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HUMAN TRAFFICKING: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND CHALLENGES IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Human trafficking is one of the gravest human rights violations in the modern world, often referred to as a form of modern-day slavery. It involves the illegal trade and exploitation of people for purposes such as sexual exploitation, forced labor, organ trafficking, child begging, and domestic servitude. Affecting millions globally, it cuts across geographic and socio-economic boundaries, particularly targeting women, children, and marginalized groups.

Despite global and national legal frameworks, including the Palermo Protocol and various Indian legislations like the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 and IPC Section 370, trafficking continues to thrive. The problem in India is both internal and cross-border, exacerbated by poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, gender-based discrimination, and weak law enforcement.

This paper critically analyzes the root causes, patterns, and impacts of human trafficking, with a specific focus on India. It highlights gaps in the current legal and institutional response and emphasizes the need for better enforcement, victim rehabilitation, and international cooperation. The study concludes by advocating for a victim-centric and multi-pronged approach that integrates legal, social, and policy reforms to combat human trafficking effectively.

Keywords – Human Trafficking, Modern Slavery, Forced Labour, Sexual Exploitation, Child Trafficking, Organ Trade, Indian Penal Code, Palermo Protocol, Rehabilitation, Victim Rights, Gender-based Violence, Cross-border Crime, Anti-trafficking Law, Law Enforcement, Human Rights Violation, Socio-economic Disparity.

1. Introduction

Human trafficking is a grave and persistent human rights violation that has garnered global attention due to its far-reaching humanitarian, legal, and social implications. Commonly referred to as **modern-day slavery**, human trafficking involves the illegal recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of individuals through coercive means such as force, fraud, deception, or abuse of power. The

primary aim behind such exploitation is to profit from victims through forced labor, sexual exploitation, organ trade, domestic servitude, and other inhumane practices.

According to the **United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2000)**, human trafficking is defined as:

“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.”¹³¹⁰

Victims of human trafficking are often lured through false promises of employment, education, or a better quality of life. Once trapped, they are subjected to inhumane treatment, stripped of their freedom, and often denied basic human dignity. The clandestine nature of this crime makes it extremely difficult to detect, report, and prosecute.

India, due to its geographical size, porous borders, large population, and socio-economic disparities, is both a source and destination country for human trafficking. Vulnerable groups, including **women, children, Dalits, and tribal communities**, are disproportionately affected. Trafficking within India typically occurs from impoverished rural regions to urban centers, while cross-border trafficking largely involves neighboring countries like Nepal and Bangladesh.

Despite the presence of several laws, such as the **Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956**, and **Section 370 of the Indian Penal Code**, the problem persists due to weak implementation, lack of coordinated efforts, and insufficient victim protection mechanisms. Moreover, factors like **poverty, illiteracy, armed conflict**, and **gender-based violence** further exacerbate the problem.

This paper seeks to critically analyze the multidimensional nature of human trafficking in India, examining the causes, legal frameworks, challenges in enforcement, and the need for reform. The aim is to recommend a more holistic, victim-centric, and rights-based approach to combating this serious offense.

¹³¹⁰ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime*, 2000, Article 3(a).

2. Historical Background and Global Overview

Human trafficking, while widely acknowledged today as a contemporary form of slavery, is deeply rooted in history. The exploitation of human beings through coercion and force has existed since the earliest civilizations. Ancient societies such as those in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome institutionalized slavery as part of their socio-economic systems, where people were bought, sold, and inherited as property. The **transatlantic slave trade** of the 15th to 19th centuries is perhaps the most infamous historical manifestation of large-scale human trafficking, during which millions of Africans were forcibly transported to the Americas under brutal conditions to work as slaves¹³¹¹.

In the colonial era, many European powers exploited local populations across Africa, Asia, and the Americas, often through forced labor and human displacement. These historical patterns laid the foundation for contemporary trafficking practices, which have transformed into more covert, complex, and transnational operations in the modern globalized world.

Today, human trafficking is recognized not merely as a criminal act but as a **transnational organized crime**, deeply linked to systemic issues such as poverty, conflict, corruption, and globalization. With advancements in technology and international travel, traffickers have expanded their operations across borders, creating networks that are difficult to dismantle.

The crime now encompasses a wide range of exploitative purposes, including but not limited to sexual exploitation, bonded labor, domestic servitude, organ trafficking, and forced marriage.

The **Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022**, published by the **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**, reveals alarming statistics that underline the global scope and gendered nature of this crime. According to the

¹³¹¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022*, United Nations Publication, 2022, pp. 11–13. Available at: <https://www.unodc.org>

report, **65% of identified trafficking victims globally are women and girls**, with the majority subjected to sexual exploitation. Conversely, **men and boys account for a significant share of victims trafficked for forced labor**, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, construction, mining, and domestic work¹³¹².

Furthermore, the report emphasizes that trafficking is not confined to developing nations; high-income countries are also affected, particularly as destinations for trafficked individuals. The nature of trafficking often adapts to geopolitical realities, with armed conflicts, humanitarian crises, and migration surges significantly increasing the risk of exploitation.

Thus, while the manifestation of trafficking has changed, its essence remains the same—the **systematic exploitation of vulnerable individuals for profit**. Understanding this historical continuity and present-day reality is essential to designing effective, context-specific interventions at both global and national levels.

3. Causes and Factors Contributing to Human Trafficking

Human trafficking thrives in conditions of vulnerability, inequality, and impunity. It is driven by a complex interplay of **economic, social, political, and cultural factors** that push individuals into exploitative situations and pull traffickers toward easy profit. Understanding these root causes is essential to framing effective prevention strategies.

3.1 Poverty and Unemployment

Poverty remains one of the primary root causes of human trafficking. In regions where basic survival is a daily challenge, individuals are more likely to fall prey to traffickers who promise employment, better living conditions, or educational opportunities. Desperation often forces families to send children away with strangers under the assumption that they will have access to a better life. In India, states with

high poverty rates such as Bihar, Jharkhand, and West Bengal report higher incidences of trafficking, especially among rural and tribal populations.

3.2 Lack of Education and Awareness

Low levels of education and awareness significantly contribute to the proliferation of trafficking. Uneducated individuals are often unaware of their legal rights, potential risks, and the deceptive tactics used by traffickers. This ignorance makes them more susceptible to manipulation and coercion. Moreover, the absence of adequate information regarding safe migration and employment laws further increases their vulnerability¹³¹³.

3.3 Gender Inequality

Human trafficking disproportionately affects women and girls, particularly for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Deep-rooted **patriarchal norms**, gender discrimination, and socio-cultural practices such as child marriage and dowry contribute to the marginalization of women. In many societies, girls are undervalued and deprived of education, making them easier targets for traffickers.

3.4 Migration and Displacement

Natural disasters, internal displacement, armed conflicts, and socio-political instability are often followed by spikes in trafficking. Refugees, migrants, and displaced individuals—especially unaccompanied minors—face elevated risks of being trafficked during their journey or in refugee camps. Irregular migration pathways, often used due to the lack of legal migration options, expose individuals to further exploitation.

3.5 Demand for Cheap Labor and Commercial Sex

The demand side of trafficking—whether for **cheap labor, domestic servitude, or commercial sexual exploitation**—drives the supply chain. The global economy's need for

¹³¹² UN Women, *Gender and Human Trafficking: Evidence and Strategies*, Policy Brief, 2021

¹³¹³ International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Addressing Human Trafficking and Exploitation in Times of Crisis*, 2015

low-cost goods and services often indirectly supports labor trafficking. Similarly, the sex industry's demand fuels sexual exploitation across borders, often with tacit societal acceptance or weak legal intervention.

4. Human Trafficking in India: Magnitude and Trends

India continues to face a severe human trafficking crisis, functioning simultaneously as a **source, transit, and destination** country for trafficking activities. The diversity of the population, coupled with vast socio-economic disparities and porous borders, creates a fertile ground for traffickers who exploit vulnerabilities for profit. The problem spans across both rural and urban areas and affects women, children, and marginalized communities disproportionately.

4.1 Internal and Cross-Border Trafficking

India witnesses large-scale **internal trafficking**, with victims being transported from rural and tribal areas to cities and industrial zones under the guise of employment, education, or marriage. Women and children from economically backward states such as **West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh** are often trafficked to metropolitan areas like Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata¹³¹⁴.

India also experiences **cross-border trafficking**, primarily from **Nepal and Bangladesh**, due to shared borders and linguistic, cultural, and familial linkages. Women and children from these countries are trafficked into India for purposes such as sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, and forced marriage.

4.2 Prevalent Forms of Trafficking in India

Several forms of trafficking have been documented across India. Some of the most widespread include:

- **Child Trafficking for Labor and Begging:** Children are trafficked for domestic work,

agricultural labor, and industrial tasks such as work in garment factories, bangle-making, and brick kilns. Many are also forced into street begging and criminal activities¹³¹⁵.

- **Sex Trafficking of Women and Minors:** Thousands of women and underage girls are coerced or abducted into the sex trade. Red-light areas in cities like Mumbai, Kolkata, and Delhi remain hubs for this form of exploitation, often involving victims trafficked from remote rural areas or foreign countries¹³¹⁶.
- **Bonded Labor:** Bonded or **debt-based labor** persists in sectors such as brick kilns, agriculture, construction, and stone quarries. Victims are often kept under inhumane conditions, with little or no wages, and are denied basic freedoms.
- **Organ Trafficking:** Though less visible, **illegal organ trade** remains a significant issue in India. Poor individuals are coerced or tricked into selling organs like kidneys, often through forged documents or under financial pressure.

4.3 Regional Trends and Hotspots

Research and government reports have identified **West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Odisha** as trafficking-prone states. These regions are characterized by high poverty rates, low literacy, and weak enforcement of anti-trafficking laws. Additionally, urban hubs such as Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru often serve as destinations where victims are exploited in commercial sex work or domestic servitude.

5. Legal Framework in India

India has enacted a multi-layered legal framework to address human trafficking, drawing from constitutional mandates, statutory enactments, and policy frameworks. While numerous laws exist, their fragmented

¹³¹⁴ Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, *Annual Report 2022–2023*, Anti-Human Trafficking Division.

¹³¹⁵ Bachpan Bachao Andolan, *Child Trafficking and Forced Labour in India: A Report*, 2021.

¹³¹⁶ UNODC South Asia, *India Country Report on Human Trafficking and Exploitation*, 2022.

implementation and lack of coordination continue to hinder effective action.

5.1 Constitutional Provisions

The Indian Constitution explicitly prohibits trafficking and related practices as part of its commitment to protect human dignity:

- **Article 23(1)** prohibits trafficking in human beings, begar (forced labor), and other similar forms of forced labor. It grants Parliament the power to enact laws punishing such acts.
- **Article 24** forbids the employment of children below the age of 14 years in factories, mines, or hazardous occupations¹³¹⁷.

These constitutional guarantees form the foundation for India's anti-trafficking legislation and policy initiatives.

5.2 Statutory Framework

Several laws supplement the constitutional provisions by criminalizing specific acts of trafficking and providing mechanisms for enforcement:

- **Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860:** Sections **370** and **370A** criminalize human trafficking and exploitation for physical or sexual exploitation. They define trafficking broadly to include acts of recruitment, transport, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons through coercion, fraud, or deception.
- **Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 (ITPA):** Primarily addresses trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation. It penalizes brothel-keeping, trafficking of persons for prostitution, and solicitation¹³¹⁸.
- **Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976:** Abolishes bonded labor and criminalizes any act of forcing a person into such labor. It also outlines

procedures for identifying, releasing, and rehabilitating bonded laborers¹³¹⁹.

- **Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986:** Prohibits the employment of children in certain hazardous occupations and regulates conditions of work in others. Amended in 2016 to completely ban child labor below the age of 14.
- **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015:** Provides care, protection, and rehabilitation of children in need, including victims of trafficking. It mandates the establishment of child welfare committees and child care institutions.
- **Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act, 1994:** Regulates organ donation and transplantation to curb illegal organ trade. It criminalizes organ trade conducted through coercion, fraud, or exploitation¹³²⁰.

5.3 Draft Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Care and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2021

This draft bill proposes a comprehensive legal framework aimed at addressing human trafficking in all forms. Key features include:

- A **victim-centric approach** with provisions for rehabilitation, compensation, and protection.
- Establishment of **Anti-Trafficking Committees** at national, state, and district levels.
- Coverage of **cross-border trafficking**, online trafficking, and trafficking for organ removal and forced marriage¹³²¹.

Despite legislative efforts and increased awareness, trafficking in India remains underreported. Victims often fear retaliation, social stigma, or lack knowledge of legal

¹³¹⁷ Constitution of India, Article 23(1), 1950.

¹³¹⁸ Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956, Ministry of Law and Justice.

¹³¹⁹ Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976, Government of India.

¹³²⁰ Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act, 1994, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

¹³²¹ Draft Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Care and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2021, Ministry of Women and Child Development.

remedies. As a result, conviction rates remain low, and rescue and rehabilitation measures are frequently delayed or ineffective.

6. Role of Law Enforcement and Judiciary

Despite legal provisions, enforcement of anti-trafficking laws remains weak due to multiple institutional shortcomings:

- **Lack of Sensitivity:** Law enforcement agencies often lack training in victim-centered approaches, leading to poor investigation quality and retraumatization of survivors¹³²².
- **Poor Coordination:** Inadequate communication between police, border forces, child protection units, and NGOs results in delayed action and poor rescue outcomes.
- **Low Conviction Rates:** According to the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)**, conviction rates in trafficking cases remain as low as **10-15%**, primarily due to poor evidence collection, witness intimidation, and lack of victim protection¹³²³.
- **Victim-Blaming Attitudes:** Stereotypes and prejudices often lead to victims being treated as offenders, especially in cases of sex trafficking.

Notable Judicial Interventions

- **Bachpan Bachao Andolan v. Union of India (2011):** The Supreme Court issued directives for the effective implementation of anti-child trafficking laws and monitoring of child labor cases¹³²⁴.
- **People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) v. Union of India (2013):** The Court emphasized the need for **victim protection programs**, proper shelter homes, and **rehabilitation services**,

recognizing the challenges faced by trafficking survivors.

These judgments underscore the judiciary's proactive stance in bridging the enforcement gap.

7. Role of NGOs and Civil Society

Civil society organizations play a pivotal role in supplementing governmental efforts in combating trafficking. They operate at multiple levels, from grassroots intervention to policy advocacy.

Key Functions of NGOs

- **Rescue and Rehabilitation:** Organizations like **Bachpan Bachao Andolan, Prajwala, and Shakti Vahini** conduct rescue missions in coordination with law enforcement and offer survivors access to shelter, legal aid, counseling, and skill development¹³²⁵.
- **Legal Assistance and Counselling:** NGOs provide pro bono legal services, accompany victims during trials, and offer psychological and trauma-informed counselling.
- **Policy Advocacy and Awareness Campaigns:** These groups have been instrumental in advocating for stronger laws, better rehabilitation policies, and raising public awareness through community workshops, school programs, and media engagement.
- **Monitoring and Research:** NGOs often conduct independent research, document human rights violations, and monitor the implementation of laws, holding authorities accountable.

8. Challenges in Combating Trafficking

Despite extensive legal frameworks and efforts by governmental and non-governmental organizations, numerous challenges remain in combating human trafficking. These challenges contribute to the persistence of trafficking

¹³²² Human Rights Watch, *Breaking the Silence: Child Trafficking in India*, 2020.

¹³²³ National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), *Crime in India Report 2022*, Chapter on Human Trafficking

¹³²⁴ *Bachpan Bachao Andolan v. Union of India*, (2011) 5 SCC 1.

¹³²⁵ Shakti Vahini, *Annual Report on Anti-Human Trafficking Interventions*, 2021.

networks and hinder the effective protection of victims.

8.1 Underreporting of Cases

Human trafficking often goes unreported due to fear, shame, or lack of awareness among victims. Traffickers frequently exploit the victims' vulnerability, coercing them into silence or threatening harm to them or their families if they attempt to report the crime. Additionally, law enforcement agencies in many regions are undertrained to recognize trafficking indicators, which results in underreporting or misclassification of trafficking cases¹³²⁶.

8.2 Cross-Border Jurisdictional Issues

Trafficking often involves multiple countries, particularly in South Asia, where India serves as a source, transit, and destination country for trafficking victims. The lack of cross-border cooperation and consistent legal frameworks complicates enforcement efforts. Conflicting national laws, differing standards of evidence, and jurisdictional barriers often prevent successful prosecutions and coordination between countries. For instance, while India shares borders with countries like Nepal, Bangladesh, and Myanmar, the lack of bilateral agreements on trafficking makes cross-border investigations difficult¹³²⁷.

8.3 Corruption and Complicity

Corruption within law enforcement, political circles, and even border control agencies plays a significant role in perpetuating trafficking. Traffickers often bribe officials to avoid arrest or to secure the release of arrested individuals. Additionally, there are instances of complicity where officials may turn a blind eye to trafficking operations in exchange for financial incentives. This systemic corruption undermines efforts to tackle the problem effectively¹³²⁸.

8.4 Re-victimization and Stigma

Victims of trafficking often face social stigma and discrimination, particularly if they have been involved in commercial sex. This social ostracism can prevent them from seeking help or reintegrating into society. In many cases, survivors are treated as criminals rather than victims, which leads to re-victimization. This is exacerbated by the lack of victim support programs and inadequate legal frameworks that ensure their protection during and after the trial process.

8.5 Lack of Adequate Shelters and Rehabilitation Facilities

While several NGOs offer support to trafficking survivors, the government's resources for rehabilitation remain insufficient. Victims need safe houses, psychological counseling, education, and vocational training to reintegrate into society. However, the shortage of specialized shelters, lack of trained rehabilitation professionals, and insufficient funding hinder the recovery process. Many survivors are left in legal limbo, with few resources to support their physical and emotional rehabilitation¹³²⁹.

9. International Legal Instruments

Numerous international treaties and protocols have been established to address the global issue of human trafficking. These instruments, while significant, face implementation challenges in countries like India, which is bound by international obligations but struggles with enforcement.

9.1 UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons (Palermo Protocol), 2000

The **Palermo Protocol** is the primary international legal instrument addressing human trafficking. It supplements the **United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC)** and provides a

¹³²⁶International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020*, p. 15

¹³²⁷ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2022*, United Nations, 2022.

¹³²⁸ The Asia Foundation, *Combating Human Trafficking in Asia: A Review of Legal Frameworks and Law Enforcement Efforts*, 2019.

¹³²⁹ UNODC, *Study on the Global Implementation of Anti-Trafficking Legislation*, 2021.

comprehensive framework for preventing trafficking, protecting victims, and prosecuting offenders. The protocol emphasizes a **victim-centered approach** and urges countries to adopt criminal laws that penalize traffickers, while providing support to trafficking victims. India ratified this protocol in 2011, but implementation remains slow and inconsistent.

9.2 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

CEDAW, adopted in 1979, is a crucial international human rights treaty focusing on eliminating discrimination against women in all spheres of life. Article 6 of **CEDAW** specifically mandates state parties to take steps to suppress and punish **trafficking of women and exploitation of prostitution**. India ratified CEDAW in 1993, and while it has made strides in enacting laws to protect women from trafficking, challenges in enforcement persist.

9.3 ILO Conventions on Forced Labor and Child Labor

The **International Labour Organization (ILO)** has several conventions that specifically address trafficking and exploitation through forced labor and child labor. Key among these are¹³³⁰:

- **ILO Convention No. 29** on Forced Labour (1930), which aims to suppress forced or compulsory labor in all its forms.
- **ILO Convention No. 182** on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999), which calls for the immediate elimination of child trafficking for purposes such as prostitution, pornography, and illicit activities¹³³¹.

India has ratified both these conventions, but their implementation remains inconsistent. While the government has passed various laws to address child labor and forced labor, gaps in enforcement, insufficient awareness, and

resource constraints often undermine these efforts.

10. Recommendations and Way Forward

The fight against human trafficking requires a multifaceted approach, combining robust legal frameworks, efficient enforcement, and victim-centered policies. Despite the progress made, numerous gaps remain, and urgent reforms are necessary. This section outlines key recommendations for improving the effectiveness of India's efforts in combating human trafficking and protecting the victims.

10.1 Enact the Trafficking in Persons Bill with Adequate Safeguards

The **Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Care, and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2021**, currently in draft form, needs to be enacted as a priority. The bill presents a victim-centric approach, focusing on prevention, rehabilitation, and support. However, it must be strengthened by including clear provisions on **inter-agency coordination**, **cross-border cooperation**, and **witness protection**. The bill should also provide adequate safeguards to prevent **victim-blaming** and ensure that survivors are treated with dignity and respect. Further, the bill must include provisions for **post-rehabilitation support**, ensuring that victims are reintegrated into society and not left vulnerable to re-trafficking.

10.2 Train Police and Judiciary on Victim-Centric Handling

Law enforcement agencies and the judiciary play a crucial role in the fight against trafficking. **Police officers** must be trained to identify trafficking victims and understand the complexities of the crime, including recognizing **psychological coercion** and **fraudulent practices** used by traffickers. **Judicial officers** should receive specialized training in handling trafficking cases sensitively, ensuring that victims are treated as witnesses rather than criminals. This would help to reduce the prevalence of **victim-blaming** attitudes and increase conviction rates. Collaboration with

¹³³⁰ United Nations, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*, Article 6, 1979.

¹³³¹ International Labour Organization (ILO), *Convention No. 29 on Forced Labour and Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour*.

international agencies for training programs could significantly enhance the capacities of domestic law enforcement and judicial systems¹³³².

10.3 Strengthen Inter-State and Cross-Border Cooperation

Human trafficking often involves the movement of victims across states and international borders. **India's cross-border cooperation** with neighboring countries, particularly Nepal, Bangladesh, and Myanmar, needs to be strengthened. Bilateral agreements and **joint task forces** should be established for the **investigation, rescue, and prosecution** of trafficking cases. Additionally, **inter-state coordination** within India is essential to address trafficking networks that operate across multiple states, ensuring that the response to trafficking is both effective and holistic. Creating a centralized **national database** that links state and national agencies can help in the quick identification of trafficking trends and suspects¹³³³.

10.4 Improve Rehabilitation Schemes with Proper Funding

While there are existing **rehabilitation schemes** for trafficking survivors, they are often underfunded and insufficient. There is an urgent need to **expand and improve shelters**, ensuring that they provide not only **safety and security**, but also **psychological counseling, education, and vocational training** for survivors. The government must ensure that sufficient funding is allocated to these schemes, making them more accessible and effective in the long term. Victims should be provided with **legal aid** to help them navigate the justice system and claim compensation for their suffering¹³³⁴.

10.5 Awareness Campaigns at Grassroots Level

Raising awareness at the grassroots level is crucial to **prevent trafficking** and **empower vulnerable populations**. **Awareness campaigns** should be targeted at communities that are most at risk, such as rural areas, and should focus on educating people about the risks of trafficking, **false promises**, and **recruitment tactics** used by traffickers. These campaigns should involve local **community leaders, educators, and health workers**, who can effectively spread messages and engage with the community. Additionally, increasing awareness within schools and colleges about **safe migration** and **trafficking risks** is essential to prevent youth from falling prey to traffickers¹³³⁵.

10.6 Use of Technology for Surveillance, Data Collection, and Tracking Traffickers

Advancements in technology provide an invaluable tool in the fight against trafficking. **Surveillance technology**, including the use of **satellite tracking, drones, and digital mapping**, can help authorities identify trafficking routes and hotspots. Additionally, **data collection tools** can aid in tracking traffickers and **monitoring trends**. The use of **artificial intelligence** and **big data** can assist in analyzing large volumes of data to uncover trafficking networks operating at both the national and international levels.

CONCLUSION

Human trafficking is one of the most severe violations of human rights, thriving in the shadows of socio-economic disparities, conflict, and gender inequality. Despite the existence of international and national legal frameworks aimed at curbing trafficking, the crime continues to grow, affecting millions, especially women, children, and marginalized groups. The persistence of trafficking highlights the urgent need for comprehensive measures to address its root causes and challenges.

¹³³² National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), *Report on Law Enforcement and Victim Rights in Human Trafficking Cases*, 2021

¹³³³ India, Ministry of Home Affairs, *Annual Report on Cross-border Cooperation in Combating Trafficking*, 2020.

¹³³⁴ UNODC, *Rehabilitation of Trafficking Victims: A Global Review of Policies and Best Practices*, 2019.

¹³³⁵ National Commission for Women, *Promoting Awareness on Trafficking: A Case Study Approach*, 2020.

In India, human trafficking is exacerbated by factors such as poverty, illiteracy, and gender discrimination. Vulnerable populations are preyed upon by traffickers exploiting their desperation. Though India has laws like the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (ITPA) and the Indian Penal Code (IPC), their enforcement remains weak, hindered by poor coordination, corruption, and victim-blaming attitudes.

Existing legal frameworks are insufficient to tackle the complex issue of trafficking, particularly in victim rehabilitation and post-recovery integration. A victim-centric approach focusing on prevention, protection, and rehabilitation is necessary to address these gaps.

A holistic strategy, including awareness campaigns, community-based interventions, and enhanced law enforcement training, is critical to combat trafficking effectively. Strengthening international cooperation and cross-border coordination is also essential to address trafficking networks that operate transnationally. The enactment of the Trafficking in Persons Bill, 2021, with a victim-centric focus, could offer a turning point in the fight against trafficking in India, provided it is paired with improved law enforcement and preventive measures.

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