

**Hon'ble Chairman,
Hon'ble Representatives of the Civil Society,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Trafficking of women and children is indeed a crime against humanity and a merciless trade in human misery. The rate at which children, especially female children, are being trafficked into exploitative situations is highly alarming.

Trafficking forces generations into its strong clutches and in a subtle manner grabs a large proportion of the vulnerable population. The gravity of the problem can be realized by the physical, emotional, mental and social implications on the victims which are highly traumatic and devastating.

Today this inhuman act (trafficking) has become a global phenomenon and is considered to be the third largest (a six billion dollar industry) among all including lethal trades with arms and drugs. It is virtually rampant in the countries of South Asia. The situation is further aggravated by existing socio-cultural mindset, which is based on power relations and believes in discrimination on the basis of caste, gender and class.

The flesh trade is flourishing all over the world and India figures prominently on the global map of this vicious market. This disquieting scenario has brought the issue of trafficking on the national agenda. India is Source, Destination and Transit zone for traffickers. Consequently, it has to face problems of both inter-state and international trafficking. On the issue of trafficking, Institute of Social Science, New-Delhi has made in-depth research and their report exhaustive has been published in the book form with the support of National Human Rights Commission & UNIFEM, New-Delhi.

A news article published in national newspaper states that roughly 2 million children are being abused and forced into prostitution every year in India, however NGOs' estimation of the members of sex workers is much higher. According to news report, it also reveals that there is 10.12 million child labours in India.

Bihar is one of the most vulnerable states for trafficking of children & women due to its socio-economic-political status. It is attached with international boundaries of Nepal & Bangladesh. In-built factors like low socio-economic status of women and children, gender discrimination, domestic violence, illiteracy & unawareness, early marriage, religious practices, varying socio cultural norms add the complexities of this issue.

The districts attached with international Boundaries have its own significance. The stretch of international boundaries of Nepal and Bangladesh facilitates the Human Trafficking primarily for the purpose of prostitution, bonded labour, organ transplantation, begging, drug trafficking etc. It serves both as source and transit points for vulnerable people.

Recognising the gravity of the problem of trafficking of women and children in the State, the government had expressed its commitment to address this so that the issue of trafficking is dealt with appropriately in the state and the vision of creating "Trafficking-Free Bihar" is attained. This step were initiated in year 2006 to prepare a comprehensive State Plan of Action to prevent and combat trafficking and rehabilitate the victims/survivors of trafficking and develop concrete tools to tackle the situation. For achieving the desired result, emphasis was on partnership and combine efforts of all the partners. Bihar is the first state to develop such a comprehensive and integrated Plan of Action. Political will is one of the most important components in the entire process. The solemnity of the issue of trafficking of women and children in Bihar and being the source, transit and destination points, this issue demands to be included in political agenda.

For empowerment of Political leaders on the issue of human trafficking, a workshop was jointly organized by UNODC- New Delhi and ATSEC-Bihar in Bihar Legislative Council on 2nd May, 2007, in which all the members of both Houses i.e. Bihar Legislative Assembly and Bihar Legislative Council actively participated. This workshop was conducted under my Chairmanship. Through this workshop, participants came up with some recommendations which are as follows:

- ✓ To make provisions for allocation of resources for the victims in the Home.
- ✓ To ensure Special provisions for victims in the welfare scheme.
- ✓ To start with Rehabilitation package for the victims of trafficking.
- ✓ To ensure early prosecution of the traffickers.
- ✓ To Orient PRIs on AHT.
- ✓ To establish District level vigilance cell with key persons as its member.
- ✓ To form Committees at all levels.
- ✓ To form State level committee by Bihar Vidhan Mandal.
- ✓ To include trafficking in political agenda of all political parties.

On this occasion we have also codified the role of the legislators i.e.

- ✓ To support the NGOs in establishing one Home per constituency.
- ✓ To start with Mandatory rehabilitation programs.
- ✓ To ensure accountability of police and government departments.
- ✓ To Empower NGOs for rehabilitation.
- ✓ To establish District Rehabilitation Fund.
- ✓ To Ensure Involvement of Panchayats.
- ✓ To make Public awareness through media.
- ✓ To create State legislation on AHT.
- ✓ To Implement State plan of action.
- ✓ To ensure that Leaders can be catalysts in action at source area.

This menace can be fought only when people from all field come together in an organised manner with a common goal and concentrated efforts. The people's representatives do hold a moral responsibility in taking up this issue with a serious note since it is the concern of the people and it directly or indirectly affects us the society at large.

I am much obliged to all of you who have given me this platform to address the issue.

Uday Narain Choudhary
Speaker,
Bihar Legislative Assembly, Patna, (India).