
THE ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN PREVENTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND FACILITATING REHABILITATION: A CASE STUDY OF EIGHT BROTHERS SOCIAL WELFARE SOCIETY

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1. INTRODUCTION

Human trafficking refers to the illegal trade and exploitation of individuals, often for purposes such as sexual slavery, forced labor, or commercial sexual exploitation. According to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), trafficking in persons involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of individuals through means such as threat, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or vulnerability, or giving payments to gain control over another person, primarily for the purpose of exploitation (UNODC, 2004). In India, human trafficking, particularly of women and children, remains a serious and widespread issue. States such as Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Gujarat, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Bihar, Odisha, and Delhi have been identified as major source and destination areas for trafficking (National Crime Records Bureau [NCRB], 2022). Additionally, regions near international borders are especially vulnerable due to poor socio-economic conditions, porous boundaries, and lack of enforcement, which facilitate cross-border trafficking (Bales, 2007; UNODC, 2014). Like, other places in India, Assam also has the issue of trafficking. As Assam is situated in North east region of India and it connect with near Boarder areas of other country such as China, Bhutan, Nepal, and Bangladesh, so it is easy for the traffickers and middle man to continue the trade of human. In Assam it has been seen that women and girl child are trafficked to all state of India. Most of them suspected to be trafficked to big cities where they are forced into a lifetime of bonded labor or end up as prostitutes.

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To know about the different schemes performed by NGO under Ministry of Women and Child Development.
2. To understand the various factors which influence human trafficking.
3. To know about the preventive measures taken for minimizing women trafficking.
4. To identify the different strategies adopted by the NGO for rehabilitation for the victims.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Human trafficking remains one of the gravest human rights violations globally, involving the exploitation of individuals through force, fraud, or coercion for various purposes, including forced labor, sexual exploitation, and organ trade (UNODC, 2020). Numerous studies have underscored the multifaceted nature of trafficking, often linked to poverty, illiteracy, migration, unemployment, and gender inequality (Chuang, 2014; Kara, 2017). Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have emerged as critical actors in combating human trafficking, both in terms of prevention and rehabilitation. According to Gallagher and Holmes (2008), NGOs play a pivotal role in policy advocacy, victim identification, legal assistance, and the reintegration of survivors. Their proximity to vulnerable communities and grassroots networks makes them uniquely positioned to address trafficking from a bottom-up perspective.

In India, where trafficking is both inter-state and transnational, NGOs have worked extensively with law enforcement and social welfare departments to provide holistic support to victims (Sen & Nair, 2004). For instance, anti-trafficking initiatives by NGOs often include rescue operations, provision of temporary shelters, psychological counseling, vocational training, and legal aid (Bhattacharjee, 2009). Moreover, community awareness and education campaigns led by NGOs have significantly contributed to early detection and prevention. A study by Banerjee and Das (2016) emphasized that community vigilance and school-level interventions could reduce trafficking risks among adolescents, particularly in rural and tribal areas.

The Eight Brothers Social Welfare Society, a grassroots organization based in Assam, has been acknowledged for its proactive efforts in both preventing trafficking and rehabilitating survivors. While there is limited academic literature specifically on this organization, reports and field documentation suggest their involvement in community mobilization, coordination with local police, and skills-based rehabilitation programs.

Overall, the literature highlights that while NGOs face challenges such as limited funding, political resistance, and safety threats, their role in anti-trafficking efforts remains indispensable. More case-based research is

needed to document local practices and the effectiveness of rehabilitation models employed by organizations like the Eight Brothers Social Welfare Society.

4. METHODOLOGY FOR THE STUDY

The present study examines the role of the non-governmental organization *Eight Brothers Social Welfare Society* in addressing the issue of women trafficking and the rehabilitation of victims within the community.

4.1 Study Area:

The research was conducted in the Sonitpur district of Assam, which has been identified as a region vulnerable to trafficking, particularly in tea garden areas.

4.2 Population:

The target population for the study comprised women victims of trafficking belonging to the tea tribe communities within the district.

4.3 Sample Size:

A purposive sample of 33 women victims was selected for the study to ensure the inclusion of individuals with direct experience related to the research objectives.

4.4 Data Sources:

Both **primary** and **secondary** sources of data were utilized.

4.4.1 Primary data were collected through structured interviews, case studies, and personal interactions with the victims and members of the NGO.

4.4.2 Secondary data were gathered from published reports, government documents, research articles, and records maintained by the NGO.

5. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

5.1 Schemes performed by NGO under Ministry of Women and Child Development

The **Ministry of Women and Child Development**, Government of India, was established with the primary objective of addressing critical gaps in state-level interventions concerning the welfare of women and children. Its mandate includes fostering inter-ministerial and inter-sectoral coordination to formulate and implement gender-equitable and child-centric legislation, policies, and programmes. A significant proportion of the Ministry's initiatives are implemented through **non-governmental organisations (NGOs)**, with continued efforts to enhance the effectiveness and scope of NGO participation in programme delivery. In recent years, the Ministry has undertaken several key policy measures, including the **universalization of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)** and **Kishori Shakti Yojana**, the introduction of a **nutrition programme for adolescent girls**, the **establishment of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights**, and the enactment of the **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act**. These initiatives collectively reflect a comprehensive approach to advancing the rights and welfare of women and children across the country.

5.2 Different Women Empowerment Schemes

1. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme
2. One Stop Centre Scheme
3. Women Helpline Scheme
4. UJJAWALA: A Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation and Re-integration of Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation
5. Working Women Hostel
6. Ministry approves new projects under Ujjawala Scheme and continues existing projects
7. SWADHAR Greh (A Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances)
8. NARI SHAKTI PURASKAR
9. Awardees of Stree Shakti Puruskar, 2014 & Awardees of Nari Shakti Puruskar
10. Awardees of Rajya Mahila Samman & Zila Mahila Samman
11. Mahila police Volunteers

12. Mahila E-Haat
13. Mahila Shakti Kendras (MSK)
14. NIRBHAYA

The present report is basically prepared on the UJJAWALA: A Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation and Re-integration of Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation. The scheme has been initiated on April 2016 with a motive conceived primarily for the purpose of preventing trafficking on the one hand and rescue and rehabilitation of victims on the other.

5.3 Objective Of The Ujjawala Scheme

- To prevent trafficking of women and children through social mobilization and involvement of local communities, awareness generation programmes, generate public discourse through workshops/seminars and any other innovative activity.
- To facilitate rescue of victims from the place of their exploitation and place them in safe custody.
- To provide rehabilitation services both immediate and long-term to the victims by providing basic amenities/needs including counselling, legal aid and guidance and vocational training.
- To facilitate reintegration of the victims into the family and society at large.
- To facilitate repatriation of cross-border victims to their country of origin.

5.4 Role of NGO

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) operate either through financial support from governmental sources or through self-funding mechanisms. Their primary objective is to serve marginalized and vulnerable sections of society by empowering them to become physically, mentally, and socially capable of resisting various forms of exploitation.

In recent years, numerous NGOs have taken active roles in combating human trafficking. Their efforts include coordination with government agencies or functioning independently to address the complex challenges posed by trafficking. Given the limitations faced by law enforcement agencies—such as staffing shortages, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of specialized training in handling trafficking cases—as well as the overburdened judiciary, NGOs have emerged as critical actors in the processes of **rescue, rehabilitation, reintegration, and legal support** for survivors. Their interventions have significantly contributed to the effective implementation of the **Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956**.

Despite constraints related to funding and resources, NGOs have demonstrated remarkable efficiency and commitment in combating human trafficking. Their role is increasingly viewed as complementary to that of the police, particularly in investigation and victim rescue operations. NGOs are often recognized for their **participatory, innovative, and community-based approaches**, which enhance the responsiveness and relevance of interventions in the field.

Moreover, NGOs have played a vital role in **raising public awareness** about trafficking and related social issues. Through the publication of newsletters, scholarly articles, and organizing seminars and conferences, they have fostered academic and policy dialogue. Many also undertake surveys and field research to highlight the realities of human rights violations and bring visibility to the lived experiences of survivors.

5.5 Mode of Working by NGO

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have adopted a range of strategic approaches to address the complex issue of human trafficking. Their interventions are often case-specific and tailored to meet the unique needs of each rescued individual. Upon rescue, NGOs assess the type of support required—be it medical care, psychological counselling, educational assistance, or vocational training and employment based on the survivor's skills and background.

In several instances, NGOs also work toward **family tracing and reintegration**, particularly in cases involving missing or trafficked minors. Some organizations proactively engage in surveillance and identification efforts by monitoring transportation hubs such as airports and railway stations, seeking to identify potential trafficking victims.

NGOs play a critical role across multiple dimensions of anti-trafficking work, including **prevention, protection, rescue, and reintegration**. They have been instrumental in providing actionable intelligence to law enforcement agencies, assisting in rescue operations, and facilitating legal proceedings against traffickers.

Despite their commitment and contributions, NGOs face significant challenges. A major impediment is the **lack of prioritization of human trafficking** as a serious crime by both government and law enforcement bodies. Moreover, **institutional corruption** among certain police officials, bureaucrats, and legal authorities often enables traffickers to evade accountability, thereby weakening the enforcement of anti-trafficking laws. This systemic apathy and corruption not only hinder justice for survivors but also discourage NGOs in their efforts to tackle this deeply rooted issue.

5.6 About Eight Brother's Social Welfare Society

Eight Brothers Social Welfare Society was shaped on 06.06.1996 as a Non- Governmental Organization and registered under Society Registration Act 1860 on 15/03/1999 with its Head Office at Tezpur, Administrative Office at Guwahati and Branch Office at Gohpur. It is established with the objective of helping hand to marginalized section of the society. The organization have been working in the field of social welfare, self employment, health and family welfare and road safety activities since 1996 with mobilization of fund from community and grant in aid of Government of Assam and different Ministries of Government of India.

I. Objectives of the Organization:

- (a) Capacity Building, Skill Up gradation
- (b) Economic Up-liftmen of Rural people
- (c) Health and Family Welfare,
- (d) Development of Youth Affairs
- (e) Social Welfare Activities,
- (f) Road Safety and Traffic Awareness,
- (g) Women and Child Development
- (h) Promotion of Cultural Heritage.
- (i) Research and Publication.
- (j) Women and Child Development,

II. Major Activities of the Organization in the Last 3 year:

The NGO have been implementing various project related to women and child development, minority women, health and family welfare , promotion of handicrafts etc under different Ministries and Department of Assam like Ministry of Women & Child Development, Govt. of India, Central Social Welfare Board, Ministry of Minority Textiles, Govt. of India, Ministry of Minority Textiles, Govt. of India, Ministry of Youth Affairs, Govt. of India , New Delhi, Social Welfare Department, Govt. of Assam. The main leading projects has been implementing by the organization are Ujjawala, Specialisation Adoption Agency, Family Counselling Centre, Working Women Hostel, National Creche Programme, Ambedkar Hastisilpa Vikash Yojana etc. in Sonitpur and Biswanath District particularly.

6. DATA ANALYSIS

Table –I: Age classification of the respondents

Age Group	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Below 12	2	6.06%
12-14	2	6.06%
14-18	10	30.30%
18-25	16	48.48%
Above 25	3	9.10%
Total	33	100%

Source- Field Survey

Interpretation: From the above table it is seen that the victims were mostly between 18-25years of age.

Table –II: Qualification classification of the respondents

Education	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Illiterate	18	54.54%
L.P(Class 1-5)	3	9.09 %
U.P(Class 6-8)	7	21.21 %

High School (Class 9-10)	2	6.06 %
Above Class 10	3	9.10%
Total	33	100%

Source- Field Survey

Interpretation: From the above table it is seen that the victims were mostly illiterate and school dropout.

Table –III: Classification of the people involved in Trafficking

Category of people	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Kidnap	6	18.18%
Stranger	7	21.21%
Neighbor	12	36.36%
Family	7	21.21%
Missing	1	3.04%
Total	33	100%

Source- Field Survey

Interpretation: From the above table it is seen that the person involved in trafficking falls under different category, but most of them are seen to be neighbours.

Table –IV: Classification of the reasons behind Trafficking

Factors	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Marriage	7	21.21%
Job	12	36.36%
Medical treatment	2	6.06%
Education	7	21.21%
Any other	5	15.16%
Total	33	100%

Source- Field Survey

Interpretation: The above table shows that majority of the victims fall in search of job , fake marriage proposal and education comes rest.

7. PREVENTIVE MEASURES TAKEN TO OVER THE PROBLEM

- **Prevention:** Prevention as one of the components of the scheme, Eight Brothers Society Welfare. Society has been taken the following activities from time to time as a part of prevention programme.
- **Awareness Camp:** To make people aware and alert against trafficking Eight Brothers organized awareness camps in different places of entire Sonitpur and Biswanath district specially in tea garden areas in every month.
- **Formation of Community Vigilance Group:** CVG plays an important role to prevent trafficking against women and children. So far Eight Brothers' form more than 150 nos. of CVG in entire Sonitpur District they create a network to observe suspected persons in villages. Thereby they trying to identify the local agents of this organized crime.
- **Formation of Balika Sangha:** Most of the blocks of Sonitpur district inhabited by tribal people. The poor girl child is frequently caught by miscreants who exploit them by giving false promises of job, money and marriage. Therefore, EB has formed many Balika Sanghas with the objective of monitoring any such kind of unusual incidents that take place within the village and informed the authority concern for necessary action

Sensitization Programmes: To aware some stakeholder the organization organized two workshop in every year. To make people aware of the trafficking of women and children, being carried on by some anti-social groups of people, which has emerged as a challenge to protect basic human rights.

- **Street Play:** Since it is a vital medium to connect, a desired message can be transmitted directly and easily to the common people. Keeping in view the effectiveness of this mass-media EB displayed street play on women trafficking issue in various parts of Sonitpur district.
- **Networking with local police stations and voluntary organization:** In the process of rehabilitation of victims under project "Ujjawala" and its successful implementation Eight Brothers' has been closely

working with various voluntary organizations and local police station for gathering information about the victims.

- **Leaflets, pamphlets distribution:** To disseminate information regarding women trafficking as well as about the project “Ujjawala” leaflets, pamphlets are distributed by Eight Brothers’ NGO among the masses.

8. MAJOR FINDINGS , SUGGESTION AND RECOMMENDATION:

- Field observations suggest that each tea estate faces distinct socio-economic and gender-specific challenges, with women often bearing the brunt of systemic vulnerabilities. Broader issues such as poverty, poor health infrastructure, and lack of educational opportunities further compound the risk of women falling prey to trafficking. These factors collectively create conditions conducive to exploitation and trafficking within these communities.
- One significant observation is the lack of parental awareness and vigilance. Many parents send their children to distant workplaces without verifying the legitimacy or safety of the employment. In such cases, they neither retain records of the employers nor have contact information, thereby limiting their ability to assist law enforcement in the event of a disappearance.
- Another critical finding is the reluctance of community members to report missing children. Fear of police harassment, coupled with low literacy levels and limited awareness of legal rights, prevents timely reporting. The general mistrust of law enforcement agencies and lack of knowledge about legal provisions further delay intervention and rescue efforts.
- The psychosocial impact on survivors of trafficking is also severe. According to the survey, many victims face social ostracism and stigma, resulting in low self-esteem, social withdrawal, and an inability to reintegrate into society. The trauma experienced leaves a lasting impact, making it difficult for them to trust others or participate in communal life.
- However, there is a growing trend of awareness and resistance, particularly among the younger and more educated generations in these communities. Young men and women are increasingly conscious of trafficking-related issues and are beginning to raise their voices against injustice.
- Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have played a pivotal role in this shift. Their efforts in conducting awareness programmes, rights-based education, and community mobilization have empowered residents to recognize exploitation and demand accountability. These interventions are gradually building community resilience and encouraging proactive measures to prevent trafficking.

13. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aims to assist government authorities and human rights institutions in identifying and addressing the underlying causes of women trafficking in tea garden regions. Multiple root factors contribute to the vulnerability of women and girls in these areas, yet the lack of systematic data and contextual understanding has hindered effective governmental intervention. One of the key challenges in mitigating trafficking is the occasional involvement of local community members, which further complicates detection and prevention efforts.

By uncovering these socio-economic and structural drivers through empirical research, the present study provides valuable insights that can inform the formulation of targeted policies and preventive strategies. It is anticipated that the findings will support the development of comprehensive measures aimed not only at reducing trafficking but also at promoting the socio-economic welfare of women and girl children belonging to tea garden communities and other marginalized groups.

14. CONCLUSION

Over the years, women trafficking has persisted as a critical and deeply entrenched issue in society. Although it is not a new phenomenon, its manifestations continue to evolve, often affecting vulnerable populations in marginalized regions. This study attempts to explore the dynamics of women trafficking within the context of tea garden communities, drawing insights from both primary data collection and field-based personal observations.

While only a limited number of trafficking cases were identified in the selected tea garden areas, this does not imply the absence of such activities. The findings may be constrained by the limited timeframe of the study and the small sample size of respondents. Nevertheless, the study reveals that several triggering factors, such as poverty, lack of awareness, and social vulnerabilities, contribute to the risk of trafficking. Importantly, the

research highlights a growing awareness among the local population regarding human trafficking and related social issues.

A key focus of this study is the awareness levels within tea garden communities, particularly among the younger generation, who are increasingly gaining access to formal education. This shift has contributed to improved understanding of social rights and responsibilities, equipping young men and women to recognize exploitation and challenge harmful practices. Such progress, though gradual, signals a positive change and offers hope for reducing the incidence of trafficking in these areas through education, empowerment, and community-based awareness initiatives.

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