



Human Trafficking: The Methods and Interventions

Human trafficking is an unthinkable reality for millions of people worldwide.

Women, men, and children—exploited for profit. Enticed into marriage, only to be sold into prostitution. Abducted and forced to become a child soldier—or to sell their organs.

The scenarios can look different based on a person's geography, sex, age, and physical abilities. But the result is always the same—a loss of freedom, a life of bondage.

Our Field Partner is working on the front line in Nepal, intercepting and rescuing women and children from the clutches of traffickers. But how do they spot traffickers and what do they do to prevent the vulnerable from being snatched away?

Here, we take a look at the methods and interventions employed by 3 Angels Nepal.

How it Happens

Human trafficking has evolved into a sophisticated and covert network, operated by a complex, underground web of criminals. Peeling away the layers, you discover the intricate movement between different traffickers which sees men, women and children passed between multiple people before they reach their final destination.

In Nepal, around 35,000 people are trafficked every year, and for the majority of these women and girls, the process will start in the remote villages where they live.

The harrowing journey of human trafficking victims, coupled with the intricate movement between traffickers, paints a grim picture of the challenges faced in eradicating modern-day slavery.

Identifying potential victims early is crucial for rescue and for bringing traffickers to justice. This is why 3 Angels Nepal continues to work on the front line rescuing and intercepting women and children from the hands of traffickers.

From the rural areas, these people are passed to trafficker B, in the metropolitan areas including Pokhara where our Field Partner is based. This trafficker will organise hotels, fake papers, and spin a story to the victims about where they are going. He or she is liaising closely with the next trafficker in the chain.

Once outside of Nepal, they are passed to trafficker D, who is the representative of the brothel or forced labour site where the women and children will end up.

Here, trafficker A begins the initial grooming of vulnerable individuals, commonly targeting those facing economic hardships. Traffickers exploit their vulnerability, luring victims with false promises of a better life, education, or job opportunities.

They dangle hope in front of them and gain their trust. Often, this source trafficker will be trying to get a group of people, between 15 and 20, but sometimes up to 50 will be trafficked away from the villages at one time.

Trafficker C is the one who escorts the victim across the border. In Nepal, this is usually across the 1700km open border with India. Although more recently, traffickers are beginning to spirit these victims into neighbouring China and Bangladesh.

They are transported through irregular channels and the ever-changing routes and modes of transport further complicate efforts to intercept these illegal movements.

Since COVID, the trend in global human trafficking is changing and victims are frequently passed on to yet another criminal in the chain. Trafficker E will be the one who takes them even further from their homes and on to yet another country like the United Arab Emirates, where the demand for forced labour remains high.

How to Spot Human Trafficking

3 Angels Nepal currently employs 37 women in checkpoints along the border with India. Ninety percent of the women have previously been trafficked and are now trained to spot the signs of others following their fate. They work closely with other not-for-profit organisations (NFPs), and local government and law enforcement agencies who assist them in disrupting traffickers. So what are they looking out for as they watch hundreds of people cross the border?



1. Body language and attire

Trafficking victims may show signs of extreme fear and anxiety, especially when questioned or approached by strangers. Their eyes may dart around, avoiding eye contact, and they may appear excessively nervous or withdrawn.

Victims may display a submissive or defeated posture, keeping their heads down and shoulders slouched.

What they are wearing can be another potential clue, with anybody displaying an artificial look raising suspicions. For example, if a girl from rural Nepal is wearing western clothes and not their village dress, this can be a sign they have been dressed by a trafficker.



2. Aggression

When staff intervene at the checkpoints and ask questions, the response of the individuals helps gauge whether or not a person is being trafficked. If the first response is to retaliate or fight back, then there is usually something suspicious happening.

3 Angels Nepal staff work closely with the police during these border intercepts, as force is often required to get the victims off transport and into the monitoring station. Suspected traffickers are taken into police custody at this stage.



3. Story inconsistencies and fake documents

If staff suspect someone is being trafficked the potential victim is taken to the 3 Angels Nepal monitoring station and interviewed. They are asked open-ended questions that allow them to share their story in their own words.

3 Angels Nepal staff will attempt to contact the person they are allegedly meeting in India. Usually, if the person is being trafficked this number is either false or is not answered. This simple step is usually enough to confirm suspicions and inform the person they are being trafficked.

Staff will also inspect travel documents and have been trained to spot fake passports and marriage certificates.



Since 2006, the vigilance of 3 Angels Nepal staff at these border crossings has led to the rescue of nearly 45,000 women and children. The covid pandemic has changed the nature of trafficking around the world and in Nepal, the trend is shifting away from border crossings to internal trafficking.

With this shift, the work of 3 Angels Nepal is also changing, and their focus is moving to the community where they aim to prevent trafficking at the grassroots level through education and raising awareness.