

BASE Organization (Backward Society Education)

Safe Migration to Combat Trafficking Project

Roundtable with Policymakers and Stakeholders in Lumbini Province



1. Introduction

The Indo-Nepal cross-border migration presents complex challenges, particularly in Lumbini province which shares a border with India. While the open border arrangement between Nepal and India facilitates legitimate movement, it has become increasingly vulnerable to exploitation by



traffickers who target Nepalese women, men, girls, and children for both cross-border and third-country trafficking. To address this protracted issue, BASE Nepal and Just Rights for Children with the support of GiZ, convened an Indo-Nepal dialogue on safe migration and trafficking prevention in Dang district of Lumbini Province on 10 January 2025. The dialogue focused on identifying key concerns around cross-border migration management and developing realistic, actionable solutions to ensure safer and better-managed migration. Additionally,

participants explored the roles of various stakeholders, with special emphasis on the Lumbini provincial government's responsibility in addressing these unique human mobility challenges.

2. Date and Venue

The roundtable meeting was held on 10th January, 2025 from 9:00 AM to 12:30 PM at Hotel Pauwa, Bhalubang Dang Lumbini Province, Nepal.

3. Key points emerged during the discussion

One important aspect of the dialogue was to diagnose the problem associated with cross-border migration. The problems discussed during the dialogue can be broadly clustered into three major categories, namely, *border management*, *data and documentation*, and the *trafficking and security concerns*.



a. Border Management Issues

Four major issues were emerged under the border management and they are summarized as follows;

- Open border arrangement lacks adequate surveillance mechanisms, benefiting traffickers: The unrestricted and poorly managed movement between Nepal and India, while beneficial for legitimate travel, also creates opportunities for traffickers to transport vulnerable Nepalese people across borders without detection.
- Limited checkpoints but numerous unmonitored corridors prone to human trafficking: While official checkpoints like Sunauli and Rupedia exist in Lumbini Province, there are dozens of unofficial crossing points that remain unmonitored by the security forces and other stakeholders, making it easy for traffickers to avoid detection.
- Weak tracking of internal and external mobility of people: The current system introduced by the Government of Nepal fails to effectively monitor and record the movement of people both within the country and across borders, making it difficult to identify trafficking patterns.
- Poor monitoring of dance bars and cabin restaurants in emerging cities and border districts: These establishments often serve as fronts for cross-border trafficking operations, but insufficient oversight allows illegal activities to continue unchecked.

b. Data and Documentation Issues

There were four major concerns around data and documentation with regard to the cross-border migration and trafficking problems and they are summarized as follows;

- Lack of reliable and disaggregated data on migrants and trafficking victims: The federal as well as the province government of Nepal lacks a comprehensive database that tracks the number of migrants and trafficking victims, making it difficult to understand the true scale of the problem.
- Scale and characteristics of undocumented cross-border migration largely unknown: Due to the informal nature of many border crossings, authorities cannot accurately assess the number of people moving between countries or their reasons for doing so.
- Weak reporting systems: Current mechanisms for reporting trafficking cases and suspicious activities are inadequate, leading to underreporting of incidents.

- Significant data gaps in tracking and follow-up: The lack of systematic data collection and monitoring makes it difficult to track cases over time and assess the effectiveness of interventions.

c. Trafficking and Security Concerns

- Women and children are the most vulnerable to trafficking: These groups face the highest risk of exploitation, particularly for forced labor and sexual exploitation.
- Growing adult entertainment sector in border cities increasing trafficking cases: The expansion of this sector has created new venues for exploitation and increased demand for trafficking victims.
- New trafficking purposes emerging (skin transplantation and surrogacy): Traffickers are finding new ways to exploit victims, including forcing them into dangerous medical procedures.
- Nepali hotels and restaurants in border areas becoming undeclared red-light areas: These establishments are increasingly being used as fronts for trafficking operations and sexual exploitation. Women and girls working into those hotels are at the risk of cross-border as well as third country trafficking.
- Lumbini province serving as both source and transit for human trafficking: The region faces a dual challenge as traffickers both recruit local victims and transport others through the area.
- High incidence of third-country migration through human smugglers: Many people from Lumbini province are being trafficked to third countries using India as a transit point.

4. Solutions to Address Cross-Border Migration Problems

Border security enhancement, cross-border cooperation, and the introduction of prevention as well as protection measures were some of the key concerns raised by the participants.

a. Border Security Enhancement

- Strengthen surveillance systems in the bordering districts of Lumbini province: Implementation of modern surveillance technology along with increased number of security personnel to better monitor border areas is suggested as a fundamental task for enhancing border security.
- Implement effective document verification processes: Establish robust systems to verify the authenticity of travel documents and identify potential trafficking victims.
- Use technology-based interventions: Employ advanced technology for border monitoring, data collection, and information sharing between agencies within Nepal as well as with the concern authorities from the India side.
- Establish additional security centers for immediate support to victims: There was also a suggestion for creating facilities near border areas to provide immediate assistance to the identified trafficking victims.

b. Cross-border Cooperation

- Regular dialogue between Nepal and India: Maintain consistent communication channels between both countries to address cross-border trafficking issues.
- Political, diplomatic, and security cooperation: Foster collaboration at multiple levels to create comprehensive solutions to trafficking problems.
- Joint efforts between Nepal and India for trafficking control: Implement coordinated operations and information sharing between security forces of both countries.
- Improved coordination among organizations working at Nepal-India border: Enhance collaboration between NGOs, government agencies, and security forces operating in border areas to detect traffickers and minimize the risk of cross-border trafficking.

c. Protection Measures

- Establish crisis management and rehabilitation centers: Create facilities to provide comprehensive support services to trafficking survivors.
- Implement victim and witness protection systems: Develop programs to ensure the safety and security of trafficking survivors and witnesses.
- Create strong information exchange processes: Establish efficient systems for sharing intelligence and data between relevant agencies.

d. Prevention measures

- Provide right information and counseling to potential migrants: Ensure that people considering migration have access to accurate information about risks and legal procedures for a regular and documented migration.
- Develop skill development training programs: Provide vocational training to vulnerable populations to reduce their risk of being trafficked.

5. Role of Province Government for Safe Migration Management

The program also emphasized a crucial role that Lumbini Province government can play for ensuring safe migration to combat trafficking. Four prominent roles of the province government, namely, policy development, institutional support, coordination and monitoring, and protection initiatives, were mainly suggested from the stakeholders.

a. Policy Development

- Formulate province-specific migration policy: Create comprehensive policies that address the unique migration challenges faced by Lumbini province.
- Mainstream migration into provincial development planning: Integrate migration management considerations into all aspects of provincial development.
- Incorporate safe migration and anti-trafficking policies into periodic planning: Ensure that anti-trafficking measures are included in regular government planning cycles.
- Develop guidelines for trafficking victim support fund: Create clear procedures for accessing and utilizing the 8-million-rupee trafficking victim support fund.

b. Institutional Support

- Establish and strengthen rehabilitation centers: Improve the quality and capacity of existing centers and create new ones to meet demand.
- Form committees/task forces to combat trafficking: Create dedicated groups to coordinate and implement anti-trafficking initiatives at the local and province level.
- Allocate adequate budget for returnee migrants: Ensure sufficient funding to support the reintegration of trafficking survivors and returning migrants from India and other countries.
- Create data portal and management systems: Develop comprehensive systems to collect, analyze, and share data on migration and trafficking.

c. Coordination and Monitoring

- Coordinate among three tiers of government: Ensure effective collaboration between federal, provincial, and local governments.
- Collaborate with Nepal Police and border security forces: Work closely with law enforcement agencies to improve border security and anti-trafficking measures. This collaboration should also be extended with authorities from the bordering Indian states.
- Monitor organizations active in trafficking prevention: Oversee and support the work of NGOs and other organizations involved in anti-trafficking efforts.
- Coordinate with NGOs and other stakeholders: Foster partnerships with civil society organizations to maximize the impact of anti-trafficking initiatives.

d. Protection initiatives

- Manage trafficking victim/survivor support fund: Effectively administer the established fund to provide necessary assistance to survivors.
- Provide protection to families of trafficking victims: Extend support services to include families of trafficking victims who may face threats or stigma.
- Ensure quality services in rehabilitation centers: Maintain high standards of care and support in the government-run rehabilitation facilities. Province government should also monitor and provide necessary support to the NGO run rehabilitation facilities.
- Implement family and community security-based interventions: Develop programs that address trafficking risks at both family and community levels.

6. List of the attendees

SN	Name	Position	Organization
1	Honorable Dilli Bahadur Chaudhary	Former CM	Lumbini Province
2	Honorable Janmajay Timilsina	Minister	Ministry of Social Development, Lumbini Province
3	Honorable Prachanda Bikram Neupane	Minister	Ministry of Industry, Tourism and Transport, Lumbini Province
4	Honorable Bhuwan Chaudhary	Member	Provincial Planning Commission, Lumbini
5	Rekha Kandel	Secretary	Ministry of Internal Affairs and Law, Lumbini

6	Sharada Basyal	Senior Deputy Secretary	Ministry of Social Development, Lumbini Province
7	Ganesh Ghimire	Senior Section Officer	Ministry of Industry, Tourism and Transport, Lumbini Province
8	Tulsiram Aryal	DSP	Lumbini Province Police Office
9	Ishwor Thapa	DSP	District Police Office, Dang
10	Binod KC	President	Nepal Children's Organization
11	Churna Bahadur Chaudhary	Executive Director	BASE Organization
12	Ashok Tharu	President	Tharu Welfare Committee, Dang
13	Bharat Kumar Karki	Engineer	Ministry of Industry, Tourism and Transport, Lumbini Province
14	Amit Tamang	Executive Director	Freed Kamlahari Development Forum
15	Prakash Bhattarai	Expert/Consultant	Wins-Consult
16	Dilip Ratgaiya	PA	Ministry of Social Development
17	Amar Bahadur Majhi	Police Inspector	Area Police Office, Bhalubang
18	Govind Khanal	Representative	Just Rights for Children, Delhi
19	Umama Khursheed	Program Officer	Association for Voluntary Action
20	Manoj Rana	Photographer	Bhalubang
21	Gopal Sharma Bhattarai	Vice-president	Press Union, Dang
22	Sushil Basnet	Senior Interlocutor/Facilitator	BASE Organization
23	Pinky Dangi	Program Director	BASE Organization
24	Bandhulal Chaudhary	Admin Finance Coordinator	BASE Organization

Along with this list there were 43 persons as the total attendees (Police force, PSO, Drivers, and Assistants in the event.

7. Photo Gallery



Honorable Dilli Bahadur Chaudhary delivering remarks



Event facilitation and participants



PD of BASE Org. sharing the concept of the project along with the objective of the event

Thank you.