



## Women and Girls Trafficking from Indigenous Communities in Bangladesh: A Critical Review on Legal Perspectives

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### ABSTRACT

Human trafficking, often referred to as modern-day slavery, involves the exploitation of individuals for various criminal purposes, such as forced labor, debt bondage, and commercial sexual exploitation. Women and girls, particularly from diverse backgrounds, are the primary victims of this crime. This research focuses on the trafficking of women and girls from indigenous communities in Bangladesh, examining the underlying factors contributing to their victimization. The study aims to raise awareness among scholars, policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and the general public about the issue of trafficking within these communities. It also seeks to encourage the effective enforcement of anti-trafficking laws to better protect women and girls from ethnic minorities. The paper offers several recommendations to tackle this pressing issue. The findings suggest that indigenous women and girls are trafficked for various reasons, which must be addressed through comprehensive measures. This research adopts a doctrinal approach and employs qualitative methods, consulting both primary and secondary sources to achieve its objectives.

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**Contribution/Originality:** This study contributes to the existing literature by critically examining the intersection of gender, ethnicity, and trafficking laws in Bangladesh. It is one of very few studies that investigates the legal gaps affecting indigenous women and girls, offering logical analysis of inadequate legal protections and documenting structural challenges they face.

## 1. Introduction

The indigenous people, especially, the women and girls from different ethnic identities are also been under the risk of human trafficking disproportionately toward the plain land women and girls. In addition, it is historically evident that these indigenous communities have been struggled against feudalism and colonialism even taken part in the liberation war in 1971 (Kibria, 2022). But they are most deprived, neglected and marginalized people for many reasons. This situation of deprivation, and marginalization often put them into vulnerable group for human trafficking. According to the reports of NGOs, the victims are usually enticed into several false promises such as promises for better job, promises for enjoyable and wealthy life, and proposal for fake marriage etc. The indigenous women and girls are mostly vulnerable for the cause of poverty, discrimination on social protection, lack of information in regard to human trafficking, less effective legal regime and policies and absence of good governance (ADRA, 2019). In view of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), ethnic minorities, “scheduled castes” or “other backward classes” of aboriginal people, hill tribes are similarly subjected to human trafficking in response to demand and supply factors around the world (Rabbi, 2015).

The offenses related with human trafficking are sponsored by the force of demand and supply of the sex market and also thrived on exploitation of vulnerable human beings (Winterdyk, 2020). Numbers of women and girls have been trafficked from Bangladesh, but how many women and girls from indigenous communities have been trafficked is a matter of careful investigation of trafficking incidents. This study examines the trafficking in person, especially, the women and girls from indigenous communities in Bangladesh although the number of incident is comparatively lower than the women and girls trafficking from other places, especially from vulnerable refugee women and girls. It also investigates the key reasons for trafficking in person of women and girls from indigenous people in Bangladesh.

## 2. Results State of Indigenous People in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is one of the largest countries by Muslim population and beside Muslim, other religious communities are living with peace and harmony from time immemorial (Jalil & Mia, 2021). There are 54 ethnic minority groups with 35 different languages are also furnishing the cultural diversity and communal harmony of the country. These ethnic communities are living in several parts of Bangladesh. It is estimated in the 2011 census that the indigenous people is about 1, 586, 141 which stands for 1.8% of the entire population of the country and nearly half of them are women (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2019). However, they assert that the number of indigenous people is about 5 million (Barkat, 2015). Majority of the communities are living in the districts without Hill i.e. plain land and others are in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) area i. e. in the three Districts in CHT (Halim, 2015). Prior to the 15th Amendment of the Constitution in 2011, they had no recognition as indigenous people. But now, people with distinct ethnic identities other than the mainstream Bengali population are mentioned in the constitution of Bangladesh under Article 23 (A).

The life of indigenous people including women and girls is mostly the story of deprivation and marginalization in many respects irrespective of their location and ethnic identity. These vulnerable communities are often being subjected to suppress by number of activities in the Hill tract areas such as discrimination and marginalization,

land grabbing, development interventions, eco-park projects, forest projects, energy projects and so on that heavily hinders the livelihood of the indigenous people and women and girls as the most vulnerable section is suffering several and intersecting categories of discrimination connecting with gender, ethnicity, language, religion, class and geographic location ([Kapaeeng Foundation, Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Network \[BIEN\], & International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs \[IWGIA\], 2016](#)). This discrimination and violence against women and girls are leading to human trafficking to the internal brothels as well as to foreign destinations.

### 3. Present Circumstances of Trafficking in Person in Bangladesh

Human trafficking is an incessant problem for Bangladesh like many other countries in the world as a source and transit country for trafficking in person. This dilemma is gradually assuming the severe form over the decades. The human trafficking dilemma is further boosted with the presence of uncounted, documented and undocumented Rohingya refugees in Cox's bazaar district after massive influx in 2017 ([Samaddar, 2020](#)). Now it has become highly challenging issue of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and Border Security Force (BSF) for tackling human trafficking at the borderline. It is reported that until Mid-August of 2020, there are 915 women have been caught while illegally crossing the borders between Bangladesh and India ([Sentinel Digital Desk, 2020](#)). In addition, intensive study on patterns of human trafficking reveals that such trafficking is not always trafficked outside the country rather trafficked into different part of the country, especially, in legal and illegal brothels and also in floating prostitution. Nevertheless, majority of human trafficking in Bangladesh is inter-state ([Biswas, 2015](#)). The statistic shows that number of women trafficking on the International Border between India and Bangladesh is increasing day by day. There are 572, 1107, and 936 women tried to cross the border in 2017, 2018 and 2019 respectively which clearly demonstrated the increasing trend of women's illegal migration that eventually results women trafficking in many destinations ([Costello, Foster & McAdam, 2021](#)). It is further approximated that if the number of women caught during trafficking has crossed 900 in seven-and-a-half months, it could cross the 1,400-mark by the end of the year 2020 ([Singh, 2020](#)).

It is further, reported that there are about one million 'undocumented' Bangladeshi women in Pakistan and among them a big number of women are believed to have been trafficked ([Islam & Mia, 2021](#)). It is further presumed that there are about 5000 women, girls, and children trafficked every year from Bangladesh to Pakistan ([Amin & Md Rashidul, 2011](#)). A report from a Pakistan-based organization dedicated to human rights and legal aid states that approximately 200,000 Bangladeshi women and girls have been trafficked to Pakistan ([Lawyers for Human Rights and Legal Aid, 1993](#)). Other studies suggest that the true number of Bangladeshi women and girls in Pakistan remains undocumented, with estimates exceeding 250,000 ([United Press International, 2000](#)). According to UNIFEM, around 300,000 Bangladeshi children have been trafficked into brothels in India over time. Between 2005 and 2010, at least 13,220 children were reported as trafficked abroad, with only 4,700 of them being rescued ([Amin & Md Rashidul, 2011](#)).

It has been estimated by the Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) that every year in between 12,000 and 50,000 women and children are trafficked for sex trade in India from neighboring country including Bangladesh ([Childline India Foundation, 2021](#)). Out of the total women and girls, children (girls) make up roughly 40% of prostitute in

brothels and beyond ([Childline India Foundation, 2021](#)). In 2014, out of total number of human trafficking, woman and girls comprised 76% in the year. Human trafficking for sexual exploitation is also increasing in India ([India Spend, 2016](#)). According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) there are 50486 human trafficking cases were recorded in 2014 which made 60% increases in between 2010 and 2014 in India ([Salve, 2016](#)). It is further estimated that over 2 million women and children are being used in commercial sexual exploitation into red-light districts in India ([Sarkar, 2014](#)). Furthermore, TIP report shows that many women and girls are being trafficked into India from Bangladesh and some Bangladeshi female migrant are being subjected to force labor, and sex trafficking in different cities in India ([Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2017](#)). However, these statistics postulate the magnitude of the human trafficking problem in India as well as demand of sex trade that influence the traffickers to traffic women and girls from Bangladesh including inhabitation of indigenous communities ([Uddin, 2017](#)).

Several studies describe that there are 400 women and girls are trafficked out from Bangladesh every month ([Siddiqua et al., 2015](#)). These women and girls including indigenous women and girls are abducted for force labor or for sexual exploitation in brothels. Study further shows that over 1 million women and children were smuggled out of the country. Another report discloses that about 3 lac Women and children in between 12 to 30 years old were trafficked to India in the last decade. Furthermore, NGOs have compiled data on human trafficking which has increased the number up to 50,000 victims of this criminal offense ([Biswas, 2015](#)). In addition, studies have also revealed that for the purpose deploying in sex services, female trafficked children are being abused physically and sexually and made them as a saleable commodity and negotiable item of the trafficker ([Rahman, 2004](#)).

#### **4. Situation of Women and Girls Trafficking from Indigenous Communities in Bangladesh**

The world statistic shows that 5 percent of the worldwide population estimated 370 million people are indigenous and perhaps no one belongs to this exploited group in more disproportionate numbers than the world's indigenous populations ([O'Day, 2018](#)). These people are being exploited in various means and ways such as discrimination and marginalization, physical and sexual violence, land grabbing, illegal arrest and detention, rape and gang rape, sexual exploitation and harassment, and human trafficking ([Cultural Survival, 2017](#)). Indigenous people of Bangladesh are also under the continuous threat and suffering above criminal offences round the year.

However, a considerable number of men, women and girls including children from indigenous communities have been trafficked every year from Bangladesh ([Siddiqua, Nahar & Akond, 2015](#)). The statistics provided by different public and private agencies such as Police department and NGOs are somehow unreliable for many reasons. So, it is hardly possible to present exact number of human trafficking record of the indigenous women and girls in Bangladesh. However, it is quite evident from the cases filed on violence against women and girls and human trafficking in the Chittagong Hill Tract Districts. In 2016, there were 5000 cases have been filed in regular Court relating to violence against women and human trafficking. Surprisingly, only one district court with one judge is given responsibility to hear and adjudicate all these cases which cause unimaginable backlog and delay in convicting the offenders. It is further reported by the CHT Commission that out of 215 cases not a single case has been resolved or not a single

offender convicted in those cases documented by the CHT Commission in 2017 (Andersen, 2018).

According to the [U.S. Department of State \(2020\)](#), women and girls from indigenous communities, especially, from Chittagong Hill Tracts are being coerced by the traffickers from Chinese origin for the purpose of sexual exploitation and domestic work through fake arranged marriage. In this process they often produced false identity documents to change their real age to make the target person eligible for sending abroad. Furthermore, besides trafficking in abroad, it is also reported that the trafficked women and girls are sent to legal and illegal brothels and private hotels in Bangladesh ([Office to monitor and combat trafficking in persons, 2020](#)). It was estimated by the human rights activists that about 200-400 young women and children are smuggled and trafficked in every month from Bangladesh into Pakistan ([Gazi et al. 2001](#)). Women and girls among the victims were from different districts of the Bangladesh especially, from the poverty affected areas including remote area of indigenous communities. In addition, recurrent natural disaster, cyclone, poverty, unawareness, weak enforcement of law are making women, girls and children vulnerable for becoming an easy target of human trafficking ([Dutta, 2021](#)). Moreover, vulnerability of the indigenous women and girls is greater than those of common Bengali women and girls for some reasons such as remoteness of inhabitation, different language, cultural impunity, and incorporation from law enforcement agencies in terms of receiving complaints, arresting the alleged offenders and so on. By means of corruption, human traffickers and other perpetrators remain outside of the prosecution or backed by some of the corrupted officers of the law enforcement department.

In addition to women and girls trafficking from indigenous communities, children are also being trafficked from these ethnic minority groups. Indigenous children are disproportionately subjected to abduction and trafficking as they have not been recognized as indigenous children and remain beyond protection of the Bangladesh Children's Act 2013 ([Mia et al., 2022](#)). Ethnic children are highly at risk in regard to education, forced labor, physical and sexual violence, abduction, and trafficking. Furthermore, abducted children are often subjected to convert to other religions ([Chakma & Soren, 2014](#)), and used in force labor, sexual exploitation, begging, war weapon and child soldiers ([Human Rights Watch, 2004](#)). Parties engaging in war are using children not only as fighters but also as scouts, cooks, gatekeeper, watchman, messenger and more. Women and girls are being faced torture and different kinds of oppressions ([Unicef, 2021](#)).

It has further reported that the women and girls including from indigenous communities are made saleable commodity at the market where the price of these victim are ranging from one thousand to two thousand dollars considering the age, beauty and apparent desirability of customers for several times ([U.S. Department of State, 2020](#)). They brought in a safe place and made as 'sex objects' as well as display item for auction. The price of a beautiful women or a girl is demanded from USD 375 to USD 500 ([U.S. Department of State, 2020](#)). The traffickers are sometimes sale women and girls in a group of 10-15 and the price of such group is ranging from USD 1250 to USD 5000 to the legal or illegal prostitution in several locations ([U.S. Department of State, 2020](#)). Furthermore, good looking women and girls are being kept for individual sale for higher price ([Hoque, 2010](#)). However, it is the prime responsibility of the Government to implement the relevant laws effectively and adequately for the prevention, prosecution,

punishing the offenders and protection of the victims of such offense, irrespective of the identity of the victim whether indigenous or Bengali women and girls (Islam et al. 2022).

## 5. Reasons behind Indigenous Women and Girls Trafficking in Bangladesh

It is alleged that there are several factors responsible behind human trafficking of indigenous women and girls in Bangladesh. It is further evident that Bangladesh has cooperated with number of International development agencies for the development of socio-economic conditions of indigenous or ethnic minority people. However, the developments boards for indigenous people and strategies in this regard are taken by several agencies are often remaining operative without representation of the indigenous people in concerned. As a consequence, these so called development activities were overwhelmed by the donor agencies. However, these agencies are often less sensible with regard to targeted development in considering their community custom and values. Thus, they are remaining with the status of backward section while big amount of donations are spending for them (Sharmeen et al. 2020). Although, the government has taken several initiatives to resolve and minimize the socio-economic complexities of the indigenous people, but the laws and other bodies in concerned are not functioning adequately and effectively that makes them vulnerable for violence and human trafficking. In this section the researcher examines major causes behind women and girls trafficking from indigenous people in Bangladesh.

### 5.1. Recognition of Indigenous people

The studies on indigenous communities are often postulated that one of the major causes of human trafficking of ethnic communities is non-recognition of the indigenous people as indigenous. This non-recognition makes them vulnerable and keeps them beyond national protection in many aspects including trafficking of women and girls. Until the 15<sup>th</sup> amendment of the constitution of Bangladesh in 2011, indigenous people had no recognition even recognition as Bangladeshi (Human Rights Committee, 2015) though it is the spirit of the constitution that all people born in Bangladesh shall be known as Bangladeshi and shall be determined and regulated by the citizenship law (The Constitution of Bangladesh, Article 6). In addition, Article 6 was substituted by new article 6 where it is stated that "The people of Bangladesh shall be known as Bangalees as a nation and the citizens of Bangladesh shall be known as Bangladeshis". However, the indigenous communities were enjoyed their rights under the generic term "backward section" (Roy, 2009). In addition, these people further recognized as ethnic sects and communities in the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment of Constitution where it is stated that "the State shall take steps to protect and develop the unique local culture and tradition of the tribes, minor races, ethnic sects and communities" (Article 23(A), The Constitution of Bangladesh) but it is viewed that the term mentioned in the Constitution are not enough to recognize Indigenous Peoples as "Indigenous" (Mondol, 2015). The Government of Bangladesh (GoB) does not ready to accept ethnic sects, and communities as "Adivasi" (Indigenous) and for this end the Press Information Department (PID) of Bangladesh in 2014 released an announcement stating that the university professors, specialists, newspaper editors, and civil society members are urged to be cautious and refrain from using the term "Adivasi" (Indigenous) during discussions and talk shows on International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples (Chowdhury, 2014).

Furthermore, an initiative was taken by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development for the propagation to establish a fact that there is no existence of “Adivasi” in Bangladesh by issuing a directive to the deputy commissioner ([Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact, 2012](#)). Thus, as a result of active denial by the Government, the demand for recognition of ethnic minority group as “Adivasi” was removed by the supreme law of the country ([Saqi, 2017](#)). Eventually, the Small Ethnic Groups Cultural Institute Act, 2010 acknowledged about 27 ethnic communities out of 50 Indigenous groups ([Dhamai, 2014](#)). After that the government formed a committee to include rest of the communities left in the earlier list and the committee proposed another 34 indigenous communities to be listed in the existing list under the Small Ethnic Groups Cultural Institute Act, 2010 and finally added in the list ([Murmu, 2019](#)).

## 5.2. Changing Nature of Livelihood and Migration

It is evident for the time immemorial that indigenous women usually lived in rural areas engaging plenty of domestic works such as child care, looking after the domestic animals, aiding husband’s work, cultivation, making handicraft etc. In course of time, the overall situation is rapidly changing and the indigenous women is now participating more and more in many formal and informal sector as an employee or as a self-employed by producing small-scale commodities and also trading accordingly. As they are outing for looking job around their home or nearby or even far from home to led a better life and contribute to the family ([Halim, 2007](#)).

In addition, the local job market in the area of indigenous communities is very limited and the city headquarters are also less developed that produces inadequate employment opportunity. On ground of the shortage of job market, women have no alternative but to migrate from low income area to the higher income i.e. urban areas for better employment. Migration from rural to urban area sometimes bring good life of the migrants in such a manner that now she can earn and enjoy her personal freedom, freedom from family restrictions and also performing community customs. This migration also increases the ability of the women and girls to face discrimination and deprivation in regard to the opportunities including the ownership of the immovable property ([Fernandez, 2007](#)). Therefore, the risk of being trapped is also increasing for them and human traffickers are searching such women from indigenous communities to trap by lucrative job proposal irrespective of the location of the applicant.

## 5.3. Lack of Record

Lack of data is one of the major challenges for understanding the magnitude of the problem as well as for taking preventive measures. A report published in 2017 on “Violations of Indigenous Peoples’ Rights in Bangladesh” by the ([Cultural Survival, 2017](#)) where many issues have been referred related with Indigenous Peoples rights. However, the report rarely mentions the term “Indigenous People” directly rather it refers to as the common citizen of Bangladesh ([Cultural Survival, 2017](#)). The report depicts some of the fundamental rights provided by the constitution for all citizens including indigenous people. Among the fundamental rights, freedom of movement in article 36, equality before law in article 27, freedom of thought, conscience and speech in article 39, freedom of religion in article 41, and protection of home and correspondence in article 43 are mentionable ([Cultural Survival, 2017](#)). The indigenous people, especially, the women and girls are being highly deprived from the above mentioned fundamental rights in their respective community. Thus they have given less opportunity to enjoy the

fundamental rights similar to other citizen of Bangladesh (Cultural Survival, 2017). Thus, the reports on human trafficking published by the national and international organizations as well as human trafficking prevention cell in the police department of Bangladesh are not maintaining any separate statistics on trafficking of Indigenous Peoples including women and girls.

#### **5.4. Discrimination and Marginalization**

It is guaranteed under the Constitution of Bangladesh that no one should be subjected to discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth and at the same time it obliges the Government to legislate special law in favor of woman or children or for the enhancement of any backward segment of the Citizen of Bangladesh (Article 28). Thus, the Government declared 5% indigenous or “tribal” quota in the public employment introduced in 1985 which is assured in article 29 of the Constitution. However, the ratio was not fulfilled adequately as appeared in two ILO studies as during the period of 2005-2014 only 271 (0.66%) of 2051 positions were secured by the applicants from indigenous people including women in the Bangladesh Civil Service recruitment examinations (Ferdous, 2011). In addition, removing of the quota system in the education and government services brought them into similar footing with other applicants that causes heavy burden on them, especially, for women to secure their position in an equal manner with others (IWGIA, 2019). It seems a clear discriminatory policy of the government that indirectly pushes them to seek job from abroad. However, the socio-economic conditions of the indigenous communities are lower than those of non-indigenous people of the country which is a serious ground for being trapped by the traffickers (Roy, 2012). Furthermore, the poverty and other situations have been observed in the National Poverty Reduction Strategies of the country e.g. Among the most impoverished populations in Bangladesh are members of the indigenous communities. These groups often experience discrimination and are vulnerable to exploitation by land grabbers. Social awareness within these communities is generally low, and many individuals endure ethnic bias, poor health, inadequate nutrition, and unsanitary living conditions (PRSP-II, 2008, para. 5.1.3). Therefore, extreme poverty, discrimination and marginalization put them into high risk of searching good job and better opportunity for leading good and poverty free life which is the capital of human traffickers as they usually grasp women and girls by offering good job both at home and in abroad.

#### **5.5. Oppression of Women and Girls from Indigenous Communities**

Cultural impunity and reluctance in punishing offenders is another cause of trafficking women and girls from indigenous communities in Bangladesh. Many incidences of sexual harassments and rape of indigenous women and girls remain unreported or even reported but criminals are often left without arrest and punishment. It is further reported that the member of the law enforcement agencies are also involve with such activity and some time they denied to take first information report (FIR) of an incident. This is because of the complex and hilly living area where communication is not so easy for quick reporting of the violent behavior against women and girls like harassment, rape, and trafficking. Furthermore, very few of the criminals have been punished in the above mentioned cases for number of reasons such as lack of witness, shortage or no direct evidence, corruption, and political pressure etc. Thus, the women and girls have no alternative but to save themselves from the criminals either by migration to other place in Bangladesh or to any foreign destination for employment. Therefore, on the

ground of insecurity and violence against women and girls, human traffickers are making these women and girls for their target by inducing them for better employment opportunity for good and safe life. Moreover, it is also true that the indigenous women and girls have lack of knowledge about the laws and their rights which demoralized them to fight for their own rights and against the criminals and other cause of violence, discrimination and marginalization (Islam & Mia, 2021). However, various kinds of oppression cause obstruction from having their prospective position in their community as well as in the national life. In addition, oppression hinders to access knowledge about their rights and the procedure of enjoyment in the one hand and taking part in the socio-economic activities in an equal manner similar to the non-indigenous women and girls on the other. Cruelty to the women and girls further, makes difficult for transformation of general knowledge, cultural activities of the concerned community, distinct identity and language of their own community similar to the male members of the indigenous people. Thus the prime agenda of the indigenous communities is to save their generation, especially, the women and girls from all sorts of oppressions for ensuring fundamental rights and personal liberty.

### **5.6. Non-Implementation of Peace Accord**

The major issues of Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Agreement have not been implemented since the sign of agreement in 1997 which are the prime causes of trafficking in person, especially, the women and girls from indigenous communities in Bangladesh (Bala, 2022). One of the major issues in the CHT is the land settlement dispute between indigenous and Bangladeshi people. It is reported that the state itself taken part in stealing the land of these people. It is further evident that a large number of indigenous people lost their land during the built of Kaptai Dam without providing any alternative rehabilitation support to the indigenous people by the then government. In addition, the indigenous people living in the plain land are also subjected to various oppression and displacement (Kabir, 2021). The government has undertaken several significant initiatives, including the passage of the CHT Regional Council Act 1998, the three Hill District Council Acts of 1998, and the CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission Act 2001, which was amended in 2016. Additionally, the establishment of the CHT Affairs Ministry and CHT Regional Council, the reform of interim Hill District Councils, the repatriation of Jumma refugees from the Indian state of Tripura, the closure of approximately 100 temporary camps, the formation of the Task Force and CHT Accord Implementation Monitoring Committee, and the rehabilitation of ex-combatants are all part of these efforts (Tripura, 2019). Despite these remarkable initiatives, oppression against indigenous people including women and girls is still continuing and the land less indigenous families including repatriated families from Tripura are living like internally displaced people having no specific land in the region. Thus, the circumstances make them most vulnerable where women and girls are at high risk of human trafficking as they are in need of outwork and income for the survival of their families.

### **5.7. Lack of Law Enforcement and Protection**

It is in fact highly tricky for the law and order enforcement authorities of the concerned locations to curb trafficking in person of the indigenous people, especially, female member of those communities. In order to get prompt response and legal protection, it is necessary to communicate as soon as possible the probable occurrence or occurrence being committed to the nearest police station. But it is also reality that many of the victim families remain silent or reluctant for timely reporting of the case of trafficking in

person to the law enforcement authorities for several of socio-psychological reasons. It goes without saying that today's child is leader of the tomorrow while grownup with capabilities and potentials ([United Nations Children's Fund, 2011](#); [Pan-American Health Organization, 2010](#); [Bruce, 2011](#)). But it requires better education, nutrition, health care services and other social facilities for them. In this regard, major portion of the indigenous young boys, girls and women are deprived from these opportunities and services which cause inefficiency among them and make them unskilled for empowering themselves in terms of economic and social standards compare to non-indigenous people of the country. In addition, lack of opportunities further hinders the socialization process like safe transforming from adolescent to adulthood that makes many of them unaware about high risk of being trapped by the traffickers in response to their lucrative job offers in any foreign destiny for wealthy life ([United Nations, 2009](#)). Moreover, lack of quick response from the law enforcement agencies in taking prompt action against the wrong doers, delay in criminal proceedings, lack of proper evidences and records, biasness are the potential causes of less effective application of the concerned law, protection of the rights, and security of the women and girls from indigenous people which make them vulnerable for human trafficking.

### **5.8. Societal Attitudes and Gendered Stereotyped Roles**

Non-affirmative social attitude and gendered stereotype roles further make the situation more complex in favor of the human traffickers ([Islam & Mia, 2021](#)). Patriarchal pattern of family and social structure of the indigenous communities causes gender imbalance and makes male member less active in family and social performances. This opposite role of the indigenous male and female people pushes them into a marginal life, and puts them into different kinds of deprivation and discrimination in connection with gender, identity as ethnic people and others. Inactivity of the male member further deprives from adequate access to natural and other resources which catches the reins of for their socio-economic development. Furthermore, diverse and complex inter-community relationship leads to violence on account of gender issues. Moreover, the primal customs, communal perception for women are still put them as a backward section of the people in Bangladesh that opens the door of trapped by the traffickers. These communities are still far from adequate access to education, health and nutrition facilities of the government. Therefore, lack of knowledge about the reality of the employment market and its potential threat under the blanket of lucrative employment opportunities by the human traffickers.

### **6. Recommendations**

From the above study it is clarified that the Government of Bangladesh is trying to reduce human trafficking offences by empowering police department throughout the country as well as delegating power to the concerned court to take care of the cases on human trafficking and provide appropriate and adequate justice to the victims and punishment to the convicted offenders. However, the reality is still unsatisfactory that the human traffickers are discharged in many cases for insufficiency of evidence as well as absence of witness that need to be taken into consideration by ensuring witness protection and making easy access to the law enforcement authorities to prompt communication of the occurrence or apprehension to commit such crime in their locality. Furthermore, the court or tribunal must take utmost care of the cases for ensuring justice to the victim as well as extent their unbiased cooperation in punishing the directly and indirectly involved criminals.

It can be easily understood that the female member of the indigenous people are being subjected to trafficking in person on the grounds of their helplessness from socio-legal protection. Although there are lack of record of the specific occurrences of indigenous women and girls trafficking in Bangladesh, it is reasonable assumption of the researchers and law enforcement agencies that female member of the indigenous people are being trafficked in Bangladesh. Thus, this study recommends several challenges to be resolved as early as possible such as facilitating indigenous people as Bangladeshi, rehabilitation of land less displaced families, restoring peace and security in the hill-tract region, removing land dispute, full implementation of peace accord, easy access to law and order forces, digitalization of communication, prompt action against occurrences including human trafficking, taking care of the cases related with the human trafficking and punishing the offenders are the major impediments to be removed in prevention of human trafficking of indigenous people especially, female member of these communities in Bangladesh. The enforcement of the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act 2012, alongside other relevant laws aimed at protecting women and children, such as the Women and Children Repression Act 2000 (Amendment 2003), the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2010, the Acid Control Act 2002, the Cruelty to Women and Children Act 2012, the Children Act 2013, the Pornography Control Act 2012 and the Child Marriage Restraint Act 2014, would play a crucial role in combating human trafficking in Bangladesh. Furthermore, social prevention by way of social awareness among the women and girls can be a more effective method for eliminating this heinous crime from the society as a whole.

## **7. Conclusion**

In concluding remark, it can be said that the study has thoroughly discussed the state of trafficking in person, especially women and girls from indigenous communities in Bangladesh. The paper magnitudes the problem by analyzing available data published in concerned. It also addressed the major causes of the crime and brought several recommendations as analyzed above. Since Human Trafficking is known as the modern-day slavery where human beings are being used for several criminal activities such as forced labor, date bondage, commercial sexual exploitation and many more, where most of the victims are women and girls from distinct jurisdiction, a durable legal initiative is needed from the part of Bangladesh government. In case of any failure will escalate the social security and human dignity of the women and girls not only in the region, but also globally.

## **Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate**

Not applicable

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