

PREVENTING TRAFFICKING: AN EXPLORATION OF CAUSALITIES AND RESPONSES



change mantras
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PREVENTING TRAFFICKING: AN EXPLORATORY RESEARCH FINAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The relevance of this research stems from firstly, the fact that there is no cogent definition of the scope of prevention of trafficking, nor any comprehensive policy on prevention of trafficking either in India or in most other parts of the world. Most anti trafficking programmes focus more on responses to trafficking, rather than pre-emptively seeking to mitigate or prevent exploitations or violations that lead to trafficking. Further, context alters the scope of prevention programmes, as for organisations focusing on specific forms of trafficking (like sexual exploitation or forced labour), prevention means addressing specific conditions that may foster that specific form of trafficking which may be regionally or situationally peculiar.

In India, the Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Care and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2021 was released by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India. The provisions in the Trafficking Bill, 2021 on prevention are very broad and place over-reliance on State and District Anti-Trafficking Committees, which do not exist uniformly at this point, before enactment of the law. Further, prevention initiatives that target underlying socio-economic causes or vulnerability factors of trafficking (like poverty, unemployment, education, etc.) have not been studied by the state for effect and impact, which is direly needed to update discourse around how trafficking can effectively and pre-emptively be tackled.

Rationale for the Research

This research explores what ‘prevention of trafficking’ means to communities who are most affected by human trafficking. It contains the intention to deepen thoughts, perspectives and capture questions and debates amongst various stakeholders (communities, social workers and duty bearers) to stimulate and energize further exploration and prevention initiatives.

Researchers

This research is conducted by ChangeMantras, a consulting group dedicated to finding solutions for developmental challenges and leadership development. The team at

ChangeMantras comprises of sociologists, psychologists, management practitioners, behavioural scientists and process workers – who are experts in, and have international experience of working in sectors of health, gender, migration, child protection and education, and human resource management. More information about ChangeMantras can be found at our [website](#) and at our [LinkedIn page](#).

Scope, Purpose and Objectives of Research

Tafteesh, an anti-human trafficking programme, run by a consortium of human rights defenders and survivors of human trafficking, supported by Kamonohashi and OAK Foundation, which works in India, wishes to understand how prevention of human trafficking, especially of children and adolescents, is understood by communities in West Bengal, India. The choice of districts and communities for this research in West Bengal was determined by the mandate of the financiers supporting this research, the geographical focus of the programme which implemented the research (Tafteesh), boundaries of time and resources, and the high relevance of prevention of trafficking amongst communities.

The Purpose of the research is to learn and inform internal and external stakeholders on how communities affected by trafficking in 2 districts of West Bengal analyse the causal factors, vulnerabilities and the ways in which social, cultural, political or structural factors of governance may underlie the vulnerability to trafficking, and what they measure they believe would be relevant, effective and impactful in deterrence of human trafficking. Ultimately, the research aims to empower and influence stakeholders to work on what they may find necessary to prevent human trafficking in Bengal.

Objectives include to explore how communities in West Bengal who are most affected by human trafficking view vulnerability that causes human trafficking; understand how communities view human trafficking, its ambit and how they therefore understand the ambit and dimensions of prevention of trafficking; to identify commonality and distinctiveness in perspectives between survivors, social workers, and duty bearers; and to facilitate respondents to identify feasible prevention approaches.

Methodology

The methodology adopted for this research is qualitative in nature, which combines both formative and summative approaches, (mixed research methods), with the ideation and exploration of prevention approaches being carried out in two phases, as follows.

Phase I: the formative portion of the research, whose aim is to collect diagnostic information, to indicate what respondents already know, feel and suggest about trafficking (and its prevention) to establish a contextual landscape around prevention of trafficking in West

Bengal and assess the commonalities, conflicts and nuances exhibited by different respondent cohorts (survivors, social workers and duty bearers) on several topics under the umbrella of prevention of trafficking.

Phase II: summative in nature, where respondents are presented with five (5) prevention models that have emerged from the Global Desk Research on prevention of trafficking. The Researchers chose a summative approach in this research exercise so that they could explore respondents' experiences, which would directly relate to their choice of actionable prevention model(s) that they think would be feasible in prevent trafficking in West Bengal.

Some limitations of this research include firstly logistical constraints that do not permit the researchers to carry out FGDs nor interviews with respondents in person. Further, logistical and timeline constraints rendered the researchers unable to interview family members of survivors of trafficking, which can be considered for a future research exercise. Further, by default - the primary focus of respondents (or their organisations) is on sex trafficking, girls and women, children and youth. This may impact the results in terms of how trafficking is understood by respondent frontline social workers, as well as the mental associations made between trafficking (as a whole) and sex trafficking. Finally, the views of the respondents have been summarised in the report for convenience of the reader while consciously aiming to stay true to the opinions of the respondents, which may simplify the overall points made by individual respondents.

Findings of Exploratory Research: Phase I

1. View on scope and ambit of human trafficking

The responses around views on human trafficking, its ambit and the dimensions of trafficking prevention show a stark lack of information and knowledge on the prevalence of trafficking in boys and men, as well as a clear bias towards young girls and women as the most vulnerable demographics to trafficking.

2. Structural Vulnerabilities and Community-Led Trafficking Prevention

While all respondents identified poverty, inequalities (and regional disparities in growth) and unemployment as factors that create vulnerability to trafficking, while talking about responses, there were sparse ideas on what community-led actions could be undertaken to address these macro and structural factors of development.

3. Focus on Parenting Capacities, Emotional/Psychological Health of Children

Respondents, particularly youth, talk about emotional neglect, excessive and restrictive vigilance and control being imposed by parents (particularly on girls), along with a lack of emotional support, which alienates girls from their families and exacerbates their emotional vulnerability. These girls seek emotional support from outside the family, which can manifest in a range of potentially unsafe outcomes – such as socially unacceptable teenage romantic connections that lead to elopement. Survivors of trafficking have shared that their vulnerability to entrapment by traffickers has been through the same or similar routes. Parenting practices in communities, parental stress, social and cultural norms that impact parenting norms and its link with vulnerability exacerbation has hitherto not been explored and addressed in detail.

4. Link between Taboos, Exclusion and Trafficking

The creation and perpetuation of taboos and ‘socially unacceptable behaviour’ of adolescents and young people lead to their social exclusion within communities. Further, the emphasis on ‘restrictions’ and ‘control’ of adolescent girls and young men is a catalyst for rebellious behaviour, which can increase vulnerability to trafficking. This, when juxtaposed with other structural factors that restrict opportunities, as well as emotional deprivation within the community, can form a starting point for community-led preventative actions.

5. Early Marriage, Domestic Oppression, Social/Income Insecurity and Trafficking

The role of early marriages, domestic oppression and consequential insecurities (both socially and economically) are clear vulnerability factors in respondents’ minds.

6. Adolescent and Youth Participation and Leadership in Community-Led Actions

In spite of the roles being played by survivors, as well as their viewpoints on social and cultural factors that lead to vulnerabilities and cause trafficking (through the lenses of emotional deprivation, restrictions and social control), their issues and their unique perspectives are not reflected by other cohorts of social workers and duty bearers, who see them as passive victims rather than agents of change. They are not, therefore, consulted or considered a necessary stakeholder to participate in leadership positions in community or NGO-led actions.

7. Focus on Minorities and Backward Communities

The vulnerability of persons from SCs, STs and the Muslim community to trafficking are linked to structural factors like social backwardness, extreme poverty, more children, higher migration for labour including adolescents, as well as the low priority of education (as opposed to other communities). Further, social practices like ‘free mixing’ of adolescents in tribal communities add to the general belief that people from minorities get trafficked. The

factual basis for these confident assertions is unclear, along with the role of social and communal biases in this information.

8. Contentious Issues on Aspiration and Greed

The responses from survivors on one hand, and duty bearers and social workers, on the other, shows that what young people look at as 'aspirations', 'ambitions', 'dreams' or wanting to 'make something' of themselves – is thought of as 'greed' and being naively 'lured by temptations' by duty bearers and social workers. There is an essential disconnect here, where duty bearers and social workers almost place the 'blame' of trafficking on survivors and their communities, whereas survivors do not assume any such blame, and do not even characterise their 'aspirations' etc. as vulnerability factors.

9. Migration, Structural Inequalities and Trafficking

The responses show a lack of perspective on how to address migration, as there are no answers on how to address these issues when compounded with structural factors like poverty, climate change and unemployment. Further, there is no discourse around precautions to be taken at the community level to mitigate distress migration.

10. Commonalities and Differences in Criminalisation of Traffickers

From responses on the identity of traffickers, the majority of respondents across cohorts believe that traffickers poach on victims from within their social network, with 'relatives' forming the most common category. The majority of people also believe that traffickers operate in network, with institutional duty bearers also mentioning corruption involving duty bearers including local politicians and police in that network.

11. Social Norms that Offset/Mitigate Trafficking

Amongst respondents, there is a negative perception of cultural or social norms, values and practices, with low awareness on how social character of the community may strengthen resilience. Respondents know much more about social norms that exacerbate vulnerability, with multiple respondents saying they did not know about positive norms. What this means is that even the perception of the community is weak, dysfunctional, incapable, resourceless and therefore to be acted upon or even blamed. Therefore, there is a need to explore how social and cultural practices end up strengthening resilience in the community.

12. Stakeholder Power, Interest and Lack of Accountability

The stakeholder analysis shows that firstly, there is no clarity on the scope of responsibilities and duties of such stakeholders, amongst all of the cohorts. The potential for survivors, social workers and duty bearers to engage with the system to make community lives better by availing of services and entitlements, would provide young people with a sense of improvement of one's life, offsetting vulnerability.

The overall findings of Phase I of the research create a unique community-level context on the various vulnerabilities and reasons for trafficking, as well as the roles of prevailing socio-economic conditions, social and cultural norms that form pathways which may lead to trafficking situations. The formative research exercise has additionally revealed a vulnerability map of sorts, where certain demographics are presumed to be more vulnerable to trafficking than others; whilst acknowledging the limits of knowledge of trafficking of respondents themselves (in terms of boys, men and trans persons).

Findings of Exploratory Research: Phase II

This exploratory research was preceded by a global desk research on prevention of trafficking ('Global Desk Research'). The Global Desk Research found that there were 5 major models for prevention of trafficking, some of which have been widely employed by governments and international organisations by way of prevention initiatives in different parts of the world.

The prevention models, as derived from the Desk Research, are summarised below:

Model Number	Name of Model	Particulars
1	Crime Prevention Programme Model	The government takes the approach to punish traffickers. The idea is that the threat of punishment will deter people from committing crimes and reduce the probability and/or level of offending in society.
2	Public Health/Elimination of Root Causes Programme Model	This approach focuses on the root causes that may lead to or make a person vulnerable to trafficking like poverty, low income, no access to education, no awareness about human trafficking etc.

3	Rights-Based Programme Model	The government focuses attention on safeguarding rights of potential victims, rather than on the perpetrator, focusing on underlying structural and systemic issues. Rights-based approaches aim at (a) strengthening the capacity of duty bearers and (b) empowering the rights holders.
4	Chain of Risk Programme Model	There are key points of vulnerability in the lifetimes of persons and communities that may arise from time to time or at specific stages in life and. The approach aims to focus on identifying these key vulnerabilities among the community members that may increase or decrease the chances of human trafficking. The government accordingly develops tailored interventions.
5	Labour Framework Model	The government has taken the approach to deal with trafficked individuals as 'workers', rather than falling within the victim - perpetrator dichotomy. This approach looks at changing market conditions of supply and demand.

Table I: Prevention Models for Human Trafficking

1. The survivors' cohort, consisting largely of young women who are survivors of sex trafficking chose the Elimination of Root Causes Model as their first choice and the Rights Based Model as their second choice. The choices reflected the desire for self-empowerment and the experiences of aspiration and restrictions that they had experienced as seen in the findings of Phase I. Survivors are clear in their desire to be treated by other cohorts as persons with agency, who are entitled to human rights and access to justice.
2. The frontline social workers' cohort chose the Rights-Based Model as their first choice and the Crime Prevention Model as their second choice, reflecting their experiences of conducting rights-awareness programmes of trafficked and prosecuting traffickers. Frontline social workers consider the Rights-Based Approach as an awareness-building exercise, rather than a structured programme for the socio-economic empowerment of survivors. The choices of the frontline workers are also informed by their perception that there is a lack of accountability of duty bearers, as seen in Phase I of the research.

3. The duty bearers' cohort chose the Crime Prevention Model as their first choice and the Elimination of Root Causes Model as their second choice. Some duty bearers spoke about organized networks of traffickers in the larger ecosystem as seen in Phase I but trafficking seems to be considered as an 'ad hoc' crime, with deterrence or criminal justice approaches focusing on individual cases, rather than developing an understanding of the criminality related to trafficking. Their responses show a systemic avoidance of their own responsibility, as well as overwhelming class and gender prejudice in terms of their outlook towards both the perpetrators and victims of trafficking.

Insights and Recommendations for the Way Forward

On one hand, the community recognises that power lies with Panchayats, police, administration and politicians, and community leaders and believes that unless and until they act, nothing can change. On the other hand, Panchayats, administration and politicians believe that the power lies with the community to change their perceptions, their choices and behaviours so as to protect themselves. So, the critical question that keeps bouncing back and forth is about responsibility and accountability - *who is responsible to prevent human trafficking, and who should be held accountable to take actions and measures to bring about changes?*

CSOs or NGOs take the position of change agents, building awareness in the community, sensitizing duty bearers about trafficking and the need for them to respond and act. However, their institutional authority being low, and resources being limited, they depend on their social power and influence but fall short of asserting accountability of duty bearers when they fail to act - be it the Panchayat, police or district administration.

While NGOs believe that addressing root causes, such as poverty, inequality, gender discrimination will be most effective in eliminating vulnerability of communities to any form of exploitation, they choose roles and actions which are feasible for them to play and implement - which could be of low impact or unsustainable. There is also limited reflection in the community on social and cultural practices that could be resilience-affirming or that exacerbate vulnerability. Thus, there seems to be schism between what they believe that should be done to address trafficking and what the organisations choose to do in terms of their programmes and projects on prevention of trafficking.

The disconnect between the community's views on how trafficking can be prevented versus the opinions and actions of NGOs could be because these NGOs depend on projects financed by philanthropic organisations, who wish to see concrete results in terms of numbers (numbers of children protected or prevented from trafficking) which then drives them to

focus on strategies of direct service delivery to vulnerable children, case management (stopping child marriage, enrolling drop out children to schools, preventing migration of children etc.).

In order to stimulate the community to think deeper about the link between solutions to trafficking, their action choices and what they think ought to happen for the vulnerabilities to trafficking to be mitigated, members of the community need time, space and facilitation to think, discuss and share and reflect on what could address the factors that they have identified as those that exacerbate vulnerability to trafficking and approaches, strategies as well as actions, roles, responsibilities and accountability that must be for implementation of the former. Conversations across the demographic spectrum (adolescents and parents, communities of different castes and religions, civil society and duty bearers) are required for deeper reflection and the community drawing from its own wisdom and resilience.

A strong potential that exists in the community are the collectives of survivors, who have the sensing, experience and knowledge of the inner worlds of adolescents and youth, who also have skills of understanding vulnerability very deeply. They would be a great resource to engage in an intergenerational dialogue and negotiation to address the schism between children and elders of the community. The strength and limitation of these collectives is that they are all women, all survivors - creating a powerful identity. Youth collectives of men and trans-people may be a great resource to strengthen the voices of the youth and its diversity, and also to address cultural issues of misogyny and stresses of transitional patriarchy.

The next concrete steps to build on this research could be as follows:

1. To enable CSOs to deepen their thoughts and reflections from this research.
2. To undertake prevention programme ideation and planning with integral participation from the community.
3. To introduce a Communication Project on dialogue building between stakeholders in the community on vulnerability, solutions, powers and responsibilities. CSOs can participate in the programme as mobilisers and organizers and co-facilitators.
4. The stakeholders to include youth, grassroots activists, community leaders, Panchayat leaders and grassroots politicians, parents of adolescents, religious leaders of the community, administrators (bureaucracy), teachers and educators, community health workers and reporters and journalists.
5. These dialogues will serve multiple purposes:
 - i. Enhance stakeholders listening to each other, and recognising different experiences
 - ii. Enhance stakeholders ability to connect the dots
 - iii. Trigger questions on responsibility sharing, based on powers and resources
 - iv. Stimulate adolescents and youth - of being heard, their thoughts, emotions being validated; adults enabled to listen to them better and not get defensive

- v. Build trust between stakeholders and foster relationships, stronger community bonds and easier collaborations
 - vi. Strengthen resilience muscles - of connecting, experimenting, innovations, building structure etc.
6. Process document and measure the impact of the programme on community resilience (through baseline and end line assessments).

PREVENTING TRAFFICKING: AN EXPLORATORY RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

Human Trafficking and its Prevention

Definitions of human trafficking encompass the exploitation of persons where they are recruited, transported, transferred or harboured or received, by means of threat, force, coercion, deception, fraud etc. according to the Palermo Protocol as well as in Indian law. The prevention of human trafficking, therefore, is a broad term that can indicate any measure undertaken to prevent such exploitations and any violations which enable humans to be trafficked.

Relevance of Research

The relevance of this research stems from firstly, the fact that there is no cogent definition of the scope of prevention of trafficking, nor any comprehensive policy on prevention of trafficking either in India or in most other parts of the world. Prevention measures across the world generally include various approaches or models of vulnerability mitigation of general populations, or specific communities.

For the criminal justice system, deterrence is often assumed to be an outcome of criminalisation and punishment of offenders, thereby breaking and challenging the crime of trafficking, its infrastructure, organisations and networks. Within the system, there is a contrarian school of advocates who believe that a criminalising approach to deterrence is counter-productive and penalises oppressed communities even further for undocumented migration, sex work and various forms of precarious labour. Advocates argue that prevention should focus on addressing structural issues of inequality that create poverty, barriers to safe migration of persons, unfair policies in trade and economics, disparities in development and income, gender inequality, caste or class-based oppression etc.

Most anti trafficking programmes, be it by the State or civil society organisations focus more on responses to trafficking, rather than pre-emptively seeking to mitigate or prevent exploitations or violations that lead to trafficking. Further, context alters the scope of prevention programmes, as for many organisations that focus on specific forms of trafficking (be it for sexual exploitation or forced labour), prevention means addressing specific conditions that may foster that specific form of trafficking which may be regionally or situationally peculiar.

Legal Reform on Human Trafficking in India

In India, the Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Care and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2021 was released by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India after the lapse of the Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Case and Rehabilitation Bill), 2018 that had been passed by the Lok Sabha.

The Bill has been drafted with the intent "to **prevent** and counter trafficking in persons, especially women and children, to provide for care, protection, and rehabilitation to the victims, while respecting their rights, and creating a supportive legal, economic and social environment from them, and also to ensure prosecution of offenders, and for matters connected thereto". Therefore, the element of prevention of trafficking features right at the beginning of the Preamble of the Bill, establishing that it falls within the scope.

The Bill's provisions grant authorities, including the National Investigation Agency, Anti-Human Trafficking Committees (at the National, State and District levels) the mandate to prevent offences of trafficking. Chapter IV of the Bill covers 'Preventive Measures' that include the following, as part of the mandate of the State and District Anti-Trafficking Committees:

- a. coordinating the implementation of all the programmes relating to the prevention of trafficking, with relevant statutory bodies, organisations and agencies including Panchayati Raj Institutions; ensuring that the victims are kept safe, secure, protected and as required, separated and distanced from any perpetrators of any offence against such victims;
- b. ensuring that all measures are taken to ensure prevention of any re-traumatisation or re-trafficking of or recurrence of any offence against any victim
 - c. converging and facilitating the implementation of livelihood, educational and skilling programmes for vulnerable persons and victims;
 - d. converging and facilitating the implementation of programmes and schemes sponsored by various Ministries and Departments of the appropriate Government for the benefit of vulnerable persons and victims;
 - e. coordinating with corporate and non-governmental sectors to implement various beneficial activities for prevention of occurrence of any offences against vulnerable persons and victims;
 - f. ensuring accountability of the concerned agencies, by regular review and appropriate corrective action if required;
 - g. undertaking vulnerability mapping of the State and districts and giving focus and attention to the challenging areas;
 - h. commissioning independent studies, surveys, research etc. on various aspects of trafficking, exploitation of victims and other offences under the Bill and ensuring follow up action;

- i. organising interface between law enforcement agencies, other Government Departments and agencies, voluntary organisations for effective implementation of the Bill;
- j. preparing an annual report on offences under the Bill in the State;
- k. coordinating with the Agency and other State Anti-Human Trafficking Committees, especially in relation to those States where source-transit-destination linkages exist, and undertake all activities for joint action programmes by bringing in common plans of action;
- l. linking with the Agency and the Central Government and other concerned agencies for prevention and combating of offences under the Bill;
- m. generating public awareness about the law.

The provisions in the Trafficking Bill, 2021 are very broad, and even though they name specific authorities as having the mandate to undertake prevention, over-reliance is placed on the establishment of the State and District Anti-Trafficking Committees, which do not exist uniformly at this point, before enactment of the law. The only role of existing district administrations and Panchayats as contemplated under the law consists of coordination with the State/District Anti-Trafficking Committees to implement other Government schemes that apply to vulnerable communities and survivors.

Further, the broad provisions around education, livelihood and skilling programmes that have been implemented widely across the country have not been seen to have a discernible effect on preventing trafficking – compounded by the fact that the impact of such initiatives on trafficking have not been researched. Prevention initiatives that target underlying socio-economic causes or vulnerability factors of trafficking (like poverty, unemployment, education, etc.) have not been studied by the state for effect and impact, which is direly needed to update discourse around how trafficking can effectively and pre-emptively be tackled.

Rationale for the Research

On a global level, organisations across the world have tried different approaches on prevention, and the rationales/philosophies underlying these different prevention approaches have been outlined in detail in a Secondary Research on Global Prevention of Human Trafficking ('Global Desk Research'), undertaken between August 2020 and January 2021. This research explores what 'prevention of trafficking' means to communities who are most affected by human trafficking.

The Secondary Research demonstrates a scarcity of exploratory studies on the prevention of trafficking in communities, and therefore, this research contains the intention to deepen thoughts, perspectives and capture questions and debates amongst various stakeholders

(communities, social workers and duty bearers) to stimulate and energize further exploration and prevention initiatives.

This research is meant for a number of stakeholders, including (in no particular order):

- a. **Policy Makers:** The exploratory research provides a unique systemic landscape at the community or district level, where local-level administration and state authorities must undertake to play key roles in preventing trafficking but may have varying levels of power/ability and interest to do so. The research is relevant for the Women and Child Department (on account of specific vulnerabilities that emerge in respect of women and children), the Labour Department (on account of migration and labour-related issues that emerge as causes of trafficking) as well as the Home Department and law enforcement (due to the ubiquitous nature of traffickers within communities, as well as strong perspectives on the power and interest of the police to prevent trafficking).
- b. **Philanthropists:** This research identifies community-level perspectives on prevention, which can be tailored within prevention initiatives funded by philanthropic organisations or investors working in the anti-trafficking space.
- c. **Civil Society Organisations:** The research is relevant for CSOs working in the anti-trafficking space, whether internationally, nationally or at the grassroots, as it provides insight into understanding and engaging with concurring and diverging perspectives on vulnerabilities, causes and prevention of trafficking that occur between social workers and the community themselves.
- d. **Implementing Actors:** In addition to policy makers, the research is relevant for implementing actors at the local/district level, including District Administrations, the police, Panchayats and community/religious leaders, in terms of understanding their roles and mandates on prevention.
- e. **Survivor Advocates and Activists:** Survivor collectives and activists have already been conducting activities at the community level, and this research can inform their understanding and engagement with duty bearers who have a mandate to prevent trafficking.

The Research Team

This research is conducted by ChangeMantras, a consulting group dedicated to finding solutions for developmental challenges and leadership development. The team at ChangeMantras comprises of sociologists, psychologists, management practitioners,

behavioural scientists and process workers – who are experts in, and have international experience of working in sectors of health, gender, migration, child protection and education, and human resource management. More information about ChangeMantras can be found at our [website](#) and at our [LinkedIn page](#).

Roop Sen (Researcher) is a Managing Partner at ChangeMantras. He is a researcher, facilitator, coach and trained process worker. He has 20 years of experience in the development sector focusing on issues of migration, youth and violence and has led qualitative researches, impact assessments and social audits and mentors start-ups in the sector to promote leadership amongst human rights activists and collectives of survivors of sexual violence. More information about Roop Sen can be found at his [LinkedIn page](#).

Uma Chatterjee (Researcher) is a Managing Partner at ChangeMantras. She is psychologist, researcher and trainer and has been working with young girls and women helping them deal with their trauma resulting from experiences of violence, abuse, exploitation, discrimination and neglect. As researcher, Uma has been part of several psychological and psychosocial researches with survivors of trafficking, sexual exploitation, of violence and with street children. More information about Uma Chatterjee can be found at her [LinkedIn page](#).

Krithika Balu (Researcher) is an independent human rights lawyer and researcher, working with organisations and practitioners on issues relating to combating violence against women and children, developing effective justice mechanisms for survivors of abuse, violence and discrimination and engaging in research on issues healthcare from a developing world perspective on social justice. More information about Krithika Balu can be found at her [LinkedIn page](#).

Dr. Dakhina Mitra (Research Advisor) has a PhD in Sociology (specialising on child rights, child labour and participatory research design) and have worked in research and international development for more than 15 years. More information about Dr. Mitra can be found at her [LinkedIn page](#).

Dr. Chandrani Dasgupta (Research Advisor) is a social scientist, with an interest in mental health, policy development and research, working with NGOs, international donor organizations, government departments and corporate organizations as an independent researcher. More information about Chandrani Dasgupta can be found at her [LinkedIn page](#).

Scope of the Research

The community understanding on prevention of trafficking is highly contextual, given unique local circumstances and could vary based on scale, and location (whether the area in question is a source, destination or both). In this background, this is a micro-research study, which is focused on rural areas of 2 districts of West Bengal, namely North and South 24 Parganas, which happens to be largely a catchment area.

Tafteesh, an anti-human trafficking programme, run by a consortium of human rights defenders and survivors of human trafficking, supported by Kamonohashi and OAK Foundation, which works in India, wishes to understand how prevention of human trafficking, especially of children and adolescents, is understood by communities in West Bengal, India.

West Bengal has been consistently identified by the National Crime Records Bureau as one of the states most affected by human trafficking, particularly that of girls and young women for sexual exploitation. While there is little data on trafficking in men and boys, or trafficking for forced labour (as compared to sex trafficking), anecdotal evidence from communities and other human rights organisations have mentioned incidence of trafficking for forced labour, servitude and other forms of slavery, or illegal adoptions, as also being prevalent but unrecognised in the legal system, underreported and un-investigated. Therefore, the choice of districts and communities for this research was determined by the following:

- a. The mandate of the financiers supporting this research
- b. The geographical focus of the programme which implemented the research (Tafteesh) and
- c. Boundaries of time, resources and relevance.
- d. The high relevance of prevention of trafficking amongst communities.

In this research, the definition of trafficking includes trafficking in all its forms, without any pre-set or pre-determined focus on type, purpose and nature of trafficking, nor any specific focus on a certain age, sex, gender or other demographic in the community.

9. The research does include participation of international NGOs as well as urban NGOs who may not identify themselves as being part of the community focused upon in this research, but note their perspectives as distinct from participants who consider themselves members of the community in focus.

Purpose

The Purpose of the research is to learn and inform internal and external stakeholders on how communities affected by trafficking in 2 districts of West Bengal analyse the causal factors, vulnerabilities and the ways in which social, cultural, political or structural factors of governance may underlie the vulnerability to trafficking, and what they measure they believe would be relevant, effective and impactful in deterrence of human trafficking. Ultimately, the

research aims to empower and influence stakeholders to work on what they may find necessary to prevent human trafficking in Bengal.

Objectives

1. To explore how communities in West Bengal who are most affected by human trafficking view vulnerability that causes human trafficking, as well as the underlying interrelations between factors that they link to trafficking.
2. Understand how communities view human trafficking, especially trafficking in children, its ambit and how they therefore understand the ambit and dimensions of prevention of trafficking.
3. To identify patterns of commonality and distinctiveness in perspectives between survivors of human trafficking (one of the core cohorts of respondents), social workers and activists (community-based organisations who have been long engaged to combat human trafficking), and others (stakeholders who are external to the community but play various duties, either as activists, bureaucrats, law enforcement officers, philanthropists, journalists or lawyers).
4. Facilitate respondents to identify approaches to prevention that they believe would be feasible and effective in preventing trafficking in persons, especially children and youth.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodology

The methodology adopted for this research is qualitative in nature, which combines both formative and summative approaches, (mixed research methods), with the ideation and exploration of prevention approaches being carried out in two phases, as follows.

Phase I

The general purpose of formative research is to evaluate or assess the understanding or learning of a respondent, with respect to a specific subject. Phase I contains the formative portion of the research, whose aim is to collect diagnostic information, to indicate what respondents already know, feel and suggest about trafficking (and its prevention) – including

- a. Human trafficking as a phenomenon and its prevalence amongst different sections of the population - girls, boys, women, men, trans-persons and the common purposes for which people are trafficked in their opinion;
5.
- b. The vulnerabilities and causes of human trafficking;
6.
- c. Their observation on particular demographics who may be more vulnerable than others;
7.
- d. Their opinions on social and cultural practices that strengthen community resilience and social defence against trafficking or that exacerbate vulnerability;
8.
- e. Their views of the respondents on duty bearers (Stakeholders), in terms of their perceived influence/power and interest in preventing trafficking;
9.
- f. Their beliefs, perceptions, experience or speculation on what approaches or actions could be effective in preventing human trafficking.

A formative assessment also deduces what gaps may exist in knowledge and understanding of the respondents, demonstrated through their responses. In this research, all the above information is useful to establish a contextual landscape around prevention of trafficking in West Bengal and assess the commonalities, conflicts and nuances exhibited by different respondent cohorts (survivors, social workers and duty bearers) on several topics under the umbrella of prevention of trafficking.

Phase II

The general purpose of summative research is to assess respondents based on their understanding of a subject, relative to a particular benchmark or standard.

Phase II of this research is summative in nature, where respondents are presented with five (5) prevention models that have emerged from the Global Desk Research on prevention of trafficking. This epistemological research study was carried out from August 2020 – January 2021 to facilitate learning from existing research, on a global scale, on prevention of human trafficking and responses to the same. The Global Desk Research provides insights from existing literature to facilitate the development of impactful prevention strategies. This exploratory research can be read in conjunction with the Global Desk Research for the reader to build a comprehensive understanding and deliberation on prevention models.

The summative phase of the research follows through from the first phase, where the respondents were asked about specific demographics that were particularly vulnerable to trafficking, making use of a summative exercise where respondents chose prevention models based on their own experiences as survivors, social activists or duty bearers. Summative assessments are useful to provide individual and cohort information regarding the respondents' learnings on a particular subject. The Researchers chose a summative approach in this research exercise so that they could explore respondents' experiences, which would directly relate to their choice of actionable prevention model(s) that they think would be feasible in prevent trafficking in West Bengal.

Research Participants and Activities

The research was carried out with three cohorts of participants: the first being survivors of trafficking, who are part of survivor collectives and act as advocates and activists in their communities; the second being frontline social workers, who undertake grassroots-level activities in the anti-trafficking space in North and/or South 24 Parganas; and the third being duty bearers, who are institutional stakeholders that either hold executive authority in the district or who are influential persons/bodies in the community.

The research encompasses the following activities between the two phases:

1. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with 22 survivor leaders, carried out online through video calls.
2. FGDs with 20 frontline social workers, carried out online through video calls.

3. Random purposive sampling for FGDs, which include both survivors and frontline activists in separate cohorts in West Bengal.
4. Purposive sampling for individual interviews and case study documentation.
5. Training of grassroots social workers to utilise the research tool to carry out Individual Structured Interviews.
6. Individual structured interviews with 31 duty bearers, including authorities involved in administrative and rural governance, at various levels, in person or online.
7. Individual in-depth interviews with 2 financiers, online.

As mentioned above in Point 5, the Researchers trained grassroots social workers as community-based researchers, to use the research tool to carry out Individual Structured Interviews with duty bearers. The Researchers found that in many research exercises, research is usually done 'on' the community, rather than 'with' the community, and the frontline social workers demonstrated a discernible interest, capability and potential to act as researchers.

Further, the power of the community-based researchers to actually carry out interviews with duty bearers was demonstrated in them meeting interview targets, and successfully undertaking interviews of more than 30 minutes, on average, with duty bearers. The community-based researchers were able to reach out to a holistic and varied number of duty bearers with whom they already worked and shared a professional rapport. The research exercise has served to energize the community-based researchers themselves.

Tools

The tools used for the FGDs include the following:

1. An FGD Questionnaire for Frontline Activists (attached at **Annexure-A**)
 10.
 - a. The questionnaire is put forth to the respondents as a structured discussion.
 - 11.
 - b. The Researchers ask questions to the respondents to understand their thoughts, emotions and suggestions on aspects of human trafficking as a phenomenon.
 - 12.

- c. The questions are not about personal, lived experiences of violence or exploitation.
13.
 - d. The first set of questions are Formative in nature; focusing on the scope, definition and meaning making of interrelated vulnerability factors in trafficking and respondents' understanding of trafficking prevention.
14.
 - e. The questionnaire includes a stakeholder analysis, where key stakeholders are colour-coded based on their interest in combating trafficking, juxtaposed with their power and influence to be able to do so (**Figure I** below).
2. An FGD Questionnaire for Survivors (attached at **Annexure – B**)
- 15.
- a. The questionnaire is put forth to the respondents as a structured discussion.
16.
 - b. The Researchers ask questions to the respondents to understand their thoughts, emotions and suggestions on aspects of human trafficking as a phenomenon.
17.
 - c. The questions are not about personal, lived experiences of violence or exploitation.
18.
 - d. The first set of questions are Formative in nature; focusing on the scope, definition and meaning making of interrelated vulnerability factors in trafficking and respondents' understanding of trafficking prevention.
3. An In-Depth Interview Questionnaire with Funding Organisations/Financiers (attached at **Annexure – C**)
- 19.
- a. The In-Depth Interview (IDI) Questionnaire is put forth to respondents, being funding organisations or financiers, either in individual interviews or in joint workshops based on availability and time.
20.
 - b. The questionnaire consists of twelve (12) questions that cover the following themes amongst financiers:
 - i. Meaning making on prevention of trafficking
 - ii. Experiences regarding nature of vulnerability, social and cultural factors that impact (in any way) vulnerability to trafficking
 - iii. Impact of political conditions on human trafficking
 - iv. Approaches that the government should and should not take to effectively prevent trafficking

- v. Approach(es) taken by the financiers for prevention of trafficking, along with learnings and evidence
 - vi. Which prevention model approach(es) is/are applied by the financiers, according to the five (5) models provided in **Table II** below?
 - vii. Stakeholder Analysis, according to **Figure I** below
- 21.
- viii. Innovative ways to prevent human trafficking; resources that can be mobilised to improve the social defence against human trafficking
 - ix. Respondents' understanding of distinctive features of trafficking of persons of different genders and ages and specific demographic vulnerabilities.
- 4. An Individual Structured Interview Questionnaire with Duty Bearers (attached at **Annexure – D**)
- 22.
 - a. The Individual Structured Interview (ISI) Questionnaire is put forth to respondents being duty bearers at various levels, by grassroots social workers as community researchers (chosen as per **Annexure – E** and listed in **Annexure – F**).
- 23.
- b. The grassroots social workers have been trained to use the ISI Questionnaire and carry out the structured interviews in person or over the phone, depending upon convenience and availability.
- 24.
- c. The questionnaire consists of fifteen (15) questions that cover the following themes amongst duty bearers:
 - i. The severity of human trafficking in the community
 - ii. Identification of vulnerable demographics by age and gender
 - iii. Identity of traffickers, reasons, purpose and locations to which victims get trafficked, delineated by gender (including male, female and transgender victims of trafficking)
 - iv. Vulnerabilities, enablers and disablers of trafficking
 - v. Stakeholder mapping, role-taking and responsibility for prevention of trafficking
 - vi. Introduction of five (5) prevention models; namely the crime prevention model, the public health/elimination of root causes model; the rights-based model; the chain of risk model and the labour model (explained in **Table II** below). Respondents are asked which model(s) they would invest in if they were in the position of the Government.

The Power – Interest Axes for the Stakeholder Analysis is provided below. The Y-Axis is one of power and influence of stakeholders to be able to prevent trafficking, and the X-Axis lies with the interest and involvement of such stakeholders in preventing trafficking. Those stakeholders in the Green Zone (that of high power and high interest) are likely to be the most effective at taking concrete steps to prevent trafficking.

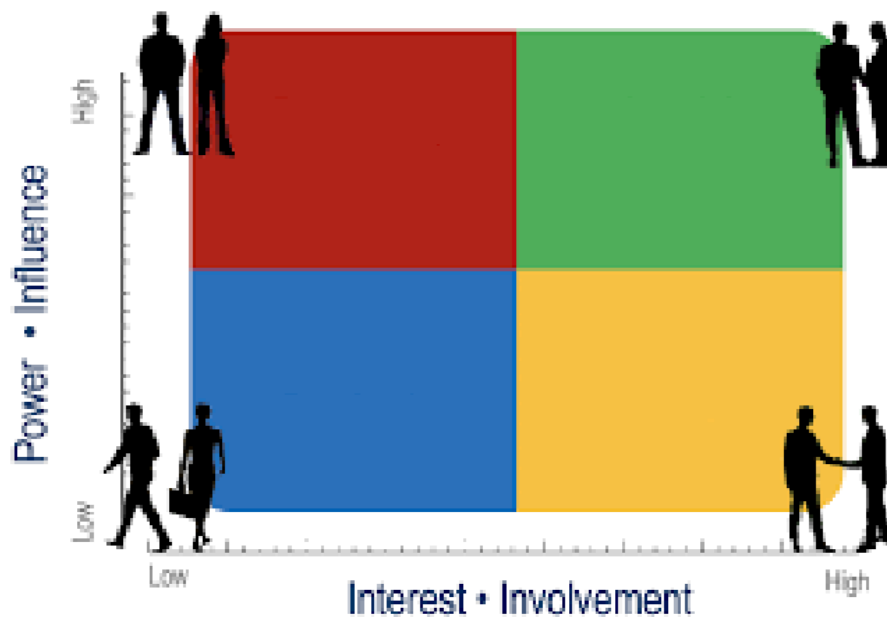


Figure I: Stakeholder Analysis – Power and Interest

IDIs with Selected Respondents

After carrying out FGDs with social activists and survivor respondents in accordance with the methodology and tools above, the Researchers selected respondents from philanthropic organisations with whom to carry out IDIs. Respondents were selected based on their activities in preventing trafficking in India. Further, the Researchers carried out IDIs with ten (10) selected frontline activists, from varied genders and different years of experience to determine their views on the stakeholder analysis as well as their choice of prevention models.

Ethical Considerations

The research has been carried out in strict conformity with the 'Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Interviewing Trafficked Women' provided in **Annexure – E** to this report for all interviews and Focus Group Discussions with survivors. The Research Advisors have provided their input on the research design and methodology, and have provided periodic advice to the Researchers to ensure objectivity and transparency in the research process.

11.

All data collection has been carried out with the voluntary participation of respondents. Respondents are informed about the research subject, purpose and methodology of data collection prior to commencement of any discussion or interview. Identities of participants are revealed only after obtaining informed consent. Interviews and Focus-Group Discussions are only recorded upon obtaining consent of any and all participants present. This research does not infringe upon the intellectual property rights of any third-party organisation.

Limitations

Some limitations of this research include firstly logistical constraints that do not permit the researchers to carry out FGDs nor interviews with respondents in person. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a situation where all such exercises are carried out online on video calls. The necessity of virtual calls was factored into the research design, excluding the possibility of using more projective techniques, or symbol work as part of the research methodology. Further, logistical and timeline constraints rendered the researchers unable to interview family members of survivors of trafficking, which can be considered for a future research exercise.

Further, by default - the primary focus of respondents (or their organisations) is on sex trafficking, girls and women, children and youth. This may impact the results in terms of how trafficking is understood by respondent frontline social workers, as well as the mental associations made between trafficking (as a whole) and sex trafficking. None of the respondents nor their organisations work with adult men or trans persons who are survivors of trafficking, and therefore, conversations revolve largely around women and children. Due to time constraints, this research has not undertaken In Depth Interviews (IDIs) with survivors of labour trafficking.

Finally, the views of the respondents have been summarised in the report for convenience of the reader while consciously aiming to stay true to the opinions of the respondents, which may simplify the overall points made by individual respondents.

FINDINGS OF EXPLORATORY RESEARCH PHASE I

1. VIEW ON SCOPE AND AMBIT OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The first portion that of the formative research was to establish the respondents' understanding of human trafficking as a phenomenon. Respondents were asked to think of key words that came to mind when they think of 'human trafficking', with varying responses between cohorts of social workers and survivors.



Fig II: Word Associations with Human Trafficking for Social Workers



Fig III: Word Associations with Human Trafficking for Survivors

From the word association exercise, the following can be observed.

- a. While social workers talked about networks, traffickers, transactions and laws (as seen in **Figure II** above), survivors used words that indicated more 'internal' factors like trauma, shame and stigma.
- b. Social workers' word associations spoke more about the impact of trafficking on survivors, whereas survivors' word associations indicate internal feelings, like panic, feeling like they have no value, no freedom and loss of childhood (as seen in **Figure III** above).
- c. Recurring social factors that emerged, which are discussed in detail in **Findings 3, 4, 5 and 8** below) include tropes of restrictions and control (in terms of 'no freedom' and 'locked').

The respondents were then asked about the scope of human trafficking with which they were familiar, as well as for nuanced opinions on child labour versus trafficking, sex work versus sex trafficking and trafficking of males and in transgender communities. The following was found:

- a. No distinction is made between child labour and child trafficking in the presence of coercion and exploitation.
- b. With respect to the distinction between sex work and sex trafficking, they stated that it is a very 'blurred line' as often, women are trafficked for sex and then become sex workers.
- c. In almost all the FGDs (with both survivors as well as social workers), at least one respondent pointed out that boys and men are trafficked as well, in contrast to the mainstream notion that trafficking primarily takes place amongst women and girls. This is in spite of the fact that most organisations did not work with adult men, and that the survivor respondents were female.
25.
- d. One philanthropist interviewed stated that boys actually demonstrate more vulnerability in respect of trafficking, as they are under more social pressure to go out and earn. They brought up boys from sexual minorities (LGBTQ+) as well, stating that their vulnerability is exacerbated due to their sexual orientation.
27.
- e. Further, there is not much direct knowledge about trafficking in the transgender community, with most social workers being unaware of the same, apart from hearsay or news about specific instances.

2. STRUCTURAL VULNERABILITIES AND COMMUNITY-LED TRAFFICKING PREVENTION

Discussions of vulnerabilities to trafficking as well as the causes of trafficking amongst social workers, survivors and duty bearer respondents resulted in most of the latter two cohorts speaking of structural factors like poverty, unemployment and lack of education as key determinants of vulnerability to trafficking.

- a. Most social workers and duty bearers mentioned vulnerabilities that include poverty, livelihood and unemployment were raised as recurring causes of vulnerability.
- b. The causes of trafficking were almost the same as the vulnerabilities mentioned, including poverty, as well as lack of education, livelihood and awareness about trafficking.
- c. The burden to have a source of income from a young age is a reason for trafficking, which leads to adolescents and young people taking risky offers from strangers, thereby exacerbating their vulnerability.
- d. When large families cannot pay attention to all their children, this leads to a situation where one or more children are deemed to become more vulnerable to trafficking. This ties into the emotional deprivation and neglect aspect mentioned in **Finding 3** below but adds the element of 'control' and 'restriction' as well (mentioned further in **Findings 4 and 5** below), where parents are unable to 'adequately' supervise their children.
- e. The identification of structural factors that related to vulnerability/causes of trafficking were clear and contextual amongst respondents, but apart from awareness programmes within the community, the role of community-based prevention is unclear.

3. FOCUS ON PARENTING CAPACITIES, EMOTIONAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN TO ADDRESS VULNERABILITIES

Discussions around vulnerabilities that lead to trafficking show that there is a focus amongst respondents on girls and women, with a lack of equal representation of young men and boys as being vulnerable or being survivors of trafficking. With that background in mind, one key factor that came up regarding vulnerability of children and adolescents is emotional deprivation at home.

- a. Persons who do not have 'family support' are more vulnerable to being trafficked. Adolescents who are unable to share their problems and issues within the community often share their issues with strangers, making them vulnerable.
- b. Respondents stated that parents 'should' realise they need to be open with children and inculcate relationships of honesty and trust to minimise vulnerability to trafficking for their adolescent children. If the parents' role is more about punishment and scolding their children, then it is likely that vulnerability is exacerbated.
- c. When asked why some adolescents get trafficked and others do not, respondents stated that teenagers who are more emotionally sensitive are at higher risk. Adolescence is the stage of life when even minor domestic disputes may make them rebel and might result in a trafficking situation. Emotionally deprived adolescents will be tricked, trapped and are more likely to be emotionally seduced by strangers, whereas persons who have strong emotional familial bonds may not be so trusting in nature.
- d. Respondents stated that control, restrictions and lack of support from parents lead to adolescents and young people taking impulsive and reckless actions. The word associations in
- e. Neglect and emotional deprivation render young people vulnerable to trusting people who show them love, attention and care. This leads to an increase in relationships between young people and forms an entry point for traffickers.
- f. The prevalence of neglect amongst families was emphasized upon by social workers and duty bearers.

4. LINK BETWEEN TABOOS, EXCLUSION AND TRAFFICKING

The discussions on vulnerabilities and causes of trafficking bring out specific factors amongst adolescents and young people, including social controls and restrictions that are intricately linked to prevention of trafficking. The respondents brought out how socially unacceptable behaviours lead to taboos and social exclusions within communities, exacerbating vulnerability to trafficking.

- a. The themes of adolescent 'free mixing' and forming 'social connections' were reoccurring amongst survivor respondents. Survivors linked restrictions within domestic settings or communities (which they said would lead to rebellion of girls) to vulnerability to trafficking.

- b. One respondent stated that the prejudice, dogmas of certain families, or (*kushanshkar* in Bengali) contributed to vulnerability to trafficking. For instance, in families where most children are girls, the female children are seen as a liability and sent to work in other places, without parents having much knowledge of the safety and consequences. This shows an intersection between prejudices and gender bias that increase vulnerability to trafficking.
- c. Some respondents drew a connection between adolescent love affairs and restrictions in families and communities, stating that greater the restrictions, greater is the chance that girls will rebel.

5. EARLY MARRIAGE, DOMESTIC OPPRESSION, SOCIAL/INCOME INSECURITY AND TRAFFICKING

Discussions around vulnerability to trafficking, especially in the context of girls and women, proceeded with mentions of the institution of marriage, as well as the post-marriage environment experienced by girls and young women.

- a. Social worker respondents stated that child marriage is a factor that enables trafficking, sometimes due to polygamy, which results in many children and consequent trafficking, through forced or labour migration.
- b. Respondents stated that early marriage (sometimes linked to specific marginalised communities as pointed out in **Finding 8** below) can lead to a mismatch in expectations between the young bride, as well as her in-laws and husband. Often, there is conflict in the domestic sphere, which can lead to conflict, separation and divorce.
- c. Domestic oppression of girls and young women can foster an environment where they are both socially and economically insecure. This in turn can lead to them seeking other avenues to fulfil that security and can thus exacerbate vulnerability to trafficking.

6. ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP IN COMMUNITY-LED ACTIONS

Discussions with social workers and duty bearers showed that they did not consider survivors or community members as agents of change when it comes to responding to vulnerabilities and causes of trafficking within their communities. However, this was at odds with the findings from discussions with survivors.

- a. Through the discussions with survivor respondents, it was clear that there were high levels of youth participation, as well as interest and ownership in this research.

- b. Further, members of the survivor cohorts have been undertaking various activities, through survivor collectives in communities and are therefore in tune with the landscape and evolving needs of communities, in terms of prevention of trafficking.
- c. There are concerted and organised efforts by survivors, through survivor collectives, to address stigma against trafficking survivors, within communities in West Bengal. Therefore, they are playing an important advocacy and communication role, to address social and cultural vulnerabilities.

7. FOCUS ON MINORITIES AND BACKWARD COMMUNITIES

The focus of vulnerability-related factors on minority communities came up consistently amongst cohorts, where people from Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and the Muslim community were deemed to be particularly vulnerable to trafficking.

- a. In terms of caste status, while social workers pointed out that Scheduled Castes and Dalits are more vulnerable to trafficking, survivors did not make such observations. In SC and ST communities, child marriage or early marriage was linked to vulnerability. If girls, especially, were widowed, they would not be allowed to remarry and would be vulnerable to being trafficked.
- b. Social workers stated that they had seen more people from Scheduled Tribes being trafficked, due to factors like poverty, weak family support systems, poverty, superstitions, dogma and discrimination against girls, lack of education and poor accountability of state systems towards these communities.
- c. There was a link made between trafficking and dancing who stated that persons from certain ST communities would dance from childhood and go out to perform, which would render them (especially the girls) vulnerable to trafficking. Some localities where this takes place include Hemalganj and Sandeshkhali in North – 24 Parganas and Sagor, Pathorpratima and Mednipur in South – 24 Parganas. However, even persons from general castes who dance well were at risk of being trafficked.
- d. Restrictive practices within the Muslim community were mentioned as a key factor that exacerbates vulnerability to trafficking, amongst all cohorts. However, it was also mentioned by few respondents as a factor that could reduce vulnerability to trafficking (as provided in **Finding 11** below).

8. CONTENTIOUS ISSUES ON ASPIRATION AND GREED

A discussion around the vulnerability factors that lead to trafficking provided a cross-cutting response amongst duty bearers and social workers, that ‘greed’ of community members and survivors was the cause of trafficking.

- a. Most duty bearer respondents mentioned vulnerabilities that include livelihood and unemployment, which in turn lead to young people being ‘lured by the temptation’ of trafficking.
- b. Duty bearer respondents used words like ‘lure’, ‘temptation’ and ‘greed’ consistently, in describing the vulnerabilities and causes of trafficking, which would catalyse situations of trafficking amongst young people.
- c. Social worker responses mirrored duty bearer responses, in terms of placing the onus on the community themselves, for being ‘greedy’ or for being ‘lured’ by the ‘temptation’ of money and opportunity, when it was absent in the community.
- d. The survivors’ cohort exhibited a drastically different approach, stating that they had ‘dreams’ and ‘aspirations’, which led to them becoming involved in situations that made them vulnerable to or caused trafficking.
- e. The survivors did not link ‘aspiration’ or ‘ambition’ itself with vulnerability, but the other factors around restrictions, control and lack of freedom (as provided in word associations in **Finding 1** as well) were integral to their vulnerability to trafficking.

9. MIGRATION, STRUCTURAL INEQUALITIES AND TRAFFICKING

The link between structural inequalities like poverty and unemployment, with migration and trafficking was established through conversations with duty bearers as well as social workers.

- a. Duty bearers mentioned that the lack of options for safe migration also made people vulnerable to trafficking, in the context of both sex and labour trafficking.
- b. Distinct geographical factors like the location of South and North 24 Parganas, as well as the saltwater influx in the Bay of Bengal result in loss of livelihood and unsafe migration.
- c. One philanthropic organisation stated that in the Sundarbans, there is a growing issue with climate change, exploitation and trafficking. They stated that the same affects marginalised communities disproportionately.

- d. Another philanthropic organisation stated that at the community level, due to climate change, soil quality is declining and agriculture, (which is the primary livelihood for people) is becoming more difficult. This climate disaster leads to increased unsafe migration.
- e. The link between climate change and trafficking is largely associated with the unsafe and/or forced migration that takes place due to climate change and consequential loss of livelihood.
- f. One philanthropic organisation stated that often, migration amongst adolescents and young people takes place from communities as they largely do not want to take up traditional livelihoods. Although organisations provide vocational training in communities, the training remains unutilised as there is no job market in these communities.
- g. One philanthropic organisation stated that the unconscious bias that is held in respect of vulnerability, where girls are presumed to be more vulnerable than boys, informs responses to migration. There is consequently a lack of inquisitiveness regarding male migration and trafficking, as well as sparse attention paid in the development sector.

10.COMMONALITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN CRIMINALISATION OF TRAFFICKERS

When asked ‘who traffics vulnerable persons’, many respondents from the duty bearer and social worker cohorts did not have a clear idea on who traffickers actually were but provided their impressions on identities of traffickers.

- a. Respondents used the term ‘anti-social’ to describe traffickers, with greed as the motivation of such anti-social persons, who would traffic girls (specifically) to earn money. Traffickers were characterised as ‘bad people’ and ‘criminals’ who are ‘not adjusted to society’.
- b. Respondents stated that traffickers could include persons known to victims, including relatives, friends, acquaintances and neighbours. One duty bearer respondent, being the Women & Child Social Welfare Director, stated that traffickers would have good contacts with police and politicians, but did not elaborate on her lived experiences to substantiate that statement.
- c. Respondents brought up the concept of a ‘trafficking network’, wherein they stated that various kinds of people constitute such trafficking networks (‘top to bottom’) and would be involved with trafficking.

- i. Some respondents, including a Mental Health Counsellor, SHG Cluster Member, a Former MLA, an ASI and the President of Panchayat Samiti – De Ganga Block mentioned family members, relatives and ‘known people’ as part of such trafficking networks, who may not directly be involved in the procurement, grooming, entrapment, transportation, selling and buying of victims, but who were involved in protecting offenders from being arrested and prosecuted, or indirectly benefited from trafficking.
 - ii. Some respondents like the Vice President of the Fishermen Forum, an Advocate from the Barasat District Court, a Muslim religious community leader and the President of the Panchayat Samiti also included people who benefited or profited from trafficking within such networks, such as corrupt police officials, Panchayat members, and politicians who may support trafficking in an indirect manner.
- d. One duty bearer respondent elaborated by saying that traffickers are ‘all sorts of people’ from different strata of society. A couple of respondents provided examples of traffickers, including a Panchayat Member who was involved with trafficking directly, as well as persons who had connects with politicians and police officials to carry out trafficking with impunity.
- e. Some respondents stated that families would often be responsible for trafficking (especially of girls), either for survival or for greed. The theme of ‘greed’ of the traffickers recurred as the main motivation for trafficking.
- f. Traffickers form another demographic within the community, just like ‘thieves’ and ‘robbers’, with female trafficking survivors playing a major role in becoming traffickers and perpetrating trafficking.
- g. An overall look at the responses in terms of who traffickers are makes it clear that duty bearers and social workers hold female survivors of trafficking, relatives, family members of victims and members of local gangs or networks who may have connections with the police or with politicians to facilitate their crimes as demographics that are themselves perpetrators of trafficking.
- h. Responses amongst duty bearers and social workers regarding the identity of traffickers seem to indicate that there is minimal understanding amongst Panchayat members, community leaders and activists on exactly how someone from their community may have gotten involved in trafficking and trafficking networks across India. Respondents who have had direct contact with traffickers (as survivors or activists) do not have much deeper insights than those who may not have had any direct contact, and the police does not seem to have any better information, either.

All respondents consider financial profit to be the primary motivation for trafficking, though little is known about the size of profits being made.

11. SOCIAL NORMS THAT OFFSET/MITIGATE TRAFFICKING

Along with the discussion of social and cultural factors and norms that exacerbate vulnerability, respondents were also asked about factors that they thought would mitigate vulnerabilities to trafficking. There were some isolated factors that emerged through the discussions, as follows.

- a. One social worker respondent said that they have seen families/communities or some villages where people have a strong community knit, where there is a more 'protective' situation. Having a community that is involved with each other, where community support is high, and leaders are informed offsets vulnerability to trafficking.
- b. Other norms that would prevent trafficking included having a limited number of children, which allows them to be educated both in schools and at home (with religious knowledge, in the latter).
- c. One philanthropic organisation stated that amongst tribal communities in Jharkhand before marriage there is a practice where adolescents (before puberty) have the right to leave the community and make independent choices. This reduces stigma even if they are trafficked and return to the community after rescue.
- d. There were hardly any answers amongst duty bearers in terms of norms that prevent trafficking, except for one respondent speaking of the isolation of certain tribal communities that creates a more protective environment for young persons who would otherwise be vulnerable to trafficking.
- e. In certain Adivasi communities who are in a better societal position, they practice customs and follow a goddess named *Bono-bibi*. They promise the goddess that they will not get their daughters married before the age of 18, which in turn protects against trafficking at a young age.

'Ram Yatra' is a custom that used to take place in some villages. The story of Ram and Sita would be told, with how Sita was abducted by Ravana. The mythological tale would be compared to today's society and girls in families would be taught lessons on how to stay safe. This cultural practice still takes place in Bagda (Assembly Constituency in North-24 Parganas), but it is completely extinct in most other places.

Figure IV: ‘Ram Yatra’ as a Cultural Practice that Prevents Trafficking of Girls

- f. The restrictions amongst the Muslim community associated with Islam provoked contradictory viewpoints amongst survivors’ groups. Some talked about higher moral education in the Muslim community and about how that could help to prevent trafficking. The rationale is that in Islam, society has foundational morality and structure, which is helpful with respect to safety and protection.

12. STAKEHOLDER POWER, INTEREST AND LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY

The Researchers asked the respondents to categorize key stakeholders on a Power-Interest axes. There were highly varying patterns in responses from social workers to this analysis, provided below, according to different stakeholders.

BDO

BDO is the Block Development Officer in charge of District Administration of a particular jurisdiction. Respondents in FGDs either opined that BDOs had high power but low interest in preventing trafficking, or that they had high interest but low power.

ASHA/Anganwadi

The ASHA or Anganwadi stakeholders are community health workers. Uniformly, respondents agreed that they had a high level of interest and involvement in preventing trafficking, but unfortunately do not have much power or influence.

Panchayat

The Panchayat, or local governing body formed from the community provoked diverse responses amongst respondents. Most respondents agreed that the Panchayat has high power but low interest in combating trafficking, but a few opined that the local Panchayats had high interest and involvement.

DSW

Most respondents stated that the Department of Social Welfare had a lot of power and influence, but no interest in preventing trafficking.

WDO and VCLP

Tasked with the protection of women and children, again, most respondents agreed that these stakeholders have high power and influence, but low interest in preventing trafficking. A few respondents stated that the Village Level Child Protection Committees (VCLPs) had low interest as well as low power in preventing trafficking.

One philanthropic organisation commented on the lack of prevalence as well as the unresponsiveness of VLCPCs. When their partners attempted to engage with VLCPCs, they found that in several areas in West Bengal, these mandated committees did not exist.

It took 18 months to create the VLCPCs, and in many cases, governmental authorities to lie about the composition of the committees. For instance, in the list of members claimed to constitute a VLCPC, some supposed members would be deceased, and others would be unaware that they were even part of the VLCPC or that there were other names listed in the VLCPC.

Figure V: Experience of NGOs with VLCPCs

Other organisations such as Save the Children and UNICEF work with VLCPCs in different areas of West Bengal as part of their child protection agenda, but the interviewed philanthropic organisation stated that the correlation between levels of vulnerability and levels of child protection resulted in a situation where particularly vulnerable areas have extremely poor child protection mechanisms.

Community and Religious Leaders

This category revealed diverse answers amongst the FGD respondents, with some respondents expressing that these stakeholders are very interested and involved, but do not have the power or influence to prevent trafficking. Other respondents said that even their interest was low, along with their limited power.

Childline

Tasked with child protection, some respondents stated that they had low power and high interest. However, most respondents as expressed that Childline had both the power and interest to effectively prevent trafficking.

The role of the police

During the FGDs, **respondents almost uniformly stated that the stakeholder who would benefit from trafficking continuing would be the police.** Respondents provided examples of why they saw the police as taking an interest in not preventing trafficking:

- a. Police would dissuade survivors from providing Section 164 statements, or would corrupt such statements themselves (this is seen pan-India at the time of rescue)
- b. They would intimidate survivors and seek to prevent them, through invoking stigma and shaming, from carrying out medical tests
- c. Police would refuse to register First Information Reports (FIRs) upon reporting of trafficking
- d. It was a unanimous statement that police behaviour is not only guided by lack of knowledge and skills, but also motivated by short term profits. Police benefit from the corruption in the system.
- e. Several cases that one philanthropic organisation was aware of involved middlemen who had strong connections with the police. However, respondents qualified these statements to the local police, as they are part of the corruption network. Higher police officials like Superintendents of Police do not want trafficking to perpetuate, unlike local police officials.
- f. Shortlisted survivors ranked stakeholders in order of power, with the police being considered the most powerful, followed by the BDO, Panchayat and jurisdictional Anganwadi.

Impunity of Traffickers

Both survivors and social workers spoke about the impunity of traffickers. The general consensus was that unless there is a challenge to such impunity, trafficking cannot be effectively prevented. This influenced the respondents' choice of prevention model.

Non-Responsiveness and Lack of Accountability of State Authorities

There is an inverse correlation between the power/authority and interest amongst stakeholders in combatting trafficking, and therefore there is a need to strengthen accountability of Panchayats, District Administration, police and local politicians to build a culture or environment where they are both able to and interested in preventing trafficking.

Social workers spoke of the lack of accountability of state actors, whether local or state-level authorities, in preventing or addressing human trafficking. One philanthropic organisation stated that the absolute lack of responsibility for child protection issues is a key factor in the lack of prevention efforts and recourse for victims, at the local level right up to the block level. The lack of good governance results in low interest levels in child protection and concerted efforts to prevent trafficking by governmental authorities.

ANALYSIS ACROSS COHORTS OF RESPONDENTS

PHASE I

1. The responses around views on human trafficking, its ambit and the dimensions of trafficking prevention show a stark lack of information and knowledge on the prevalence of trafficking in boys and men, as well as a clear bias towards young girls and women as the most vulnerable demographics to trafficking.
3. While all respondents identified poverty, inequalities (and regional disparities in growth) and unemployment as factors that create vulnerability to trafficking, while talking about responses, there were sparse ideas on what community-led actions could be undertaken to address these macro and structural factors of development.
4. Respondents, particularly youth, talk about emotional neglect, excessive and restrictive vigilance and control being imposed by parents (particularly on girls), along with a lack of emotional support, which alienates girls from their families and exacerbates their emotional vulnerability. These girls seek emotional support from outside the family, which can manifest in a range of potentially unsafe outcomes – such as socially unacceptable teenage romantic connections that lead to elopement. Survivors of trafficking have shared that their vulnerability to entrapment by traffickers has been through the same or similar routes. Parenting practices in communities, parental stress, social and cultural norms that impact parenting norms and its link with vulnerability exacerbation has hitherto not been explored and addressed in detail.
5. The creation and perpetuation of taboos and ‘socially unacceptable behaviour’ of adolescents and young people lead to their social exclusion within communities. Further, the emphasis on ‘restrictions’ and ‘control’ of adolescent girls and young men is a catalyst

for rebellious behaviour, which can increase vulnerability to trafficking. This, when juxtaposed with other structural factors that restrict opportunities, as well as emotional deprivation within the community, can form a starting point for community-led preventative actions.

6. The role of early marriages, domestic oppression and consequential insecurities (both socially and economically) are clear vulnerability factors in respondents' minds.
7. In spite of the roles being played by survivors, as well as their viewpoints on social and cultural factors that lead to vulnerabilities and cause trafficking (through the lenses of emotional deprivation, restrictions and social control), their issues and their unique perspectives are not reflected by other cohorts of social workers and duty bearers, who see them as passive victims rather than agents of change.
8. The vulnerability of persons from SCs, STs and the Muslim community to trafficking are linked to structural factors like social backwardness, extreme poverty, more children, higher migration for labour including adolescents, as well as the low priority of education (as opposed to other communities). Further, social practices like 'free mixing' of adolescents in tribal communities add to the general belief that people from minorities get trafficked. The factual basis for these confident assertions is unclear, along with the role of social and communal biases in this information.
9. The responses from survivors on one hand, and duty bearers and social workers, on the other, shows that what young people look at as 'aspirations', 'ambitions', 'dreams' or wanting to 'make something' of themselves – is thought of as 'greed' and being naively 'lured by temptations' by duty bearers and social workers. There is an essential disconnect here, where duty bearers and social workers almost place the 'blame' of trafficking on survivors and their communities, whereas survivors do not assume any such blame, and do not even characterise their 'aspirations' etc. as vulnerability factors.
10. The responses show a lack of perspective on how to address migration, as there are no answers on how to address these issues when compounded with structural factors like poverty, climate change and unemployment. Further, there is no discourse around precautions to be taken at the community level to mitigate distress migration.
11. From responses on the identity of traffickers, the majority of respondents across cohorts believe that traffickers poach on victims from within their social network, with 'relatives' forming the most common category. The majority of people also believe that traffickers operate in network, with institutional duty bearers also mentioning corruption involving duty bearers including local politicians and police in that network.

12. Amongst respondents, there is a negative perception of cultural or social norms, values and practices, with low awareness on how social character of the community may strengthen resilience. Respondents know much more about social norms that exacerbate vulnerability, with multiple respondents saying they did not know about positive norms. What this means is that even the perception of the community is weak, dysfunctional, incapable, resourceless and therefore to be acted upon or even blamed. Therefore, there is a need to explore how social and cultural practices end up strengthening resilience in the community.
13. The stakeholder analysis shows that firstly, there is no clarity on the scope of responsibilities and duties of such stakeholders, amongst all of the cohorts. The potential for survivors, social workers and duty bearers to engage with the system to make community lives better by availing of services and entitlements, would provide young people with a sense of improvement of one's life, offsetting vulnerability.

31.

Ways to Combat Trafficking

32.

1. Survivor and social worker respondents have stated that trafficking can be addressed through initiatives that target parental issues, in order to ensure the psycho-emotional health of adolescents and minimise vulnerability to trafficking. These initiatives can focus on actors including frontline activists, social workers who work in community-based organisations and grassroots NGOs at the community-level.

33.

2. Social workers have mentioned specific communities that are more vulnerable to trafficking, including minorities like Muslims, SCs/STs and Adivasis, as well as socio-economically marginalised families that have more children or are headed by women, as well as separated or divorced girls and women. These stakeholders have suggested that the specific vulnerable communities be the subject to targeted, focused interventions, with no mention of who will undertake responsibility for such interventions.

34.

3. Philanthropic organisations emphasised that an unconscious bias denying the vulnerability of boys and men needs to be addressed, and survivors stated that stigma around girls, women and LGBT communities, for violating social norms and engaging in societally unacceptable behaviour can lead to social exclusion and exacerbated vulnerability to trafficking. Such initiatives to address taboos and stigma can be undertaken at the community level, with the involvement of youth groups, community-based organisations and survivor collectives.

35.

4. Social workers spoke about the lack of accountability of duty bearers, whether local or state-level authorities, in preventing or addressing human trafficking and a philanthropic organisation stated that the lack of responsibility for child protection issues is a key factor in the dearth of prevention efforts for victims right up to the block level. Further, the Therefore, accountability structures and mechanisms must be set up to ensure that duty bearers have

36.

a. Official, clear mandates on their roles and responsibilities to prevent trafficking in their jurisdictions

b. Institutions for recourse of the public, like tribunals or courts, to address non-performance of duties by duty bearers

c. Penalties and other consequences for non-performance of duties or delays by duty bearers

d. Separate and independent accountability structures for areas like gender inclusive and child-sensitive governance, policy implementation, law enforcement and service delivery by State providers.

37.

The initiatives to increase the accountability of duty bearers, especially those in the high power – low interest category, can be carried out through efforts by survivor collectives, NGOs and philanthropic organisations.

The overall findings of Phase I of the research create a unique community-level context on the various vulnerabilities and reasons for trafficking, as well as the roles of prevailing socio-economic conditions, social and cultural norms that form pathways which may lead to trafficking situations. The formative research exercise has additionally revealed a vulnerability map of sorts, where certain demographics are presumed to be more vulnerable to trafficking than others; whilst acknowledging the limits of knowledge of trafficking of respondents themselves (in terms of boys, men and trans persons).

The formative research exercise also reveals the lack of accountability of stakeholders in preventing or addressing trafficking, showing that institutional mandates are not fulfilled, and duty bearer activities rarely encompass any more than superficial awareness-building activities. The patterns of vulnerability, with their commonalities and disjuncts between cohorts, as well as respondents' impressions of local duty bearers' roles sets the tone for a summative exercise, where respondents can infer (based on their experiences) what prevention approaches are most feasible to effectively prevent trafficking.

FINDINGS OF EXPLORATORY RESEARCH: PHASE II

1. FINDINGS OF GLOBAL DESK RESEARCH

This exploratory research was preceded by a global desk research on prevention of trafficking ('Global Desk Research') as outlined in the Research Methodology section. The Global Desk Research found that there were 5 major models for prevention of trafficking, some of which have been widely employed by governments and international organisations by way of prevention initiatives in different parts of the world. Further, the Global Desk Research made recommendations for the adoption of the Chain-of-Risk Programme Model (Model 4 in **Table I** below) to address key points of vulnerability amongst communities, with a view to preventing trafficking at different stages of people's lives. The prevention models, as derived from the Desk Research, are summarised below:

Model Number	Name of Model	Particulars
1	Crime Prevention Programme Model	The government takes the approach to punish traffickers. The idea is that the threat of punishment will deter people from committing crimes and reduce the probability and/or level of offending in society.

2	Public Health/Elimination of Root Causes Programme Model	This approach focuses on the root causes that may lead to or make a person vulnerable to trafficking like poverty, low income, no access to education, no awareness about human trafficking etc.
3	Rights-Based Programme Model	The government focuses attention on safeguarding rights of potential victims, rather than on the perpetrator, focusing on underlying structural and systemic issues. Rights-based approaches aim at (a) strengthening the capacity of duty bearers and (b) empowering the rights holders.
4	Chain of Risk Programme Model	There are key points of vulnerability in the lifetimes of persons and communities that may arise from time to time or at specific stages in life and. The approach aims to focus on identifying these key vulnerabilities among the community members that may increase or decrease the chances of human trafficking. The government accordingly develops tailored interventions.
5	Labour Framework Model	The government has taken the approach to deal with trafficked individuals as 'workers', rather than falling within the victim - perpetrator dichotomy. This approach looks at changing market conditions of supply and demand.

Table I: Prevention Models for Human Trafficking

2. PROPOSED PREVENTION APPROACHES BY RESPONDENTS

The Researchers introduced the 5 prevention models as provided by the Global Desk Research to the respondents in all 5 FGDs. The Researchers then asked the respondents in the FGDs about which models they would invest in if they were in the position of the Government. The responses were as follows.

1. The Rights-Based Programme Model is the most popular amongst respondents, closely followed by the Public Health Programme Model, as their first priority for

investment. Both social worker and survivor respondents agreed that the Rights-Based Model would empower survivor communities and would be required as a starting point to build awareness and strengthen survivors to claim their rights.

2. As a close second, the Elimination of Root Causes Model was chosen by respondents, as they felt that there are many reasons and factors behind trafficking. One respondent even proposed their vision of carrying out research in a particular geographical area to determine the unique factors responsible for trafficking in that region. One philanthropic organisation stated that the Public Health Approach is advantageous, as it addresses vulnerabilities and structural inequalities that illustrate societal and systemic ‘gaps’, which marginalised people fall into and get trafficked.

3. The third most popular model was the Crime Prevention Programme Model, which focuses on prosecution and punishment of traffickers. The reason that this was chosen by several respondents (separately and in conjunction with other models) is because of the deterrence factor of crime prevention initiatives, as well as ending impunity experienced by traffickers.

4. Only two respondents chose the labour model and the Chain of Risk Model as their First Priority, with one survivor respondent choosing the Labour Model as their Second Priority, after the Chain of Risk Model being the First Priority. One philanthropic organisation called the Chain of Risk Model ‘interesting’, stating that they wanted to draw the life cycle of, for instance, a woman, to determine vulnerability issues at every age or milestone.

5. One philanthropic organisation had an interesting response to the prevention model question. Although, as a government, they chose the Crime Prevention Programme Model as well as the Labour Framework Model to focus on strengthening implementation of laws and rights of workers, they stated that their current programmes fit the Rights Based Approach and Chain of Risk Model. They stated that as an international organisation, they are focused on bringing structural changes and rights-based approaches to communities. On the other hand, governments have a welfare-based approach, which complements the expertise of international organisations and NGOs.

The overall preferences amongst duty bearers for the solution models are as follows:

S. No.	Solution Model	Male	Female	Total
1	Crime Prevention Model	9	3	12

2	Elimination of Root causes programme Model	9	3	12
3	Rights Based programme Model	9	1	10
4	Chain of risk programme Model	7	1	8
5	Labour Framework Model	5	0	5

Table II: Solution Model Preference amongst Duty Bearers

Therefore the Root Causes Model and the Crime Prevention Model have been chosen the most. The duty bearers have acknowledged the importance of tackling the root causes (including poverty, etc.) to prevent trafficking and have also talked about implementing laws strictly to punish and deter traffickers. The model choice does not seem to be based on the occupation of the duty bearer. In terms of the understanding of the models, the duty bearers' answers show restrictiveness and superficiality. For instance, the respondents who chose the crime prevention model mainly spoke about prosecuting individual traffickers and implementing criminal laws strictly to deter traffickers from carrying out trafficking, rather than talking about actual crime prevention nor the prevention of other ancillary crimes. This is mirrored in the global research as well preceding this exploratory research exercise, where crime prevention models mostly deal with crime responses.

Further, the Elimination of Root Causes Model ties into the choices of 'poverty', 'unemployment' and 'lack of education' as the vulnerabilities and causes of trafficking that were articulated by the duty bearers. There is a presumption on the part of the duty bearers that addressing these root causes will eliminate the 'lure of temptation' or 'greed' of persons vulnerable to trafficking, which will facilitate their 'refusal' to be trafficked. This viewpoint consistently places the onus of preventing trafficking on the vulnerable persons themselves, largely assuming that poverty alleviation and educational programmes will suffice to make them 'say no' to trafficking. Such viewpoints are consistent with the global prevention research, where significant research (from source countries, primarily in the Eastern Hemisphere) proposed similar factors as causing human trafficking. The duty bearers had a similar view of the Chain of Risk Model, stating that such a model would address the various causes of trafficking at different stages in life.

From the responses, a fundamental disconnect is seen by duty bearers in terms of responses related to the identities of traffickers (which include specific demographics), the vulnerabilities and causes of trafficking (that place the onus on families and communities to prevent trafficking) and the solution model choices (which are either focused on prosecuting

individual traffickers or dealing with larger socio-economic issues like poverty and education). Duty bearers have failed to provide targeted responses on solutions to prevent trafficking, which ties into their perceptions regarding their own responsibilities. Save for one respondent, being the Women & Child Social Welfare Director, who stated that *“As we work with the community and the people, we have to cater to them. Their interests lie in having good roads, houses, and loans. Hence, we work on those issues mainly. Then if we have time, we focus on spreading awareness about human trafficking”* as well as one police official who said that crime response was their responsibility, all the other duty bearers talked about their primary prevention role being in spreading awareness of trafficking.

The perception of most duty bearers that their own responsibility is limited to spreading awareness places the onus of preventing trafficking largely on the community and families of vulnerable persons. Further, the disconnect between knowing who the traffickers are in a community versus attributing the causes of trafficking to ‘the greed and lure of temptation’ of the victims (implicitly blaming the ignorance of victims) results in victim-centric, highly gendered prevention models, which focus on large scale developmental issues as well as the prosecution of individual traffickers, rather than any targeted, multi-layered, organised response.

ANALYSIS ACROSS COHORTS OF RESPONDENTS

PHASE II

For ease of analysis, the respondents have been divided into cohorts consisting of survivors, frontline social workers, financiers and duty bearers, to determine their top choices for solution models for the prevention of trafficking. The overall choices of each cohort are as follows:

Cohort	First Model	Second Model
Survivors	FGD 3 – Elimination of Root Causes Model FGD 4 – Crime Prevention Model and Rights Based Model FGD 5 – Elimination of Root Causes Model	FGD 3 – Crime Prevention Model and Rights Based Model FGD 4 – Elimination of Root Causes Model and Chain of Risk Model FGD 5 – Rights Based Model
	Overall: Elimination of Root Causes Model	Overall: Rights Based Model

Frontline Social Workers	FGD 1 – Rights Based Model FGD 2 – Rights Based Model FGD 6 – Elimination of Root Causes Model	FGD 1 – Crime Prevention Model FGD 2 – Crime Prevention Model and Elimination of Root Causes Model FGD 6 – Rights Based Model
	Overall: Rights-Based Model	Overall: Crime Prevention Model
Financiers	Rights Based Model Crime Prevention Model/Labour Model	Elimination of Root Causes Model Crime Prevention Model/Labour Model
Duty Bearers	Crime Prevention Model	Elimination of Root Causes Model

Table III: Solution Model Choices Across Cohorts of Respondents

1. The survivors' cohort, consisting largely of young women who are survivors of sex trafficking chose the Elimination of Root Causes Model as their first choice (despite significant) variation between FGD groups, and chose the Rights Based Model as their second choice.
2. The choices of the survivors reflected the desire for self-empowerment and the experiences of aspiration and restrictions that they had experienced as seen in the findings of Phase I, sought to be remedied by the social and economic upliftment promised by these models. Survivors are clear in their desire to be treated by other cohorts as persons with agency, who are entitled to human rights and access to justice.
3. The frontline social workers' cohort chose the Rights-Based Model as their first choice and the Crime Prevention Model as their second choice.
4. The choices of the frontline social workers reflect their experiences working with trafficked survivors to provide awareness of their rights as well as to combat trafficking through the prosecution of traffickers and strict implementation of laws. The understanding of the Rights-Based Model by frontline social workers is different from that of the survivors, in that social workers consider this approach more of an awareness-building exercise, rather than any kind of structured programme for the socio-economic empowerment of survivors. The choices of the frontline workers are

also informed largely by their perception that there is a lack of accountability of duty bearers, as provided in Phase I of the research.

5. The duty bearers' cohort chose the Crime Prevention Model as their first choice and the Elimination of Root Causes Model as their second choice.

6. Some duty bearers spoke about organized networks of traffickers in the larger ecosystem as seen in Phase I, but trafficking still seems to be considered as an 'ad hoc' crime, with deterrence or criminal justice approaches focusing on individual cases and prosecution of individual traffickers, rather than developing an understanding of the criminality related to trafficking.

7. The response of duty bearers to ascribe the entire phenomenon of trafficking to poverty and underdevelopment seem to manifest as a way of subverting any action that they might have to take as futile in nature. Their responses show a systemic avoidance of their own responsibility, as well as overwhelming class and gender prejudice in terms of their outlook towards both the perpetrators and victims of trafficking.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS AND INFERENCES

The Exploratory Research has brought up several observations and inferences as follows. These are made based on both Phase I and Phase II of the research.

I. OBSERVATIONS

Prevalence of Trafficking

1. When it comes to discussing prevention, the notions regarding the prevalence of trafficking are as follows amongst Respondents.
 - a. Respondents almost uniformly state that trafficking is more prevalent in adolescents and youth. They opine that the local community is much more aware of girls and young women being trafficked for the purpose of sex trafficking.
 - b. Knowledge of labour trafficking, trafficking in boys is much lower and there is no knowledge about trafficking in men.
 - c. Invariably, respondents either did not know anything about trafficking amongst trans persons, or even if they did, their information was all based on

stories or hearsay. Further, the global prevention research carried out before this exploratory research did not provide any concrete insights on human trafficking in the transgender community.

- d. Respondents claim that they have heard of instances of organ trafficking or limb amputation, but they are alienated from literature or case studies on this point.
- e. Accordingly, the notions around prevalence translate into prevention approaches, which clearly seem to focus more on girls than boys, men or transpersons.

Perspectives on Causality of Trafficking

1. There is a strong connection made between emotional deprivation and vulnerability to trafficking, where respondents opine that adolescents who are in caring and emotionally involved family environments are more resilient to trafficking.
2. Young people attribute social restrictions and controls, particularly on girls, as a trigger or precursor to risky behaviours by adolescents. Muslim families are perceived to be higher on control according to the respondents.
3. Older community members believe lack of controls in families and communities, or neglect, make people, particularly children and youth more vulnerable.
4. There is an intergenerational tension between younger people wanting to be heard, listened to, controlled less, supported more - and the older generations believing that children and young people need to be controlled more and protected from external vulnerabilities and risks.
5. The frontline workers strongly perceive a lack of accountability amongst duty bearers and the failure of duty bearers to perform their prevention-related responsibilities, which contributes to the prevalence of trafficking. Duty bearers from almost all occupations, however, uniformly state that their own responsibility is limited to 'awareness generation' of trafficking amongst the community. Therefore, they do not believe there is lack of accountability, but only take ownership of an awareness generation role. The majoritarian view amongst duty bearers is that trafficking is caused by socio-economic vulnerabilities and greed within the community itself.

Prevention Approaches to Trafficking

Common Views around Prevention

1. The survivors' cohort chose the Elimination of Root Causes Model as their first choice and the Rights Based Model as their second choice. The choices reflected the desire for self-empowerment and the social and economic upliftment promised by these models to respond to their experiences of aspiration, whilst being surrounded by restrictions. Survivors desire to be treated as persons with agency, who are entitled to human rights and access to justice.
2. The frontline social workers' cohort chose the Rights-Based Model as their first choice and the Crime Prevention Model as their second choice. The choices of the frontline social workers reflect their experiences working with trafficked survivors to provide awareness of their rights, as well as to combat trafficking through the prosecution of traffickers and strict implementation of laws.
3. The duty bearers' cohort chose the Crime Prevention Model as their first choice and the Elimination of Root Causes Model as their second choice. The duty bearers view trafficking as a product of socio-economic inequity, so their choices reflect firstly, a protective approach to the community through punishment of traffickers and secondly, the addressal of the 'underlying causes' of trafficking that will empower the community to 'say no' to trafficking.
4. Both frontline activists and duty bearers only speak about awareness programmes for the community, rather than speaking about awareness generation for other stakeholders. This places the responsibility for prevention of trafficking on vulnerable people, families and young people themselves.
5. The understanding of the Crime Prevention Model is almost uniform amongst cohorts. Trafficking still seems to be considered as an 'ad hoc' crime, with deterrence or criminal justice approaches focusing on individual cases and prosecution of individual traffickers, rather than developing an understanding of the criminality related to trafficking.
6. The community prioritizes crime prevention as strongly addressing root causes as prevention approaches.

Differential Perspectives on Prevention Approaches

1. The understanding of the Rights-Based Model by frontline social workers is different from that of the survivors, in that survivors consider the model to be empowering for them, and social consider the approach more of an awareness-building exercise for survivors. As stated earlier, frontline workers strongly perceive a lack of accountability

amongst duty bearers, which they opine contributes to failure of existing prevention methods.

2. Duty bearers' approaches reflected their widely held presumption that the responsibility of trafficking prevention largely lies on the community and survivors themselves. Therefore, the duty bearers' prevention approaches are centered around addressing the 'root causes' of trafficking through socio-economic programmes (targeting poverty, child marriage and lack of education, amongst others).
3. There is a disconnect between causality of trafficking and prevention responses. While causality is attributed by respondents to social (neglect of children), cultural (control and restrictions over adolescent girls, less emotional support) or endemic factors (poverty, lack of employment), the suggestions on response are far more focused on lack of awareness or behaviours of vulnerable people and families.
4. Solutions are thought of as prescriptions and not processes. They are predictive and results based, with the 'activity completion' (e.g., conducting of awareness programmes) being the result.

Responsibility for Prevention of Human Trafficking

1. Most of the community perceives that Panchayat, Police and District Administration may have authority but little interest in combating human trafficking, and the duty bearers believe that the power and responsibility to combat trafficking largely rests on the community itself.
2. The community also believes that law enforcement may be vulnerable to corruption and therefore may have interest in protecting and sustaining prevalence.
3. In the stakeholder power grid, there is a gap between activists and survivors on one hand, and the duty bearers on the other hand. The former cohorts emphasize the lack of accountability of duty bearers, and the latter do not consider their own authority as being beyond awareness generation largely. What then happens is mistrust, as the first two cohorts believe there is no response by duty bearers to their demands, and the duty bearers believe they have no authority.
4. What is clearly observable is the difference in expectations and response in terms of Duty Bearers. There is no policy clarity in terms of roles and functions. The role of the DBs is considered 'supportive' to NGOs, as opposed to reality, where NGOs are supposed to play a facilitatory role.

II. INFERENCES

7. There is a perceptible difference between how young people view the phenomenon of trafficking and how older generations in the community view the same.
8. Because of lack of data (crime data on labour trafficking, trafficking in men or of trans-persons), and any research, it cannot be said that the community is biased towards sex trafficking in girls and women. This skew is observed not only in the community, but also external stakeholders like as philanthropists or foundations who may have invested on child protection or combating human trafficking in Bengal.
9. The community is consistent in its view that human trafficking is a result of endemic factors (poverty, unemployment) and socio-cultural patterns (emotional neglect of children, more control and less support towards adolescent girls) and therefore its choice of prevention approaches are those that address structural, socio-cultural and economic factors.
10. When the community looks at trafficking as a phenomenon, the story starts much before the initiation of the criminal activity, to cover sociological and cultural factors that induce vulnerability and stress. However, with financiers, there is a focus on systemic and structural factors that cause trafficking, leading to a disconnect between these two cohorts. In most interventions and research, community participation in designing research programmes is low, which leads to an outside-in approach to interventions with community engagement based on the understanding of trafficking held by the external agency. This accounts for the 'top-down' action in interventions which creates various fragmentations.
 - i. For example, if a funder holds the view that trafficking should be addressed through root causes model and the community thinks that trafficking comes from tension from youth, migration, marriage, love, freedom, expression, engagement with technology, etc. the actual 'root causes' elucidated by the community will not be addressed. NGOs adopt change theories of financiers.
11. The police have not considered pre-emptive crime prevention and neither has it been considered by the Panchayat or the community. Presently, the community believes, and duty bearers also state that prosecution of traffickers will lead to challenging impunity and therefore challenge growth of the crime.
12. Lack of policy on prevention of human trafficking results in lack of clarity in duty bearers' powers, authority, roles and responsibilities. But the community attributes high power to certain duty bearers, with low accountability. NGOs seem to then focus

on awareness generation of communities and micro focused activities (prevention of incidents of child marriage, rescue of missing children, etc.) as case management actions on prevention.

13. None of the stakeholders have talked about any existing change theory based on their own action, showing that prevention programmes are rarely based on the views and needs of the affected community. Even the planning process of such prevention interventions is not from within the community and has limited inclusivity, due to philanthropists initiating research/action based on their own impressions of data.
14. The prevention approaches are not 'replenishing' for the parties involved, and are more of a burden, rather than something enriching for the community. The prevention approaches show no spirit of exploration nor trial and error and the spirit of enquiry has been very weak.
15. It remains to be seen as to what extent can policy be reinforced to clarify the roles and responsibilities of institutions and actors. Presently, the power, responsibility and agency of doing anything about prevention of trafficking falls onto NGOs and funders who are limited in their own authority.
16. The skewed focus on prevention of human trafficking on adolescents, and women creates judgement on their aspirations which, when seen by community leaders and duty bearers get ascribed as greed which then translates into victim-shaming. The gender, class and age skew (people in authority and power being mostly men, duty bearers from a socio-economically more privileged class and being of an older generation than children and women from socio-economically vulnerable backgrounds) results in judgement and less of understanding, empathy or compassion. Caste and religion may also have an influence in this judgement.

INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE WAY FORWARD

Overall Insights

The research that asked communities in rural Bengal endemically affected by human trafficking what could prevent trafficking of vulnerable people confirmed quite definitely that the community does understand what is causing the vulnerability or the underlying factors that make certain communities more vulnerable to human trafficking. Where the community

struggles, however, is to think of what responses could be, or should be, to reduce the vulnerabilities.

On one hand, the community recognise that power lies with Panchayats, police, administration and politicians, and community leaders (religious leaders or powerful people in the community who have the power of money, muscle or social influence) and believes that unless and until they act, nothing can change. On the other hand, Panchayats, administration and politicians believe that the power lies with the community - families, parents to change their perceptions, their choices and behaviours so as to protect themselves. So, the critical question that keeps bouncing back and forth is about responsibility and accountability - *who is responsible to prevent human trafficking, and who should be held accountable to take actions and measures to bring about changes?*

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) or Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) take the position of change agents - where they see themselves building awareness in the community, sensitizing duty bearers about trafficking and the need for them to respond and act. Factors that they address in their actions fall mostly in the Chain of Risk Model – including campaigning against child marriage, domestic violence, preventing school dropouts. Their institutional authority being low, and resources being limited, they depend on their social power and influence but fall short of asserting accountability of duty bearers when they fail to act - be it the Panchayat, police or district administration.

While NGOs believe that addressing root causes, such as poverty, inequality, gender discrimination will be most effective in eliminating vulnerability of communities to any form of exploitation, they choose roles and actions which are feasible for them to play and implement - which could be of low impact or unsustainable. There is also limited reflection in the community on social and cultural practices that could be resilience-affirming or that exacerbate vulnerability. Thus, there seems to be schism between what they believe that should be done to address trafficking and what the organisations choose to do in terms of their programmes and projects on prevention of trafficking.

The disconnect between the community's views on how trafficking can be prevented versus the opinions and actions of NGOs could be because these NGOs depend on projects financed by philanthropic organisations, who wish to see concrete results in terms of numbers (numbers of children protected or prevented from trafficking) which then drives them to focus on strategies of direct service delivery to vulnerable children, case management (stopping child marriage, enrolling drop out children to schools, preventing migration of children etc.).

Since Taftesh's entry point has been with survivors of human trafficking and supporting survivors of trafficking with services for rehabilitation and justice, organisations and survivors

who have participated in the Taftteesh programme acutely argue that the prosecution of traffickers in the community (catchment areas) is a necessary step to break impunity of the violence (crime prevention model) and the socialisation, tolerance, neglect and normalisation of the crime. On the contrary, CSOs who have focused primarily on prevention do not see the link between crime and vulnerability and focus on chain of risk actions and reducing vulnerability. Interestingly, those who believe that trafficking can never be eliminated say so because they cannot see how vulnerability in risky-migrations can be mitigated (for instance, amongst young people with low power migrating for opportunities, migrations in exploitative labour - menial workers, elopement of young girls from repressed families, women in oppressive marriages who elope with their lovers).

In order to stimulate the community to think deeper about the link between solutions to trafficking, their action choices and what they think ought to happen for the vulnerabilities to trafficking to be mitigated, members of the community need time, space and facilitation to think, discuss and share and reflect on what could address the factors that they have identified as those that exacerbate vulnerability to trafficking and approaches, strategies as well as actions, roles, responsibilities and accountability that must be for implementation of the former. For example, if prevailing parenting and childcare practices (including current practices of parenting adolescents) has been one of the key issues that has been identified as creating emotional and psychological vulnerability amongst adolescent girls, then the community needs to delve into what be done to enable communities and families respond better to children's emotional and psychological needs. These conversations, to be conducted across the demographic spectrum (adolescents and parents, communities of different castes and religions, civil society and duty bearers) are required for deeper reflection and the community drawing from its own wisdom and resilience.

There is an impatience amongst CSOs to act. Actions are not only a way of dealing with anxieties stemming from confusions, ambiguities and dilemmas, actions for CSOs also mean projects, funding, financial security and jobs. Such CSOs have no training or skills in research, facilitation of conversations or dialogue. Yet, they have the best potential to mobilise and organise spaces for dialogue between all stakeholders. CSO members while being committed to preventing trafficking and violence against the marginalised may also have class, caste and value biases and prejudices on gender, sexuality, social and cultural norms as is evident in the research. It is also an interesting finding of the research that there is poor valuing of indigenous social and cultural norms and resources that make communities resilient, nurturing, protective or progressive.

A strong potential that exists in the community are the collectives of survivors - who have the sensing, experience and knowledge of the inner worlds of adolescents and youth, who also have skills of understanding vulnerability very deeply. They would be a great resource to engage in an intergenerational dialogue and negotiation to address the schism between

children and elders of the community. The strength and limitation of these collectives is that they are all women, all survivors - creating a powerful identity. Youth collectives of men and trans-people may be a great resource to strengthen the voices of the youth and its diversity, and also to address cultural issues of misogyny and stresses of transitional patriarchy.
