

CRS Human Trafficking Response: India - Trafficking in Persons

India is a source, transit, and destination country for human trafficking. Buying and selling of women and children is an expanding activity and increasingly lucrative for those involved in it. Though India is a destination for a large number of people trafficked from Nepal and Bangladesh and a source of women and children trafficked to Middle Eastern countries, the majority of trafficking is within the country, between different regions. This internal trafficking constitutes 89% of the 'trade' in human beings in India. Most of the documented trafficking takes place for sexual exploitation, leading to the association of trafficking with commercial sexual exploitation or prostitution. However, a significant proportion of persons are also trafficked for bonded labour, domestic work, circuses, adoption and organ transplants. Amongst those trafficked, the majority are young girls.

At the state and national level, India has various laws and public services focused on the prosecution of traffickers, rescue and care for victims of trafficking. However, many of these exist only on paper and large gaps still remain.

CRS India provides funding and technical support on counter-trafficking through projects with 20 partner organizations spread across both source and destination areas in 9 States of India. The problem of trafficking in India is widespread and requires a broad scope of actors and interventions to provide protection of victims and prevention of those at-risk becoming the victims of the future. A number of the most effective organizations started out providing one specific type of service, such as shelter for recently rescued adult women survivors of sex trafficking, and soon came to recognize the need for far greater outreach to home communities, police, health care workers, policy makers in order to improve overall response, the need to create employment options for the survivors who are often subsequently rejected by their families and communities, new groups of people, and many other activities not contemplated when they initial response began.

In fiscal years 2008-09, CRS counter trafficking programs focused on:

Prevention – CRS works closely with partner organizations and communities to establish and strengthen community vigilance groups to monitor risk and prevent trafficking in their regions. Empowered communities increase their understanding of the nature of trafficking and how the various actors in the trafficking network operate and the responsibilities required (though not always implemented) of police and law enforcement agencies to combat trafficking. Mapping of migration patterns and information on safe migration practices are other key tasks undertaken by community vigilance groups.

As an example, one of the prevention projects funded by CRS, the SURAKSHA project, focuses on strengthening Self Help Groups (SHG) of women to take on vigilant anti trafficking roles, involvement of men to form anti trafficking committees and sensitization of relevant government agencies, in the aftermath of the tsunami, given the demonstrated risk of trafficking confronted by displaced people, or those who are further impoverished

as a result of natural and man-made emergencies. The project also promotes education for all and vocational programs – with a special focus on adolescent girls.

CRS and its local partners promote access to education for all children especially in the 6 to 14 years age group as a mechanism for protecting children, and the creation of alternative livelihood options (formal and informal employment and income generation) and vocational training programs for adolescents to prevent unsafe migration to urban areas.

CRS works with local partner organizations to create greater awareness among key stakeholders like elected representatives, police, community leaders, lawyers, non-governmental organizations, media and others on trafficking related issues. The focus in Mumbai and Delhi, for instance, has been to mobilize public opinion on the problem of trafficking occurring within the domestic worker sector, and the necessity to promote basic rights more broadly for domestic workers. Information campaigns on trafficking are also funded for tribal areas, where seasonal migration is common and people are at a higher risk of becoming trafficking victims.

Rehabilitation & Support to Victims - CRS funds organizations that rescue victims of trafficking - those forced into commercial sexual exploitation or forced labor. It also supports organizations which run transit homes and shelters for victims that offer psychological counseling, medical aid, recreational activities, vocational training and means to economic and social self reliance. Partner organizations additionally provide legal aid to trafficking survivors in cases of non-payment of wages, sexual abuse, rape, and torture.

CRS funds organizations like Prerana, which has been instrumental in developing Minimum Standards for Rescue and Rehabilitation of Victims of Trafficking. Included within efforts of rehabilitation and reintegration, training is provided for staff on home investigations before reintegration of victims with their families. This is a crucial element to successful reunification of victims and the prevention of what could result in additional trauma if their families are not ready to welcome them home, or were involved in the initial trafficking.

Additionally CRS also funds programs that prevent children living in red light districts from ending up as second generation sex workers through the creation of drop-in shelters near brothels, provision of education and nutrition to the children, and options for alternate employment.

Networking and Advocacy – For effective prevention and protection of victims well designed laws need to be in place and implemented, state services funded, well run and monitored, and many actors engaged in public, private and non-governmental sectors engaged. CRS provides funding to and participates in networks that promote counter trafficking efforts and greater coordination between organizations in source and destination areas. These networks also carry out advocacy for improved implementation of laws; service delivery of government welfare programs; and awareness generation on the plight of trafficked children, domestic workers and sexually abused women and girls.

Questions for Discussion:

1. In the field of counter trafficking programming three areas are prioritized internationally – known as “The 3 P’s” – Prevention, Protection and Prosecution. Why do you think these three components are important and how do they reinforce each other?
2. In the area of Prevention- information campaigns are important. Who do you think it is most important to focus these information campaigns on? What are other types of activities might help prevent people becoming victims of trafficking?
3. How are migration and trafficking related? Why are both seasonal migrant workers and international migrants particularly vulnerable to become victims of trafficking?
4. How are poor children vulnerable to becoming trafficking victims in India and around the world? What can be done about it?