

The Role of Communicative Strategies Taken by Four N.G.Os in Raising Awareness against Trafficking of Women and Children in Bangladesh: A Study on Six Vulnerable Areas



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Submitted by:

Habib Mohammad Ali

Roll No-981634, Reg. No-991

Course Title: Communication Appreciation, Course No: 406

Department of Mass Communication

University of Rajshahi

Bangladesh

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Abstract

Trafficking of women and children has become a social problem and a challenge to the way of development in Bangladesh. It has also become an issue of gender discrimination in this country. Every year about 7000 women and children are trafficked from this country to India, Pakistan and Middle-East where their ultimate fate is a life of sexual exploitation, abuse and other forms of bonded labour. In response to this issue, a number of N.G.Os have formulated different strategies along with the programmes for raising awareness against this problem. N.G.Os like ATSEC, BNWLA, CWCS, INCIDIN, IOM and UDDIPON have launched a set of communication programmes from awareness raising perspective.

This study has tried to look critically at the communicative strategies of four N.G.Os to uncover the prevailing inconsistencies in them. It has found that the selected N.G.Os have not taken proper communicative strategies to respond to the issue of trafficking in Bangladesh. They are only performing some formalities in support of their other strategies. This study will also try to recommend some suggestions for revamping these strategies in terms of the real information-need of the vulnerable groups.

In the 1st chapter, discussions about the problem, extent and reasons of trafficking of women and children in Bangladesh have been made briefly. The 2nd chapter contains the brief about the methodology and information about the selection of the N.G.Os and the vulnerable groups. The 3rd chapter usually is a very important chapter where the data about this research, and analysis and discussion have been presented. Here, collected data from the vulnerable group have also been converted into the section of Information-need instead of any statistical scale or table. The 4th chapter has concluded the research monograph, recommending some suggestions for the selected N.G.Os.

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Chapter-1

1a. Introduction

Scholars and experts from different dimensions have identified that the trafficking of women and children has become a social problem and a challenge to the way of development in Bangladesh. An actual perception of its extent and future consequences logically tends to imply that there is no alternative but to raise awareness about this problem among the people of Bangladesh. And, in this context, communication could play a vital role, as communication is accepted as “essential for social change”. Wilbur Schramm cited that communication is the fundamental of social process. It underlies any social change that a developing country wants to make and is necessarily a part of any place to improve the quality of human life in any society. (Rahman 1999:42)

Trafficking in women and children is one of the fastest growing criminal activities in the world, behind drugs and arms. (McCoy 2003:3) A report recently published by US Department of State has revealed that most of the trafficking incidents have occurred in South and South-East Asia, East-Europe, Latin America and in the poverty-stricken Africa. About one million women and children are trafficked every year from these regions to the west and other places. (Murtuja 2001:2) It is a grave concern for the human community that 70% of them are women, aged between 14 to 24 and that each of them is abused sexually five times in a day. So, first of all it can be considered as a violation of human rights and secondly as a way of spreading HIV across the globe.

Trafficking in women and children within the territory of Bangladesh is also a common phenomenon. Uneducated and vulnerable woman and children deprived of financial, legal and social support and opportunities easily become victims of internal and cross border trafficking. The organized gangs of traffickers are targeting the poorest of the poor and disadvantaged children and women in the rural areas of the country. The victims are either abducted or allured

with promises of better life by providing lucrative job or marriage offers and false proposals to visit holy places. But, practically, they become the victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation and eventually embrace a life of agony and torture. Sometimes, their valuable organs are also taken away for rescuing other's life in the clinics of different countries including India.

Most of the Bangladeshi women and children are sold in the brothels or forcibly engaged in prostitution or in cage brothels in the receiving countries like India, Pakistan and different Middle Eastern country. The victims who are forced into prostitution or brothels are the high-risk group for being HIV positive, and having AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. (Ali 2001:3) According to the information revealed by various studies and observations of different organizations, the prostitution or the brothels in Mumbai, India are the most high-risk areas for HIV and AIDS contamination. (Ibid.)

There are two common types of trafficking in Bangladesh: one is internal and the other is cross border trafficking. In the case of internal trafficking, women and children are often taken away from their homes through abduction, on false promise of a better life with good employment, by traffickers who in turn sell them in brothels and ship-breaking yards in Bangladesh. On the other hand, at the cross-border level, they are smuggled by the gang of traffickers to place them further destinations such as India, Pakistan and other Middle Eastern countries where their ultimate fate is a life of sexual exploitation, abuse and other forms of bonded labour. Tiny boys, who are trafficked to the Middle-East mostly become camel-jockeys, which is a very risky and hazardous job.

According to a study conducted by the Bangladesh National Women's Lawyer's Association, in 250 villages in different parts of the country in 1999, every year a total of 7000 women and children become victim of cross-border trafficking. The real number is much higher, and could not be ascertained due to the absence of studies covering currently all the districts of the country. Besides, a large number of women and children are trafficked every year within this territory. In addition, it has been identified that almost all of the 1.6 million garment-worker-girls and young

women are the vulnerable groups that can easily become victim of internal and cross-border trafficking at any time. (Ali, Ibid.)

The networks of traffickers in Bangladesh are well organized with different settings of people like local political leaders, smugglers, anti-social activists and somehow law-enforcement personnel also. (<http://www.state.gov/g/inl/rls/tiprpt/2001/index.cfm?docid=3928>) The traffickers take advantage of Bangladesh's sizable borders to transport the women, often using large criminal networks and deceptive tactics to avoid detection and prosecution. It has been revealed from an interview with a local journalist that the victims of trafficking are taken and measured as a coin of exchange between the traders of India and Bangladesh. For example, if any valuable goods are smuggled from India to Bangladesh, the Bangladeshi smugglers make their payment by trafficking women and children instead of sending natural currency. This is because, it is paving the way for another illegal and profitable business, and saving the time, space and energy in exchanging the natural currency between the two countries.

1b. The Definition

At present, there is no internationally agreed definition of trafficking in women and children. However, international and national organizations use various definitions for describing trafficking according to their approaches.

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) proposed a definition of trafficking, as follows: "All acts involved in the recruitment, transportation, forced movement and/or selling and buying of women and children within and across borders by fraudulent means, deception, coercion, direct and or indirect threats, abuse of authority, for the purpose of placing a woman and/or child against her will or without her consent in exploitative and abusive situations such as forced prostitution, marriage, bonded labor, begging, organ trade, etc." (www.changemakers.net/library/temp/nytimes042902cfm)

Andrew Natsios, administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) said in a different way as "Trafficking in persons for economic exploitation is a severe abuse of human rights on a global scale. Trafficking destroys childhood and leaves a legacy of psychological, social, and health problems as these children grow up," (www.usembassy.it/file2002_05/alia/a2051002.htm)

The US president's Interagency Council on Women defines trafficking as: "All acts involved in the recruitment, transport, harboring or sale of persons within national or across international borders through deception or fraud, coercion or force, or debt bondage for purposes of placing persons in situations of forced labor or services, such as forced prostitution or sexual services, domestic servitude, or other forms of slavery-like practices," (Centre for Health and Population Research 2001: 13)

Similarly, the Global Alliance against Trafficking in Women considers that trafficking of women and children refers to, " all acts involved in the recruitment and/or transportation of a women or child within and across national borders for work or services by means of violence or threat of violence, abuse of authority or dominant position, debt-bondage, deception or other forms of coercion." (Archavantikul 1998: 97)

Ishrat Shamim, president of Centre for Children and Women Studies, internalized trafficking in women and children in its broad perspective, which included all acts involved in capture, acquisition, recruitment and transportation of children and women within and across national borders with the intent to sell, exchange, or use for any illegal purposes, such as prostitution, servitude in the guise of marriage, bonded labour, or sale of human organs by means of violence or threat of violence. (Shamim, Kabir 1998:88)

In the context of Bangladesh, the Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association has adapted the definition of the Global Alliance against trafficking in women. So, it could be applied to situations involving both women and children. The BNWLA defines trafficking as all acts involved in the recruitment and for transport of a women (or child) within and across national

borders for work or services (or marriage) by means of violence or threat of violence, abuse of authority or dominant position, debt- bondage, deception or other forms of coercion. (Ali 1998: 63)

After reviewing the above-mentioned definitions, the concept of trafficking in women and children can be seen in three dimensions.

First of all, it consists of all acts involved in the procurement, transportation-forced movement of women within and across the borders. Secondly, this act is done through deception, coercion, direct and indirect threats, abuse of authority and other dominant positions. And finally, the purpose of this act is to place women and children without their will in exploitative and abusive situations such as commercial sexual abuse, forced marriage, bonded and forced labour, camel-jockeying and other sports, and organ trade.

On the other hand, there is also a growing tendency to mix the concept of trafficking with migration, although they are not the same in reality. (Gupta 2002: 1)

The first reason behind this argument is that trafficked persons are deceived or forced to move, whereas migrants (even domestic workers) are not usually deceived or forced to leave his/her place of residence. Secondly, migration is an integral component of economic development whereas trafficking is a development-retarding phenomenon. Thirdly, trafficking is viewed as an anti-social and morally degrading heinous event. But, migration is widely considered as a process that enhances social progress in both the origin and destination countries. And finally, exploitation, trade, profit and illegality are all central to the idea of trafficking. That is certainly not in the case of migration process.

Considering all the prevailing dimensions of trafficking, we could say that trafficking in women and children is the recruitment, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons (women and children) 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 of the giving or receiving of payments or

benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purposes 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.

1c. Causes of Trafficking

Trafficking of women and children is a complex problem in Bangladesh with an international dimension. Previous researches show that poverty, lack of education and large families are three main factors for why trafficking has been able to flourish in this country. The causes of trafficking and factors leading to this apparent increase in recent years are multiple and complicated.

Now a days, newest researches show that globalization and materialism are also main factors behind this growing problem. In Bangladesh, due to increasing landlessness and inadequate investment in rural industrialization, the scope for employment opportunities and skill development, particularly for rural women, is less. Women have traditionally worked as unpaid family labourers in the society. And this is why, women are forced to migrate from rural areas to urban ones. This trend of migration creates vulnerable conditions for women and children, and provides opportunities to the traffickers to exploit women and children.

The lack of education is also another important factor behind this problem. As the rate of literacy is low in the country, the level of consciousness about the problem among the rural people is also negligible. A study conducted by BNWLA shows that above 88% of trafficked women are illiterate and 9% received primary education. Above 79% of victims' fathers was illiterate and only 16% received primary education. Also, above 88% of the victims' mothers was illiterate and 8% received primary education. (BNWLA, 1999:110)

In rural communities, early marriage, the dowry system and polygamy are commonly practiced phenomena. Parents are often unable marry off their daughters because of their inability to pay a

dowry. In order to avoid social pressure and stigma regarding the delayed marriage of women, parents try to arrange a marriage for their daughters at an early stage. And at this moment, the traffickers take the opportunity for pseudo-marriage in different areas saying that they will not take dowry. The parents then agree with them and their daughters turn into the victims of modern slave trade, trafficking.

The number of widowed, divorced and separated women is also on the rise following dowry, polygamy and other factors like love, illness etc. It has been found that both polygamy and dowry have led to an increased incidence of domestic violence and desertion. Sometimes, physical and mental illness and contagious diseases result in women and girls becoming outcasts. In many instances, communities and families treat those widowed, single women as outcasts and as a social, economical burden. Hence, offers for marriage and employment prospects are tempting for them. Often frustration in love or failure in conjugal life pushes women toward the allure of a better life. A study of two Unions in Rajshahi, conducted by the Association for Community Development, found that many young girls trafficked over land-border were treated as a burden by their respective families as they were unable to find any paid work after they were deserted by their husbands. (Centre for Health and Population Research 2001: 210)

Side by side with the above mentioned causes, there are also factors like negative attitude towards women and female children, religious fundamentalism, natural disasters, inadequate government policies and inefficiency among the law enforcing agencies that are facilitating the problem day in and day out. Above all, lack of consciousness among the people from different strata of the society can also be termed to be the hidden factor behind this social problem.

1d. Extent of Trafficking

The magnitude of trafficking in Bangladesh cannot be understood in isolation from its historical and geographical background.

After independence from British colonization in 1947, the Indian sub-continent was divided into two countries: India and Pakistan. Pakistan had two distinct geographic regions, East Pakistan and West Pakistan, separated by 1200 miles. Thus many cross-border families were formed. During separation, many Muslim families from India migrated to Pakistan, particularly East Pakistan simultaneously, many Hindus living in East Pakistan too moved to India.

In 1971, East Pakistan became independent from Pakistan and a new nation, Bangladesh, was born. During this time, many non-Bengali Pakistanis (who were originally from India) wanted to go back to West Pakistan and are still waiting for repatriation to Pakistan. They live in 6 camps scattered in 40 districts of Bangladesh. As repatriation of these people has been delayed, many of them cross the border illegally. Often with these groups, other women and children from different parts of the country are trafficked.

On both sides of the newly drawn border between India and Bangladesh, there are many "enclaves" which are pockets of land belonging to a nation other than that which carrousel them. There are 111 enclaves of Bangladesh in India. Usually, these areas are not patrolled or controlled by any law-enforcing agencies. Research by the BNWLA has shown that these enclaves have been used as recruitment and collection sites by the traffickers. (Ali 1998: 63) So, it is very clear that the problem of trafficking in Bangladesh is rooted historically.

There is no reliable estimate of women and children who are being trafficked and who have already been trafficked from Bangladesh to other countries. According to estimates by human rights activists, 200-400 young women and children are smuggled every month from Bangladesh to Pakistan. (Centre for Health and Population Research 2001:18) Most of them end up in prostitution. A large number of Bangladeshi women are involved in sex trade in India, mostly in the brothels of Kolkata, Mumbai and Delhi. Regarding trafficking of women and children, the BNWLA and CWS have made the below-listed estimates (Box 1) from different sources like newspapers, literature reviews and information from the law enforcing agencies. (Shamim 1998:17)

Box-1: Estimate of children trafficked from Bangladesh.

13,220 children trafficked out of Bangladesh in the past five years
 300, 000 Bangladesh children work in the brothels of India.
 200,000 Bangladesh children work in the brothels of Pakistan
 45,00 women and children trafficked to Pakistan.
 1,000 child-trafficking cases documented in Bangladesh media in 1900-92.

For the purpose of getting more acquainted with the extent of the problem, we need to search through some other investigations in this regard. A report submitted by Ishrat Shamim, Associate Professor in Sociology of Dhaka University, has also claimed that the lack of empirical studies on the issue has withheld exposure to the magnitude of the problem and denied the necessary legal protection and sanctions. However, police sources revealed that between January 1979 and August 1983, there were 823 Women and children, who were to be sent to neighbouring countries or had escaped and had been apprehended by the law enforcing agencies, while between May 1987 to December 1989, the number increased to 880. (Shamim 1993: 8) Among them, many women and children were brought from Burma (Now Myanmar) and had crossed into Bangladesh to be sent to other countries. Boxes 2.3 given below will provide some details regarding the trafficking problem in Bangladesh.

Box- 2 : Number of Bangladeshi and Burmese Women and children victims being apprehended by the Police

Year	Bangladeshi	Burmese	Total
1979	192	23	215
1980	104	6	110
1981	250	-	250
1982	114	49	163
1983 till August	56	29	85
	716	107	823

Source : Bangladeshi Police Department 4 noted by Ali, 1985

Box- 3: Women and children continued by trafficker during the period from May 1987 to December 1989.

Sector	Children	Women	Traffickers	Total
Khulna	302	294	42	638
Rajshahi	82	122	13	217
Dinajpur	1	9	5	15
Rangpur	0	3	0	3
Maymansingh	0	2	2	4
Sylhet	0	2	1	3
Total	385	432	63	880

Source : Bangladesh Rifles 4 noted by Fernando, 1985

The figures indicate that the rate of trafficking in women and children is quite high and has increased in recent years. However, police officials are of the opinion that the hidden incidents are much higher. (Ibid.)

On the other hand, a survey carried out by The Centre for Communication and Development, shows that about 55 to 82 women and children are trafficked everyday from Bangladesh to other countries. More than one million women and children have already been trafficked to India, Pakistan and the Middle East in the last 30 years. A report, published by UNICEF, has revealed that about two lacks Bangladeshi women are still in the brothels of Pakistan, and three lacks in India. Experts concerning this issue are worried that if it continues to this extent and remedial measurers are not taken in accordance with the need, the number of trafficked women and children will be 25 lacks in 2010. (Mortuja, Ibid.)

1.e The Objective of the Study

The trafficking of women and children has taken a formidable turn in the context of Bangladesh, as previous chapters have already showed its increasing extent in the last few years. Experts are alarmed at the fact that if the extent of trafficking continues at this current level and relevant institutions fail to take proper steps to prevent it, the number of trafficked women and children will be 25 lacks before 2010. So, this is the high time for the Government and Non-Government organizations to address trafficking as a social problem, and to formulate strategies to prevent it from a *holistic point of view.

The main victims of trafficking in Bangladesh are women and children who are illiterate and deprived from different social opportunities. In response to the problem, different N.G.O's have already taken several steps with which a set of communicative strategies are equipped as a tool for creating awareness among the vulnerable groups. The objective of the study is to look critically at these communicative strategies from raising-awareness point of view. And secondly, the researcher has tried to identify the inconsistencies of these strategies according to the 'information-need' and media exposure of vulnerable groups in different social-settings of the country.

*In alternative development paradigm, the holistic approach requires not only an one-way programme like disseminating information to the target people, but also some other steps that can ensure their economic stability, taking into account the cultural factors of these groups.

Chapter-2

2.a Research Questions

The following research questions arise directly from the literature review and other documents related to trafficking, development communication and gender issues in Bangladesh. These questions are designed to help search out the lacunas of the communicative strategies, taken by several N.G.Os, in comparison with the information need of vulnerable people.

1. What kinds of strategies have been taken in responding to the issue of trafficking of women and children in Bangladesh? Are these strategies taken only to set an agenda before the government and donor groups?
2. Are these strategies two-way, target group oriented, and far-sighted?
3. Have these strategies covered all the vulnerable groups and other settings of people in the country?
4. Could information that is instilled into the message lead to any change in behaviour of the vulnerable groups?

2b. Methodology

In brief, social research may be defined as a scientific undertaking which, by means of logical and systematized techniques, aims to: discover new facts or verify and test old facts; analyze their sequences, interrelationship and causal explanations, which were derived within an appropriate theoretical frame of reference. (Youngs, Schmid 1982)

Any inquired fact of a kind of specific research problem is not an isolated phenomena, rather closely intertwined and associated with each other, as M.R Cohen stated it, facts are not intelligible unless they are related to other facts and are shown to be part of a larger system. (Good, Hatt 1981) Obviously, such research can not be accomplished without a unified approach

of various scientific methods or disciplines. Most social science researchers feel this kind of methodological problem in explaining the appropriate causal relationship within the inquired fact with a larger social system.

Communication may enhance social process along with other social variables. So, inquiring the role of communication in the changing process faces problems mentioned above. For the purpose of investigating the role of communicative strategies taken by the selected N.G.Os in raising awareness against trafficking of women and children in Bangladesh, the case study method has been applied as a whole. Yin has defined the case study method, as an empirical inquiry that uses multiple sources of evidence to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context in which the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident. (Wimmer, Dominick 1987:156)

According to Wimmer and Dominick, case study research includes both single and multiple cases. (Wimmer and Dominick, Ibid.) Here, we have taken all of the communicative strategies as a single case and tried to analyze the collected data from qualitative point of a view. Because, qualitative analysis helps us see the media-contents and strategies critically and reach a conclusion about them. Two sources have been used to collect the data for the study. Firstly, relevant documents from the selected N.G.O s have led us to map out their communicative strategies in a simple version. Secondly, interviews were conducted with two groups of people: one is comprised of the experts and representatives of the N.G.O s, and the other is comprised of different arrays of illiterate and socially disadvantaged people who may be victims of trafficking at any time. Two different sets of question were used for these two groups.

For the presentation of the data, derived especially from the communicative strategies, simple quantitative way has been followed. However, the collected data from interviews with the above mentioned groups and messages from different communication media like posters, and video documentaries have been converted into qualitative forms for the purpose of analysis. These messages have also been translated into English for the sake of this study. Actually, the overall

matrix of the study is qualitative, although the communicative strategies have been investigated and analyzed here as a single case.

2.c Setting the N.G.O s and the Vulnerable Groups

Trafficking of women and children has posed many challenges to the policy makers, scholars, G.Os and N.G.Os in Bangladesh. In response to the issue, many Non-Government Organizations like ATSEC, BNWLA, CWCS, INCIDIN, IOM, UDDIPON and so on have already formulated and launched their measures from different point of view. For the present study to investigate the role of communicative strategies, we have selected four N.G.Os that include Action against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children (ATSEC), Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA), Centre for Women and Children Studies (CWCS), and United Development Initiatives for Programmed Actions (UDDIPON).

Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) is one of the foremost organizations striving towards the promotion of all kinds of rights for women and children, and the establishment of social justice in the country. It is an organization formed by a group legal professionals in 1979, committed to establish rule of law with gender equality and to ensure social justice against all forms of violence, exploitation and discrimination that women and children are facing, through providing protection, prevention, and rehabilitation services. To stop trafficking in Bangladesh, BNWLA has already launched its programmes from the very beginning, although the sensitization and awareness raising campaign has only gained momentum from 1995. Now the organization has set ten different focal points to conduct the sensitization workshops with law enforcing agencies, lawyer, journalists, judges, magistrates, and different segments of leading people. The focal points are Dhaka, Narayanganj, Laximpur, Cox'sBazar, Gopalganj, Jessore, Satkhira, Dinajpur, Lalmonirhat and Chapainawabganj.

United Development Initiatives for Programmed Actions (UDDIPON) has been working on anti-human trafficking issue since 1995 in different parts of Bangladesh, which are the most trafficking prone. Through its anti-trafficking programme, UDDIPON has been covering twelve districts and

about 8000 directly involved beneficiaries including children. The names of UDDIPON covered districts are: Chittagonj, Cox's Bazar, Bandarban, Comilla, Chandpur, Pabna, Khustia, Natore, Bagerhat, Pirozpur, Barisal and Dhaka, The objectives of UDDIPON anti-trafficking programmes are to reduce and prevent child and women trafficking in Bangladesh. They also have a programme of micro-credit for the rural poor.

Action against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children (ATSEC) is also an important N.G.O, working against trafficking of women and children since 1978 in Bangladesh. Funded by Save the Children of Denmark and in cooperation with other 14 other grass root organizations, this organization has launched a four-year nationwide campaign against trafficking of women and children in the country. On the basis of different studies, they have launched their campaign on 20 trafficking-prone districts of Bangladesh. The main activities of this N.G.O include advocacy, capacity building, preparing communication materials and campaigns against trafficking of women and children.

As a research organization concerning gender issues in Bangladesh, Centre for Women and Children Studies (CWCS) was established in 1997. From that time, awareness-raising activities through advocacy workshops have started in different places of the country. Funded by the European Commission, this organization had launched a three year project, entitled "Advocacy to combat Trafficking in women and children in the Northern Region of Bangladesh from September 2000 to August 2003 in the eight northern districts of Bangladesh". It has also launched a network named Traffic Watch Bangladesh Northern Region and developed a number of communication materials to combat trafficking.

To set and select the vulnerable groups to trafficking is another important aspect of this research monograph, as the effort of identifying the inconsistencies of communicative strategies partly requires to take the foretaste of 'information-need' and media exposure of these vulnerable groups. For the purpose of the study, we have interviewed people of different settings, ranging from border villages to urban areas of Dhaka City.

Researches show that the most trafficking-prone areas are the border-villages of the country where people also could play a vital role to stop this crime by keeping a surveillance attitude towards unknown and suspicious people. Following these above-mentioned factors, the researcher firstly has selected the people of Sonamasjid, Binodpur, and Naraynpur border-villages of Chapainawabganj, one of the main routes for the trafficking in the country. To understand the 'information-need' and media exposure of indigenous people of the country, the researcher has investigated "Santal Para" of the same district where, above all, the people are unconcerned about the problem. Also, a number of garment workers, who live in Uttar Badda and Mirpur-1 of Dhaka, have been perceived to be important for interview based on their vulnerability. It seems to the researcher that the location, identity and social status of the people of these areas bear a number of important factors that could help us evaluate their overall attitude towards trafficking of women and children in Bangladesh. In these areas, the groups of interviewed people included opinion leaders, local farmers, schoolteachers, imams, BDR personnel students and illiterate people.

Chapter 3

3a. Data collection

The data collection process for the study to identify the inconsistencies of the communicative strategies taken by the selected N.G.Os, has led the researcher to examine the newsletters, research papers, and other valuable documents of these N.G.Os. An interview was also conducted with the experts of these N.G.Os to understand their overall attitude towards raising awareness against trafficking of women and children in Bangladesh. As much as possible, for the selection and presentation of the relevant data, we have tried to make a synthesis between the collected documents and the interview data.

Communicative Strategies

in terms of media, interpersonal channels and other communication policies

In responding to the issue of trafficking of women and children in the country from communicative point of view, Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association had launched their programme since 1979, but their approaches took a serious turn from 1995. To date, it has organized about 66 sensitization workshops and 165 discussion meetings among judges, journalists, magistrates, schoolteachers, policemen, stakeholders and other settings of important people. For the same purpose, it has developed two posters, three leaflets, one folder and a video documentary titled Kranti. Interviews with the experts have revealed that they cover only 10 districts (Dhaka, Narayanganj, Laximpur, Cox'sBazar, Gopalganj, Jessore, Satkhira, Dinajpur, Lalmonirhat and Chapainawabganj) where any programme for indigenous people has not been taken, any feedback research has not been conducted on the target groups, and any folk media have not been applied in line with these strategies.

Realizing the challenges of campaigning against trafficking, ATSEC has formulated a number of need-based communicative strategies since 1998, and its new programmes were launched in

June 2000 in 20 trafficking prone districts. The districts are Bogra, Chapainawabganj, Rajshahi, Khustia, Chuadanga, Jessore, Satkhira, Khulna, Bagerhat, Dinajpur, Maymensingh, Dhaka, Narshingdi, Narayanganj, Gopalganj, Lalmonirhat, Chandpur, Chittagong, Cox'sBazar and Joypurhat. Interviews with the experts and the review of documents indicate that in order to disseminate the message against women and child trafficking, the organization has developed two posters, a leaflet, three folders, and a video communication material, and organized about 33 advocacy workshops among the important people from different strata, and staged several street dramas in the concerned areas. But, there is no programme for indigenous people and feedback research in line with these strategies.

As a research organization on gender issues, the Centre for Women and Children Studies initiated a three-year project for raising awareness against women and child trafficking from September 2000 to August 2003 in the eight northern districts of Bangladesh. Its strategies included two posters, 10 advocacy meetings, three newsletters, one leaflet, eight street dramas and two stickers. But programmes for indigenous people, video communication and feed back research were absent in their strategies.

Along with these organizations, UDDIPON has been working on anti-human trafficking issues since 1995 in 12 different districts of the country (Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Bandarban, Comilla, Chandpur, Pabna, Khustia, Natore, Bagerhat, Pirozpur, Barisal and Dhaka). To date, it has organized 26 advocacy workshops among the important people relevant in stopping trafficking, and developed a brochure, folder, flipchart, sticker, two posters and a video documentary titled "Kothay Jabo". It has also established rural child clubs in its working areas for empowering children. The child club members are provided with training facilities on various cultural activities through which messages against trafficking are disseminated. In addition, UDDIPON has a rural educational programme in which a chapter on raising awareness against trafficking has been included. But, they have not launched any programmes among indigenous group, and conducted any feed back assessment at all.

Communicative Strategies

in terms of messages in the posters and video documentaries

ATSEC

Poster-1: Don't hate the trafficked people
They are members of our society
Let us be forward to take their responsibilities

Poster-2: A lot of people may come in your life
Marriage---- Offer for good jobs-----Going abroad
Success may come
But, be careful
If you accept any proposal (above mentioned) without any inquiry, you
may be victim of trafficking
So, to relieve from trafficking, make inquiry before any proposal
Take decision carefully for marriage, job and going abroad

BNWLA

Poster-1: Traffickers are the enemies of the society
Beware of Traffickers!

CWCS

Poster-1: Combat women trafficking
Watch out the traffickers
Rescue the victims

UDDIPON

Poster-1

You may be a victim of trafficking

Beware of traffickers

They are always with you

Video Documentaries

Ojanar Pothey (Destination unknown)

This 24-minute ATSEC video documentary depicts the present condition of trafficking in Bangladesh. On the basis of a few real incidents, it tries to give a brief sketch about the reasons, process and consequences of trafficking. In the middle of the documentary, interviews with the repatriated people who were trafficked into brothels or as camel jockeys are also included to describe the fate of their lives. The documentary has appealed to the people of different strata to take steps to stop this crime.

Kothay Jabo (where is her destination?)

This 20 minutes video documentary, made by UDDIPON, firstly depicts that parents sending their girl children off with traffickers in the hope of receiving house hold jobs in town. The traffickers also took three or four children by deceiving them. And after that, they sold them in different locations. In the mean time, a girl child of those parents returned home after being raped. But the parents denied taking her as their child .Now who will take her responsibility?

Kranti (Time)

The main story of this 24-minute video documentary, made by BNWLA, shows women are trapped in the network of trafficking due to familial problems and conflicts. At last, they are caught by the police, but this is not the end. The traffickers come again for their bails. But, the arrested women remain in the custody for not being able to lie according to the advice of traffickers before

the court. At this crisis moment, the BNWLA takes legal measures to prove the women are not guilty and to set them into mainstream society.

3b. The Information- need

Assessing the 'information-need' and media exposure of the vulnerable groups is the second important area of this investigation, as this assessment will help us scan out the lacunas of these communicative strategies in an appropriate context. It is such an area from where the ways of conclusion and recommendations for the discussed problem also could be drawn.

The term 'information-need' is used in a variety of ways. However, Wilson and Streatifield have defined that information is a subjective and relative concept only in the mind of the experiencing individual. (Kurbunogly 2003:1) In general terms, information-need refers to the desire of people to know something that could develop their cognitive level. This concept of information-need also indicates the way or medium through which the people consume or receive information for their daily life.

For this stage, a set of vulnerable groups in Binodpur, Sonamasjid and Narayanpur border-villages of Chapai Nawabganj district have been interviewed on the basis of their location, low income and education. The researcher has found that about 75% people of these areas, whose education qualifications are below primary level, are quite ignorant of the modern mode of trafficking. They only have the concept of "Cheledhara", which refers to a group of people who take away only children through deception from town or city centres. It has been revealed that the growth of such a concept lies on interpersonal channels as a whole. Concepts about modern traffickers, who may be their relatives or neighbours, are totally absent in their minds.

Most of the respondents of these areas show no interest in being much conveyed of trafficking, as they don't know it is a big problem for them. For daily information and entertainment, they mainly rely on radio, folk media and interpersonal channels like schoolteachers, imams and so

on. Respondents from literate groups that include students, N.G.O workers, teachers, imams and others, show a different picture, in that they have a moderate concept of trafficking, and they have access to radio, TV and newspapers. They want to know how trafficking could be stopped from grassroots to the top level. Indeed, such literate people in these areas could play a vital role in conveying the message to the people about the process and consequences of trafficking.

On the other hand, respondents of Uttar Badda and Mirpur-1 in Dhaka also show a less moderate concept of trafficking despite their constant exposure to different electronic media and channels. Like the vulnerable groups of Binodpur, Narayanpur and Sonamasjid, they also have the concept of "Cheledhara", and they are highly aware of the consequences of trafficked children. The primary knowledge-gap among them is they are unaware of the fact that the traffickers also may come in guise of their relatives or friends. On the question of information-need, they show interest in knowing about such traffickers, who may pose threat to their community and life in future.

An indigenous group of people named "Santal" was also interviewed in Chapai Nawabganj for this study. Here about all of the people are ignorant of trafficking, even though they are vulnerable to trafficking based on their identity, location and social status. It has been found that these people mainly rely on interpersonal channels for information including the leader of their community and parents of their families. Observation by this researcher shows that they have no interest in getting information about trafficking, although they have the intention to listen to anything that is helpful for their lives.

3c. Analysis and Discussion

This portion of the study usually has been resulted from the qualitative assessment of the collected data from documents and interviews with different groups of people ranging from experts of the N.G.Os to the members of vulnerable areas of the country. The communicative strategies of ATSEC, BNWLA, CWCS, and UDDIPON in raising awareness against women and child trafficking mainly include five posters, five leaflets, five folders, 200 advocacy and group workshops, and three video documentaries. Only CWCS doesn't have any video documentary in

this regard. But, CWCS shows its differences by staging eight street dramas in their working districts. In line with that, ATSEC has also proved its difference implementing the programmes of several street dramas on their focal points.

Following the raising awareness campaign against trafficking, UDDIPON has the most unique communicative approaches. They have established several child clubs in their working districts where messages against trafficking are disseminated through discussions and organizing dramas. The child club members are also provided with training facilities on various cultural activities that also raise awareness in this regard. In addition to that, a chapter on trafficking issues has also been included in their rural educational programme.

It has been found that the absence of a feedback assessment programme reflects a prominent inconsistency in these N.G.Os' communicative strategies, as communication is not a one way or linear process. Rather, it's a two way process where sender and receiver reach a mutual understanding in a given social context. Due to the absence of this strategy, experts and specialists in a campaign programme fail to evaluate the effectiveness of their media and messages in their targeted areas. Another important implication is that the message designing and dissemination process requires an understanding of information-need and the media exposure of the target groups. (Rodrigo 1989: 207) In fact, data from interviews with the experts of these N.G.Os and target-vulnerable groups supports the above-mentioned argument in several ways. For example, while the most popular folk media in Chapainawabganj is *Gombhira, ATSEC has used there a different folk media named street drama to disseminate their message. And for this, the appeal of the message is assumed to be low towards the audience.

The absence of feedback research or assessment the cultural factors of target groups also has resulted in several problems in designing and disseminating the messages through the proper channels. Documents and interviews with the experts show that these N.G.Os have mostly

*Gombhira is a popular folk media of Chapainawabganj district. Usually, two people are engaged in performing this cultural programme ,which is displayed before rural-audience.The main aim of this programme is to raise awareness against any social problems.

concentrated on printed material for disseminating the messages, rather than alternative media. In fact, printed materials are only helpful in the case of literate people who naturally are less vulnerable to trafficking. But, for the other groups, different kinds of alternative media and interpersonal channels should be the main source of information about this problem. Respondents in the vulnerable areas support this argument and have led the researcher to think of staging about 20 street dramas or displaying a few video documentaries could not be counted as the long term and effective steps in the context of raising awareness programme against trafficking in Bangladesh.

Another weakness in these communicative strategies is the absence of a programme for raising awareness among the indigenous people, who make up 2% of the total population of the country. (www.sdnpsbd.org/sdi/international_day/indigenous-people) The interview with an indigenous group in the northern part of Bangladesh named "Santal" shows that they are quiet ignorant of trafficking in Bangladesh, although their location, race, and income level have made them vulnerable to this crime. It has also been found that they do not want to know anything about trafficking, but they show a desire for entertainment and that kind of information at the same time. Actually, such ignorance about trafficking among them has been resulted from the absence of including these groups in any anti-trafficking strategies in Bangladesh.

A few problems have also been scanned out in the messages of posters and video documentaries of these N.G.Os. For example, the BNWLA has shown an inconsistency in their poster-1, setting the message "Beware of Traffickers" in the English language. In the context of Bangladesh, this is really an irrelevant way considering the high rate of illiteracy in both Bengali and English among the target groups. The posters of ATSEC are also problematic in that the messages only emphasize the acceptance of the trafficked people by the society, and a few ways to prevent trafficking. However, any indication about the other methods the traffickers commonly use was absent from these messages.

It seems that the contents of the video documentaries only depict a narrow and one-side perspective of trafficking in Bangladesh. For example, the video documentary "Kothay Jabo" of

UDDIPON only emphasizes the need of rehabilitation for trafficked children. Moreover, emphasis on the need for taking other measures to stop this crime was not included in that documentary. The video documentary "Kranti" of BNWLA can also be blamed for portraying only the legal and repatriation approaches to this problem. However, how one could prevent oneself from being allured by traffickers through the promise of a good profession and thus economic stability is left out of the video.

In addition, the video documentary "Ojanar Pothey" of ATSEC has ignored the information-need of vulnerable groups in that the tone of the documentary is technocratic. This may create problems in understanding the messages among the vulnerable groups. In fact, the important messages for raising awareness against women and child trafficking were not framed in a dramatic or info-tainment mood, even though this need was found through the interviews with vulnerable people. So, the documentary seems to be only useful for such audiences that only includes policy-makers and experts of different N.G.Os in this regard.

The collected data also tends to imply that these communicative strategies are only reflecting a centralized and top-down approach to respond to this issue. Because, the locations of the working areas of these N.G.Os are city centres and district headquarters from where the message or information could hardly reach the vulnerable areas. However, the experts of these N.G.Os think the strategy of advocacy and group discussion in these headquarters are the main channels through which messages can be disseminated in this regard. But, observation by the researcher shows that such channels are only helpful in disseminating the messages among the local elite, who never maintain any close ties with the vulnerable groups at all.

Interviews with the experts and critical review of communicative strategies of these N.G.Os also indicate that they have only concentrated on disseminating information to raise awareness through a limited number of channels, avoiding the holistic point of view to respond to this issue. In fact, information is not enough to bring about modifications in attitude and behaviour or to produce such kinds of changes these strategies demand. (Bassette 1997: 19) There should be some economical opportunities for the vulnerable groups so that they could at first provide

themselves in the context of poverty. Because, when a human being passes his life in extreme poverty, he can never think what is right and what is wrong; side by side, he can never evaluate the importance of these information or messages that could be helpful for them. Actually, human beings are very selective in selecting and perceiving any information, and this process depends entirely on their socio-economic status. (Melkote1996: 71) So, before formulating any strategy about raising awareness against trafficking of women and children in Bangladesh, it is important to perceive the need of setting up an economic platform for the vulnerable groups.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

This study suggests that ATSEC, BNWLA, CWCS and UDDIPON have not taken proper communicative strategies to respond to the issue of trafficking in Bangladesh. They have only tried to set an agenda before the government and donor groups following this problem. The analysis also demonstrates that the absence of feedback research aspect in their communicative strategies has labeled their campaigns as a one-way or top down approach to the crisis. In addition, their strategies have completely neglected the indigenous people of Bangladesh, who make up 2% of the population and who are at high risk for being victims of trafficking at any time.

The assessment of information-need and media exposure of vulnerable groups during this study implies that the texts and messages in the posters and video documentaries of these N.G.Os are unable to meet the vulnerable people's communication-needs. This inability has been resulted from the absence of proper reading the cultural factors of target audience across the country. In addition, another weakness in their approach is that they have only concentrated on disseminating information for raising awareness among the vulnerable groups, rather than providing any long term economical support for creating any job-placements for them. In fact, the contemporary economic perspectives of these groups demand such approaches, in that they need the promise of three meals in day at first and then awareness raising information against this crisis.

It is highly praiseworthy that like others, these four N.G.Os have advanced from different dimensions to stop women and child trafficking in Bangladesh. In line with their other programmes, they are also trying to develop a unified communicative strategy to raise awareness against this problem. But, the following weaknesses, revealed by this study, indicate that they are only performing some formalities in support of their other strategies. In this respect, they have

failed to follow the proper way of communication in addressing this issue from awareness raising perspective. To make their strategies time-efficient and audience-need oriented, the following recommendations have been outlined:

- (a) A feedback research programme should be included in communicative strategies to measure the effectiveness of disseminated messages against this issue.
- (b) The anti-trafficking campaign should also be expanded to the indigenous people of Bangladesh, considering their vulnerability.
- (c) The cultural factors of the vulnerable groups should be prioritized in line with other common areas of concern before launching any communicative programmes in raising awareness.
- (d) A critical approach should also be developed especially in designing, timing and framing the concerned messages in appropriate media, be it mass or folk, for communicating this social problem at the grassroots level.
- (e) A program for providing extended economical support with the mere vulnerable people should also be taken into account in these N.G.Os in line with the approach of information or messages dissemination for raising awareness. This point of view will lead their strategies to a holistic approach to this crisis.

There are also two limitations in this study. The researcher has not been able to use any statistical scales to measure the information-need and media exposure of the vulnerable people of the concerned areas. However, these phenomena have been understood through interview, discussions and critical analysis. In addition, no table has been used to present the collected data from interviews with the concerned groups for the study. The second limitation is that the tasks of analyzing the messages have not covered all the posters, folders and other forms of communicative materials, as the authorities of these N.G.Os failed to provide them. Future researches could be done on assessing their messages from textual-analysis point of view, and their effectiveness of media and channels in their working areas in Bangladesh.

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Abbreviations

Action against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children (ATSEC)

Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA)

Centre for Women and Children Studies (CWCS)

United Development Initiatives for Programmed Actions (UDDIPON).