



# Perils of Women Trafficking: A Case Study of Joynagar, Kultali Administrative Blocks, Sundarban, India

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**Abstract:** The Indian Sundarban, comprising of 19 community development blocks (6 in North 24 Parganas and 13 in South 24 Parganas) is physiographically a deltaic plain, having an intricate network of creeks and is ravaged by natural hazards like Tropical cyclones. The inhabitants of Sundarban are primarily involved in agriculture (monocropping due to increased salinity), aquaculture and collection of non timber forest products and thus do not enjoy adequate income. An ill effect of globalization, trafficking means the trade of humans for the purpose of sexual slavery, forced labor or commercial sexual exploitation of the victim. It is now dominated by organized traffickers who lure young girls by making fake promises of love, marriage and lucrative job offers. Kultali and Joynagar of Indian Sundarban are highly vulnerable to hazards due to their close proximity to river Matla to the east and Bay of Bengal to the south. For this paper, data of women trafficking was collected from police department. Cartograms based on the data have been produced. Analysis of records over the years 2008 – 2015 shows that mostly young girls of age group of 15 – 18 are trafficked in Kultali and girls of age group 15 – 20 are trafficked more in Joynagar. Radhaballavpur, Sankijahan and Beledurganagar show highest number of cases. No definite trend could be seen for Kultali while Joynagar shows increasing trend. Poverty, illiteracy and disasters play pivotal roles in case of trafficking here. Spread of women education and interplay of Government and NGO is necessary to prevent trafficking.

**Keywords:** Women Trafficking, Natural Hazards, Sundarban, Kultali, Joynagar, Sexual Exploitation

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## 1. Introduction

The term “human trafficking” denotes the trade of humans, especially for the purpose of sexual slavery, forced labour or commercial exploitation for the trafficker or others. This may be in the form of bride trafficking by forced marriage and also encompasses organ trading. According to the UN Protocol definition, trafficking of humans include various actions such as to “recruit, transport, transfer, harbour or receive by means of threat or force or other forms of coercion, within the purpose of exploitation.”

In the year 2008, according to UN estimate, nearly 2.5 million people from 127 different countries were being trafficked into 137 countries around the world, yielding about USD \$90,000.

### 1.1. Forms of Trafficking

a) *Child trafficking* – This involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer or receipt of children for the

purpose of exploitation. This also involves child pornography and even children are forcefully driven into prostitution. Illicit international adoption, trafficking for early marriage, servitude and beggary are the varied reasons for child trafficking.

b) *Sex trafficking* – Affecting 4.5 million people worldwide, this form of trafficking involves coercion and ensnares the victims in an abusive web from which escape is really difficult.

c) *Forced marriage* – When one or both participants are married without their freely given consent, the marriage becomes a forced one. Often, brides are sent abroad forcefully married and is coerced to get involved in sexual relation with new husbands or others, the case falls under the category of sex trafficking. On the contrary, if the bride is treated as a domestic servant by her new husband and his family, then this is a form of labour trafficking.

d) *Labour trafficking* – This involves the movement of persons for the purpose of forced labour and services.

Including bonded labour, involuntary servitude, domestic servitude and child labour. It is seen mostly within the domain of domestic work, agricultural sector, construction, manufacturing and entertainment involving mostly migrants and indigenous people.

- e) *Organ trading* – In this form of trafficking the victim is often compelled to give up his organ. In most of the cases the organs are removed without the knowledge of the victims.

### 1.2. The Global Scenario

The UNODC (UN Office on Drugs and Crime) published the new edition of the Global Report on Trafficking in persons, in December 2012. It was revealed that 27% of all victims of human trafficking, tracked officially globally between 2007 and 2010 are children which has increased by 7%, from 2003-2006.

In the countries of Middle East most of the victims have been detected to be from East & South Asia. Victims from East Asia have been detected in more than 60 countries.

## 2. The Indian Scenario

India has been largely identified as a source, transit and destination area for trafficking. India has been placed on the Tier 2 watch list for consecutively four years in Trafficking in persons report by the US Government. It indicates India's failure to combat this budding problem. It has been found that there is not only an issue of low priority given to trafficking but also there is a lack of co-ordination among the "police, welfare department, health, women and children department" [3]. The United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) ranks Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan as countries of high origin. India and Pakistan are ranked as high destination countries. India has been identified as the country with the highest instances of labour trafficking problem but records of NCRB present a quite different picture. States having international borders and low socio-economic development record high cases of trafficking but most of it goes unreported. Moreover, besides interstate trafficking, girls are also trafficked to India from Nepal and Bangladesh. In India, child marriage becomes a major modus operandi in trafficking of girls. In addition to that, the parents who for survival send their children to work elsewhere do not know that they become victims of labour trafficking.

### 2.1. Causes and Forms of Trafficking in India

An increased demand for trafficked people – from end users to the profit makers and middlemen engaged in this industry has accentuated trafficking. A second reason may be the advent and increasing use of new technology which has accelerated mobility of people. Nowadays, petty criminals are being replaced by organized criminals engaged in flesh trade transforming it to a large scale industry.

Natural disasters leave people homeless devoid of their

prime assets and drain away their livelihood thus making them prey to lucrative offers and trafficking. Displacement and migration without proper protection measures have increased incidences of trafficking. Global economic crisis since 2008 without proper social safety nets has also accentuated sex trade. Bachpan Bachao Andolan (Save the Childhood Movement), an Indian NGO reported that the pivotal points of 'intercepting traffickers' after the Kosi floods were railway stations, bus and taxi stands in Katihar, Purnea and Araria, Bihar of India.

Broadcasting media (Television) and Internet also deceive vulnerable people by making fake promises of lucrative jobs, residency status in more prosperous countries and false relationships like marriages. NWC of Thailand, India and Sri Lanka report that job offer is the most common method of tapping youth in the traps of trafficking forming 50% of cases. Prostitution in pilgrimage sites, sex tourism, child sexual abuse are alarming trends. There has occurred a shift in demand and operational centres from big cities (Red Light Areas of Kamathipura of Mumbai) to smaller cities like Pune due to law enforcement and real estate development.

Cases of North India show that increased demand for sons has led to a deficit of girls and for the want of forced marriages girls are brought from other areas to states of Punjab, Haryana capturing them into the growing business of trafficking. According to International Labour Organization, forced labour in the form of bonded labour for farms, in construction sites and domestic servitude, form 18% cases of trafficking. Industries like agriculture, fishing, manufacturing, sweetshops, fireworks production, drug trafficking and construction involve trafficking. Camel racing in Middle East involves trafficking of children from South Asia. Also begging, forms a branch of trafficking industry. Children are involved in begging and are re-trafficked when they become adults.

Women who are engaged in this business were often found to have been trafficked previously and as they hail from the same locality as the victims, they have full knowledge about the economic condition of the victim. Bribing from a share of the profits incurred often occurs for protection. Women have always been the second sex and have been vulnerable to sex trade. Once trafficked, the victim becomes liable to be trafficked again and is often alienated from the society. She is controlled through debt bondage and threat of punishment. Her daughters are also used by brothel managers to coerce and later employ them in the same place.

### 2.2. Incidents and Trafficking Routes

Reports on total cases of human trafficking by NCRB had been considered for the years 2010 – 2012. (Figures 1 -3). On the basis of the data, maps have been prepared to show the spatial distribution of human trafficking. The percentage of cases registered for each state and union territory to the total has been plotted for three years.

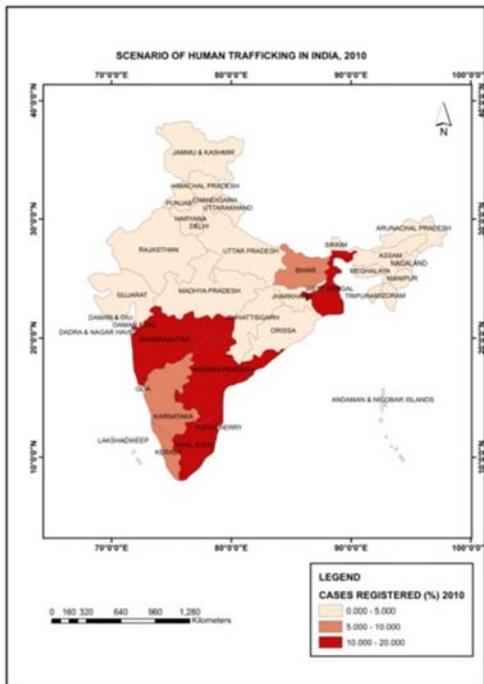


Figure 1. Scenario of human trafficking in India, 2010 (Source: NCRB, 2010).

In case of the year 2010, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala and Bihar have recorded moderate instances of human trafficking while West Bengal, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have recorded high instances of human trafficking. All other states and union territories have recorded low instances of human trafficking.

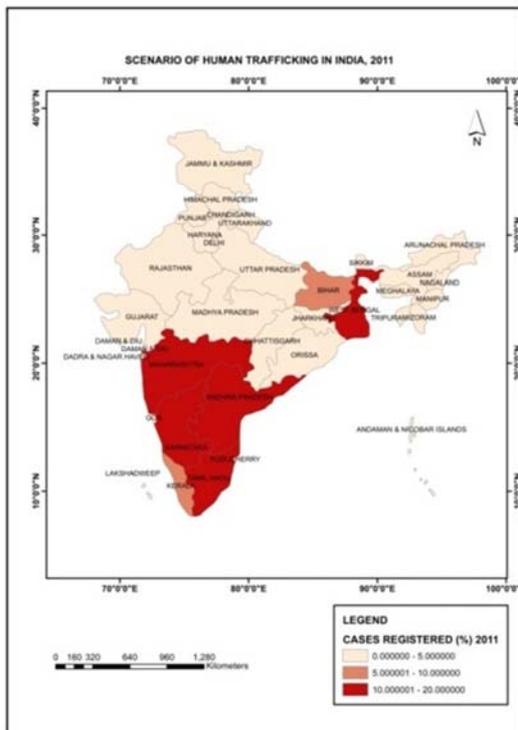


Figure 2. Scenario of human trafficking in India, 2011 (Source: NCRB, 2011).

In the year 2011, the scenario got changed a little bit. Only Bihar & Kerala have recorded moderate instance of human trafficking. West Bengal, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have recorded high instance of human trafficking. Karnataka has recorded an increase in human trafficking. All other states and union territories have recorded low instance of human trafficking.

In the year 2012, the scenario of human trafficking has changed a bit. Only Kerala has recorded moderate instance of human trafficking. West Bengal, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have recorded high instances of human trafficking. West Bengal has retained its position of highest cases of human trafficking.

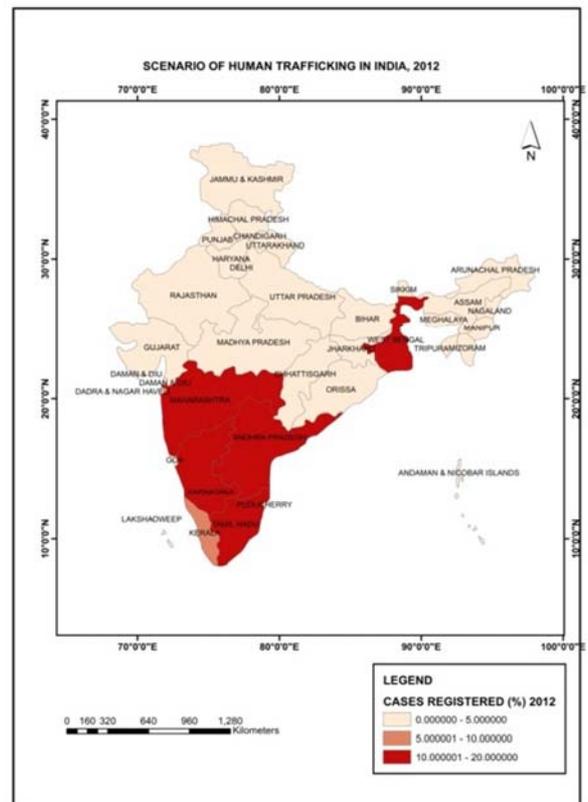


Figure 3. State of women trafficking in India (Source: NCRB, 2012).

A map has been prepared to show interstate trafficking flows of India (Figure 4).

The data has been derived from National Human Rights Commission in the year 2004. High trafficking flows are recorded by Mumbai – Jaipur (both ways), Jaipur – Delhi, Mumbai – New Delhi, Jaipur – Lucknow (both ways), Lucknow – Patna (both ways), Lucknow – Calcutta, Mumbai – Panaji, Panaji – Calcutta (both ways), Mumbai – Hyderabad, Bangalore – Chennai, Panaji – Chennai (both ways), Calcutta – Chennai, Chennai – Lucknow, Jaipur – Chennai, Bangalore – Lucknow and are shown in red. Metro cities are seen to record high trafficking flows and this scenario results from the amalgamation of many industries in one centre where demands for young girls are high. These cities also record medium and low trafficking flows.

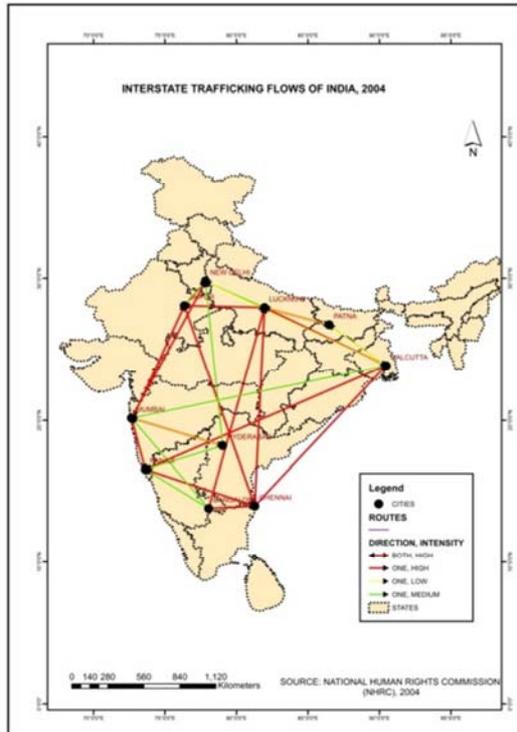


Figure 4. Interstate trafficking flows of India, 2004 (Source: National Human Rights Commission).

### 3. Scenario of West Bengal

West Bengal has always recorded highest cases of human trafficking. Trafficking routes extend to Red Light Areas in Delhi. Often the parents don't give witness against the traffickers and the victim gets re trafficked without the knowledge of family. At times victims trafficked are tortured when they disagree to get involved in physical relation with the trafficker. They are thrashed and raped. In some cases the victims willingly having no other option start prostitution. Often girls are married off to proclaimed well to do men who forge their parents. They marry girls and tricking them sell to women dealing in girls. They get engaged in circle of prostitution. In some cases they are rescued by activists and their clients who sometimes help them to escape. Abduction also forms another method of trafficking. Of missing, trafficked and unsafe migration, in West Bengal missing cases are highest followed closely by trafficking. Of these females are mostly trafficked. Girls of age group 15 – 18 years are trafficked mostly. In case of West Bengal, North 24 Parganas ranks highest in trafficking followed closely by South 24 Parganas. The destination areas for trafficking in South 24 Parganas are Delhi, Goa, Kolkata, Mumbai, Namkhana and Pune. Most of the victims are rescued by police. A map showing intrastate trafficking routes of West Bengal has been prepared (Figure 5). Girls are trafficked from Jalpaiguri, Koch Bihar, Maldah, Uttar Dinajpur, Dakshin Dinajpur and Murshidabad to both North and South 24 Parganas. Girls are also trafficked from Medinipur to North 24 Parganas. Girls are trafficked from North and South

24 Parganas to Kolkata. Also, girls are trafficked from Maldah, Murshidabad, Koch Bihar, Uttar Dinajpur and Dakshin Dinajpur to Bangladesh, Nepal, Mumbai and Delhi. Girls are also trafficked from Bangladesh to these areas, as these form the borders.

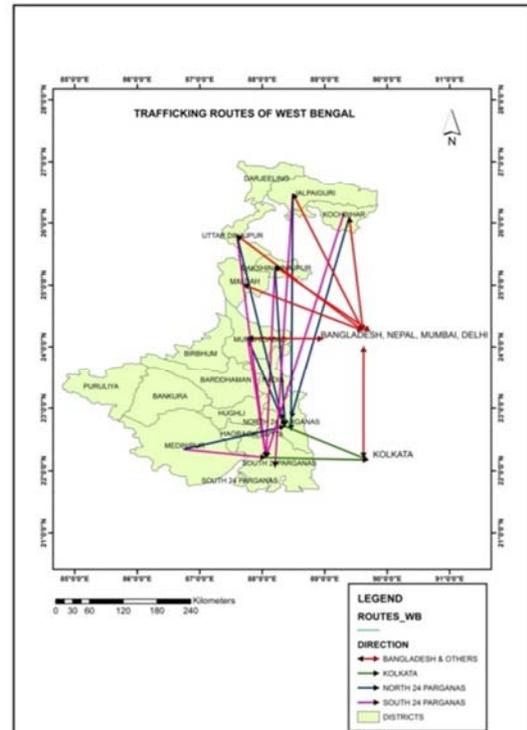


Figure 5. Intrastate trafficking routes of West Bengal.

#### 3.1. Study Area and the Indian Sundarban

The Indian Sundarban forms a part of the single largest halophytic ecosystem of the world. Indian Sundarban is 9630 sq km in area. Among 102 islands, 54 are reclaimed. Physiographically, it is a deltaic plain, criss crossed by an intricate network of tidal channels, now severed from their fresh water upland sources. Moreover, the deltaic Sundarban forms the active part of Ganga delta. (Bagchi, 1944). The islands of the Sundarban located at the forest fringe are less sheltered from the ravages of nature. The economic status of about 4 million inhabitants of Sundarban is quite low. The livelihood of people revolves around extraction of resources from forests and creeks apart from agriculture.

#### 3.2. Women Trafficking at Joynagar & Kultali Blocks

Joynagar and Kultali are two community development blocks among the 13 community development blocks of Sundarban in South 24 Parganas. The economic profile of both the blocks is not at all impressive. The majority of the inhabitants earn a "hand to mouth" existence. These blocks have agriculture as their main source of income. The socio economic assets are very poor. The per capita income of South 24 Parganas being lower than the State average also is a distressing fact (Human Development Report, 2004). South 24 Parganas has the highest share of crimes in the state.

There is a marked inter regional variations in South 24 Parganas when it comes to Crime against Women (CAW). During the time span of 2005 – 2007, Sundarban recorded the highest cases of crime against women (680), (Human Development Report, 2004). In case of crimes against women, Kultali ranks highest, followed by Joynagar I & II.

Also, in the vulnerability analysis done by UNDP HDR, the blocks Joynagar and Kultali occupy ranks of 14, 15 and 18 respectively which signify that these blocks have high vulnerability. Human trafficking is most widespread in the blocks of Joynagar and Kultali. According to reports from various NGOs that every third house at Kultali has victims of human trafficking.

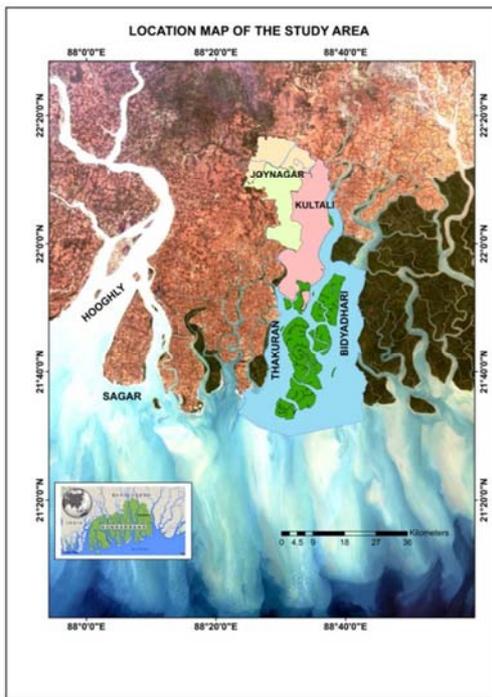


Figure 6. Location map of the study area.

These cartograms have been prepared taking into account Joynagar I & II blocks. It can be seen that since 2010 to 2015, instances of women trafficking have been on the rise and it has taken a leap in 2015, which is a very alarming case indeed. The age groups have been plotted and from this it can be inferred that the girls aged 15 to 20 are trafficked more owing to their high demands in sex trade.

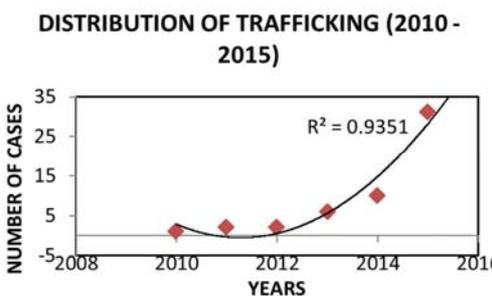


Figure 7. Distribution of trafficking in Joynagar (2010 – 2015).

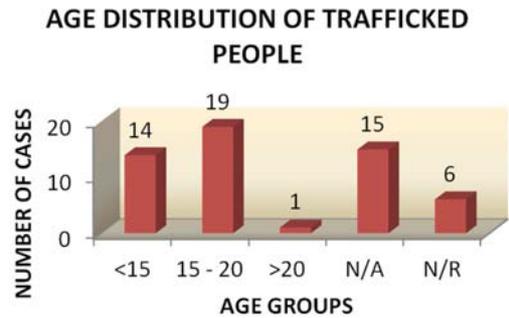


Figure 8. Age distribution of trafficked people of Joynagar.

In case of Kultali, the cases of human trafficking have started to decrease from 2008 to 2014. However, trafficking has again increased in the year 2015. The year 2009 has the highest number of women trafficking cases to its credit. This can be attributed to cyclone Aila that struck the coast of West Bengal on 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2009. Disasters shatter the houses and leave people in utter deprivation. The houses at Kultali are mostly mud houses, which had shattered due to Aila. This caused people to stay on the embankments raising temporary makeshift huts. As life is insecure, girls get trafficked easily. Often, men migrate elsewhere to earn a living and taking this opportunity middle men ensnare the women of the house in sex trade. According to local people of Gosaba, tourism has increased this business of middlemen taking women off to the tourists for sex trade.

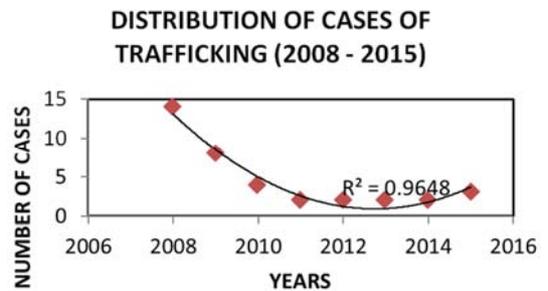


Figure 9. Distribution of trafficking in Kultali.

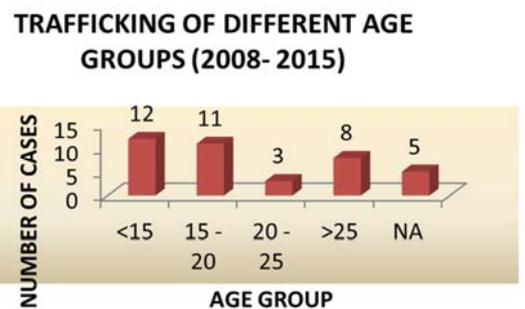


Figure 10. Age distribution of trafficked women in Kultali.

Taking the addressess of girls from where they were trafficked elsewhere, maps have been prepared for Joynagar I, II and Kultali blocks. It can be seen that Joynagar I has less cases of trafficking than Joynagar II and Kultali ranks the highest.

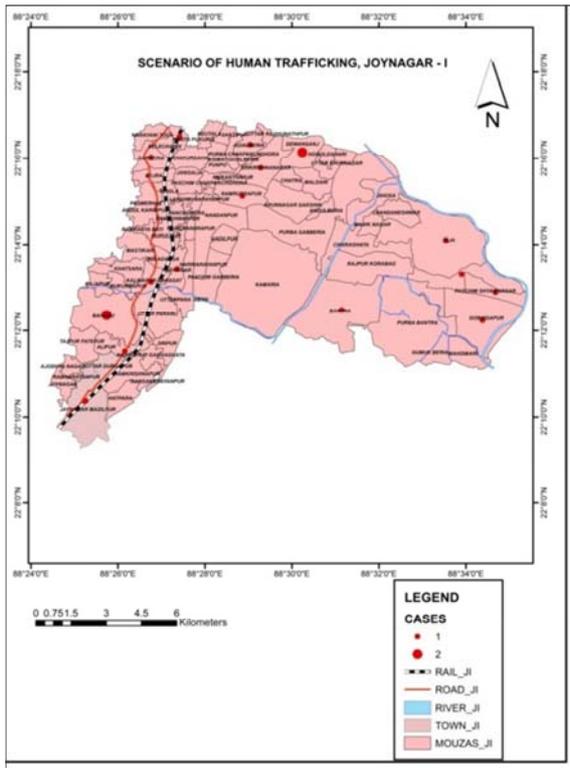


Figure 11. Scenario of women trafficking, Joynagar I.

Mouzas of Baharu Daspara, Charaghata, Raynagar, Alipur, Tilpi, Shyamnagar, Kalikapur, Kantapukuriya, Sarberia, Ramrudrapur, Goalberia, Batra, Srikrishnanagar and JoynagarMazilpur municipality record cases of human trafficking. Women have been trafficked from these places. Baharu has recorded the highest cases of women trafficking since 2010 to 2015.

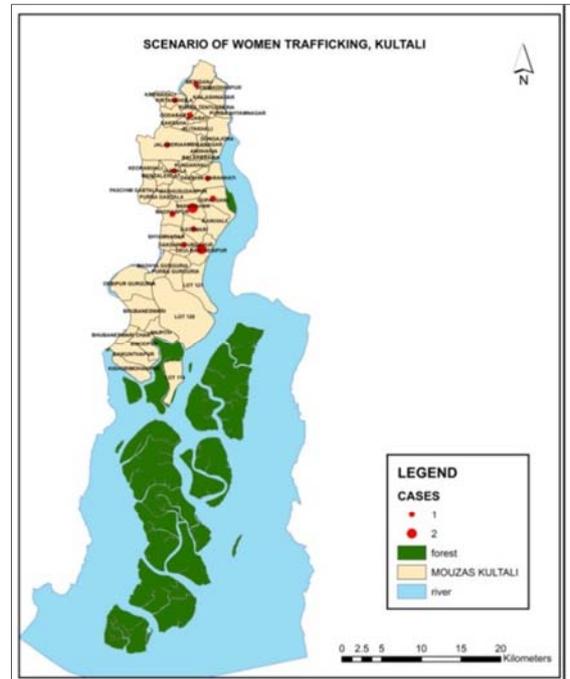


Figure 13. Scenario of women trafficking, Kultali.

#### 4. Existing Management

State and Central governments have a set of laws to curb trafficking. Under Ministry of Women and Child development, National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking & Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Women and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Women & Children (1998) was passed to reintegrate the victims of commercial sexual exploitation in society. The Ministry formulated a protocol for Pre – rescue, Rescue and Post Rescue operations of child victims of trafficking for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. Integrated efforts of The Ministry of Women & Child Development, Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and National Commission for Women (NCW) strive towards reducing trafficking.

Rates of women trafficking are increasing by and by on the pretext of providing jobs in various states of India. Child and women trafficking are widespread in Murshidabad& North and South 24 Parganas of West Bengal. To combat all these Central government has come up with some new policies and laws. The problem of trafficking does not end with the rescue of the victim. Even after the victim is rescued her rehabilitation in the society faces a huge crisis. Owing to the absence of complete rehabilitation in the society the victim

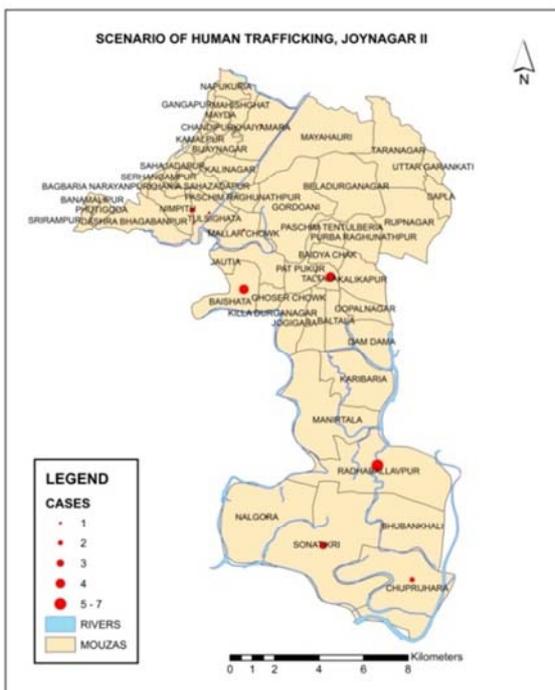


Figure 12. Scenario of women trafficking, Joynagar II.

again gets ensnared in the trap of traffickers. Often the victims fail to stay with their own families. Moreover, the victims trafficked from neighbouring countries suffer the problem of inter country relationship. The women and child development ministry has come up with some new laws to combat the problems of trafficking. At present, a draft has been made and the opinions of various people and groups belonging to various strata of the society have been asked. Even after the preparation of several bills and their amendments, the complete control of trafficking has not been possible. Trafficking is increasing due to the loopholes of the law. The recent law has it that any convict accused of trafficking would be punished by confiscation of his property. Special courts will be arranged for the trial of such cases of trafficking where the convicts need to surrender their property. It has been decided in the draft report that each and every state shall decide with the chief justice of the high courts of the respective states and then arrange for the special court in the lower courts. The special court shall be arranged in every district. Special lawyers shall be recruited for these special courts by the State government. One special lawyer shall be recruited who will look after the cases of trafficking. The qualifications required for the recruitment have also been mentioned. It has been decided that the applicant must have an experience of 10 years and he/she must be adept in dealing with these cases. The officers recruited for cases of trafficking should be gazetted officers. Besides tracking the cases of trafficking, emphasis shall be given on the rehabilitation of the victims. The bill has also proposed the arrangement of a special fund. The fund shall be disbursed for the betterment of the victims of trafficking and for their return. Even this bill addresses the issue of international trafficking.

Baikunthapur Tarun Sangha was started in the year 1978 by a group of young people. The flood of 1982 had hit Kultali badly and the people who started the club undertook relief measures and pleaded the Government for organising relief camps. Thus, BTS came into being. BTS aims to provide equal opportunities to all sections of poor and distressed people for comprehensive development. BTS also upholds sustainable and participatory approach to enhance special emphasis on care of vulnerable women and malnourished children.

Child Domestic Workers' Eradication Project (CINI) is a programme that aims at mobilising people to combat child trafficking and ensure that domestic work by children is rendered unacceptable. This programme is operative in 16 villages from 5 village panchayats – Sarisa, Kamarpole, Mathura of Diamond Harbour – II & Maipith Baikunthapur, Gurguria Bhubaneswari village panchayats of Kultaliblock. The children from these places are to be admitted to formal schools.

Sanlaap was conceived in 1987 and was registered under the provisions of West Bengal Societies Registration Act on 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1989. In the year 2013-14, it was found by Sanlaap that 64.35% were trafficked as minors. It was also found that 64% were single indicating that a good percentage were

trafficked long before they had reached a marriageable age, inspite of the fact that 50% of marriages are child marriages in India. The girls rescued showed signs of trauma and depression. Sanlaap has a psycho – social rehabilitation programme. Life skill education classes, non formal education classes, dance therapies, group therapies, tailoring training, karate, handicrafts training are provided. 27% of the girls were repatriated.

## 5. Conclusion

India is identified globally as an area of source, transit and receipt. In India, West Bengal ranks the highest in women trafficking. Not only the vulnerable sections, but also the others are also susceptible to trafficking. The need and desire for a better life accentuates trafficking. Ignorance and illiteracy coupled with remoteness accentuate trafficking. The villages of West Bengal are not well connected and the victims often don't know whom they should turn to for help. Though laws exist, however their implementation is still not commendable. This is very necessary to curb women trafficking. Often the families of the victims introduce them to the traffickers or openly sell them and so the families need to be sensitized more. Even after their rescue, the family faces issues of rehabilitating the victims. The victims are then seen as outcasts. Kultali, of Sundarban is a place well recognised for women trafficking. Here, every third house has a victim of women trafficking. The State government has come about with several programmes whereby the school students are provided with grants so that they can pursue education. This has helped to curb women trafficking to some extent.

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