

IUAES2013, PANEL MMM02**TRAFFICKING OF WOMEN IN ASSAM, INDIA: STATUS AND CHALLENGES**

Dr. Pranjal Boruah

Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, Dibru College, Dibrugarh, Assam, India,

Email: anthroboruah@yahoo.co.in, Mobile 09435332715

Introduction: Trafficking is an evolving multidimensional and complex human problem that cannot be defined in simple terms. United Nations defines trafficking as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons by means of 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 a 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 service, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs”. Trafficking of women has increased significantly over the past two decades both globally and in South Asian countries. Trafficking in India occurs both across the borders as well within borders among the states and districts. In India 72 percent trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation in Intra-state and 28.26 percent inter-state. To quote a UNICEF report, “trafficking of children continues to be a serious problem in India. The nature and scope of trafficking range from industrial and domestic labour, to forced early marriages and commercial sexual exploitation. Over 40 percent of women sex workers enter into prostitution before the age of 18 years. A survey sponsored by the Central Social Welfare Board in 1991 in six metropolitan cities of India indicated that the population of women and child victims of prostitution would be between 70,000 to 1000,000. It also revealed that about 30 percent of them were below 18 years of age.

Connected to mainland India by the thin 'chicken neck' area – the peculiar geographical location of Assam makes it more vulnerable to infiltration and insurgency resulting in slow economic growth. Over the decades, Assam has witnessed large scale migration of the local population to the comparatively richer parts of the country. The growing need for better livelihood options and employment has turned Assam into a fertile place for human traffickers and in the past few years, thousands of young men and women of the state have fallen prey to the designs of traffickers. Women and girls are trafficked within the country for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and forced marriage. In this paper an attempt has been made to highlight the present scenario of trafficking of women in Assam. The data has been collected by visiting IGP, CID Headquarter Assam and the leading NGOs working in this field.

The State Assam as Source of Women Trafficking: Assam is the gateway to the North East states situated at North Eastern part of India consisting 27 districts including 2 Hill districts. Its state boundaries touch 7 states and their locations make for easy accessibility from countries like Bangladesh and Bhutan too. The State of Assam has been used as source, Transit and destination for women, children Trafficked for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation, forced labour, forced marriage, domestic servitude etc.

The source areas of Trafficking in Assam include Sonitpur, Nagaon, Silchar, Dhubri, Kokrajhar, Kamrup etc. while the destination area include, Siliguri, Mumbai, Goa, Chennai, Haryana, Punjab, Delhi, Guwahati, Silchar etc. The important transit Points are Guwahati, Kokrajhar, Bandardewa (a place in Assam Arunachal Border), Silchar, Siliguri etc.

The only entry to the North East Region is through Guwahati in Assam. Road transport alone has to meet more than 95% of the transportation needs of the area, all the

States being connected to rest of India through Guwahati. Further the rail head at Guwahati provides the route to rest of India. Thus the routes of trafficking include Guwahati -New Jalpaiguri railway line, Guwahati- Siliguri by road.

The traffickers use force, fraud and coercion to compel women, men and children to engage in exploitative activities. According to a report on trafficking in women and children in India 2002-2003 conducted by NHRC the traffickers were strangers only in 11.1 percent of the cases only. The highest percentage was of the family members and relatives. In Assam the victims of trafficking have been usually lured by persons they know or trust. There have been false promises of marriage, better education, jobs with occasional token payment to victims' family. In certain instances unorganized recruitment agencies sell off recruited girls for domestic help, prostitution etc.

Name of Trafficking Agents Arrested:

Mrs Anita Boro was arrested in the 23rd August 2004 from Kokrajhar (BTC) rail station. Her husband Mr. Daoharu Boro managed to escape from the running train. They were luring 200 women and girls from various districts of Assam.

The police acting on specific information arrested three youths namely Jamal Ali (20), Awajuddin (18), and Moinul (28) who had lured two women on promise of job and sold them off to a person running a sex racket in Mumbai. They also revealed in the police interrogation that they had taken three girls previously from Dimapur, Nagaland and sold them to Mumbai. All three of them are on bail now.

The Guwahati Railway Police Force arrested Mohd. Azarudhin who is the agent trying to take 5 girls to Mumbai. He confessed that he has been to this trade last five years. He also confessed in the police interrogation that he had lured North East village girls many times and sold them to another trafficking network in Mumbai.

Occasional visits by traffickers to victim's families assure the well-being of the victim and lead to more victims being lured. Some victims also accompany the traffickers and this leads to gaining of trust and consent of the probable victims' family. Such traffickers in many cases may have been previously trafficked or are currently sex workers. They come in the pretext of domestic servant recruitment drive and mostly they enter into the most poverty stricken areas. They take the women in the pretext of helping them to place in the wealthy family as a domestic servant through the one or two village connection. In North East region most domestic recruiters have some link with the other cities. Most often those recruiters have lived in the cities or travel for work purposes.

CID Headquarter Report on Trafficking of women in Assam: The quantitative data collected from CID headquarter Guwahati, Assam on trafficking of women has been presented in tabular form in the following tables.

Table 1: Year wise and Head wise Figures of District Relating to Crime against women for the year 2006-2010

Districts	Kidnapping					Immoral Traffic				
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Bongaigaon	19	38	49	46	70	0	0	0	0	0
Dhemaji	30	28	52	65	64	0	0	3	1	1
Sonitpur	108	75	92	128	147	0	1	1	3	2
Goalpara	37	39	81	89	120	0	1	0	0	0
Jorhat	52	59	43	45	51	0	1	0	1	2
Nagaon	177	203	191	232	301	0	0	5	5	4
Hailakandi	48	30	10	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kamrup	60	36	78	90	107	7	2	2	1	2
Darrang	46	40	52	94	134	2	0	1	0	0
Borpeta	70	81	127	108	175	0	0	0	0	0
Dhubri	94	111	108	144	197	0	3	6	9	6

Nalbari	26	22	45	45	47	0	0	0	0	0
Morigaon	56	57	4	0	0	0	0	2	1	0
Dibrugarh	56	2	22	6	61	0	1	3	2	1
Lakhimpur	93	82	78	102	96	1	0	1	0	1
Cachar	105	105	103	128	149	0	1	0	2	3
Kokrajhar	39	38	37	49	52	0	1	1	0	0
N.C. Hills	9	8	5	7	7	0	0	0	0	0
Golaghat	70	58	61	21	85	0	0	0	3	4
K/Along	18	15	24	21	45	1	1	0	0	2
Karimganj	46	37	11	30	33	0	1	0	1	0
Tinsukia	38	76	87	106	111	1	0	0	0	0
Sivsagar	79	43	6	0	0	0	0	2	1	2
Chirang	26	17	23	30	38	0	1	0	0	0
Udalguri	25	20	24	38	45	2	0	0	0	0
Baska	14	13	22	26	24	0	0	0	0	0
City Guwahati	108	135	170	249	327	11	8	4	8	16
Total	1549	1468	1605	1906	2486	25	22	31	38	46

Table 2: Number of cases registered under I. T(P) Act during the period from 2005 to 2011 (upto August) in respect of Assam

Year	Nos.of Cases Registered	Nos. of Person Arrested	Present position of the Cases		
			CS	FR	PI
2005	25	69	10	7	8
2006	22	57	5	1	16

2007	23	52	8	1	14
2008	26	89	12	-	14
2009	30	83	17	1	12
2010	39	56	13	2	24
2011 (upto August)	21	38	1	1	19

**Table 3: Number of cases of trafficking of girls outside the State of Assam for sale etc.
(Under IPC Section) during the period from 2005 to 2011 (up-to August)**

Year	Nos. of Cases Registered	Nos. of Person Arrested	Nos. of Victims	Nos. of Victims recovered	Present position of the cases		
					CS	FR	PI
2005	4	6	4	1	3	-	1
2006	7	4	12	6	6	1	1
2007	10	14	17	12	6	1	3
2008	12	18	13	7	5	1	6

2009	37	59	61	38	10	3	24
2010	32	33	36	21	3	-	29
2011(up to Aug.)	30	32	65	49	1	1	28

There is a close link between missing person and trafficking. Various reports reveal that most of children are missing from their homes voluntarily in search of job and the information of missing children are not cognizable offences which do not indicate any commission of crime. So it is very difficult to trace out the missing children as they generally tend to keep themselves concealed from their family members and relatives and many such cases end up being trafficked/sexually/physically exploited. The rate of missing children is higher in the backward rural areas. Besides a few young girls also elope for marriage which is quite common in Assam.

Table 4: Year wise data on missing children from 2006 to 2010

Year	Nos. of missing children	Nos. of children found
2006	853	311
2007	915	63
2008	840	108
2009	813	310
2010	774	400

Table 5: Number of cases of child trafficking during the period from 2006 to 2010

Year	Nos. of cases registered	Nos. of person arrested	Nos. of Victim	Nos. of Victim recovered
2006	4	6	4	4
2007	6	10	6	6
2008	7	19	10	9
2009	23	30	30	25
2010	16	18	35	28

N.B.: 24 Children were recovered from Chennai and
9 children were recovered from Bangalore in the year 2010.

Since January 2010, 163 Nos. of women and children were either recovered or rescued ; 251 Nos. of Culprits were arrested; 147 Nos. of cases registered, of which 67 Nos. of cases submitted Charge sheet, 3 case ended in F.R. and 77 Nos. of cases are pending investigation for various reasons.

Causes of Women Trafficking in Assam: All the push-pull factors and socio-economic anomalies which cause distress migration are available in Assam. It includes the structural poverty ingrained in basically agrarian economy, the meltdown of the traditional lively hood and industries, gender violence as well as the lure to spend a better life in urban comfort. A number of girls particularly belonging to the poor families go outside the State of Assam to find semi skilled/unskilled jobs such as house maid etc. are either willingly or unwillingly victims of Immoral Trafficking. Some among these girls do get involved in flesh trade outside the State of Assam either willingly or are forced into.

In Assam a large number of people who trafficked are migrant workers seeking job. They are seeking to escape poverty and improve their livelihood and send money back home for their near and dear one. They hear about handsome amount of money paid outside through friends and far distance known people or through recruitment agencies, and other individuals who offer them to find them employment and make the travel arrangement. For most trafficked people it is only once they arrive in the place of destination that their real problems begin as the work promised does not exist and they are forced instead to work in jobs or conditions to which they did not agree.

Most of the victims have been trafficked with promises of jobs, better career prospects and marriage. Some are inducted forcibly through abduction. Poverty and Deprivation,

secondary status accorded to women in society, prejudice against the girl child, weakening of the family structure, urbanization and migration are some of the important factors, which have contributed to the commercial sexual exploitation of women and children.

Some important vulnerable soft targets of Trafficking are:-

- Char areas.
- Internally displaced persons due to ethnic conflicts.
- People affected by flood/erosion/natural calamity
- Poor families.
- Women/girls lured by so-called recruitment agents to provide jobs in the unorganised sectors and later sold off.
- Girls/women lured to work as models/bar-girls/call centres and then pushing them towards prostitution.

Case Histories of the Trafficked victims from Assam: The following case histories of the victims have been given to have a better understanding of the way of trafficking.

- 1) Name: **Rumi**
 Age: 15years
 Father's name: A. Sarma
 Occupation: Garage mechanic
 Mother's name: L. Sarma
 District: Karbi-Anglong,

Rumi, from Sukajan at the age of 7 was brought to the place of one G Acharya of Jayanagar, Guwahati, by Mr. G Acharya, the brother of Mr. Arya to work as a domestic help. Mr. G Acharya contacted one L Ghosh of Dimapur Dutta Colony, was paid money by the accused Mr. G Acharya to pay the father of the child. The wife of Acharya became suspicious of her having an illicit relationship with her husband. Thus, girl was tortured physically and mentally by Mr. Acharya's wife, and when the situation went out of control, the child escaped from the place along with the maid of 8 years from the same District she hailed from.

Guwahati Child Line rescued the missing child. At the time of rescue, the child was 15. She stayed under the custody of Child line for one week, subsequently order was passed by the Child Welfare Committee for her stay at Children's Home, Jalukbari.

- 2) Name: **Alima**
 Age: 22 years
 Father's name: Latif .
 District: Kamrup

Alima got married at the age of 12. Her husband passed away leaving 3 children, when she was 19 years old. After his death her condition became difficult to run her family with no source of income. Taking the opportunity of her condition, one man from the neighbouring district, Nalbari, lured her of a job in Mumbai with lucrative salary. Thus, she worked at Mumbai in a lady's placement agencies for 9 months, later on the house lady sold her to an "Aunty", and got advance money to get into the contract. After 5 months she came back to the home town, and again went back to Mumbai. This time she was engaged in a house as house maid and started attending clients as and when contacted.

Next she came to the contact of an agent named Vijay in Goa, who helped her to get in touch with one Bobby, who helped her in getting clients. She used to stay at Bobby's place with his wife. Bobby assured her to pay Rs. 25,000/- per month for the task she was assigned for.

Third time, she came to Goa on her own, without any help of others. Reaching Goa, she contacted one Shiva, a taxi driver from Sangolda to arrange a room for her. Shiva helped her getting one flat at Calangute as well as bringing customers for her.

Alima was rescued after a raid operation by Police with the help of ARZ, Goa. For a short period she was staying at Children's Home, Goa, later on transferred to State Home, Jalukbari. Alima was resorted to her family on 4/3/11.

- 3) Name: **Rubna**
 Age: 17
 Father: Late Mustafa.
 District: Nagaon

Rubna, who hails from the village Rupahi in Nagaon District lost her parents in her childhood and brought up by her brother and sister. She was married, but left her husband due to the physical and mental torture from him, and returned to her sister's place to stay.

Taking the opportunity of her plight, one guy lured her of getting a good job in Pune, and subsequently sold her in a brothel of Pune. Eventually Police raided the brothel and she helped police by providing information about other girls. After the rescue operation, she was admitted in the observation Home of Mandua District on 14/11/09, and was transferred to State Home for Women in Guwahati on 29/3/09. She was pregnant at that time and delivered a baby at the State Home. Since she was from Nagaon District, CWC ordered for her transfer to Children's Home Nagaon.

With the effort of Home Superintendent and Case Manager she is restored back to her sister with her daughter on 26/4/2010. Now she is residing with her sister at the village Rupahi.

- 4) Name: Karishma
 Age: 19 years

District: Sivasagar

Karishma hails from Bihubor, Simoluguri in Sivasagar District. In her childhood, she lost her mother. Father was again married to a woman after her death. Family maintained their livelihood depending on the sole income of her father, who worked as a truck driver in a coal mine. As per her version, one day a Sadhu came to their place, when she was alone and gave her some food to eat. She fall unconscious and when she got back to the state of consciousness, found herself in a brothel of Delhi. Since she had to work hard there, one day escaped from the brothel after 1 month. Police found her loitering and admitted her in a Children's Home (Nirmal Chaya) in Delhi. With the order of CWC, Delhi, the victim was transferred to the State she belongs and admitted in a Children's Home for girls' at Guwahati.

The Probation Officer of Sivasagar, after due enquiry, reported that Karishma's family had moved to Nagaon, from where her step mother belonged, for her husband's treatment. Hearing the news she showed her desire to meet her parents in Nagaon. Subsequently, CWC Kamrup ordered her transfer to Nagaon State Home. But she had different programme in her mind and one day she escaped from Nagaon Home influencing three other girls of the Home. It is reported verbally by some of the inmates and staff of State Home Jalukbari that at present she is in Guwahati and probably indulged in the same trade like before.

- 5) Name: **Nisha**
Age: 13
District: Karbi- Anglong

13 years old Nisha originally hails from the District of Karbi-Anglong. She is the daughter of Bibhas and Bibhati. She has got 5 siblings. When Nisha was a tiny child, her father dropped her in one Khikano and Lichal's Home at Kohima. Nisha was engaged for helping the couple in a Bakery named "Daunet" and a hostel .One day Nisha was taken to Khikano's aunty's house to place her there. But her aunt informed that already she has got 4 maids and didn't want more. Khikano also didn't want Nisha to work for her, thus Nisha was boarded a Dimapur bound bus from Khohima and told her to board a bus from Dimapur to Diphu to reach her place. Nisha was handed over a ten rupee note to board the bus. The driver of the bus suspected seeing Nisha and informed Diphu Police. Till the family was traced, Nisha retained in Nagaon Children's Home for about 2 years. Endeavour put by the Case manager of the Home helped Nisha in reuniting with her family.

- 6) Name: **Jonali**
Age: 15years
District: Nalbari

Basically from Nalbari, time of trafficking she was in Dimapur since her parents were in that place for work. One day she boarded a train from Dimapur after the argument with her parents. She met some guys in the train who lured her of giving a good job. The train stopped in Pune. There she was sold off by those guys. When Police raided the brothel she was working, six girls from Assam were rescued together. On 6th March 2009 all these six girls were transferred to Assam.

Still the girl is in the State Home Jalukbari. She has the strong urge to go to her home but authority is unable to trace out her family. Now she is engaged in embroidery and knitting

classes in State Home for Women at Jalukbari and has shown a good talent in doing jobs assigned for her.

- 7) Name: **Bina**
Age: 15years
District: Golaghat

Bina along with her boy friend went to a hotel in Golaghat where her boy friend offered her soft drink mixed with some medicine, after consuming the drink she fell unconscious. When she detained sense, found herself in Nagaon. From Nagaon she was trafficked to Pune and sold off to a brothel. She was working in the brothel for 5 months. Police rescued her after the raid in the brothel. She was restored to her family after her transfer to her State. Adivasi Students Union of Golaghat helped police in handing over the culprit to them. She is restored to her family.

- 8) Name: **Rani**
Age : 15yeras old
Father: Md. Raju
District: Dhubri

She is a native of Khajipur, Kalapani, Dhubri. She was married twice. First spouse died and second one left her. She started working as a construction worker at Guwahati. Somebody lured her of giving a good job in Pune. During her journey she found herself along with twelve others (5 girls other were the group members). When they got down in the railway station, they were sold off to 2 ladies. She was rescued by Pune Police and following the order of CWC (Pune) was transferred to Assam. She got admitted in the State Home for Women, Jalukbari on 29/3/09. After one year she was restored back to her parents by ICCW on 13/2/10, Assam.

- 9) Name: **Jahanara**
Age: 15 years
District: Nagaon

Jahanara lost her parents at an early age. She was looked after by her elder sister and brother in law for some period .After that she was married but due to the physical and mental torture by her husband, she left him and went back to her sister's place. She used to quarrel with them and not happy staying with them. Taking the opportunity of her condition, one boy lured her of giving a job in Pune and thus sold off to a brothel owner. Rescued after police raided the brothel. She was pregnant at the time of rescued, and delivered a baby on 18th of July 2009. On Nov 8th 2009, she was transferred to the Nagaon Home and restored back to her sister on 26/4/10 with the effort of NGO.

- 10) Name: **Laky**
Age: 12 years
District: Sivasagar

Laky has no parents, staying with her brother who worked in the Sonari tea Estate in Sivasagar. Tea Estate's Manager wanted a maid in their home at Guwahati. Her brother sent

her to help the Manager's wife. She was tortured inhumanly there, that some signs of torture all over her body could be seen. Situation went unbearable and the tiny child ran away from the place and took shelter in a nearby residence, who informed the police and referred to CWC (metro). The child was sent to Jalukbari Children's Home for shelter. Two people named Adam and Kishor came from the Tea Estate to take her custody, but the child expressed her unwillingness and apprehension to go back with those people. CWC informed CID (Police) suspecting over the guys and police caught them. The girl is staying in the Children's Home for Girls in Guwahati.

- 11) Name: **Nur Ali**
 Age: 16years
 Father: Mohammad Ali Hussain
 District: Nagaon

Nur was sold by her would be brother-in-law making a conspiracy with his friends who offered her cold drink mixed with depressant drug, fall unconscious and sold to a brothel in Pune. She is back to her family now.

- 12) Name: **Juli**
 Age: 15years
 District: Morigaon

Juli was ditched by her boy friend as he mixed drug in her drink and sold her to a brothel in Pune. On 29/3/09 she was transferred to State Home, Guwahati and restored to her parents on 18/8/09 followed by the investigation done by the Superintendent to trace out her family.

Anti-Trafficking Measures: To prevent trafficking of women and girls, District Ss.P. are instructed to ensure:

- a. Investigation of Crime against Women to be prioritized at Police Station and Out Post level
- b. Optimum vigilance in Railway stations/ bus stops which are prone to movement of human trafficking
- c. Prompt enquiry/verification to ascertain incidents of trafficking from those of kidnapping, abduction, missing entries.
- d. Senior Police Officers to conduct effective raids by taking assistance of NGOs connected in anti trafficking
- e. Organized rackets and its members to be identified for firm legal action

Necessary action is taken by the Police whenever information/complaints are received from any quarter to rescue the victims and to take punitive action against the accused persons as per law. In many instances, girls have been intercepted at Railway Stations and bus stands

based on confidential inputs or on suspicion they are being trafficked for immoral purposes. One difficulty faced during such interception was that of the adult girls going outside the State to be lawfully employed. Indiscriminate interception of the girls during transit, merely on suspicion, sometimes results in depriving the poor girls from getting lawful employment outside the State. Recently the following anti human trafficking initiatives has been taken by Assam Police.

- AHT Cell created at CID Hq with IGP CID being the Nodal Officer
- 14 Nos. Anti Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) have been created at district Hqrs. as per Ministry of Home Affairs Guideline with the existing manpower.
- 26 Nos. of Districts of Juvenile Justice Boards have been created at the district Hqrs.
- 26 Nos. of Child welfare committees have been created in districts
- 30 Nos. of SJPU have been created in 30 Police districts of Assam.
- 3 Nos. Advisory boards have been created in districts U/S 13(3)(b) IT(P) Act
- Continuous process of training and sensitization on Human Trafficking for officers and men are going on at the National level as well at the CID HQ.
- Increased inter-action between Police and other Govt./Non-Govt. Agencies
- 7 Nos. of Observation Homes and Shelter Homes already created in districts.
- Certificate course in Anti Human Trafficking (CAHT) under IGNOU for all Police staff, social worker and NGOs.

**Anti Human trafficking initiatives
By
Assam Police**



Different N.G.O.s such as NEDAN, GOLD and IMPULSE etc. also working in this field out of these special mentions may be made of GOLD N.G.O. in Guwahati. During the investigation it has been noted that there are a few homes under this N.G.O. in different locations in Guwahati where the victims are kept until they are surrendered to their respective families. All the victims staying in these homes are in the age of 12 to 15 years old and are seen very innocent, low education and economically poor background. Most of them have no warm cloth to wear in the winter season and remains with bare foot. As they talk with their family members by phone their tears come out.

Though different anti trafficking measures are taken by Assam Police with the help of the NGOs but they are not in the stage to minimize this trafficking. The only problem is that they cannot get the actual fact and they proceed on suspect. Besides the traffickers are mostly female and the victims never tell the truth for threat.

It is the hour to promote programs to stop second generation trafficking by providing educational options to the children of source areas. There is a need of working partnership between the police and NGOs to prevent trafficking of girls in the source areas. However to prevent trafficking it is must to organize public awareness campaigns and community participation programmes on trafficking so that the general people become aware of the traffickers false promises. Thus it is hope that the combine efforts of all the policy makers, social workers and NGOs with Assam Police will get a desired result to save the children from traffickers in general and the women in particular.

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