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READING THROUGH A TREACHEROUS TRAIL: RESEARCH ON TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS IN SOUTH ASIA

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**Reading through a Treacherous Trail:
Research on Trafficking in Persons in South Asia**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Abbreviation and Acronyms	1
About the Paper	2
1. Trafficking in Persons: an overview of the situation in South Asia	2-12
1.1. The Source Countries	4
1.1.1. Trafficking in Persons: the Bangladesh Scenario	4
1.1.2. Trafficking in Children and Women from Nepal	6
1.1.3. Trafficking in Persons: the Sri Lankan Scenario	8
1.2. Destination Countries	10
1.2.1. India as Transit and Destination	10
1.2.2. Trafficking in Women and Children in Pakistan	12
2 Research on trafficking: An Account of South Asian Experience	13-23
2.1. Major Features of the Existing Research	13
2.2. The Second Generation of Thinking on Trafficking	14
2.2.1. Trafficking and Migration Nexus	8
2.2.2. Inclusion of Men	16
2.2.3. Deficiencies with Existing Definitions	17
2.2.4. Trafficking seen as a multilayered process	18
2.2.5. Agency, Trafficking and Recovery	20
2.3. The Policy Implications of Knowledgebase	20
2.4. Innovative Research Methods and Thematic Framework	21
2.4.1. Participatory Learning Workshop	22
2.4.2. Consultative Process of Bangladesh Counter Trafficking Thematic Group	22
3 Data on human trafficking: Towards a South Asian Knowledgebase	23-24
4 Review of the knowledgebase in South Asia	24-25
4.1. A regional survey to develop authentic information on trafficked individuals	25
4.2. A regional study on demand side of trafficking in persons	25
Selected Bibliography	26

List of Abbreviation and Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BCC	Behavioural Change and Communication
BDR	Bangladesh Rifles
BNWLA	Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association
CATW	Coalition Against Trafficking in Women
CEDPA	The Center for Development and Population Activities
CIDA	The Canadian International Development Agency
CSW	Commercial Sex worker
CWCS	Center for Women and Children's Studies
CWIN	Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Centre
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus /Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ILO	International Labour Organization
INCIDIN Bangladesh	Integrated Community and Industrial Development in Bangladesh
INGO	International Non Government Organization
INGO	International Non Government Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPEC	International Program on Elimination of Child Labour
LHRLA	Lawyers for Human Rights and Legal Aid
NGO	Non Government Organization
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UBINIG	Unnayan Bikalpa Niti Nirdharany Gobeshana (Alternate Policy Research)
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	US Agency for International Development

About the Paper:

The paper presents an overview of the trafficking in persons in South Asia. The trend of trafficking is on the rise but the knowledgebase at hand is not adequate to understand the phenomenon at regional level.

The paper is based on secondary information. It is basically a selected reading of the existing literature on trafficking in south Asia.

1. Trafficking in Persons: an overview of the situation in South Asia

There are not many studies conducted from the south Asian perspective. One of the latest studies looks at the problem of trafficking in persons in south Asia considering India and Pakistan as the major destination countries for women and girls in south Asia.¹ For Bangladesh, India and Pakistan are also the transit countries for Middle Eastern countries (where the boys are exploited as camel jockey and girls and women in prostitution). For Bangladeshi women and girls, India is also a transit point for Middle East and Pakistan.

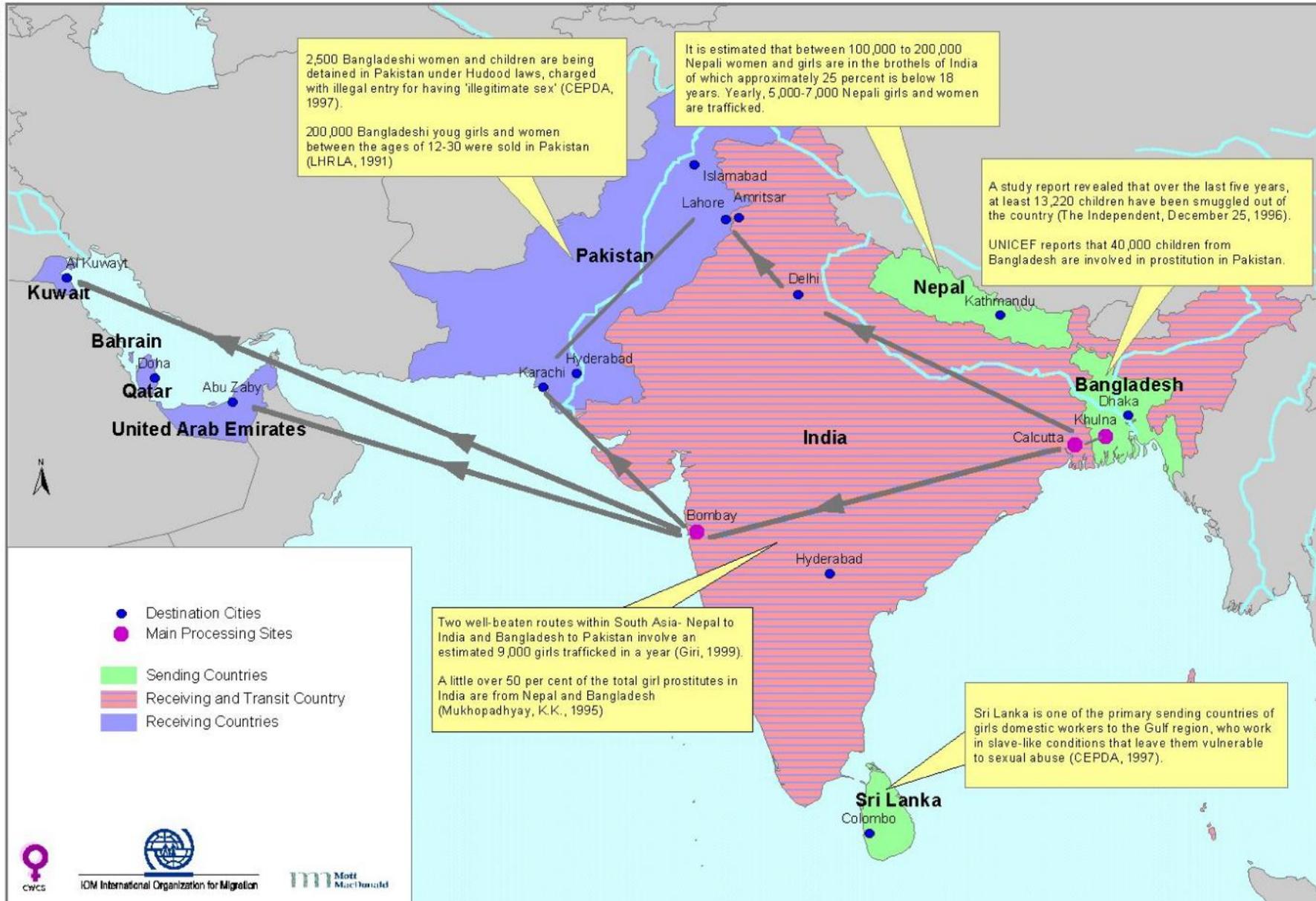
The study revealed that low prospects of employment and lack of opportunities were the main reasons for the women and men to venture out for better livelihood across border.² The economic compulsion was, however, compounded by other social and political factors. The importance of economic factor in deciding to migrate is, in all probability, due to lack or low level of education among women and men resulting in poor job prospects in the country. Apart from the economic reason, discrimination against women leading to desertion, divorce or husband's second marriage, dowry, early marriage also played an important role in pushing women to look for independent living within or outside the country. This made them easy target for the traffickers. Some of the women in exploitative livelihoods were not necessarily trafficked but situation left them no choice but to go out of the country. A recent study reflects on some external factors³. These are:

- Impacts of globalization have included the spread of modernization with greater access to transport, media etc. For others also the loss of traditional income sources and rural employment, pushing the poor and unskilled to migrate to survive. Competition among countries in South Asia has driven the cost of labour down further, encouraging some employers to use illegal practices (such as bonded labour) to access cheaper labour sources.
- Conflicts and natural disasters that force communities to move, often en masse to meet their basic needs. When individuals within those communities have no skills or education, and are exposed to health risks, their capacity to secure sustainable livelihoods is limited, and their risk to trafficking heightened.
- External migration policies that exclude many unskilled people, particularly women, from legal migration and are therefore forced to seek alternative livelihood options through illegal means.

¹ In search of dreams: study on the situation of the trafficked women and children from Bangladesh and Nepal to India. IOM, Dhaka, August 2002

² In search of dreams: study on the situation of the trafficked women and children from Bangladesh and Nepal to India. IOM, Dhaka, August 2002

³ ADB, 2003



1.1. The Source Countries:

In South Asia Bangladesh and Nepal are the major source countries. Sri Lanka is also a source country but the women and girls are mentioned to be trafficked not within South Asia but to Middle Eastern countries. This section presents the major features of trafficking in the source countries.

1.1.1. Trafficking in Persons: the Bangladesh Scenario

All the research reports so far conclude that trafficking in children is increasing at an alarming rate.⁴ Ironically, because of its illusive nature, authentic statistics regarding magnitude of the problem are not available. Estimation of the spread of the problem is further complicated by the fact that the crime so often goes unreported, even if reported there is lack of follow-up data regarding recovery and sometimes the incidents of missing children are not taken into account while dealing with trafficking. It is also difficult to estimate the span of criminal networks working in and outside the country.

In Bangladesh women and children are falling victims of trafficking mainly for the purpose of prostitution, sexual abuse, forced labour, camel jockey, cheap labour, bonded labour, domestic servitude, sell of organs and marriage. In case of women and girls the destination is usually sex-market both within the country and outside. In case of boys the destination is usually Middle Eastern countries where they are engaged as camel jockeys. In most cases the girls, who are trafficked abroad, are trafficked to India. In case of the boys, India is usually treated as country of transit for Middle East. On the other hand, within the country an alarming number of boys and girls are forcefully engaged in prostitution. The girls are engaged both in brothels and the street sex-market, while the boys are almost exclusively engaged in street sex market.⁵

Men are also trafficked however, the issue of trafficked men are almost absent in the literature on trafficking in Bangladesh. So far men are predominantly seen as “migrants” while women and children are typically seen as being “victims of trafficking” reflecting a strong gender bias in mainstream literature on trafficking. The present paper would like to stress on the fact that the “second generation” of thinking on trafficking recognizes the phenomenon of trafficking in men, but the discussion is only at its initiation.⁶ Men in Bangladesh are exposed to trafficking in Middle Eastern countries and in Asian neighbourhood (such as in Malaysia) and end up in slavery like employment status. In such cases their passports are taken away and they are engaged in ill paid and often hazardous jobs, although they were promised with just the reverse.

A joint study report prepared by the Ministries of Home, Social Welfare and Women and Children Affairs, is one of the most frequently cited reports on the magnitude of the problem of trafficking in children in the country. The report indicates that over the last five years at least 13,220 children have been smuggled out of the country, of whom only 4,700 have been rescued. Although there are laws against this crime, but these are not

⁴ INCIDIN Bangladesh, Rapid Assessment on Trafficking in Children for Exploitative Employment in Bangladesh, ILO-IPEC, Dhaka, February 2002.

⁵ INCIDIN Bangladesh, *Misplaced Childhood: A short study on street child prostitutes in Dhaka*, (Dhaka: INCIDIN Bangladesh with support of UNICEF 1997).

⁶ Bangladesh Counter Trafficking Thematic Group, *Revisiting the Human Trafficking Paradigm: The Bangladesh Experience*, IOM-CIDA, 2003.

strictly enforced. This is evident from the fact that during the last five years, only 53 such cases were placed before the court, out of which 35 had to be dropped for lack of adequate evidence.⁷ However, in a recent meeting (17 April, 2004) with the Prime Minister's Secretariat, Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA), an Non Government Organization (NGO) in Bangladesh, reported that out of 74 cases reported to them, 61 cases had been filed against the traffickers in 2003, under a project funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) carried out a mapping study⁸ of missing, kidnapped and trafficked children and women from print media reports between 1990 and 1999.⁹ IOM report shows that, 3397 children up to 16 years of age were trafficked between 1990 and 1999 of whom 1683 were boys and 1714 were girls.¹⁰ The study shows that a total 306 children were rescued from within the country. Of these rescued children 234 were rescued by police, 51 by local people and 21 from the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR).¹¹ The report shows that in the nine-year period, 3391 children (1382 girls and 2019 boys) went missing.¹²

Data on Number of Women Trafficked from Bangladesh¹³

No. of Women	Frequency / Time Frame	Destination	Source
200-400	Monthly	–	BNWLA, 2000
24,000-48,000 b	Annually	–	
200,000	Over 10 years	–	Rape of Minors
200,000	–	Worry Parents, 1998 Pakistan, India,	Rape of Minors
500	Middle East Daily	Worry Parents, 1998 Pakistan, via India (Press Statement)	BNWLA, 1998
200,000	1990–1997	–	Centre for Women & Children Report, 1998
1% of 500,000 foreign Commercial Sex Workers (CSW) 13	– Daily	India –	Central Social Welfare Board, 1997; BNWLA, 1997 The Daily Ittefaq, 1990; UBINIG, 1995
4,000 or more	Annually	–	UBINIG, 1995
50	Daily	–	Approx. 6,000 Annually
27,000	–	Indian Brothels	Centre for Women & Children Report, 1998
10–15,000	–	India	UN Special Rapporteur, 2001

The study suspects the number missing children to be higher than media reporting, as most cases of missing children were not reported to law enforcement authorities. The study also reveals that the number of kidnapped children is less than a third of that of missing children.¹⁴ According to another study¹⁵, on average 13 percent of the households

⁷ The Independent, 25 September 1996

⁸ In search of dreams: study on the situation of the trafficked women and children from Bangladesh and Nepal to India. IOM, Dhaka, August 2002

⁹ Ishrat Shamim, *Mapping of Missing, Kidnapped and Trafficked Children and Women: Bangladesh Perspective* (Dhaka: International Organisation for Migration, no date).

¹⁰ Ibid. p.33.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ ADB, 2003

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 22.

¹⁵ Ibid, INCIDIN Bangladesh, 2002.

in the study areas have had at least one incident of missing children within last five years. Only in a half of the missing cases the children were found. Experience of missing children is important as it indicates that a large portion of the missing cases can very well be trafficking incidents.

A nationwide survey on child and women trafficking of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) in 1997 presented the magnitude of the problem by citing some statistics of the number of children being trafficked beyond the borders:

- 13,220 children trafficked out of Bangladesh in the past five years;
- 300,000 Bangladeshi children work in the brothels of India;
- 200,000 Bangladeshi children work in the brothels of Pakistan
- 4,700 children were rescued from traffickers in the past five years;
- 4,500 women and children trafficked to Pakistan yearly
- 1,000 child trafficking cases were documents in the Bangladeshi media press during the years 1990 to 1992;
- 69 children were reported being rescued at the border during a three months study in 1995.

In most cases the researchers find it extremely difficult to estimate the number of women and children trafficked. This can be explained largely by the illegal status of the act, which motivates the actors who control these women children to hide them and the maintain secrecy. On the other hand, if a child is trafficked at a very early age s/he may forget her/his real identity and address. Moreover, sometimes the family members themselves are involved with the traffickers and develop vested interest. In other cases, families and community members withheld information to protect their reputation and to avoid legal consequences.

1.1.2. Trafficking in Children and Women from Nepal

It is important to note that there is almost no evidence of trafficking in men from Nepal in existing literatures on trafficking. All the research reports conclude that the 1,740 mile-long open border between Nepal and India facilitates the clandestine trade of trafficking exclusively in girls and women. Under the 1950 Treaty with India, there is no immigration control or documentation process for Nepalese travelling or migrating to India. Under such conditions the data on mobility in general and trafficking in specific are very difficult to come by at exit points.

Several studies suggest that every year thousands of Nepalese girls born in poverty and hardship end up in commercial sex work. According to Indian Health Organization there are approximately 100,000 Nepalese girls working in the brothels of India and this number is increasing each year. There is enough evidence to show that annually thousands of girls are trafficked to India, including several thousand Nepalese girls who are working in the Indian sex industry.¹⁶

¹⁶ Shamim, I. (2001).

In Nepal, some micro studies have been carried out in small geographical span within the source areas. In 1998, the Centre for Legal Research and Resource Development carried out a field-based study that compared the number of girls less than 18 years who were out of the district at known and unknown destinations.¹⁷ However, there are no studies, even at the micro village level, that examine trends in Nepal. It is also misleading to project estimates of the volume of trafficking in other areas of Nepal based on micro studies such as the one cited above. The prevention programs currently underway in Nepal do not monitor such trends systematically, so even project reports and evaluations do not reveal additional useful information¹⁸.

Number of Women Trafficked from Nepal¹⁹

No. of Women	Frequency/ Time Frame	Destination	Source
5000-11000	Annually	–	STOP/Maiti, 2001
300,000 “globally” 200,000 (10% 14-18 years)	–	–	CAC Nepal – 2001
5,000	Annually	–	CWIN, 1994 Ghimire, 2002
5000-7000	Annually	–	Population Council, 2001
50,000	–	–	STOP 2002
100,000–200,000	–	–	Asian Development Bank (ADB), Nepal Country Report 2002
200,000	–	Sex Industry	Population Council, 2001

The Nepalese government estimated in 1992 that 200,000 Nepalese women and girls work in Indian brothels. In fact the most common figure found in various documents, without citing a source and cross-referred, is 200,000. The ADB study concludes that variation and inconsistency in data collection make it impossible to derive trends with any accuracy.²⁰

Studies indicate economic deprivation as the root cause for families to allow their girls to go abroad as 90 percent of Nepal’s population living in rural areas dependent on subsistence agriculture. The World Bank reports that more than half of all Nepalese lives below the poverty line. Furthermore, traditional cultural practice, such as Deuki system, (in which the rich families without daughters are increasingly buying young daughters from impoverished rural families and offering them to temples as their own) also leads to vulnerabilities of girls to trafficking in Nepal’s. These girls are prohibited from marrying and often end up as ‘kept wives’ or commercial sex workers. In 1992, 17,000 girls were reportedly endowed as Deuki.²¹

While commercial sex work is prohibited in Nepal more than 5,000 commercial sex workers are believed to work in some 500 brothels within the kingdom. Nepal has

¹⁷ Community Action Centre, 2001.

¹⁸ ADB, p-26, 2003

¹⁹ ADB, p-28, 2003

²⁰ *ibid*

²¹ The Center for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), 1997.

become a major exporter of Nepalese girls to the Middle East and Asia. On average 5,000 to 7,000 young girls are also trafficked to Indian brothels each year, and the average age has dropped over the past decade from 14-16 years of age to 10-14 years of age.²²

Major Border Regions Used by Traffickers from Nepal to India²³

Nepal	India
Pashupatinagar	Phatak/Mirik
Kakarbhitta	P.Tanki/Siliguri
Biratnagar	Jogbani
Devangunj	Sonwasi
Jaleshwar	Vittamod
Gaur	Barginia
Birgunj	Raxaul
Bhairahawa	Sunauli
Krishnanagar	Badhhani
Koilabas	Gonda
Nepalgunj	Rupedia
Mahendranagar	Banbasa

The ADB (2003) study quotes the research from Kathmandu, to illustrate the working of the trafficking network. It shows that most of the brokers in Nepal travel by local buses to New Delhi, then travel by bus or train to Mumbai. Actual routes are changed frequently for fear of being intercepted. India may not be the final nor only destination of the traffickers. Various cases have been noted where Nepalese girls have been trafficked either directly or after spending time in India to places such as Hong Kong, China; Thailand; and Gulf countries.²⁴

1.1.3 Trafficking in Persons: the Sri Lankan Scenario

The discussions on trafficking in South Asia seldom include Sri Lanka. Not many studies at regional level also include the Sri Lankan scenario in trafficking. However, Shamim (2001) presents a brief overview of trafficking in girls and women of Sri Lanka. It reflects that the Sri Lankan girls and women in general, are more literate and socially mobile than other countries in South Asia, although their status varies widely according to class, ethnic group and religion. The current ethnic conflict has displaced populations and exposed many girls and women to acts of violence.

²² CEDPA, 1997

²³ ADB, 2003

²⁴ Human Rights Watch. 1995.

The most known figures on trafficking in Sri Lanka are as follows:

- 10,000 to 12,000 children from rural areas are trafficked and prostituted to paedophiles by organized crime groups.²⁵
- 80% of labour migration in 1994 was of women workers. Job trainees in Korea and Japan have disappeared into underground exploitation, such prostitution.²⁶

However, the presence of child prostitution and illegal immigration indicates a high probability of trafficking. Sri Lanka has a reputation as a paedophile's paradise. In 1997, it was considered the principle source of child pornography for the United States and Europe. Child care workers in Sri Lanka estimate that between 10,000 and 12,000 children are being prostituted, many of whom were orphaned during the 14-year civil war.²⁷ According to a 1996 study by End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism, almost 30,000 boys are in prostitution in Sri Lanka.²⁸

In addition to child prostitution, other forms of commercial sex are increasing. It is estimated that one-third of women and children in prostitution in Sri Lanka were trafficked into the country.²⁹ The rapid growth of tourism in the 1970s coupled with an increase in local demand of commercial sex has led to higher sexual exploitation of girls in Sri Lanka in recent decades.³⁰

In-country trafficking of women and girls are predominantly for prostitution. There is one specific section of "High-grade" commercial sex workers who are engaged to serve only foreigners. "Middle grade" sex workers give their service to local men and operate in coffee shops, hotels and restaurants. "Low-grade" sex workers work at bus stations, parks and cheap meeting places. These women and girls are highly stigmatized and are considered criminals under Sri Lanka laws.³¹

Migration for employment is a rising phenomenon in the Sri Lanka economy and 80 percent of those migrants are female. Sri Lanka is one of the primary sending countries of domestic workers to the Gulf region and its economy lies on their remittances. The business of smuggling people out of Sri Lanka on boats to places such as Italy and Australia prospers.³² The rising prices of fuel have caused many fishermen to resort to prostitution themselves or to smuggling people. Small fishing boats packed with immigrants are often discovered in transit to or on arrival at a country wealthier than Sri Lanka.³³ Also, the number of women emigrating from Sri Lanka—often illegally—is increasing. Many women go to Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf states as maids. In Hong Kong, Japan, and Singapore, three out of five Sri Lankan are women.³⁴ Sri Lankan maids have reportedly been mistreated in Saudi Arabia. Many Asian maids in the Persian

²⁵ Sri Lankan children for sale on the Internet, Julian West, New Delhi, *London Telegraph*, 26 Oct 1997)

²⁶ CATW - Asia Pacific, Trafficking in Women and Prostitution in the Asia Pacific.

²⁷ "Sri Lankan Children for Sale on Internet," *Sunday Telegraph*, 26 October 1997

²⁸ "Sex Tourism Spreading from Asia to Latin America, Study Warns," *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, 23 March 1996.

²⁹ "WHO Notes Lucrative Asian Sex Trade," *Business World*, 31 August 2001.

³⁰ Shamim, 2001, p-8.

³¹ CEDPA, 1997

³² Saragh Malalasekera, "Negombo Police Seize Shipload of Illegal Emigrants," *Sri Lankan Daily News*, 16 April 2001.

³³ Amal Jayasinghe, "Sri Lanka Fishermen Hooked on Prostitution, People Smuggling," *Agence France Presse*, 18 June 2001.

³⁴ Zoraida Portillo, "Labor: Migration of Women Is a Survival Strategy," *Inter Press Service*, 5 July 1999.

Gulf states are forbidden to leave the house of their employer, are not given time off, are poorly paid, and are sexually harassed.³⁵

A large number of girl domestic workers suffer violence and inhumane conditions in countries such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Their employers commonly force the girls to become virtual prisoners, working in slave-like conditions that leave them vulnerable to sexual abuse. Sri Lankan women working in other parts of South Asia report that they are cheated by unscrupulous agents or lured into commercial sex work in Bombay and Karachi.³⁶ At the same time Sri Lanka is increasingly being used by the traffickers as a transit to Europe. According to a recent media report 254 Pakistanis were recently arrested by the Sri Lankan immigration authorities. Pakistani officials said most of them were innocent passengers who had been tricked by human traffickers. They further said the Pakistanis were trying to get to Italy, but he had no other details because the Sri Lankan authorities had not given any more information about them, Pakistani press reported.³⁷

1.2. Destination Countries

In South Asia India and Pakistan are the major destination countries. However, both the countries are also transit for other international destinations (such Middle Eastern countries).

1.2.1 India as Transit and Destination:

India is both a destination and transit area for trafficking of women and children for South Asia. Within south Asia, India is mostly working as destination of women and girls to meet the demand of trafficked labour in sex industry. More than 2 million women and children are in the red light districts throughout India. The Indian government estimates that the vast majority of the 500,000 children in the sex industry are girls. In Calcutta, at least 20 percent of the commercial sex workers are reportedly under 18 years of age.³⁸ A little over 50 percent of the total commercial sex workers in India are from Nepal and Bangladesh. This is evident from the fact, as per UNICEF report, that Nepalese girls below 16 years constitute about half of the total 300,000 commercial sex workers under age in India.³⁹

There is no data or discussion regarding India as a sending country. This is an area that needs additional attention, as it would seem implausible that Indians are never trafficked out of India⁴⁰. However, it is estimated that cross-border trafficking represents about 10% of the coerced migrants, with approximately 2.17% from Bangladesh and 2.6% from Nepal.⁴¹ Interstate trafficking, therefore, could make up as much as 89% of trafficked victims.⁴² Given this, addressing internal as well as cross border trafficking issues is essential to any strategic approach at the national level.

³⁵ Michael Binyon, "UN Rules Sought as Exploitation of Asian Maids Rises," *Times* (London), 8 July 1995.

³⁶ Shamim, 2001, p-8.

³⁷ Tamil News Service (TNS), Sri Lanka blamed as hub for human trafficking, Mar 30, 2004

³⁸ CEDPA, 1997

³⁹ Shamim, 2001

⁴⁰ ADB, 2003

⁴¹ Mukerjee Dr. K.K. and Dr. (Mrs.) Sutapa Mukerjee. 1991.

⁴² Ibid.

Data on Number of Trafficked Women in Indian Brothels⁴³

No. of Women	Nationality	Location Frame	Time	Source
70% of 1,000 to 10,000	Bangladeshi, Kolkata	Over last 5 years		Sanlaap, 2002
800 (140 flying Commercial Sex Workers (CSWs))	Bangladeshi, Kolkata	1990–1992		Sanlaap, 2002
30,000	Bangladeshi, Kolkata	—		Trafficking Watch Bangladesh Reuters, 1997
2,000	Bangladeshi, Various cities	—		Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), Asia Pacific Http://www.catw-ap.org/Ffacts.htm
10,000	Bangladeshi, Mumbai, Goa	—		Trafficking Watch – Bangladesh, Reuters, 1997
200,000	Nepalese —	—		Ghimire, 1996
27,000 a	Bangladeshi—	—		Shamim, 2001
2.7% of women	Bangladeshi, Kolkata	—		Central Social Welfare Board, India 1991

The means of procurement of the girls and women for prostitution for India has been under the “false promise” of better future. Out of the 1000,000 to 160,000 Nepalese women and girls reportedly working in India’s brothels, at least 35 percent have been brought into India under the pretext of marriage or good jobs.⁴⁴

India has become a safe passage for those who are involved in trafficking of minors and young women for commercial sex work, cheap labour and beggary. West Bengal is one of the main places through which girls are trafficked from Nepal and Bangladesh. The situation of West Bengal reveals that trafficking of children from Bangladesh and Nepal and within the country has risen enormously. West Bengal, because of its situation has become the central transit place for sending and receiving girls. Moreover, due to AIDS, younger virgin girls are more in demand.

⁴³ ADB, 2003, p-35

⁴⁴ CEDPA, 1997

1.2.2. Trafficking in Women and Children in Pakistan

200,000 Bangladeshi women have been trafficked to Pakistan for the slave trade and prostitution. In Pakistan, most of trafficked Bengali women are sold into in the slave trade. According to a Bangladesh research, there are about 1,500 Bengali women in jail and about 200,000 women and children sold into in the slave trade.⁴⁵ According to a Pakistan report, there are over 200,000 undocumented Bangladeshi women in Pakistan, including some 2,000 in jails and shelters. The report future details that Bangladeshis comprise 80 percent, and Burmese 14 percent, of Karachi's undocumented immigrants.⁴⁶

The forced trafficking of Bangladeshi women and girls into Pakistan for domestic or sexual slavery has flourished for at least 10-15 years. It has been reported that there are around 200,000 young girls and women between the ages of 12 to 30 who have already been sold by their captors in Pakistan alone.⁴⁷ The average age of their victims is 15. Girls and brought to the slums of Karachi and other cities and kept under terrible conditions in "dens" crowded, filthy rooms without proper food. Brothel owners and pimps manipulate them by threatening to expose the girls as illegal immigrants or to denounce them under the Hudood laws, which penalize sex outside of marriage and impose long prison terms and severe corporal punishment. The Islamic Hudood Ordinances are penal laws, introduced in 1979 that discriminate against women and girls.⁴⁸ According to the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women reports that at present, 2,500 Bangladeshi women and children are being detained in Pakistan under these laws, charged with illegal entry and for having 'illegitimate sex'.

Apart from that Pakistan is also used as a transit for camel jockey for Bangladeshi children. Pakistani boys are also trafficked to United Arab Emirates (UAE) as camel jockey. The Karachi-based NGO, Lawyers for Human Rights and Legal Aid (LHRLA), made a study of all the trafficking cases reported in Pakistan's newspapers during 2002. The report documented 29 cases of child trafficking for camel racing in the UAE. This represents an increase from the 20 cases reported in newspapers during 2001.⁴⁹

Under the protection of Pakistani laws, Traffickers or their network partners are often allowed to marry their victims to protect themselves from prosecution under Islamic Hudood laws. In its 1993 World Labour Report, the International Labour Organization (ILO) debt bondage has been identified as the primary tool used by sexual exploiters to enslave girls.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ UBINIG,1995.

⁴⁶ Zia Ahmed Awan, 1997.

⁴⁷ *IHRLA Report, 1991 as quoted by Shamim, 2001.*

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ Anti Slavery, 2003.

⁵⁰ CEDPA, 1997.

2. Research on trafficking: An Account of South Asian Experience

The data at regional level so far have been collected by human rights organizations or development agencies as per their needs and priorities. Through out South Asia, the research initiatives on trafficking in persons have been therefore taken from perspective of either human rights violation or from development interventions. This has led to reports focusing the phenomenon from segmented perspectives. More importantly, the issue of human trafficking has been often narrowed down to trafficking in women and children.

2.1. Major Features of the Existing Research:

The research on human trafficking in Bangladesh and south Asia in general reveals four categories of sources of data. The nature of data also varies based on the sources. The table below illustrates all four sources of data and their natures:⁵¹

Source of data	Nature of data	Use of Data
Origin or source areas	The number of missing persons reported, the number of cases filed, the number of persons abducted, the number of returnees, people's perception regarding migration and trafficking, mobility of people in general, causes of acceptance to risky movement etc.	Estimating probable number of trafficked persons and trends, framing prevention programs, designing Behavioural Change and Communication (BCC) materials, planning community based interception and integration programs etc.
During the process of Movement	Data collected at border exits on number of persons, the nature of the trafficking network, actors and their roles, linkage with irregular migration network, role of border communities, role of NGOs and law enforcing agencies etc.	Estimating probable number of trafficked persons and designing awareness raising programs and BCC materials, identifying local allies, strategies of interception, creating access to information to prospective migrants.
Destinations	Location and number of trafficked individuals, nature of human rights violation, role of actors of trafficking network in exploitation, perception of the trafficked individuals regarding better future, different interventions of NGOs and role of law enforcing agencies etc.	Estimating probable number of trafficked persons and designing program of rescue, rehabilitation/recovery and re/integration, facilitating policy and legal reform, measuring span of the problem etc.
Institutional rehabilitation process both at source and destination	Number of rescued individual, nature of existing services, assessment of the existing rescue, rehabilitation/recovery and re/integration services, causes of trafficking, means and process of trafficking, roles of different actors and factors, experience of abuse and human rights violation in trafficking process and trafficked state etc.	Estimating probable number of trafficked persons and designing program of rescue, rehabilitation/recovery and re/integration, facilitating policy and legal and institutional reform, identifying indicators and standards, measuring span of the problem etc.

There have been several research studies undertaken in recent years on the issue of trafficking in women and children. Some were sample-based surveys, while others were studies done in pocket areas or based on media coverage of incidents being reported to the police or found during investigative report writing.

The matrix below gives an overview of the different types of reach problems that have been taken up and their implications.

⁵¹ ADB, 2003, identifies three sources of data. The paper finds that the fourth category is useful as it contributed in developing the Thematic Framework of the Bangladesh Counter Trafficking Thematic group.

Research problem	Lessons learned
Estimation of span of trafficking	The process of study area based sample survey cannot lead to authentic figure on the span of the problem. A baseline survey is essential. However, the available database adequately provides indication of the wide spread of the problem. The knowledge base is also helpful in program designing.
Consequence: Violation of human rights	Concentration so far has been on the issues of violation of human rights of women and children. Trafficking in men has not been given much attention. Moreover, focus has largely been restricted on prostitution. In this respect HIV/AIDS has also emerged as a development agenda. In Bangladesh this has also led to tension between the activist groups who would try to "rescue" trafficking survivors from brothels and the AIDS activist who would like to extend services to them in brothel situation. However, paradigm of Bangladesh Counter Trafficking Thematic group attempts to resolve the conflict by introducing the issue of "agency" as an integral part of recovery of trafficked individual. By which a trafficked survivor may chose to remain in brothel situation and move towards recovery while others may chose to leave it as a precondition to recovery.
Cause analysis	The causes are no longer treated solely as "criminal". Trafficking is treated as a social phenomenon complex interplay of socio-economic, cultural and political factors and actors. However, concentration so far has been given on the supply side. Demand side analysis is still to be taken up comprehensively.
Mapping	Mapping is still in its infancy. The database more often built upon sample groups of studies or on media reporting. The absence of electronically accessible, upgradeable and authentic database hampers the quality and scope of mapping initiatives. Moreover, only recently the mapping process is directed towards understanding the nexus between migration and trafficking. While these are far from accurate trends, it does provide indicative maps based on these data.
Stocktaking	Stocktaking on service providers and knowledge sources lead to quality and coordinated programming. However, triangulation of data is a very complex process, especially regarding field level reality and documents (e.g. on NGO activities).

For the community at grassroots, there is no authentic source of information and institutional setup to raise awareness on the issue of trafficking. The information at hand of the community has developed through own experience, stories and myths as well as intervention of NGOs, government agencies and media. Nevertheless, the major source still remains informal human media and role of NGOs (both research agencies and development or humanitarian service providing agencies) has been found at a minimal level.⁵² According to a research findings, the major source of information for the people at grassroots appears to be informal human networking (around 80 percent have gathered information on trafficking from their neighbours while another third of the responded accessed information from relatives). Among the institutional sources radio (almost a third), television (12 to 16 percent) and newspaper (up to nine percent) were mentioned. It has been found that a negligible portion of marginalized respondent (less than four percent) has been reached by the NGOs with information on trafficking.⁵³

Thus the findings of the studies on trafficking and the knowledge gathered through the process have largely not reached the people who are exposed to the risks of being trafficked. Ironically all the researchers have depended on the same people for information. Nevertheless, the research process in Bangladesh has led to a heightened conceptual understanding regarding trafficking. The matrix of Bangladesh Counter Trafficking Thematic group in brief presents this "second generation" thinking regarding trafficking in persons in general. Now the challenge is to put that knowledge into action.

2.2. The Second Generation of Thinking on Trafficking:

Revisiting the Human Trafficking Paradigm: The Bangladesh Experience, Part one: Trafficking of Adults, Bangladesh Counter Trafficking Thematic Group, 2003, is an outcome of a consultative research process which began on September 26, 2002, the

⁵² INCIDIN Bangladesh, 2002.

⁵³ Ibid.

International Organization for Migration (IOM) organized a roundtable discussion entitled “*Anti-Trafficking Initiatives: Bangladesh and Regional Perspectives*”. The main objective of this event was to discuss various conceptual and definitional aspects of the human trafficking sector in Bangladesh and South Asia. To date, the participants attending these meetings have included representatives from Government, donors, International Non Government Organizations (INGOs), NGOs, universities, and law enforcement agencies. This has led to a process document (Revisiting the Human Trafficking Paradigm: The Bangladesh Experience, Part One: Trafficking of Adults) and a Matrix presenting a thematic paradigm on trafficking. Few of the basic components of this thematic framework are discussed in below:

2.2.1. Trafficking and Migration Nexus

Most of the studies do not explore the nexus between trafficking and migration. However, the matrix developed by Bangladesh Counter Trafficking Thematic group and a recent study find that the irregular trade network, specially the irregular migration network is accessed by rural poor for different needs of migration, the same network is used by the traffickers⁵⁴. This creates a problem of overlapping. In order to avoid confusions, there is a need of isolating migration (even irregular migration) from trafficking by identifying difference in consequences after reaching destination.

The studies identify that while in movement, the trafficked individuals are very difficult to distinguish from the ordinary migrants.⁵⁵ However, when destination is reached the trafficked individual is distinctly separated from the labour migrant by their terms of employment and engagement. A trafficked individual after the end of physical movement reaches the destination only to be engaged or employed in highly exploitative slavery like employment or arrangement. This phase continues till she or he is ‘rescued’. The entire pre-rescued state from the time of trafficking has been defined by a research report as the ‘trafficked state’.⁵⁶

The trafficking chain functions at cross country level well hidden within the same mechanism used by people for the irregular and sometimes by regular migration. This constitutes a serious problem for both those who would like to interrupt the trafficking process and those (e.g. the organizers of illegal migration) who would like to make money out of the process.

For the economic poor and illiterate section of the population the legal process of trans-border travelling appears to be quite expensive and complicated. Almost all rural and urban poor do not have passports. The cost of accessing a passport as well as the means of getting a passport is beyond the capacity of most of the poor. Moreover, the visa process, travel tax and harassment of individuals by officials at the border exits function as additional discouraging factors.

While the poor are unable to acquire legal documents of travel and incapable of meeting the costs of legal process, the poor nevertheless do have the desire and the felt need

⁵⁴ Haque, Md. Shahidul, 2004.

⁵⁵ Bangladesh Counter Trafficking Thematic Group, 2003; INCIDIN Bangladesh, 2002.

⁵⁶ INCIDIN Bangladesh, 2002.

crossing the border. A study identifies five major causes of such border crossing (from Bangladesh to India):⁵⁷

Reason	Nature of Migration	Destination
Migration for trade	Usually the illegal traders of goods frequently (even number of times in a day) cross the border to India to buy goods from nearby markets and sources.	India: West Bengal (border districts)
Migration for work	Usually for a season. However, some migrate to India for a long time and gradually even settle down. A good number of people of Shatkhira, a border district in Bangladesh, have been reported to be working in Indian Brickfield and in Bombay. In brickfields there is supposedly job all around the year (Rs. 100/day). Sometimes couples go together.	India: Kolkata, Delhi, Bombay
Migration for citizenship	Usually the Hindu community members of Bangladesh migrate to India to acquire Indian citizen ship. It is usually permanent in nature.	India: West Bengal
Migration for medical service	The people at the border localities have reported that the cost of medical service is much lower in West Bengal of India while the quality of such services is much higher in India. As a result even the rural poor of border areas migrate to India to meet medical needs. It is also for short term and need based.	India: Kolkata, Delhi
Migration to visit relatives	The political division of India and Bangladesh has resulted in separation of family members who are now citizen of different countries. This political separation cannot prevent relatives from visiting each other.	India: West Bengal, Bihar

The element of safety in illegal migration has been reported to depend on control of individuals on resource, human connection, administrative and political liaison, and connection with ‘criminal element’ of illegal trade-network etc. The very ‘discourse of Dhurs’ (i.e. “insignificant individuals” by which the irregular migrant is referred to) reflects an inferior position of these migrants in relation to resource and control. The trafficking chain can therefore; more easily take advantage of the ordinary “dhurs” and entrap them. The “dhurs” take refuge to irregular migration out of economic necessity while their inability to ‘buy safety’ from criminal elements expose them to the risk of trafficking.⁵⁸

2.2.2. Inclusion of Men

Although, the victims of trafficking are children, women and men (i.e. all migrant labourers), the research initiatives have mainly focus on trafficking in women and children through out south Asia. For example apart from the sporadic media reporting and handful of studies it has been found that the analysis of trafficked situation of male migrant labourers working in Malaysia and Middle East is overlooked by the researchers working on trafficking in persons. Therefore men need to be incorporated in research regarding trafficking in persons. The counter trafficking thematic paradigm takes account of this gender bias of previous research initiatives. The paradigm includes both men and women.

⁵⁷ INCIDIN Bangladesh, 2002.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

2.2.3. Deficiencies with Existing Definitions

The new thematic framework proposes inclusion of consequence as an integral part of the definition of trafficking in persons.⁵⁹ It reflects that many definitions used to articulate the human trafficking problem include statements that focus on what “occurs” as part of this process of moving and placing a person into a particular “slave-like condition.” For example, the *UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons* defines trafficking as follows: “*Trafficking in persons’ shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.*”

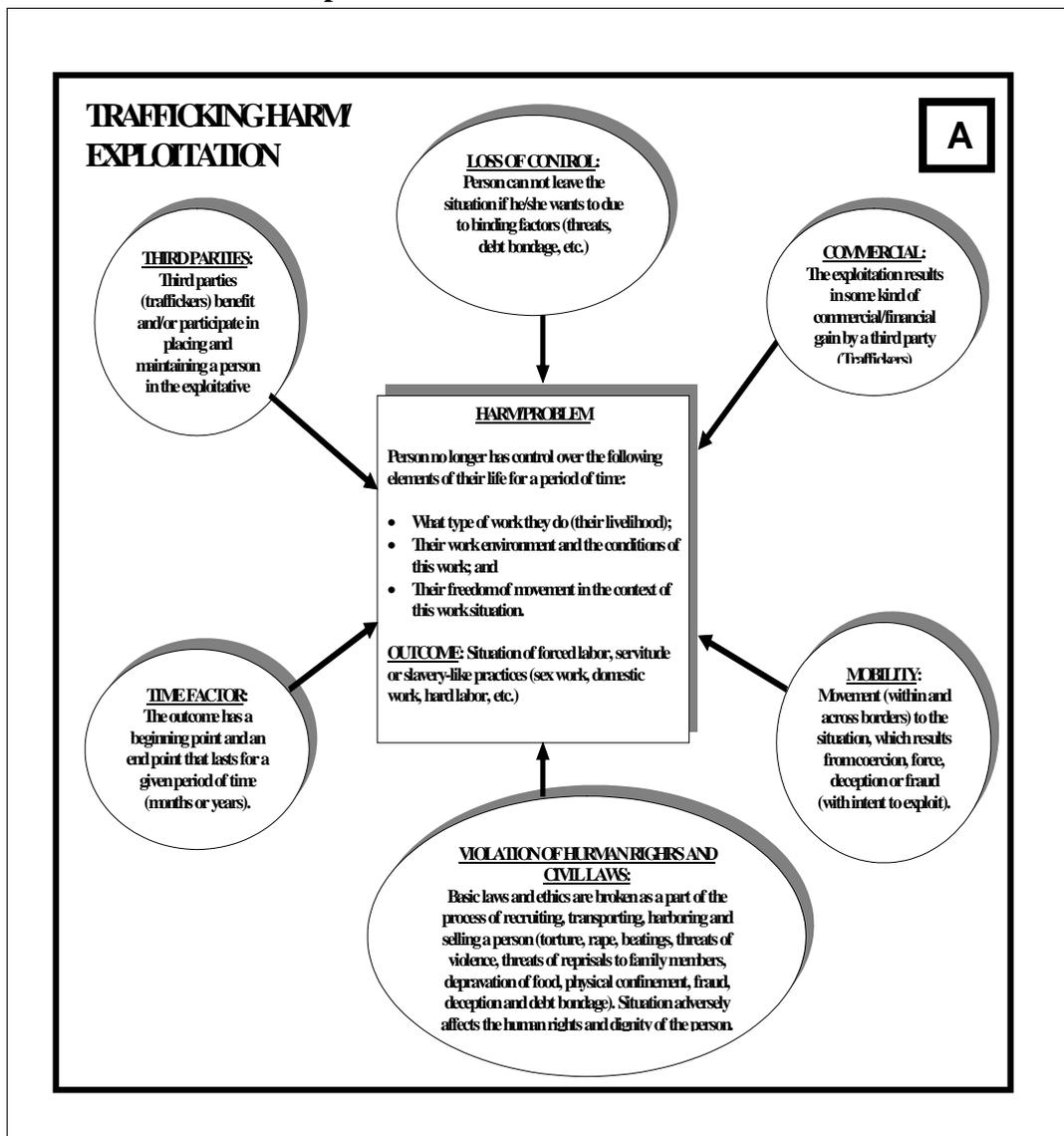
The new thematic framework notes that these particular definition, along with many others, tend to focus on three basic elements: firstly, the movement and trade/sale of a person, secondly the techniques used to bring about a condition for this movement (e.g. deception, fraud, violence, etc.) and thirdly, listing that relates to the “purpose” for the above-mentioned actions (e.g. forced labour, prostitution, slave-like practices, etc.). What the definitions do not clearly addresses are:

- The actual “outcome” of the trafficking event
- The various tortures, rapes, intimidation, and threats used to ensure that a person complies with their new situation;
- The “slave-like” conditions they must endure over time; and
- The evolution or temporal nature of the event.

Thus, the definition does not directly “include” or focus on the outcome of this placement – the “slave-like condition” itself. While the “outcome” is often implied within most “trafficking paradigms,” technically, it is not there within many definitions. Most anti-trafficking definitions focus on the recruitment, movement and transport of people “into something.” In the absence of the “outcome” being included in the definition (in the receiving location/country), only a portion of the “real” issue is being dealt with. In other words, many definitions only address a part of the essential elements that make up the overall problem or “harm” As an analogy, it is like focusing on everything that leads up to a rape, without including the rape itself as part of the problem. As our research, understanding and interventions revolving around the “human trafficking” sector expand, there may need to be a change in the present conceptual frameworks and definitions to better articulate the “outcome” of what we call “human trafficking” – e.g. commercial sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, and other slavery-like practices.

⁵⁹ Bangladesh Counter Trafficking Thematic Group, 2003.

The components of harm and the matrix on definition



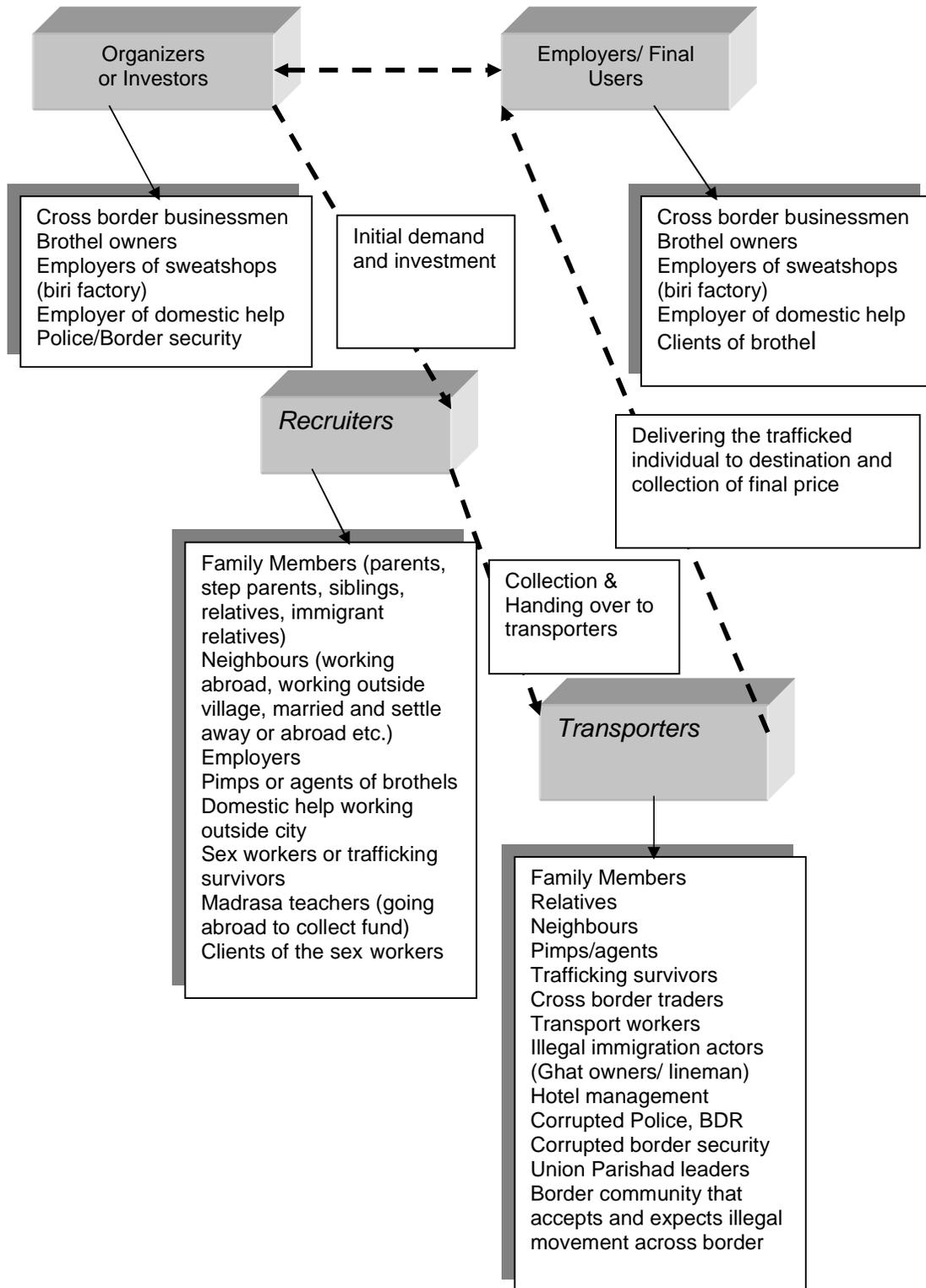
2.2.4. Trafficking seen as a multilayered process:

A study on trafficking in children has revealed that the recruiting agents are not only external criminal agents but also relatives and community people. In general for the interviewed children⁶⁰, pimps (52 percent), relative (17 percent) and neighbours (8 percent) appear as the top three recruiting agents. This indicates that trafficking should not only be treated as a criminal process, it is also a social phenomenon. The chain of traffickers include members from the family of the victims as well as organized crime syndicate and even from within the law enforcing and border security forces. The study is also in line with the conceptual construction of the thematic framework.⁶¹

⁶⁰INCIDIN Bangladesh, 2002.

⁶¹ Ibid.

The Trafficking Chain



2.2.5. Agency, Trafficking and Recovery:

The new paradigm puts forward the question of agency as a key element in defining trafficking as well as in qualifying any process of rescue and recovery. From this analysis it is revealed that loss of agency (although there is no state of complete agency there is a continuum of agency) lead to trafficking. Therefore, all sorts of activities aiming at rescue and recovery should aim at expansion of agency of the survivors on a sustained basis. This means an individual may recover also within a harm situation (there may not always be geographical transfer of a person). Moreover, this also lead to develop a framework to assess whether a program (may be of an NGO) is regressive or progressive in terms of empowering the survivors. The newly evolved thematic framework also introduces the term “integration” instead of “reintegration”. The conceptual understanding regarding this discourse lies in the fact that it may not be the best interest of the survivors to reintegrate within a context that led to the harm situation; rather the issue may be of “rebuilding the life”.

2.3. The Policy Implications of Knowledgebase:

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has recently ratified a convention of trafficking in women and children. This “*SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution*” has been recently sanctioned by the member states. The Convention now waits to be enacted by individual states.

Draft, SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution, May, 1997

ARTICLE-1: DEFINITIONS

- 1) “Child” means a person who has not attained the age of 18 years;
- 2) “Prostitution” means the sexual exploitation or abuse of persons for commercial purposes;
- 3) “Trafficking” means the moving, selling or buying of women and children (for prostitution) within the outside a country for monetary or other considerations with or without the consent of the person subjected to trafficking;
- 4) “Traffickers” means persons, agencies or institutions engaged in any form of trafficking;
- 5) “Persons subjected to trafficking” means women and children victimized (or forced into prostitution) by the traffickers by deception, threat, coercion, kidnapping, sale, fraudulent marriage, child marriage, or any other unlawful means;
- 6) “Protective home” means a home established or recognized by a Government of a Member State for the reception, care, treatment and rehabilitation of rescued or arrested persons subjected to trafficking.

However, a large section of the women and child activist groups and NGOs in Bangladesh and India have strong reservation against restricting the proposed convention only within the area of ‘prostitution’. During the discussion with the knowledge

institutions the same opinion has been revealed. The NGOs and activist groups all over the region have proposed several amendments to the draft convention.

There is some progress also at national level. In Bangladesh, Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs developed a *The Counter Trafficking Framework Report: Bangladesh Perspective*, Dhaka, 2004. It concludes that research that provides comprehensive information and analysis is vital for the implementation of counter trafficking interventions. Studies have already been carried in many areas, and an understanding of the dynamics of human trafficking in Bangladesh is emerging as findings are exchanged and integrated into the planning and monitoring of initiatives. The collection of quantitative data remains a challenge, and gender concerns are sometimes absent from analysis, but a commitment to continue learning and building knowledge for all stakeholders is very clear in Bangladesh. The study also urges to deal the trafficking in children and women separately; understanding the different needs and rights of the two groups.⁶²

However the quality of government services is under question. Previous study found that effect of safe custody further victimizes those being held. The safe custody neither a desirable nor a safe place to confined. There is some journalistic report on safe custody and lacking systematic study on safe custody. The government shelter for the victims of violence and has less facility to provide psychosocial support. There is also lack of authentic information on the status of government shelter.⁶³

ADB, *Combating Trafficking in Women and Children in South Asia: Country Paper Bangladesh*, 2002 is another attempt at creating policy framing resource. The report provides a short analysis of national policy and plan of action for combating trafficking of women and children, offers an outline of regulatory framework, both national and international, indicates legal procedures to prevent trafficking and protect the victims of trafficking, and provides an overview of current practices, procedures, knowledge and awareness of the law enforcing agencies, experiences of the victims, training materials used by different institutions of the government and the NGOs.

These feedbacks are now integrated into a process that would lead to a separate National Plan of Action for trafficking in Women. There is already a National Plan of Action for children regarding trafficking. Moreover, now government is planning to treat women and child trafficking separately to reflect the findings of several studies. However, the challenge is not so much in changing policies; the real challenge is in ensuring effective implementation of the policies.

2.4. Innovative Research Methods and Thematic Framework: Case of Bangladesh

Some of the studies have adopted innovative approaches which led to in-depth understanding on the issues as well as opened new ways of approaching old problems. This section only presents two such approaches.

⁶² Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, 2004.

⁶³ INCIDIN Bangladesh, 2002.

2.4.1 Participatory Learning Workshop

In an attempt to overcome subjective bias of the individual researchers in case of qualitative data a participatory learning workshop process at the end of field level data collection was introduced⁶⁴. In the workshop process:

- The entire research team had the opportunity of participating in data analysis process
- The individual researchers had to reveal their biases, interact with others and come up to a critical analysis of their finding through group work

Moreover, after the identification of the preliminary findings of the study, researchers, development activists, representatives of government agencies and NGOs working in the field of child trafficking, international development partners and donors were invited in a ‘Sharing workshop’ to triangulate study findings. Indeed, it was felt that greater ownership of new and at times controversial findings among the different stakeholders engaged in anti-trafficking interventions was initiated.

2.4.2. Consultative Process of Bangladesh Counter Trafficking Thematic Group:

Following this in-depth discussion, the representatives concluded the following:

- Many trafficking definitions being used tend to be limited in their scope and do not reflect the totality of the problem;
- There are many inconsistencies in the existing human trafficking paradigm that have yet to be resolved here in Bangladesh;
- The sector still lacks conceptual clarity among even those who are working to reduce the problem; and
- There is a need to “rethink” some of our previous assumptions to restructure and revise/expand our understanding of the problem.

To address these conclusions, it was recommended that a systematic process be adopted to formally “*come to terms*” with the trafficking paradigm in Bangladesh. The approach was consultative in which the process led to knowledge on the basis of continual consultation with people who are involved in research and interventions regarding trafficking in persons.

From the beginning, the new “combined” thematic group set the following “guiding principles” for each session:

- The process itself is as important as the outcome;
- The outcome of the process has no ownership (e.g. diagrams, text, matrixes, etc) – anyone can use the materials for whatever purpose they want;
- Anyone is welcome to attend the meetings;
- The conceptualization process should be based on what the group feels is important and relevant, not necessarily what exists within the literature;
- Anything and everything should be questioned and debated until a consensus is reached;
- There is no limit to what element of the problem can be introduced;

⁶⁴ Ibid.

- All views are welcomed and will be given due consideration; and
- There will be three different paradigms produced over time: one for adults, one for adolescents (13-18) and one for children (1-12)⁶⁵

There is a dearth of conceptual frameworks available that provide a good overview of the “human trafficking” sector. Such frameworks are needed to help those who are not well-versed in the subject to better understand the relationships that exist between various factors within the “human trafficking” paradigm. Unlike reports that describe a problem using text (often in an abstract way), a framework (matrix) can help a person to instantly visualize the inter-related elements of a problem. This allows for a group of people to be brought “up to speed” very quickly.

Another important difference between this framework and most others is that it is “person-centered.” In other words, the various boxes and arrows are used to depict that a person goes through a particular process from the point at which they are recruited to the point at which they are integrated back into society. This makes it easier for people to understand the overall trafficking experience, with its numerous steps.

3. Data on human trafficking: Towards a South Asian Knowledgebase

There is not many study conducted from the south Asian perspective. The latest studies looks at the problem of trafficking in persons in south Asia considering India as the major destination country for women and girls for south Asia. ⁶⁶ For boys India is the transit country for Middle Eastern countries (where the boys are exploited as camel jockey). For Bangladeshi women and girls India is also a transit point for Middle East and Pakistan. Therefore, the map of human mobility in South Asia links the countries of the region in very complex manner.

The studies reveal that low prospects of employment and lack of opportunities are the main reasons for the women and men to venture out for better livelihood across border. The economic compulsion is, however, compounded by other social and political factors. The importance of economic factor in deciding to migrate is, in all probability, due to lack or low level of education among women and men resulting in poor job prospects in the country. Apart from the economic reason, in case of women desertion, divorce or husband’s second marriage, dowry, early marriage and general discrimination based on sex also play an important role in pushing women to look for independent living within or outside the country. This makes women and girls easy target for the traffickers.⁶⁷

The IOM (2001) study reveals that there is a need of regional studies for better understanding of the trafficking situation, as the phenomenon itself is regional. In south Asia, the institutional setup of the research initiatives are not well connected or coordinated. Presently, the ownership of knowledge and resources lack coordination. Although there is a contextual and cultural similarity and dependency and a regional feature of the phenomenon of trafficking in persons, there is no collective ownership and learning process at regional level. The experience so far reveals that a regional process to develop a collective learning and sharing among the researchers may lead to a greater value of the research initiatives.

⁶⁵ It was decided that the adult paradigm would be developed first.

⁶⁶ ADB, 2003 and IOM, 2001

⁶⁷ IOM, 2001

Recently, ILO-International Program on Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) has formally identified this gap and has initiated a process to assess need of a regional coordination among the research agencies and knowledge institutions across the south Asia working on the issue of trafficking in persons.⁶⁸

This type of regional network of researchers can lead to:

- Regional coordination in identifying research problem
- Regional ethical and methodological guideline on research related to trafficking in children
- Regional level shared database and knowledge resources on research related to trafficking in children
- Strengthened capacity of the national researchers based on the learning generated through regional research initiatives.

4. Review of the knowledgebase in South Asia:

As it has been discussed in prior sections of the present paper, in south Asia men are seen at best as participants of “irregular migration” and are seldom viewed as “victims of trafficking”. This has led to a dearth of knowledge and data on trafficking in men in south Asia. This is also a general limitation of the research conducted around the world. So far as claims that most trafficked persons are women and children and that most smuggled persons are men are concerned, it is worth noting that the gender of victims of trafficking is only systematically recorded by a minority of European Union governments that contribute data on trafficking to the Inter-Governmental Consultations, and that trafficking statistics are rarely disaggregated by age.⁶⁹

There are two sides of trafficking supply side and demand side. Most of the study deals with supply side; there is lack of study on demand side. However, in south Asia, most of the research initiatives have been restricted in analysing the supply side dynamics in trafficking in persons. There are some sporadic studies on demand dynamics of human trafficking.⁷⁰ However, these studies do not provide adequate information regarding the demand influencing factors and nature of demand of the trafficked labour for:

- The third party (s)
- The employers of trafficked labour
- The consumers who use trafficked labour

Different studies also highlight on the quality of data on trafficking. The findings reveal;

- The existing body of data and analysis on trafficking is unsatisfactory because it is an amalgam of information from different sources, collected in different ways, at different times, using different definitions of trafficking, by different agencies for very different reasons.⁷¹ The experience in Bangladesh has been the same. A study noted that Different studies have applied different methodologies, which further complicates the intention of using these studies to develop a national overview.⁷²

⁶⁸ INCIDIN Bangladesh, 2004.

⁶⁹ Davidson, Julia O'Connell and Anderson, Bridget, 2002.

⁷⁰ Davidson, Julia O'Connell and Anderson, Bridget, 2002.

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² INCIDIN Bangladesh, 2002.

- No national level baseline database is available. This makes it difficult to measure trends in trafficking. It also makes it difficult to measure impacts of different interventions of the government agencies and NGOs.
- Some of the figures (such as proportion of Bangladeshi children engaged in prostitution in India and Pakistan) have not been verified by any national agency or upgraded over the years.⁷³
- In the absence of a standard definition of the term trafficking, the findings of individual studies are rarely comparable, and this further undermines the reliability of global claims and estimates based on several different single country and/or regional studies.⁷⁴
- In south Asia trafficking related studies focused more on women and children. The studies have almost always related trafficking with prostitution.

The paper identifies two areas of priority that the future studies should meet at regional level.

4.1. A regional survey to develop authentic information on trafficked individuals:

Several studies used different techniques and methods at different time to collect data on trafficking, Most of the time the secondary data are repeated and unverified and provides guesstimations. The available studies however contribute in understanding cause, source, destination and consequence of trafficking. But information available fails to generate the national database. It is difficult to state the nature and extent of the problem accurately. As such there is an urgent need of carrying out national level baseline survey with the aim of developing a South Asian database on trafficking in persons. Given the economic and institutional constraints experienced throughout the region, this task will be very difficult to carryout alone for the states. Multilateral agencies, such as IOM can its technical assistance and play a crucial role in any such endeavour.

4.2. A regional study on demand side of trafficking in persons:

The time demands a comprehensive study on demand side dynamics concerning trafficking in persons. There are some media based studies in which data have been generated from content analysis. Media reports have not also been critically assessed. There is some study on demand of trafficked women (in sex industry) in south Asia. But the samples of the studies were very small and the analyses were not comparable at regional level. Bangladesh Counter Trafficking Thematic Group also identified the need of such a study. The thematic group also identified the major actors on demand side. The findings show that the demand side includes three sets of actors, namely; the third party (s), the employers of trafficked labour and the consumers who use trafficked labour.

The paper would like to conclude that the treacherous path that leads people to the trafficked state needs much more in-depth understanding. In this regard, a comprehensive baseline and a study on demand dynamics can unfold greater policy options for the states in South Asia, as well as, for the civil society actors to safe guard citizens from the clutches of the traffickers.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Davidson, Julia O'Connell and Anderson, Bridget, 2002

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