Children Trafficked and Sexually Exploited in the Adult Entertainment Industry

Child Labour Status Report 2009
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Until the early 1990s there was little awareness that Nepal had a trafficking problem. Without NGOs or any civil society voice and a government-controlled media, trafficking was hidden from the public. With democracy, trafficking of Nepali girls to India for exploitation in brothels came under the spotlight. Over time, a stereotype of a trafficking victim emerged – an ignorant village girl tricked by the trafficker, drugged, smuggled across the border, resold to the brothel madam, kept imprisoned and forced into prostitution. Estimates of the numbers trafficked to India ranged from 4,000 to 7,000 victims annually.

By the late 1990s, Nepal was mired in civil war and internal trafficking was emerging as an issue. Women anti-trafficking activists were concerned that girls were being trafficked at younger ages. In 2001, a Tribhuvan University study for ILO estimated 12,000 girls were being trafficked every year with a quarter of these under the age of 14 and more than half under 16. Many media commentators believed that trafficking was being fueled by conflict. However, the end of the conflict resulted not in a decline in trafficking but an explosion of the adult entertainment sector and in the number of trafficked children being exploited.

While the numbers trafficked remain controversial, the fact is that thousands of young minor girls are being sexually exploited for commercial gain in Nepal’s adult entertainment sector – in massage parlors, erotic dance bars, cabin restaurants and batti pasals (local bars). A rapidly growing youth population is also causing millions of Nepalis to be on the move. Ensuring safe migration is crucial if young Nepalis are not to be trafficked for labor or commercial sexual exploitation.

The National Centre for AIDS and STD Control estimates more than 32,000 young women are engaged in commercial sex work. With programs finding more than 50% of these girls to be under 18, an estimated 16,000 minor girls are in sexually exploitative work in Nepal today, and most have been trafficked.
Who Can be Considered Trafficked?

Until recently, many Nepali’s believed all trafficking victims fitted the stereotype of young women from rural areas trafficked to Indian brothels. The United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children define trafficking as:

“the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or force or coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or a position of vulnerability or of giving or receiving payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person or having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.”

Thus, to be trafficked, it is not necessary to be transported across an international border; the consent of a recruited child or adult is not relevant if there has been abuse of power or vulnerability, fraud or deception; both men and women, adults and children can be trafficked; and trafficking can be for both labor or sexual exploitation.

Children in Commercial Sexual Exploitation

Trafficked children in Nepal can be found in many work situations but those in the worst situations are sexually exploited in the adult entertainment industry. Under ILO Convention 182 the worst forms of child labor include:

- All forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom, and forced or compulsory labour;
- The use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;
- Illicit activities, such as trafficking of drugs; and
- Work that harms the health safety or morals of children
Nepal’s Adult Entertainment Industry

Until the late 1990s, Nepal had a very discreet and hidden sex industry. Commercial sex workers were young but were seldom described as being children. The younger sex workers were hard to access but research in 1998 found that the majority of women had entered sex work as minors with 12% at ages 12-13, 25% at 14-15 and 16% at 16-17. At that time the total number of sex workers in Nepal was estimated to be about 10,000.

With years of civil war, rapid population growth and high unemployment – migration for work increased. This migration, and a breakdown of law and order and social controls fueled businesses that offered entertainment for males, including sex. With the end of ten years of civil war and a peace process under way few expected that trafficking would escalate the way it has. During the conflict, movement from the districts to urban centers and India became much more challenging with police, Maoist and army roadblocks at frequent intervals along the highways. This in fact held trafficking in check. Freer movement of travelers, an improved security and economic situation has resulted in a booming demand for workers in the domestic sex and entertainment industry, and made it easier for trafficking children to urban areas of Nepal, India and the Middle East.
The Evolving Trafficking Situation in Nepal

Historically, the greatest trafficking problem Nepal faced was the trafficking of young women to brothels in India. In recent years, this has changed and Nepal now has to respond to two new and growing trafficking problems - the internal trafficking of children and women for sexually exploitative work and child labor, and the trafficking of young men and women to other countries. USDOL and ILO were the first to start investigating the internal trafficking situation in 2001 as it became more visible. Revisiting the studies done on commercial sex workers in 1998 (Frederick 1998) it is clear that even then the majority entering sex work were minors. But in 1998, the trafficking situation was so well hidden that it was difficult to find or access the trafficked minors. The studies conducted by ILO in 2001 showed that a large percent of those employed in massage parlors and cabin restaurants in were also trafficked minors. The trafficking trends within the country and across the border are constantly changing. The Brighter Futures project collected data on beneficiaries and information from the field and as a result was able to make the following observations on the trafficking situation over the past five years.

Trafficking to India - Regional

Trafficking to India continues to be a problem, but girls from the same communities are also being trafficked internally and to countries in the Gulf. Of the trafficking survivors who had returned from India, the majority were from Janajati (ethnic minority) and Dalit groups. While false marriages and false job promises are still used to traffic women to India, many now go to India in the belief that they are en-route to other countries. The majority of the traffickers taking girls and women across the border are males. No new studies or evidence as to the numbers trafficked to India has been produced over the past five years. Many recent trafficking victims traveled to India with official passports in the belief that they are en-route to jobs as domestics in the Middle East. Often the documents obtained by middlemen falsify their age and other personal details. For traffickers, correct documentation is often not important, as they have no intention of seeing them used for international travel. Others deliberately make these less specific so that they can be used by other trafficking victims. Most victims have no idea what the passport states as all the details are in English and so even with basic literacy this is beyond their
limited education. Most have little understanding of visa requirements and believe traffickers who tell them it is safer and easier to travel via India. In addition, restrictions for women to travel to the Middle East as migrant workers from Kathmandu's international airport has helped make cross-border trafficking worse. Many trafficking survivors returning from India don't return with the support of NGOs, or access any shelters, counseling or rehabilitation services. Brighter Futures identified many girls and young women returning from India independently or with the support of families. Girls and young women returning directly to home communities reported illness as being one of the main reasons they returned home. The majority of them had been in sexually exploitative work in brothels. A flood of victims returned from circuses in 2006 and 2007 as a result of increased raids and pressure on circuses in India.

The Elimination of Child Labor in Indian Circuses

NGOs have seen a few numbers of returned trafficking victims from Indian circuses in NFE classes in Makwanpur District. This district has been one of the major sources of 'small' girls for Indian circuses. The work is difficult and dangerous and the girls are kept underfed for years on end so as to ensure they stay small and supple for the work. The Esther Benjamin's Trust and Indian NGOs have been working to end this practice in India. In a 2002 survey they found 48% of the girl children were from Nepal with the majority coming from Makwanpur District. In 2007, Indian NGOs stepped up the pressure on circuses organizing raids and rescuing trafficked children. The children rescued were then brought back to Nepal by the Esther Benjamin's Trust. The raids have made circus owners realize that recruiting Nepali children through agents is no longer a viable option.

Circus returnees brought home by agents or family started attending NFE classes for children at risk. Some of the girls in the more affected communities openly shared the fact they were sent for work in the circuses. While still young, some have spent eight or more years in this work. Other girls are reluctant to admit they were in the circus for fear of consequences for their families. These girls are from the poorest families in the communities and continue to be at great risk of being trafficked for other work.
International Trafficking

International trafficking of women for sexually exploitative work, and both men and women for labor exploitation continue to be major problems for Nepal. The huge number of manpower agents, and a distrust of government make trafficking victims more likely to trust a stranger than the police or immigration services. Increasing unemployment also makes many youth believe that migration for work is their only option. There have been few systematic efforts to promote safe migration, however, youth have avoided even the government’s compulsory pre-departure orientations in the belief that these are planned to extort additional money from them.

In May 2008, the media reported that more girls were now being trafficked to gulf countries to work in dance bars and other forms of work that involve sexual exploitation. Foreign manpower agents are actively recruiting girls from massage parlors and cabin restaurants in the Kathmandu Valley for jobs in foreign countries. Just what these jobs involve remains unclear, but NGO outreach workers are concerned that these girls may be trafficked for even greater exploitation in other countries. Isolated reports from young women now abroad confirm that some were taken with the intention to engage them in sex work. Some observers question whether these girls were first trafficked to Kathmandu with this in mind.

In 2008, the government reported that exit data showed a 24% increase in female migrant workers going abroad for employment. More and more young women are joining this growing migrant workforce. Sindhupalchowk District records show that 700 passports are being issued monthly with 40% of them being issued to women. This district has poor education levels for women and a trafficking history - making this is a serious concern. The office issuing the passports reports that the majority of those being provided with passports are illiterate women (Kathmandu Post 08/06/2008). Most are from trafficking prone VDCs and are seeking work abroad. Brighter Futures partners have come across several cases of minors, girls as young as 14, being issued with passports stating them as being older to facilitate their migration for work. Despite their enthusiasm to go and work abroad, their age and vulnerability make them trafficking victims. Many do not even reach their destination being sold en-route.

Pourakhi, an NGO working with returned labor migrants, estimates that every day 15 migrants return to Nepal having been the victims of false labor contracts, other fraud or trafficking. While this represents less than
3% of the migrants the impacts are enormous. Families are left in debt, and all too often the trafficking victim has to take on more debt to go abroad to pay back what was lost. Although Nepal has signed labor pacts and has appointed labor attachés in common migrant destinations, the Ministry of Labor and Transport does have a system to investigate complaints and many choose out of court settlements for their cases. Most complaints are against individual brokers with fewer complaints against legitimate manpower agencies.

With millions of young Nepalis on the move, traffickers are always on the lookout for the most vulnerable to exploit. Trafficking, sexual and labor exploitation affect Nepalis, both young and old, male and female. The government has paid more attention to trafficking internationally, but the issuing of passports, management of pre-departure programs, and action against individuals and companies involved in fraud and trafficking, need tightening along with mass awareness campaigns on safe migration.

**Internal Trafficking**

Over eight years the Brighter Futures partners witnessed massive shifts in the situation with regard to internal trafficking and sexually exploitative work. In the mid-nineties prostitution in Kathmandu was mainly a hidden phenomena. Sex workers and their pimps would recruit clients on the street in areas such as Ratna Park. These ‘contact points’ were well recognized by clients. Over the last five years massage parlors and cabin restaurants emerged as major new sites for the sex industry. Some of them were contact points for clients to identify sex workers while others were actually sites for sexual contact and functioned more like brothels. The end of the conflict, changing social conditions and an improving economy caused an explosion of these establishments with many new ones opening. With improved security came resurgence in nightlife, with bars, discos and restaurants staying open all night. Soon after, erotic dance bars with massive signs advertising "striptease" and "bar girls" popped up.
New "guesthouses" that do not cater to tourists but are barely-disguised brothels followed. Many of the bars and striptease establishments are 'contact points' where clients link up with commercial sex workers or trafficked minors that are being used for commercial sexual exploitation by owners or pimps. Some of these establishments have rooms for use by clients upstairs or nearby. In rare cases, the girls or women take the clients to their own rented premises.

**Child Traffickers**

Traffickers who traffic girls within Nepal are more often female than male. Many are older girls who were once trafficked themselves. Their motives for trafficking new young victims remain unclear. Some clearly do it to "replace themselves" as employers often refuse to release girls from their debts and work without a replacement. Others may be doing it for cash payments though this is usually denied.

In July 2008, a major television channel broadcast news footage about a 20-year old bar dancer who had brought two girls (10 and 11 years old) to join her at her work. These girls were brought to Kathmandu without the consent of their parents and the parents assumed that the girls were missing. The two girls were kept in a locked hotel room, were drugged and given alcohol in their water bottles. The girls were finally rescued by the police with the help of a youth force of a political party. The woman who trafficked these girls was arrested and the two girls were sent back home to their villages.

One NGO partner was also involved in an unsuccessful attempt to rescue a 13-year old trafficking victim. It turned out that this victim was trafficked by a member of security forces. Both the girl and her mother were very frightened of this particular person and were fearful that being rescued could result in worse consequences for the family. When the individual started making threats against the NGO it was necessary to abandon efforts to rescue this girl. There is no evidence that the traffickers have formal gangs and are more often independent operators who take advantage of their mobility to traffick girls. Husbands, boyfriends and pimps are also clearly trafficking and bringing girls into the sex industry. Male friends are most often the ones who initiate the girls, get them intoxicated and encourage or force them into taking clients and who often gain financially from their exploitation. Many young girls blame themselves - unaware that they have been drugged during their first encounters with customers.
Marriage Forces Monika Into Sex Work

Monika’s dream marriage has turned to a nightmare. Coming from a remote VDC in Makwanpur, Monika was married to a young boy from the local community. A year ago at fourteen years of age she found herself both married and pregnant. Her husband is just a year older than she is. Initially things went well but the family she was married into is an extremely poor farming family. The crops did not do well, and after the baby was born she and her husband decided they could not stay in the village. A man they knew in the community promised he would help them find work in the city. It was he who took her to the massage parlor to work. Just three months post-partum, Change Nepal outreach workers came across Monika in a massage parlor. Monica breastfeeds her new baby between clients. Monika says her husband is finding some work but not enough to support them yet. She is confident that things will get better and she will be able to leave this work.

Customers and Employers

Massage parlors, cabin restaurants and dance bars are usually small operations run by staff with owners rarely in sight. Often the owners have several establishments and move the girls from one to another to meet the clients demand for “fresh” girls. Most have at least one security man and one “madam” who supervises and manages the girls and is often an older sex worker no longer of interest to the customers. The average amount paid for sexual favors in 2002 (at the start of the project) was Rs.300. By 2009 this had risen to an average of Rs.500, though some girls especially those in dance bars are able to charge much more. In most establishments with under age girls 75% of this money goes to the establishment and 25% to the girl.
ILO’s Study on Demand Side of Trafficking in Children and Women in Nepal (2005) found that 86% of clients preferred a new sex worker on each visit. For age, 69% preferred girls under 18 years old, and 52% prefer girls from ethnic minorities and 65% girls from the hills. Most are repeat visitors to such establishments with 25% visiting several times a month. The majority - 62% - visit between two and ten times a year. About 13% are occasional visitors with two or less visits per year. The demand for new and young faces of minority girls from the hills drives the demand for girls to be trafficked or lured into this industry.

Although many of these establishments are managed by former sex workers, these women are rarely the owners. The employers and owners of the entertainment establishments often remain hidden in Kathmandu. Some of the erotic dance bars, massage parlors and cabin restaurants are owned by well-known criminals. One technique they use to reduce police interference is to make senior police and army officials, close to retirement, co-owners or shareholders of these establishments. This makes police personnel reluctant to interfere with their seniors’ retirement enterprises. Many of the businessmen running these establishments have chains across the city. New trafficked children in Kathmandu are introduced to sex work in the establishments around Gongbu and the ones likely to satisfy the more choosy customers of Thamel - are then transferred. Girls are moved frequently so as to be able to offer the clients fresh faces but also to evade legal problems and to make the girls more dependent on the employers and their networks. It also gives clients the impression that there are many girls in an establishment.
The clients profile varies depending on the establishment. In the dance bars the prices are high and huge profits are made on door charges, drinks and food while watching the striptease floor show. Sex is often arranged at these establishments and some have rooms situated close by for clients use while others make use of local guesthouses. Here, a mix of Nepali professionals and businessmen, Indian tourists and smaller numbers of westerners can be found. In the massage parlors the physical environment is often modest and the majority of clients are Nepali – government officials, businessmen, office workers, tourism workers, police and many students. Many massage parlors arrange girls to visit special clients and tourists in nearby hotels and guesthouses for an extra fee. There are also “guesthouses” emerging which function as brothels with guesthouse signage, but with no rooms for visitors to stay. These cater to more demanding clients willing to pay more. In cabin restaurants, the clientele is more middleclass or working poor and is almost exclusively Nepali. The security forces 'army and police' and government workers, transport workers, students and office workers are its major clientele. The bhatti pasals are more often located along the highways and on the fringes of cities and towns and cater more to transport workers and migrants.

**Children in Commercial Sexual Exploitation**

A UNICEF study in 1998, found that a high percentage of women engaged in commercial sex work or in sexually exploitative work said that they had entered the work as minors. However, it is very difficult to access these minors and determine how they enter the sex industry. The numbers of women engaged in commercial sex work or in sexually exploitative work has grown dramatically in recent years. The most recent AIDS prevention program estimates from 2008, by the government's National AIDS and STD Control Centre, are that 32,000 women are in this situation. From earlier studies and project experience we can estimate that more than half these women and girls are minors and a majority were trafficked into sex work. Based on our experience - on average, trafficked girls work two to three years before being removed from sexually exploitative work. This would mean about 5,500 to 7,000 new girls are being trafficked internally each year.

Many of the girls are deceived by traffickers with promises of jobs in hotels and restaurants. They come willingly expecting to be able to lead a better life in Kathmandu. Some are promised opportunities to continue on to higher education not available in their villages. The largest number
of girls trafficked internally are from Janajati (about 60%) Dalit (20%) and other groups (20%). It is very difficult to determine the true age of girls as they are coached to lie about their age by traffickers, employers and other trafficking victims. In 2003, the average age at which girls in the Brighter Futures program had been trafficked was about 16 years of age. This has declined with younger girls being trafficked, and in 2008 the average new victim was in the 14-15 age group. The youngest girls in the worst conditions were from the Dalit community. There is no evidence if this declining age is because of customer preference or if these girls are easier to traffic and exploit. However, NGOs workers believe that an increasing number of clients look for younger sex workers and this drives traffickers to seek out new recruits. This also reduces the access of NGOs to these young girls as they are more closely guarded.

Young girls brought into sex work are seldom aware of the work they are to undertake. Some say they were aware from other girls that they were sent for sex work, but say they had no choice and that families insisted on them going. Many say that they were given “advances” to get to Kathmandu and to buy clothes, pay advance rent and for luxury items like mobile phones effectively putting them in debt bondage.

In the experience of Brighter Futures, girls in the massage parlors tend to be the least literate with many being totally illiterate. The girls in cabin restaurants are more often school dropouts, while dance bars look for more educated girls that can socially interact with clients.
New In The City

Anita perches nervously on the armrest of the sofa, fiddling with her expensive new mobile phone in a massage parlor in Thamel. When quizzed about her schooling she explains that she was in grade 6 but dropped out. She didn’t find school interesting and it was a long hike from home to the Lower Secondary School in Sindhupalanchok. 15 year old Anita, bored with village life was excited when her cousin’s friend suggested she get a job in Kathmandu. Anita’s mother hoped she would be able to send money back home. At first Anita thought she would be able to send a lot of money home, but now she finds it’s going to be harder than she imagined.

It was not possible to talk with Anita alone. The woman who manages the massage parlor hovers, and the bouncer sits close to the door to prevent the girls leaving, and stop unwelcome visitors.

Anita is a new young Tamang girl in the massage parlor favored by all customers. She is expected to provide sex to her customers at Rs.500/visit. Of this, she gets to keep 25% or Rs.125. At first, she thought this was a good income but now she realizes Kathmandu is expensive and despite her sharing a room she has to pay for rent, food, clothes and transport. She also took a loan from the owner to buy her mobile phone for Rs.15,000 as her new friends convinced her she needed one. Anita says “Now that I am bigrio (spoiled) what choice do I have but to stay in this work?”

“I was fifteen when I started working in a shop but I could not do the math with the customers or record the sales properly and lost my job. I then started working in a massage parlor as it did not require any kind of education. But I was unaware that I would be sexually exploited there. When I came to know about Change Nepal’s NFE classes I joined and learnt the educational skills I was lacking.”

Thamel NFE Participant
Home Districts

Girls involved in the entertainment industry usually closely guard information on their age, names and homes. However, over time Brighter Futures staff managed to find out more about these girls and their home situations. They found that girls are trafficked from across Nepal with girls coming from east to west and north to south. Through the program 1,868 minors were reached and they came from various districts from most all ethnic groups. The hill districts closest to Kathmandu (Kavre, Sindhupalanchok, Nuwakot, Dhading and Makawanpur) are the most affected. Tamang and Dalit girls from these communities remain disproportionately affected by trafficking. Speculation as to why this is so is difficult to confirm or deny. Historical trafficking networks; greater vulnerability and a lack of social protections; lack of opportunities in these districts; family dysfunction may all contribute. One definite factor though is the proximity of these districts to the capital and lure of work. Traffickers too look at their profits and the shorter the distance these girls are moved - the lesser the risk.

Responses to Trafficking

Despite the commitment and co-ordination at the national level, the response to a growing trafficking problem remains erratic and inadequate. Law enforcement is lax, and despite joint raids by Maoists and police on Thamel massage parlors and dance bars at different times over the past three years, many of the young girls claim that both groups took money to not take any action. Along the highways, nothing seems to be done to prevent brothels exploiting under age girls or using middlemen and traffickers to bring girls into the trade. Many of these establishments have blatant criminal protection, and networks of transport workers threaten strikes and actions if the police try to interfere.

Prosecution of Traffickers – Legal programs focus on prosecution in a handful of cross-border trafficking cases. A new Trafficking Act was passed by the government but in its first year not a single case regarding an internal trafficking victim was brought forward. The police say they have no mechanism or resources to determine the age of a victim, and no evidence to support a prosecution. No laws or regulations are in place to guide the police to deal with trafficked minors. As most are in debt and fear for their own safety, the victims are reluctant to testify and refuse to stay in rehabilitation homes unless severely injured or abused.
Rehabilitation of Trafficking Survivors – There are numerous rehabilitation centers in different parts of the country. Most are exclusively for trafficking victims while others also take in victims of domestic violence and rape. Those that take trafficking victims repatriated from India rarely accommodate those victims who are internally trafficked or from the Middle East or other countries. The majority of these shelters are full most of the time, and struggle to find sufficient funds and resources to meet the needs of the trafficking victims they support. When raids were stepped up in monsoon 2008, it was suggested that the minors found trafficked into sexually exploitative work should be taken by the police to these rehabilitation centers. These centers do not have the space, staff or the resources to support so many internal trafficking victims. The services offered vary depending on the shelter, but most include short-term shelter, psychosocial counseling and vocational training. Outreach and follow-up support post re-integration in the community varies greatly.

Interception During Trafficking – Maiti Nepal, ABC Nepal and Saathi-all have interception programs at critical points on the highway and Indian border. Helpline and CWIN monitor the bus parks and main drop-off points where children are trafficked in to the Kathmandu Valley. These efforts act as a deterrent and catch significant numbers of trafficking victims. However the more experienced traffickers can easily recognize and evade these interception points. Many rights groups also question the NGOs’ right to interrupt passengers’ journeys even though it usually only involves a few minutes of delay. The traffickers often abandon a victim as soon as they are questioned, while genuine relatives have no difficulty answering a few questions. Again a lack of funds mean these efforts are at times erratic – a situation that traffickers are quick to exploit.

Prevention and Safe Migration – Efforts to prevent trafficking and promote safe migration have been nominal - reaching just a handful of communities and potential migrants in most districts. Research on pre-departure programs shows that few actually attend the required pre-departure programs, and the instructors are poorly trained on the issues such as labor exploitation, trafficking and AIDS prevention
(G.Gurung 2006), Nepal participated in the SARI/Q Initiative (an AED regional project supported by USAID) that resulted in the production of a toolkit in Nepali for Safe Migration. A small grant was to be provided to reproduce and disseminate these materials but the approved funding never arrived and the materials remain unused.

These trends, if allowed to continue, will increase the numbers of trafficking victims needing assistance, and make it more difficult to access victims and provide services for their eventual removal. If law enforcement is tightened it could create a surge of desperate girls being forced out of establishments in Nepal - ultimately making them more vulnerable to being trafficked to other countries if services cannot immediately respond. These changes create new challenges for anti-trafficking programs and make it even more important for collaboration to ensure a holistic approach to address trafficking and safe migration.

**Brighter Futures and Education**

Brighter Futures set out to provide education to help withdraw children from the sex industry and to use education as a tool for re-integration. Over eight years the Brighter Futures Program was able to help thousands of young girls and women trafficked into sexually exploitative work or at risk of being trafficked. In all, the project reached 2,590 beneficiaries with services that were survivors of trafficking. Of these, 2,329 were victims of internal trafficking and 261 were girls that had been trafficked to India. 2,507 trafficking survivors were reached with core project funds and USAID provided small additional funding in 2007-08 that enabled the project to do some interception of internal trafficking victims, provide counseling, emergency shelter and reintegration and provide education for an additional 1,083 trafficked minors in sexually exploitative work.

**Access To Victims**

Under Brighter Futures, World Education started to try and access internally trafficked girls and get them in to education programs and then remove them completely from exploitative work. Initially NGOs found it almost impossible to even access these girls. However, as they delivered services to initial beneficiaries others became interested in getting similar help. The NGO staff also developed the skills of the outreach workers. Over time they became adept at entering massage parlors, *bhatti pasals*, cabin restaurants and dance bars to contact girls. They built up a network of girls they had helped who put them in contact with new girls that had recently been trafficked.
The NGOs outreach workers visited massage parlors, cabin restaurants, guesthouses, dance bars and illegal brothels where minors are trafficked for sexually exploitative work. Many minors either do not realize they have been trafficked, or accept it as their fate. The youngest and newest trafficking victims are often well hidden and initially too frightened to talk to NGO workers. Outreach workers have a difficult task building a rapport with the trafficking victims, and often have to deal with the unsavory characters who manage these establishments, to make contact with new trafficking victims. This is at times dangerous and they are often abused and ridiculed for their efforts. They have also shared that they are frustrated by the fact that there are so many victims in terrible situations that they cannot help, or worse, victims who refuse help out of fear or despair.

Brighter Futures reached out to many trafficking victims, intercepted while being trafficked in sexually exploitative work in their workplace or through drop-in centers. It has been difficult to count the exact numbers reached through these repeated visits. Many are too restricted, too frightened or embarrassed to come in to an education program. Once in contact with an outreach worker these identified young girls are visited regularly to encourage and support them to change their lives and come in for help.

The Educational Services

After contact with an outreach worker, NGOs would identify the most suitable program for these survivors. Most trafficking survivors first needed nonformal education, followed by either vocational education, or a return to school.

Nonformal Education

Most trafficking survivors first joined a nonformal education class. Even those with literacy and numeracy skills often lacked in self-confidence and self-esteem that they were likely to drop out of vocational programs without adequate preparation. In shelter situations there is a degree of mutual support that girls still in exploitative work lack. Girls who are still working are influenced by pimps, madams, partners, criminals and co-workers who seek to discourage them from participating in classes.
Most Successful Approaches

- **Curriculum Choice**— Nonformal education classes used two curriculums. One was the Girl’s Access to Education (GATE) reproductive health and trafficking curriculum, and the other was Jeevan Shiksha - a more comprehensive modular curriculum, from which topics of interest could be chosen.

- **Reproductive Health Content**— Many girls were older than the intended audience for GATE but needed the content as they were confused about their own reproductive health and how to protect themselves. As a result, many were very interested in using this curriculum.

- **Trafficking Content**— Introducing the trafficking content was seen as maybe being a bit insensitive for girls that had already been trafficked, however NGOs found that this helped girls to open up and discuss the whole issue and their experiences. Many trafficked girls, desperate for a way out find themselves further trafficked abroad. A discussion and an understanding of trafficking and safe migration proved to be of great interest to these girls.

- **Money Management**— The Jeevan Shiksha curriculum included topics that address knowledge and skills related to financial literacy; use of calculators; functional math for daily life; how to save; how to keep accounts; how to use a financial institution or bank; how to be a part of a microfinance group; and how to start a business. Girls in the adult entertainment industry earn a lot of money compared to other sectors but their lifestyle encourages waste and debt. Taking charge of their money, saving and planning for the future are important steps to get out of the situation they are in and proved to be a major draw for class participation and an aid for eventual removal from the sex industry.
Class Timings and Location – Girls in the sex industry are often ashamed of the work they are engaged in and are fearful of the goondas (criminals) that control the industry and the police. They also fear exposure to their families and the community in which they live. Where they attend classes can affect their safety and expose them to arrest or public humiliation.

Classes in residential areas – Most girls in the sex industry have very limited lives moving between two locations where they live and where they work. Many spend a fortune on taxis to reduce the chances of their being seen going to work. For many girls attending classes close to where they live was preferred. Attending classes in these neighborhoods enabled them to extend the part of their day when they could behave like normal children interacting with a facilitator and friends.

Open Learning Centers and Drop-in Centers – Located close to work areas these centers were able to offer learning opportunities and other services. With Open Learning Centers girls could spend more or less time depending on their situation and interests. These centers proved valuable contact points at which girls could access more help. Counselors, legal advice, health care, emergency help and repatriation services could be more easily accessed through these centers.

"Joining the NFE class run by Change Nepal brought a major turning point in my life. After knowing how to get my money calculations done properly and with support from my family, I have myself started a small shoe shop. I am happy now, as I can look at myself in the mirror and smile and say I have a dignified life."

Mailee Rai All the names of survivors of trafficking have been changed in order to protect their identity., Khotang, 15 years
Creating A Network of Friends

- **Friends Outside the Workplace** – Nonformal education classes provide not just opportunities to learn and plan for the future, but a network of friends with similar experiences to help girls cope and take action to change their lives. Many girls reported that before joining classes they knew no one but the girls they worked with. As they shopped, cleaned and cooked in the mornings and worked afternoons and evenings they never had a chance to meet anyone. Through classes they met girls who had escaped the industry and others planning to do so. These support networks developed through classes were important to help girls when they were ready and able to leave the industry.

**Challenges**

- **High Costs** – Space for classes in areas with adult entertainment businesses like Thamel, Koteswore, Kalanki, Naya Baneshwor and Gongabu is expensive. Facilitators living in Kathmandu face high living and transportation costs. All this makes running nonformal education classes expensive. Running two sessions in one venue makes for greater cost-efficiency but can reduce access as girls are reluctant to attend classes unless close to where they live.

- **Lack of Suitable Venues** – Finding space for classes proves difficult. In high rent neighborhoods and in the areas the girls live, rooms are often small and cramped. Larger rooms are not available and many landlords are reluctant to rent if they are aware the girls are in the sex industry. A separate space for counseling is often not available.

- **Disturbed and Traumatized Participants** – Facilitators often have girls in classes that are traumatized by their situation. Linking these girls to psychosocial counseling and providing groups support was important to enable and encourage them to continue in classes.

- **Babies and Childcare** – Many of the girls quickly become teenage mothers. Not only are children taken to the workplace but they are often brought to the classes. This creates a special challenge and if not addressed these young women drop out.
**I Wanted To Study**

Purnima comes from a hill district in East Nepal far from Kathmandu. She wanted to be a high school teacher and continue her schooling, but her parents could not afford it. A young man from her village visiting home for the holidays convinced her that he could get her a job in a restaurant in Kathmandu, and she could work evenings and study in the mornings at a 10+2 college. In 2006, Purnima ended up in Thamel. She had never imagined such places existed where girls danced naked while men drank and clapped and cheered, and that the girls had to sell sex. Purnima cannot explain why she didn’t just flee and go home and give up. She said once she was in that mess it was hard to leave.

Months later she met a Brighter Futures outreach worker who helped her get vocational training to be a waitress and a scholarship to continue her studies. Months later Purnima landed a job in a five-star hotel and re-enrolled in school. Purnima is now determined that one day she will really be a teacher.

**Scholarships**

Many of the girls in this industry are school dropouts and a return to school is a possibility. Brighter Futures experience over the last eight years, however, has shown that this is rarely possible. Most girls are a year or more out of school by the time they are removed from their exploitative situations.

These girls feel embarrassed and ashamed and are unwilling to re-enter the formal school environment. Scholarships are most useful for younger girls, quickly removed from their situations and who are outraged by what has happened to them and less likely to blame themselves for having been trafficked. Older girls lured in to sex work on the pretext of being able to work and continue their education are also interested in scholarships. However, the challenge is finding them safe work while they continue their studies.
Vocational Education

Family poverty and a lack of employment opportunities for young people, especially young women, in rural Nepal is a major driving force that results in them coming to the cities and towns for work. Most imagine themselves landing office, factory or restaurant jobs and few envisage the type of sexually exploitative work they end up in. Most have dropped out of school but remain illiterate despite attending one or two years of school. They want to take vocational training but often lack ideas as to what they might do or where they plan to live. To meet their need for vocational training, NGOs have experimented with a number of approaches. Self-employment training has been most successful for the less educated girls who want to return home to their villages. More educated girls determined to stay in the city have done better with occupation-specific focused training. NGOs have provided 1,313 girls faced with commercial sexual exploitation with vocational training.

Those attending self-employment training have since then formed themselves into self-help groups doing microfinance, and 690 now work either in groups or individually to run small enterprises. Self-employment is a challenge for youth, but in these difficult economic times with few employers hiring, many youth either have no alternative or earn more by being self-employed. The participants in the project have started their own micro-enterprise activities and are generating modest incomes that should grow over time. Of the participants who have been trafficked into sexually exploitative work another 133 are building small businesses so that they can completely leave their current jobs. The self-help groups formed by the graduates are proving valuable in helping these young women address the challenges running their new enterprises and enabling them to manage their finances and access credit. These young entrepreneurs would benefit greatly from further technical support. NGO partners continuing to support these efforts are working to link the graduates to government line agencies and other technical training to build their businesses.
Most Successful Approaches

- **Use of Nonformal Education As A Bridge** – Girls who have been sexually exploited often lack self-esteem and are resigned to their situation and incapable of planning for the future. Participation in nonformal education rebuilds self-esteem; helps girls socialize and interact in more normal settings; and helps them prepare for alternative work. Classes also help them refresh and build on literacy and numeracy skills needed for the work environment.

- **Career Counseling** – Without career counseling many girls chose traditional types of training—such as tailoring—without considering the actual work options where they will be living after the training. Use of the “Life and Work Planning” booklet prepared by World Education with CTEVT helped girls identify their skills and understand potential options that would work for them.

- **Self-employment** – Finding suitable employment for young girls coming out of the sex industry can be a challenge. Many entry-level jobs have modest salaries compared to what they have previously earned. Also many girls have psychosocial problems that make it difficult for them to fit in to a regular work environment. Others return home to villages with few employment opportunities. NGOs have found that these girls often do better in self-employment. Favored and successful businesses have included teashops, restaurants, beauty parlors, hairdressing salons, tailoring shops, grocery businesses, making candles, snack food, bangles, beads and jewelry making. The Self-employment and Economic Education Program (SEEP) gave girls the knowledge and basic experience running a business and helped them get started and have a viable alternative to sex work.

- **Tailored trainings** – NGOs used experts from within different trades to provide specially tailored trainings for the girls. This proved more successful than trying to send girls to training institutes. Girls also built confidence and connections by being linked to real people in the trades who wanted to mentor and assist them to find new jobs and lives.
**Identification of Potential Employers** – Many businesses associated with the tourism industry see the dark side of the entertainment industry and the exploitation of minors. These employers have been particularly supportive of retraining and hiring these girls to work in hotels, restaurants and tangka painting enterprises that are not exploitative. More social recognition is needed to encourage these employers to take on girls removed from sex work without exposing their identities.

**Links to Microfinance** – Money management skills are the first new skills learned in an education program girls put to use. Starting savings to get out of debt are important but microfinance also provides a source of funds to start a business and to access advanced training for girls being removed from sex work.

“Working in the massage parlor and being sexually exploited at work was devastating me mentally and physically but enrolling into NFE and then doing an apprenticeship in a beauty parlor has changed my life. No more do I curse myself for being the ruined one in the society. I now work in the beauty parlor and when I go back home I sleep a good night’s sleep. I am happy I am out of that mentally and physically torturous work.”

Bindu Lhamichhane - 17 years – Change Nepal Beneficiary
Challenges

- **Time Taken to Establish a Viable Business** – Starting a new business takes time and has its ups and downs. Many girls stay in sex work while building up their business before leaving sex work completely. The need to keep earning until the new business replaces the income can keep girls in high-risk situations.

- **Need For On-going Business Development Services** – Girls starting businesses need ongoing help to upgrade their businesses. For this they often need more advanced training, access to technical help and marketing networks and help to access credit.

- **Return to Rural Areas** – Returning home to the village is often the only option for girls if they are to leave the life behind in which they have become entangled in the city. Doing so limits the employment options and cuts them off from ongoing support and services.

- **High Costs of Vocational Training** – Occupation-specific vocational training is expensive and time consuming. For many girls attending full time would mean providing hostel accommodation. This has not been possible and many of these girls are distrustful and reluctant to enter any sort of institution or home. If forced to - they simply run away. Finding options that enable them to continue working while gaining skills for complete removal has worked best, but even this is still very costly with many more girls wanting help than is available. Once trained, many girls need further support to find work or set themselves up in a business.

- **High Unemployment and Competition for Jobs** – Each year 600,000 young people enter the job market while 200,000 retire. Boys often migrate abroad for work. For girls the competition for work is intense. Girls coming out of sex work often have less education and lack the connections and resources to find jobs in a competitive market.

“While working in a cabaret restaurant I went through the worst of times. Being sexually harassed at work had become a way of life for me. I could not think beyond being used by people without my consent. But coming in contact with Saathi gave me an opportunity to change my profession. After the tailoring training now I have opened up my own tailoring shop which has brought in new hope for life. Now I do not need to worry about not being paid my salary on time.”

Renu Saha, Dolakha - Saathi beneficiary
COMPLEMENTARY SERVICES

Working with girls that have been trafficked and have ended up in sexually exploitative work is more challenging than working with children in other forms of child labor. While traumatized and abused children are found in many other sectors - girls in domestic work, in carpet and brick factories, boys in recycling - those in sex work face additional problems with social stigma. Despite public perceptions there are very few services available to victims of trafficking and sexually exploitative work. Services that are available often can accommodate and help only small numbers of those that need these services. Brighter Futures helped 1,868 girls in sexually exploitative work over eight years but NGOs estimate that more than 40,000 girls and women that had been trafficked needed those services during that time. Services NGO partners provided through the program were:

Psychosocial Counseling

The girls are first identified through outreach efforts and then referred for professional counseling to receive help from a trained counselor. The trained counselor worked with these victims to help protect them from further harm, access health services and protect themselves from HIV and AIDS, cope with the trauma of being trafficked and the situation they found themselves in, and worked with them to determine the steps to take to rebuild their lives away from the trafficking environment. Once the victims enroll in education programs, the counselor supports them to stay in the program and make changes needed to be completely removed from exploitative work. Three Kathmandu-based NGOs initially shared a counselor supported with matching funds with 914 girls receiving professional services. This is now being supported by Terre des Hommes. NGOs feel that a trained counselor is essential to assist outreach workers and facilitators to provide care for these girls.
Health Care and HIV/AIDS Prevention

Girls in sexually exploitative work face many health risks and problems. Separated from home and support systems they are often unsure when to ask for help and where to go. AIDS prevention programs are well rooted in many communities with peer educators in many of the establishments providing condoms and advice. The youngest and most vulnerable children though are kept well hidden and are at the highest risk of infection with sexually transmitted diseases and the least able to negotiate condom use. In addition many girls have other health problems predating their entry into sex work. NGO staff have built up relationships with public and community clinics where these girls are referred for health services. Many seek to be tested for HIV and support to access such testing services.

Inception and Early Re-integration

Internal trafficking victims are usually brought to Kathmandu from the surrounding districts by public bus. Many of these trafficking victims pass through the Gongabu bus park. Working with Helpline, 512 girls being trafficked were successfully intercepted. These girls were counseled, provided with emergency shelter and reunited with their families or relatives either in Kathmandu or their home districts. Increased efforts to intercept girls and a breakdown in control by the transport police enabled traffickers to disembark at more points around the city. Traffickers also learnt to recognize interception points and were found stopping in locations like Bhaktapur and then moving victims by taxi from there making it difficult to intercept them. NGO partners, Helpline and CWIN both operate booths at the bus park and shelter homes using internal resources. Each month about 30 young girls are identified at the bus park as they arrive at the bidding of traffickers to join jobs in hotels. Increasingly - to avoid detection - the traffickers have them travel alone and take a taxi from the bus park. Others on realizing the nature of the work they have been promised quickly run away and return to the bus park. These services were invaluable as without them these girls risk being re-trafficked by others. There is still an urgent need to provide funds to support NGO presence at the bus parks and transit points in order for them to continue to reach-out to the trafficking survivors and prevent children entering exploitative work.
Legal Services

Efforts have been made to link beneficiaries to legal services. Many organizations supporting trafficking victims are keen to provide legal help to prosecute traffickers. Most internal trafficking victims though are reluctant to be involved in any sort of legal case against employers or traffickers. They fear police action as many have been rounded up in police raids and then fined and released. Change Nepal working with Terre des Hommes has been working to try and prevent juveniles from being locked up with adults and charged as adults. Efforts though to take girls from police custody to shelters have not been successful as girls have their own place with all their possessions and are often too frightened to just walk away from their jobs for fear of the long-term consequences. Girls who seek legal services do so to resolve more common problems; a lack of legal identity; fraudulent debts; land issues that have impoverished their families; abandonment and marital problems and the need for family support. Many of the girls, despite being young, have husbands or partners and children that they help support, and when abandoned often struggle to cope with getting documentation and rights and support for their children.

Child Care and Children’s Education

Teenage mothers with young children find themselves in more difficult situations. They know they need to get out of sexually exploitative work but are unable to find a viable alternative. They take their young babies with them to work and other women and girls mind them while they attend to customers. As they get older this is not possible and children cannot be brought to work. Young children also make it more difficult for young mothers to access services, education and training. Children are a huge driving force for young mothers to leave the sex industry and find more respectable employment to pay for their children’s education. NGO partners have tried to assist some mothers linking their pre-school children to Early Childhood Development classes. Others have assisted beneficiaries to set up reciprocal care so they can attend classes. Addressing the needs of young mothers is a special challenge that needs to be met.
**Emergency Shelters**

NGOs continue to run a number of shelters and rehabilitation centers. Some of these cater to the needs of survivors intercepted during trafficking or repatriated from India. Maiti Nepal, Saathi, Shakti Samuha and ABC Nepal, all having centers. The Esther Benjamin’s Trust manages a shelter for children trafficked to circuses in India. CWIN runs shelters and is able to take in both trafficked boys and girls. Helpline focuses on internally trafficked victims and runaways at high risk of being trafficked or ending up in exploitative work. Pourakhi provides shelter and rehabilitation services for those trafficked internationally. Under new trafficking legislation the government is required to provide shelter and initially considered running government shelters but later decided to support rehabilitation shelters and services being provided by three local NGOs. The shelters supported by the government are however not permitted to provide shelter for internal trafficking victims or migrants trafficked for labor exploitation. Despite these efforts, most shelters are full most of the time and face a constant struggle for funds. Due to the shortage of space any major efforts to remove minors trafficked internally gets more difficult.

**Awareness Raising For Safe Migration**

To prevent trafficking, two approaches were used by Brighter Futures partners. Within nonformal education classes, for girls at risk and already trafficked girls, materials on trafficking were introduced and discussed. Girls trafficked once are at high risk of being further trafficked to India or another country. In addition, in work places such as carpet factories, transport hubs and in the trafficking prone districts of Dhading and Makawanpur the project supported peer educators to work with youth in the community likely to migrate to share information on safe migration and AIDS prevention. Drama groups were also trained to put on public performances and to participate in school career days to discuss migration for work and safe migration with senior students. Art, music and sports competitions were also supported in these communities for further outreach. While effective, these efforts need to be constantly maintained as each year a whole new cohort of young people are moving in search for work, to study or to marry.
Nepal's trafficking situation is evolving rapidly and Brighter Futures was able to have a major impact on the lives of hundreds of young beneficiaries. The challenge now is to address the growing trafficking problems in Nepal's unstable political environment while in transition to a new system. Through the project the level of awareness of the government, the donor community, INGOs and NGOs and UN agencies has been raised. Working with the Inter-Agency Co-ordination Group, World Education has been able to step up advocacy efforts and will work with the US Embassy, UNICEF and the government as they design new strategies and programs to address the problem.

### Pedophiles and Pornography

The exploitation of young female trafficking victims by Indian and Nepali pedophiles in the entertainment centers of Thamel is relatively recent. The trend though for Nepal to be associated with child sex and pornography is new and is likely to result in an increasing number of cases. There is an urgent and growing need to push for licensing these entertainment establishments and restricting work in them to adults only. There is also a need to clarify the laws on the sexual exploitation of children so that police, NGOs and human rights groups can more aggressively address pedophilia.

Foreign pedophiles from many other countries are also active in Nepal with both boys and girls being targeted. As other countries such as Thailand, Sri Lanka and Cambodia clamp down on minors in the sex industry and pedophiles, Nepal’s lack of regulation is a concern and likely to attract unwelcome visitors. Several high profile cases have come to light in recent years but Nepal's police and legal system are still weak at dealing with such cases.

Over the last few years yet another form of commercial sexual exploitation of children emerged with Nepali girls and in a few cases Nepali boys being used to produce pornography. The girls from the sex industry with or without their knowledge are being filmed for blue movies being shown on the internet. Nepali migrant workers within Nepal and abroad seem to be the main target for these poorly produced films.
This final project report provides an analysis of the current trafficking situation and the commercial sex industry as it affects children and their rehabilitation. Through the efforts of the NGOs partners and other stakeholders a number of important lessons have been learned that need to be taken into account in future efforts. The most important of these are:

- **Role of media** – The media often has sensational, superficial and unsophisticated coverage on trafficking and the domestic sex industry. This serves to reinforce the stereotypes and prejudices held by policy makers, law enforcement officers and the general public. Where children in commercial sexually exploitative work are concerned it promotes the “bad girl” image with resentful and defiant teens shown in provocative clothing. This undermines the sense that it is a government and community responsibility to protect and rehabilitate these girls.

- **Role of Police and Legal System** – The police and legal system do recognize the plight of these children but are erratic when it comes to law enforcement. A judicial ruling requires the Chief District Officers, Women Development Officers, and Police to enforce the laws with regard to entertainment establishments. Juvenile Justice standards also need to be respected. To make progress, use of hand x-rays and regular prosecution of those with minors found working needs to be pushed. Too often raids and efforts to address the adult entertainment industry have been half-hearted and short-lived and rarely result in prosecutions.

- **Role of Employers and Trade Unions** – Employers and trade unions often express a willingness to regulate the industry. In the early years of Brighter Futures, massage parlor owners adhered to a voluntary Code of Conduct preventing minors from working. As soon as the industry picked up post-conflict this was ignored with children being hired. Unions and employers need to push for a better regulated adult industry with no trafficked minors working if they are to have a predictable industry that is not subject to constant social and police pressure.

- **Role of Donors, National Human Rights Commission and INGOs/NGOs and Networks in Advocacy** – The donor agencies, foreign ambassadors, Office of the National Rapporteur on Trafficking, the Inter-agency Co-ordination Group on Trafficking and advocacy by other INGOs/NGOs and anti-trafficking networks has been critical to keep attention on the trafficking issue. These groups have gradually taken up the issue of internal trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children.
NGO Collaboration – NGOs working with trafficking victims all suffer from high demand and inadequate resources. This puts them in direct competition for resources undermining co-operation. Where NGOs have collaborated and shared services - this has helped increase the coverage and efficiency of services. More efforts to share psychosocial counseling, shelters, health, financial or legal services would help expand support. Regional collaboration facilitated by SARI-Q helped many actors gain a greater understanding of regional and international trafficking, strategies, policies and build networks to address trafficking.

Microfinance and Money Management Skills – Debt bondage is another major issue, and factor in trafficking. Poor money management skills keep girls trapped in the sex industry. Microfinance programs that build savings and provide access to loans have a major role to play in helping girls exit the industry. Traditional microfinance programs have avoided such clients in the past, seeing them as high risk and NGOs working with survivors need to build special programs to integrate financial literacy and microfinance.

Follow-up After Graduation – Once girls are ready to leave the sex industry they do a quick “disappearing act”. They often change their names (many use pseudonyms while in sex work) and cover their tracks as much as possible. NGOs find it difficult to trace the girls to see how they are using new knowledge and skills and what work they are engaged in. NGO staff do not want to damage the girls efforts to reintegrate and leave their experiences in sex work behind. More research is needed though to better understand the pathways out of sex work and the long-term impacts and needs of reintegrated girls.

Time Taken to Withdraw Girls – Many trafficked girls are 16 and 17 years of age when identified for help. A small number of girls are removed as a result of raids, while most are reached through outreach workers and community based services. This is time consuming and many are young adults older than 18 by the time they are completely removed from the sex industry.
World Education Brighter Futures partner NGOs providing services for children trafficked and sexually exploited in the adult entertainment industry.

- Change Nepal
- Shakti Samuha
- Saathi
- Integrated Community Development Center
- Community Women Development Center
- Suryodaya Yuva Club
- Biswas Nepal
- Maiti Nepal
- MEET Nepal
- Sundar Nepal
- Helpline
- Agro-forestry Basic Health and Cooperatives Nepal
- Boudha Bahunepati Pariwar
- Grameen Mahila Shakari Sanstha

The Brighter Futures Program is an eight year initiative supported by the USDOL with matching support from UNICEF, WFP and private donors to eliminate child labor though education. Over eight years the project has provided educational and other support to 43,291 children working in the worst forms of child labor in Nepal and 72,140 children at risk.

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