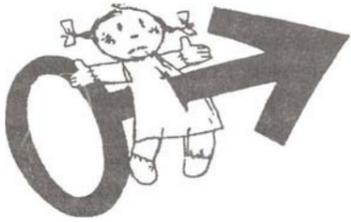


In Kathmandu alone, there are over 200 brothels, crowded with minors. About 5,000 children under 16 years of age are involved in the sex business in Nepal. As far as the trafficking of girls is concerned, the number of Nepalese girls forced into sex slavery in Indian brothels has reached nearly 200,000. Every year about 5,000 to 7,000 children are trafficked to Indian cities to be forced to work as prostitutes.



"She is called a prostitute. But that's not her name."

Large numbers of uneducated rural girls in Nepal are migrating to bigger cities in order to seek employment. Lured into urban areas by the promise of prosperity, a good job and a bright future, lots of them end up in the street where they easily fall into the sex industry. Some girls end up in carpet and garment factories, some times used as conduit points for trafficking girls to India. The girls are also themselves prone to drift into commercial sex as a means of surviving.

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For the most part, lower caste and casteless people are targeted, as they lack the close protection existing within higher caste families. There are some areas of Nepal in which prostitution is a woman's only means of earning money, and even the community accepts this.

Refuge: When and if trafficked women are returned to Nepal, what is life like for them? Is there any assistance available?

Shanti Adhikari: There are four organizations who travel to India and bring back the girls—Maiti Nepal, ABC, WOREC (The Women's Rehabilitation Centre), and CEWIN (Child Workers in Nepal). When the girls return, they are housed together and provided with

medical assistance, training, and rehabilitation. If possible, they return to their own homes and families. These girls would otherwise be left homeless, as the community does not normally accept them again. They are given skills training, such as weaving, sewing, woodcarving, and bamboo crafting. Some are able to attend literacy programs and awareness classes. Some have actually attained quite high levels of education prior to being taken and can return to high school to continue their studies. Those with individual talents are encouraged to pursue them.

Refuge: What kind of action do the region's leaders propose to take?

Shanti Adhikari: The Foreign Ministers in attendance at the latest SAARC summit have met again since then. At the SAARC summit to be held in Nepal next year, the host country plans to have all leaders sign a convention abolishing the trafficking of women and girls. AA TWIN believes this convention will be signed, but may not be implemented by each country. AA TWIN will be working to lobby and pressure governments, as well as individual parliamentarians. *Refuge:* What are the consequences of trafficking in terms of HIV/AIDS?

Shanti Adhikari: The majority of girls tested are HIV positive. Very few have developed full-blown AIDS as yet, but hospices or hospitals will be a need in the future.

Refuge: What is most important to CWISH? to AA TWIN?

Shanti Adhikari: The top priority of CWISH is to stop all girl trafficking, and to empower women and girls, to close the gap between the status of men and women in Nepalese society.

AA TWIN's top priority is to abolish girl trafficking in Nepal by working closely with the SAARC countries, which have an effect on Nepal.

Refuge: What are the largest obstacles you face in trying to meet your goals?

Shanti Adhikari: With regards to trafficking, the main obstacle is Nepal's open border with India. We have 17 border crossings. Also, there are no strict punishments given to people involved in trafficking. There are minor laws in

place, but AA TWIN is lobbying for stronger penalties.

Nepal's poverty is also an obstacle. Some of these girls actually return to India as they consider their chances of rehabilitation to be hopeless, and they prefer life in the brothel.

About 200,000 Nepali women and girls have been taken to India in the last 20 years. Twenty percent have been less than 16 years old.

Interviewer's note: Pratima Khadka, President of the Bhutan Women and Children Organization, in exile in Kathmandu, has expressed great concern regarding the tenuous situation of young Bhutanese women living in Nepal. Crowded by the hundreds into refugee camps, these girls lack adequate income and job opportunities. Demanding immediate repatriation of the thousands of Bhutanese forced into exile on the basis of their ethnicity, Mrs. Khadka points out that it is their vulnerability, living the precarious existence of refugees, that makes these girls likely targets for traffickers. II

Good Tourism ...

"Respects the culture of the host nation

"Operates in harmony with the environment

"Defends the rights of children "Gives equal

respect and recognition to all people,

regardless of gender, race, physical

handicap, religion or age "Portrays and

promotes itself in a way which does not

demean persons nor places "Ensures that the economic benefits of its activity

reach to all sectors of society

"Promotes positive values of peace and

justice, harmony and understanding

between peoples

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