Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We are delighted to announce the second edition of the USAID's FSTIP Activity newsletter, which shares a glimpse of the previous three quarters’ highlights and an overview of our achievements.

We were honored to welcome a delegation from USAID to FSTIP working areas in Sylhet. The USAID team spent time visiting our incredible peer leaders, ANIRBAN network members, interacted with the members of Counter Trafficking Committee, Child Marriage Prevention Committee, and Marriage Registrars’ Association, attended a training on trafficking-in-persons and victim rights, and visited a shelter home to learn about the situation of trafficking in persons and child marriage and CTIP initiatives in Sylhet. The visit was a huge encouragement to the FSTIP Activity, particularly our dedicated field teams who implement activities in the most remote locations to fight against trafficking-in-person (TIP) and child marriage (CM).

USAID’s FSTIP and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) jointly organized a national level workshop to update the National Plan of Action (NPA) with the intention to extend its timeline from 2023 to 2025. The national level workshop was the final in a series of consultations (four) held at the divisional level. The workshops drew recommendations from the stakeholders across the country based on which the NPA has been updated. MoHA accepted the revised NPA as an official document, which will be shared with stakeholders.

For January – TIP Awareness Month and International Women’s Day - we organized a signature campaign for college students, rallies and human chains, Gambhira show, bi-cycle rally, and also hosted debate competitions at the secondary school level to raise awareness on TIP with particular emphasis on the use and abuse of digital technology. We congratulate our team for continuously challenging ourselves to innovate and break social norms to stand against TIP and CM.

All of this encourages us further to dedicate our efforts to improve the lives of the survivors we serve, leading to dignified reintegration, and practicing a survivor approach implementing CTIP initiatives. We hope that the aggregated efforts will help Bangladesh retain its placement at tier 2 in the US Department of State’s Annual TIP report.

Susan Stamper  
FSTIP Chief of Party  
Winrock International

H.M. Nazrul Islam  
FSTIP Deputy Chief of Party  
Winrock International
According to chapter five of the PSHTA Act, 2012 victims and witnesses of human trafficking must be provided with assistance, protection, and rehabilitation.
The Bangladesh Government is taking various measures to fight against trafficking-in-persons (TIP), which is a heinous organized crime that causes the worst form of human rights violations. The most important initiatives of GoB were the enactment of the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act, 2012 and its rules 2017. To support the implementation of the Act, GoB formulated the National Plan of Action (NPA) 2018 – 2022 with technical assistance from Winrock’s former project Bangladesh Counter Trafficking-in-Persons (BC/TIP) Project.

In 2020, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA), which is the lead Ministry in taking the CTIP initiatives in Bangladesh, conducted a mid-term review (MTR) that revealed the overall progress of the plan was slow due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore MoHA consulted with different stakeholders and decided to revise the current NPA and extend the duration from 2022 to 2025.

This time, Winrock’s Fight Slavery and Trafficking-in-Persons (FSTIP) project provided comprehensive technical assistance including organizing drafting committee meetings on the revision, four divisional workshops in Khulna, Rajshahi, Chattogram, and Sylhet, and one national consultation in Dhaka to gather recommendations from a wide range of stakeholders including different ministries, government departments, local administrations, counter trafficking committees (CTC), national and international NGOs, and UN agencies. FSTIP also in cooperation with MoHA conducted an inter-ministerial consultation to finalize the revised version of the NPA extending it up to 2025.

The main features of the revised NPA are (1) 90% of the activities in the revised version are new and different from those in the old version; (2) The revised activities will be funded through SDG implementation and the annual development plan under the 8th five year plan, which will be adjusted every year until 2025; (3) The civil society organizations are recognized; and (4) The Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief has been identified as the major contributor to the implementation of the NPA.

It is expected the revised NPA will create a momentum in the implementation of CTIP activities that will help Bangladesh retain its placement at tier 2 in the US Department of State’s Annual TIP Report.
A group of district legal aid panel lawyers (DLAPL) improved their understanding of the TIP context in Bangladesh the differences between human trafficking and human smuggling, the relevant national legal framework, legal aid in Bangladesh, victims’ rights, and protection after receiving a training by USAID’s FSTIP Activity. The training also enhanced their abilities to support victims of trafficking (VoT), improve VoTs’ access to justice, expedite prosecution of traffickers, and dismissal of TIP cases.

Let us ensure safe and orderly migration by having services from the government-run recruiting agency (BOSEL) and BMET for promoting safe migration.

District Legal Aid Panel Lawyers’ Capacity Development

A group of district legal aid panel lawyers (DLAPL) improved their understanding of the TIP context in Bangladesh the differences between human trafficking and human smuggling, the relevant national legal framework, legal aid in Bangladesh, victims’ rights, and protection after receiving a training by USAID’s FSTIP Activity. The training also enhanced their abilities to support victims of trafficking (VoT), improve VoTs’ access to justice, expedite prosecution of traffickers, and dismissal of TIP cases.

FSTIP and ICITAP worked together to strengthen the capacities of criminal justice sectors to increase their responsiveness towards victims of trafficking. The 45 First Responding Police Officers demonstrated solid understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They further committed to expedite effective investigations of pending TIP cases maintaining a victim centered approach, following do-no-harm principles, and ensuring the protection of TIP victims. They also emphasized gender sensitivity while prosecuting TIP cases after receiving a training from FSTIP Activity on “Trafficking-In-Persons and Protection of Victims’ Rights”.

FSTIP’s Assistance for Successful Conviction of TIP Cases

FSTIP continued providing legal assistance to TIP survivors with the support from partner organizations and the Task Force (TF) committees. This type of assistance included filing of cases, assisting survivors during the investigation, and prosecuting cases until there is a conviction or dismissal. As a result of this support, Anti-Human Trafficking Offence Tribunals (AHTT) and the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal in Cox’s Bazar announced 78 convictions involving 245 traffickers ranging from three years to a maximum of lifetime imprisonment.

FSTIP Launches GBV Benchbook for Judges

FSTIP developed a Gender-based Violence (GBV) bench book (a practical manual) for judges who adjudicate GBV cases. FSTIP worked jointly with Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training (OPDAT) and USAID’s Promoting Peace and Justice (PPJ) project to develop this practical manual and included sections on a victim-sensitive approach to GBV cases, principles of a fair trial in GBV cases, and resources available to GBV victims in Bangladesh. The objective of the bench book is to support the judiciary in applying the existing legal frameworks related to GBV crimes, both substantively and procedurally, in a manner that is expeditious, uniform, and in line with the established precedent and international conventions to which Bangladesh is a party.
Counter trafficking committees at the district, upazila and UP levels are working to prevent trafficking in persons in line with the National Plan of Action. Let us support them and stop trafficking.

**PREVENTION**

**Fighting Human Trafficking in the Community**

FSTIP's volunteer group Peer Leaders (PL) are now able to use mobile-based applications and social media platforms to create awareness on TIP and CM within their community. This was made possible because of a Training of Trainers (ToT) provided by USAID's FSTIP Activity of Winrock International. The training helped Peer Leaders boost their confidence, facilitation skills and knowledge to apply new techniques of modern technology and mobile-based applications including online portals such as SafeStep, Ami Probashi and social media platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and IMO to combat TIP and CM, and to promote safe migration in Bangladesh. The Peer Leaders also registered for the GoB sponsored online “Promotion of Safe Migration and Prevention of Human Trafficking” course at Muktopaath (https://muktopaath.gov.bd/course-details/369) to increase their knowledge. One of these Peer Leaders succeeded recently in stopping a child marriage by using the government’s online birth verification portal (https://everify.bdris.gov.bd/).

**Promoting Safe Migration**

The Shahidbagh union parishad (UP) Counter Trafficking Committee (CTC), located in a remote place in the Rangpur district is a CTIP role model that sets example of good practices in countering TIP and CM. On the seventh day of each month, this model CTC holds its monthly meeting and follows up on its decisions. After receiving training from USAID’s FSTIP Activity, the Shahidbagh UP was one of the first UPs to allocate a budget for the CTC to cover its expenses of holding meetings, conducting awareness sessions in the community, observing international days, and assisting TIP survivors directly and through referral mechanism.

Dr. Chitra Lekha Naznin, Deputy Commissioner of Rangpur delivering her speech at the safe migration workshop in Rangpur, Bangladesh

With the intention to promote ethical and transparent recruitment by creating an effective network among District Employment and Manpower Offices (DEMO), Technical Training Centers (TTC), Counter Trafficking Committees (CTC), and recruiting agencies in Bangladesh FSTIP provided an orientation on ‘Safe Migration and Skill Development’ to 65 participants including district administration, various government departments - Department of Youth Development (DYD), Department of Social Services (DSS), Department of Women Affairs (DWA), TTC, recruiting agencies, Probashi Kallayan Bank, CTC members, Peer Leaders, ANIRBAN, potential and returnee migrants. The event enabled stakeholders to inform aspiring migrants in their communities about the availability of employment and the proper steps to ensure safe and orderly migration, which will help reduce the influence of middlemen and traffickers. After the workshop, the recruiting agencies and CTCs expressed their commitment to work collaboratively and share employment information and details concerning aspiring migrants.

**Shahidbagh Union Counter Trafficking Committee - A CTIP role model**

Counter trafficking committees at the district, upazila and UP levels are working to prevent trafficking in persons in line with the National Plan of Action. Let us support them and stop trafficking.
We can reduce the risk of being trafficked and earn money and honor by making an informed decision on going abroad.

FSTIP and DSS Launches CSS Guideline

FSTIP and the Department of Social Services (DSS) of the Ministry of Social Welfare launched the Comprehensive Survivor Services (CSS) Guidelines in Dhaka to improve support services for survivors of human trafficking. This is a breakthrough step in standardizing the quality of care for survivors while reducing stigma and assisting them with dignified reintegration into society. Chief guest Dr. Abu Saleh Mostafa Kamal, Director General, DSS unveiled the CSS Guidelines in the presence of special guests Habiba Akter, Team Lead, Office of Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance, USAID/Bangladesh and Dr. Md. Bashirul Alam, Director General, Islamic Foundation and urged all the stakeholders to follow the guidelines. The launch of the guidelines completed the process of official adoption of the CSS Guidelines by the GoB that will be followed by all the stakeholders involved in providing protection assistance to survivors of TIP and CM across the country.

Develops and Updates District Referral Directories

FSTIP, in collaboration with district administrations, updated eight referral directories in Barishal, Chapainawabganj, Cox's Bazar, Joypurhat, Khulna, Lalmonirhat, Naogaon and Sirajganj, and developed four new referral directories in Bagerhat, Gaibandha, Jhenaidah and Narayanganj. In addition to the Deputy Commissioners (DC), 428 (Female 83 & Male 345) government and non-government service providers including private sector representatives attended these workshops. These referral directories are playing a pivotal role in establishing an effective referral mechanism to ensure that more trafficking and child marriage survivors receive comprehensive protection assistance and are reintegrated into the society with dignity.

Babu Ali (pseudonym), once trafficked to Oman under the guise of migration and returned home empty-handed, is now supporting his family financially and bearing the cost of education for his two children. Babu is also expanding his fish farming business with loan assistance from the Bangladesh Rural Development Board, Rajshahi which is possible from the support arranged by the USAID’s FSTIP Activity and through the Rajshahi referral mechanism.
Let us stand by the side of trafficking victims and help them to start a new life.

**Observance of the International Women’s Day 2023**

The FSTIP activity organized a series of events as part of its International Women’s Day 2023 campaign to express solidarity with the theme of the day – *DigitALL: Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality (Digital Projukti O Udvaban, Gender Boishammo Karbe Niroshan)*. The activities featured various events including the colorful rallies and human chains, debate competition, bi-cycle rally and community meeting, which attracted more than 3,000 participants who learned about how to effectively use technology to promote their work and to protect themselves from various forms of cyber violence and how people defraud other to ensnare human trafficking and child marriage through digital technology.

More than 60 Women Judges and Speakers emphasized empowering women across the country through the use of technology as well as providing the appropriate education and training, which will help women learn to use the digital technology to promote their work and to protect themselves from various forms of cyber violence at a FSTIP organized event in Dhaka on IWD 2023. FSTIP organized this event in collaboration with USAID’s PJ3 project that ended in July 2023.

**Commemorates Human Trafficking Awareness Month**

In commemoration of observance of *January as the Human Trafficking Awareness Month*, FSTIP Activity joined subgrantees to create awareness on human trafficking and informed the people on how to identify and prevent this crime and promote safe migration across the country organizing various cultural events including Gambhira show, street drama, puppet show, etc. Additionally, the project organized community meetings, outreach awareness campaigns and digital campaigns through social and online media, sessions with students in school and with religious leaders highlighting negative consequences of TIP and CM and importance of safe migration to avoid being end up in TIP situation. The project also highlighted USAID’s work in combating TIP and CM.
Let us stop Violence against Women, Human Trafficking, and Child Marriage; and ensure women’s participation in national development.

USAID’s FSTIP activity expressed solidarity with the theme of the World Day Against Trafficking In Persons 2023 - Reach Every Victim of Trafficking, Leave No One Behind (Pacharer Shikar Shakoler Pashe Thakbo, Bad Jabe Na Keo) engaging Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA), networks like CTIP-TWG and BDUNNM, district and local government administrations and stakeholders including community people across the country. The various events featured national dialogue, colorful rallies, human chains, discussion meetings, signature campaign, debate competition, radio talk shows and spot on safe migration, bi-cycle rally, candlelight campaign on the sea beach, puppet shows, digital campaign through social media and union information center, video show, and community meetings, which attracted more than 2,500 people (1,054 females) who learned about the negative consequences of human trafficking, safe migration, and further vowed to combat this heinous crime within their community.

The Minister of Home Affairs Asaduzzaman Khan, MP called for collective action to fight TIP at a National Dialogue event held in commemoration of the WDATP 2023. USAID’s FSTIP Activity COP presented FSTIP achievements in combating TIP in Bangladesh at the event.

Around 81,440 students including 28,874 girls took an oath to remain vigilant against TIP within their communities and further expressed their commitment to fight TIP and CM during the Oath Taking Ceremony, organized in collaboration with the District Administrations and District Education Offices at 160 educational institutes throughout the country.
Let us discharge our respective duties, and implement the National Plan of Action to prevent human trafficking and child marriage.

USAID’s Visit

A delegation from USAID along with the FSTIP team visited Sylhet and Barishal from March 20 – 23 and September 4 – 7, 2023. During their visit, they met with sub-grantee BSHER, and attended meetings with ANIRBAN network members, Peer Leaders, Task Force, attended a CTC orientation, CMPC, and MRA meetings, a training on trafficking-in-persons and victim rights, and visited a MTIC and shelter homes.

The visiting USAID delegation also learned about some of the activities including awareness raising at the community level, identification of victims and those at-risk of TIP and CM in Sylhet and Barishal with support from USAID’s FSTIP Activity.

Task Force Meeting jointly organized by FSTIP Activity and the Sylhet Anti-Human Trafficking task force (AHTT) committee discussed several ways to ensure justice for trafficking victims in Sylhet.

Migration and Trafficking Information Center (MTIC) set up at the Dehorgoti Union Digital Center (UDC) of Babuganj Upazila under Barishal district is now helping the community people with vital information on safe migration and creating awareness about human trafficking. So far, USAID’s FSTIP project has established four MTICs in Bagerhat, Barishal, Khulna and Satkhira in collaboration with the UDC entrepreneurs to promote safe migration and combat trafficking in persons in remote areas.

Dehorgoti Union UDC entrepreneur informs locals about safe migration during their visit to the center.

The delegation attended a CTC meeting at the Mogla Bazar Union Parishad and came to know this CTC is active against TIP and CM which resulted in almost no incidents of TIP and CM in that Union.
We are united to combat human trafficking and protect the survivors.

**USAID’S LEARNING VISIT**

A six-member delegation from the USAID’s Office of Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance and Program Office along with the FSTIP team visited Cox’s Bazar from 24 to 27 September 2023 to learn about CTIP initiatives and preventive actions. During the learning trip, the visiting delegation conducted various meetings and interacted with CTCs, CMPCs, interfaith groups, Marriage Registrars’ and IMAMs Association, survivor service providers, and different private sector organizations that participated in discussions with the volunteer PLs and trafficking survivor’s voice network ANIRBAN. The delegation also visited the Cox’s Bazar Task Force, TIP Tribunal Staff, and a shelter home. USAID engaged with 112 stakeholders (Female 25 & Male 87) and learned how they plan to reduce the community’s vulnerability to TIP and CM and further advance CTIP initiatives.

One of the ANIRBAN members discusses about their CTIP activities like awareness raising at the community level, identification of victims, and those at-risk of TIP and provide appropriate referral support. ANIRBAN members also informed that they use digital technology - WhatsApp and Facebook page to promote safe migration.

**COLLABORATION WITH THE IMAM TRAINING ACADEMY**

FSTIP Activity has collaborated with Imam Training Academy of Bangladesh Islamic Foundation under the Ministry of Religious Affairs to develop a training module on topics related to TIP, CM, and safe migration that will be included into the foundation training course for Imams. Following the training, Imams will be able to disseminate appropriate messages to people in their communities daily, particularly during the Jummah sermon on Fridays. This will also enable the project to reach a very large number of people with CTIP, anti-CM, and safe migration messaging, raising awareness in these communities.

FSTIP Activity organized a workshop in collaboration with Islamic Foundation to develop sessions on TIP and CM for the Imams on March 13, 2023, Dhaka.
ADDITIONAL SECRETARY VISITS FSTIP ACTIVITY

Additional Secretary of Political and ICT at the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) Md. Khairul Alam Sheikh visited the USAID’s FSTIP activities in Jashore on September 5, 2023. He toured a shelter home run by the Dhaka Ahsania Mission and engaged in valuable discussions with shelter home officials and survivors. He also conducted a productive meeting with the project’s trafficking survivor network ANIRBAN and Peer Leaders, interacted with young workers, and counter-trafficking committees, and inaugurated a counter-trafficking committee (CTC) office space generously provided by the Magura Union to bolster anti-trafficking initiatives.

Bangladeshi companies representing sectors including banking, insurance, hospitality, IT, telecommunications, and recruitment vowed to join the government, NGOs, and development partners including a dialogue with think-tank in fighting trafficking-in-persons. They expressed their commitment at private sector engagement events in Dhaka, Cox’s Bazar, and Rajshahi organized by USAID’s FSTIP Activity. During these events, Matt Friedman, CEO of the Hong Kong-based nonprofit, The Mekong Club, shared examples of good practices adopted by the private sector, including renowned brands in South Asia promoting TIP-free operations. FSTIP urged the private sector attendees to raise consumer awareness and create employment opportunities for TIP survivors.

ENGAGING PRIVATE SECTOR IN CTIP INITIATIVES

Matt Friedman shares experience on private sector’s role in CTIP initiatives

During the period, FSTIP activities were covered on national, divisional, and district-level electronic, online and print media for events such as January - TIP Awareness Month, observation of International Women’s Day, National Workshop to Review and Update the National Plan of Action, and the Launching of the CSS Guideline.

Let us identify traffickers together and stop them.
The trafficking survivors’ voice network ‘ANIRBAN’ and Peer Leaders – a volunteer group of young people together took an oath to boost their CTIP initiatives within their communities at a USAID’s FSTIP Activity organized ‘National Convention of ANIRBAN and Peer Leaders’ held from August 22 to 24, 2023. The event was designed by the FSTIP Activity in consultation with ANIRBAN and Peer Leaders that allowed the participants to exchange ideas, views, strategies and innovative ways to combat human trafficking and child marriage across the country. The National Convention was attended among others by the USAID representatives, ASIA CTIP project team, Academician, and ANIRBAN Central Committee members. The guest speakers emphasized on social volunteerism and urged for a collective action to fight human trafficking and child marriage and uphold victims’ rights through ensuring victim centered approach from identification to reintegration into the society.

The national convention was held in due festivity that boosted the morale of the volunteer groups and vowed to further intensify their endeavor to combat TIP and CM and promote safe migration in their community.
FSTIP launched Brown Bag Technical Sessions with the aim to create a creative learning space for its partner organizations where issues/topics relevant to FSTIP MERL are discussed regularly. This is also a good capacity strengthening activity from where the participants improve their learning and understanding of the sessions. FSTIP Activity hosted a series of brown bag sessions that focused on a variety of topics, including survivor-centered MEL, evidence uptake in FSTIP program, data quality, realities of field MEL, and GESI in MEL.

From January to September 2023, FSTIP Activity provided prosecution and protection assistance to the host community in Cox’s Bazar including a series of meetings with Public Prosecutors (PP), assistant PPs, senior lawyers, panel lawyers, and investigation officers to review TIP cases and to strengthen the case management system and foster task force committee members’ collaboration. FSTIP continued its awareness-raising interventions in Cox’s Bazar on TIP, CM, and safe migration within the host communities. The project mobilized Peer Leaders (PL) to carry out community activities to disseminate messages on TIP and CM, which were shared with wide range of audiences in Ukhia and Teknaf. In addition, FSTIP provided protection assistance to TIP victims directly from the project and through referral mechanisms needs-based shelter home and counseling support.

A team from Winrock International Home Office visited FSTIP in Bangladesh. During their visits, they met with the FSTIP team, discussed project implementation and designed different activities to combat trafficking in persons and child marriage.

**Host Community Support**

- **2,656** community people reached through awareness discussion
- **41** religious leaders received orientation to create public movement against TIP and CM
- **93** TIP survivors received protection assistance

**INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL VISITS**

A team from Winrock International Home Office visited FSTIP in Bangladesh. During their visits, they met with the FSTIP team, discussed project implementation and designed different activities to combat trafficking in persons and child marriage.
USAID’s Fight Slavery and Trafficking-in-Persons (FSTIP) Activity

The USAID’s Fight Slavery and Trafficking-in-Persons (FSTIP) Activity is a five-year program aimed to reduce vulnerability to trafficking in persons (TIP) and child marriage (CM) and promote safe migration.

The project is working in 25 Bangladesh districts to implement counter human trafficking and child marriage activities focused on prosecution, prevention, and protection integrating gender and social inclusion programming, while partnering with youth, survivors, communities, and community-based civil society organizations, and promoting health, safety, and security practices against COVID-19 and promoting innovative best practices.

FSTIP is collaborating with national, regional, and local governments, survivor service provider networks, legal rights groups, civil society organizations, and committed partners to further strengthen the country’s ability to combat trafficking and child marriage as well as to increase community resilience to identify people vulnerable to trafficking and child marriage and provide support.

Winrock International is a nonprofit organization that works with people in the United States and around the world to empower the disadvantaged, increase economic opportunity, and sustain natural resources.

Connect with us...

FSTIP Project Office
H - 14, R - 137, Gulshan - 1
Dhaka, Bangladesh
Tel: +88 02 55045248-9
winrock.org

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