauma care and counselling to the rescued victims. Later on, victims are provided skill training, capacity building, job placement and guidance in income generating activities to empower them and help them live independently. The five important components of this scheme include prevention; Rescue, Rehabilitation, Reintegration and Repatriation under the same victims of trafficking are accommodated in the society. The government of Bihar has also launched schemes to provide comprehensive support to the victims of Human Trafficking, although the result of schemes has not come as per the expectations.

Operation Mahavir (Operation against Child Trafficking):

The Bihar Police on Jan,1 2015, in Patna launched a special drive named "Operation Mahavir" against trafficking of children, an official said. "We have launched 'Operation Mahavir' to trace and free children who are victims of human trafficking," said Additional Director General of Police (Weaker Section) Arvind Pandey. He said police will observe "2015 as the year to free child victims of trafficking." A team of policemen has been set up in each of the 38 districts to crack down on gangs involved in trafficking of children. Police will closely monitor places like brick kilns, roadside hotels, markets, bus stands and railway stations to trace missing children. The Bihar government had told the Supreme Court in October 2014 that 2,241 children who went missing from the state have been recovered, while at least 617 were still untraced.⁹

Critical assessment of the role of Bihar Government in Combating and Controlling Human Trafficking:

Bihar government has made a lot of efforts to combat and control human trafficking. But due to various obstacles into their way, the problems still persist with the same serious nature. Although, Bihar

made various plans like, Astitva, 'Ujjawla' and 'Operation Mahavir' and Human Trafficking Prevention programme 2007, to prevent, protect rehabilitate and reintegrate trafficking victims in the society, but enforcement agencies do not take it seriously and trafficking is not in their priority list as this scholar observed during the field work. In every trafficking affected district, there is a provision of establishing Anti-Human Trafficking Unit at district level but in some districts, it is yet to be translated into reality. In most of the cases, police are unable to make distinction between trafficking and prostitution. In addition, the enforcement officers are not well trained well versed to tackle the trafficking problems.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Some of the most valuable suggestions and Recommendations for combating human trafficking in Bihar are;

- (i) The State should coordinate with multi stake holders to tackle the problem;
- (ii) There is need to implement rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration programme vehemently and on priority basis, keeping in mind the nature of problem.
- (iii) Urgently work on poverty removal programme and create equal employment opportunities for both the sexes in the state;
- (iv) All the concerned government departments and agencies need to be trained, well-informed and sensitized for the trafficking issues.
- (v) 100 percent trafficking victims should be covered under the victims compensation scheme (the fund created post- Nirbhya incidents 2012, as 'Nirbhya Funds').
- (vi) The officers of enforcement agencies need to be well trained and well informed regarding this inhuman business.
- (vii) The Government should create awareness among masses regarding human trafficking with the help of print and electronic media.

CONCLUSION:

Despite of several efforts made by the government of Bihar to combat and control human trafficking, the problems are still continued to haunt. Although no one can denied that the situation are little bit improved. Unfortunately the pace of improvement to curbing and controlling of human trafficking is slow due to half heartily efforts taken by the various stakeholders, and extent of corruption in government agencies as well as NGOs. The politico- criminal nexus also discourage the combating programme. Recently, some NGOs who are in news, who running shelter home with the help of Government and other donors directly and indirectly are also found to be involved in exploitation of women and children, such as at Muzaffarpur children shelter home, Patna women shelter home and recently Purnia shelter home is also in news. The stakeholders working on human trafficking issues must audit their work on regular basis so that they can be made accountable to the concerned authority. The State Government lacks a sincere effort which has become reality. It cannot be denied that government drive is not productive but there are various loopholes still remained existing that is why positive results did not come out. The State Government should work, sincerely and engage all stakeholders honestly to combating human trafficking so that fruitful results come out.

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