



# GÖMDA

## MITT IBLAND OSS

EN STUDIE AV BARNARBETE & MÄNNISKOHANDEL  
I RAUTAHAT, NEPAL

ISLAMIC RELIEF SVERIGE



**WORLD DAY AGAINST  
TRAFFICKING  
IN PERSONS**  
**30 JULY**



# SAMMANFATTNING

Sexuell exploatering av kvinnor och barn är en av de mest lönsamma formerna av människohandel i världen, med en årlig omsättning som uppgår till 99 miljarder dollar.<sup>1</sup> Varje år faller 40 miljoner människor offer för trafficking, 71 procent av dem kvinnor och flickor. Majoriteten av dessa blir sexuellt utnyttjade.<sup>2</sup>

Människohandel och barnarbete är komplexa, och globala, fenomen. 152 miljoner barn i världen sitter fast i barnarbete, och 73 miljoner av dem har tvingats in i de värsta formerna av barnarbete, såsom sexuellt utnyttjande, handel med droger, och rent slaveri.

Barnarbete berövar barn på deras barndom. Deras förhoppningar om att undslippa fattigdom och skapa ett bättre liv för sig själva och sina familjer utnyttjas, men resultatet är ofta att de snarare dras än djupare ner i fattigdom.

Denna studie fokuserar på Rautahat-distriktet i Nepal, ett landsbygdsområde där människohandel och barnarbete har blivit ett problem som spänner över generationer. Här bor 37-åriga Nasruddin som fortfarande bär på traumat av att ha blivit inlurad i barnarbete vid 10 års ålder. Nasruddin lovades en anställning på ett företag i Indien men hamnade i en livslång skuld omöjlig att betala av. Han utsattes regelmässigt för misshandel, berövades både sömn och mat och tvingades arbeta över 20 timmar per dygn för ett textilföretag som gjorde broderier på brudklänningar. Liksom många offer för så kallat skuldsclaveri arbetade Nasruddin i fem år utan lön.

Rapporten belyser de komplexa faktorer och samband som ligger till grund för människohandel och barnarbete i Rautahat-distriktet, med ytterligare insikter från Islamic Reliefs och vår partner Rural Development Centres projekt för att minska barnarbete och människohandel i området.

Rapporten bygger på ett stort antal intervjuer som genomfördes i februari 2020, där både barn i riskzonen och barn som lyckats undkomma barnarbete eller trafficking deltog. Vi intervjuade också föräldrar, civilsamhällsorganisationer, aktivister, lokala myndigheter, människorättsorganisationer, lokal polis och religiösa ledare.

Ur samtalen utkristalliserade sig tre centrala teman: Att klimatförändringarnas katastrofala effekter även medfört en ökad risk för trafficking och barnarbete; att kulturella normer och sedvänjor förstärker utvecklingen; och att religiösa ledare potentiellt kan spela en viktig roll i kampen mot trafficking och barnarbete.

# EN STUDIE AV BARNARBETE & MÄNNISKOHANDEL I RAUTAHAT, NEPAL

## Klimatförändringar, barnarbete och människohandel

En viktig slutsats från rapporten är att risken för barnarbete och trafficking ökar i samband med klimatrelaterade katastrofer i lokalsamhällena i Rautahat-distriktet. Under 2017 drabbades Rautahat av förödande översvämningar, vilka medförde ökning av både barnarbete och människohandel inom distriktet. 80 procent av de som medverkat i denna studie påverkades direkt och negativt av dessa översvämningar. Både långsamma och akuta klimatrelaterade katastrofer medför ökade påfrestningar i lokalsamhällena, vilka ofta har ont om resurser att anpassa sig.

Klimatförändringarnas effekter i Nepal är särskilt akuta för kvinnor, flickor, personer med funktionsvariation och marginaliserade grupper som daliter, ursprungsbefolkning och muslimer. Dessa faktorer bidrar även till en ökad sårbarhet för trafficking och barnarbete.

## Kulturella normer och sedvänjor

Ytterligare ett viktigt resultat från denna studie är att kulturella patriarkala normer och sedvänjor har en central roll i att försvara och normalisera förekomsten av barnarbete och människohandel. Dessa normer och sedvänjor bidrar också till att kvinnor och flickor löper ökad risk för övergrepp och utnyttjande, exempelvis i form av könsbaserat våld, barnäktenskap eller tvångsäktenskap. Unga kvinnor och flickor är extra sårbara på grund av de strukturella och kulturella barriärer som begränsar deras tillgång till utbildning och anställningsmöjligheter. Dessa normer bidrar till att normalisera trafficking och barnarbete och tysta dem som dras in i det.

## Att involvera religiösa ledare och institutioner

Över 84 procent av världens befolkning identifierar sig med en religiös grupp.<sup>3</sup> Tro spelar en viktig roll i att forma samhällsnormer och mänskliga erfarenheter. Religiösa ledare och institutioner utgör många samhällens ryggrad, så även i Rautahat-distriktet. De har därför en unik position att utmana skadliga sedvänjor.

Religiösa ledare kan använda sina kunskaper för att öka medvetenheten och utbilda samhällen kring de normer som upprätthåller barnarbete och människohandel. Trots begränsad kapacitet och knappa re-







surser har religiösa ledare i Rauthat-distriktet använt sin religiösa läskunnighet - sin förmåga att tolka religion och dess roll och funktion i samhället - för att öka medvetenheten om riskerna med barnarbete och människohandel. Religiösa ledare utgör också en del av lokalsamhällets rapporteringssystem och hjälper ofta till att uppmärksamma lokala myndigheter och civilsamhällesorganisationer på barn som löper risk att utsättas för trafficking eller barnarbete.

Att bygga jämlika partnerskap med religiösa ledare och institutioner är en helt väsentlig del i kampen mot barnarbete och trafficking. Religiösa ledare har starka relationer i lokalsamhällen och förstår de kulturella nyanser som ligger till grund för barnarbete och trafficking. Trosbaserade partnerskap bör också åter spegla och omfatta de olika röster som finns i religiösa samhällen, inklusive kvinnliga lärda och akademiker, samt unga religiösa ledare. Religiösa ledare är värdefulla aktörer i den globala kampen mot människohandel och barnarbete.

### En vision för framtiden

När vi arbetar för att förverkliga Agenda 2030 och de globala målen för hållbar utveckling, måste vi sätta lokalsamhällen i centrum för att identifiera och for-

mulera lösningar. Att möta lokalsamhällens behov genom att arbeta mot mål fem om jämställdhet, mål 8 om anständiga arbetsvillkor och ekonomisk tillväxt, och mål 16 om fredliga och inkluderande samhällen, är nyckeln till att begränsa människohandel och barnarbete. Att ta itu med grundorsakerna till människohandel och barnarbete kräver partnerskap och långsiktig finansiering, för att säkerställa att insatserna effektivt stärker lokala aktörers kapacitet.

Även om människohandel och barnarbete är en global fråga, har de också betydande påverkan lokalt. Svaren på hur de ska bekämpas bör därför också formuleras av och förankras i lokalsamhällena. Lokalt ägandeskap börjar med att lokalbefolkningen analyserar sin situation och ser sin förmåga att åstadkomma förändringar. Lokalt ägandeskap är avgörande för att förbättra effektiviteten i biståndsinsatser och för att ge lokalbefolkningen en röst och en roll i att forma sin egen framtid. En viktig del av detta är även att säkerställa att lokalsamhällen inkluderas i implementeringen av bistånds- och utvecklingsinsatser. För att göra det behöver man inkludera röster från både manliga, kvinnliga och unga religiösa ledare. Att exkludera dem vore ett dyrt misstag.



## WHY LOCAL PARTNERS ARE CRUCIAL TO THE FIGHT AGAINST CHILD LABOUR IN NEPAL

Child labour affects over 152 million children around the world, including in Nepal. Before coronavirus locked down the world, an Islamic Relief research team visited the country to examine the underlying factors that contribute to child labour. On the launch of the research report, our research and advocacy officer, Najma Abukar, reflects on what she learned in one of the country's child labour hotspots.

### HEARING STORIES OF RESILIENCE

On the border with India lies Rautahat district, one Nepal's child labour hotspots. The socio-economic marginalisation of communities within the district is compounded by effects of climate change and harmful cultural practices that increase the risk of child labour.



In the world's poorest countries, slightly more than one in four children are engaged in work that is potentially harmful to their health. Meeting survivors and their families in Rautahat district showed me the real stories behind the statistics. Manish\*, survived debt bondage which saw him overworked and starved whilst working at brick factory in India. Debt bondage is common among those subject to child labour. It traps children and their families in a cycle of labour, often working in harsh conditions and unable to pay back high interest loans.

"He ran away from the factory and when he came back home he was very thin and weak," says his mother, Ki-

ran. "He is still very sick and he can't work anymore so he stays at home. As a mother, it makes me very sad. It is difficult for me to see him in this condition."

Her 14-year old son, Sang\*, was also a brick factory worker, though he was able to stay in the district. An entrepreneurial boy, Sang was working three jobs to support his family, at the expense of his education. With support from Islamic Relief, Sang has stopped working and is now receiving skill based tailoring training.

Child labour steals childhoods. It forces children to grow up too fast and exposes them to abuse and exploitation. Like 14-year old Gauri\*, who told me about her gruelling work collecting large rocks from riverbanks and carrying them to construction sites.



Child labour also disrupts their education, as was the case for 11-year old Ritesh\*. A bright boy, when his father passed away and his mother became too ill to work, Ritesh was forced to leave school aged 9. For two years he sold bottled water on the side of the highway to provide for his family.



## LOCAL OWNERSHIP

Local actors in Rautahat are fighting against child labour. Civil society organisations mobilise others such as faith leaders, women and youth groups. They have a strong community presence along with the important understanding of the institutional setup at provincial level, which has been key component to creating community based referral mechanisms to identify and supporting children vulnerable to child labour.

Rautahat district is a multi-ethnic multi faith community and Islamic Relief has been working with diverse range of faith leaders, organising interfaith focus group discussions on the role faith leaders can play in safeguarding children and addressing the issue of child labour.

We've been engaging and partnering with local actors. Our partner the Rural Development Centre has been heavily engaged in community development, gender and child protection projects. In cooperation with Islamic Relief, they've been implementing a project in Rautahat. The intervention aims to prevent and protect children from trafficking and child labour by providing education for children and giving livelihood support to families of children that are at high risk.

During interviews with local non-governmental organisations, faith leaders, local activists, child protection committee and parents, I began to understand that the saying 'it takes a village to raise a child'. Together, we're protecting and safeguarding children from the risks of child labour and creating an environment where they can thrive.

But despite the incredible work of local experts, many are underfunded. Covid-19 has highlighted to us once more the value of local actors who are on the ground working directly with communities. I often wonder what the impact of Covid-19 and the consequent shift in donor priorities will have on the vital local actors like the Rural Development Centre.

Focus group discussion with members of Rautahat's Child Protection Committee



Focus group discussion with members of Rautahat's Child Protection Committee.

## BEACONS OF HOPE

Local communities are experts of their own experiences and contexts. We asked them about their hopes for the future and what changes they want to make within their communities. Their insights shed more light on the complex socio-economic and cultural factors that underpin child labour whilst highlighting some actionable solutions.

"My message to other activists and advocates around the world is to advocate and work to raise women's empowerment, particularly women's decision making and leadership," says Reenu, a determined community activist.

"Empower women by providing skill based training that raises their independence so that they are self-sufficient and not reliant on others. We should advocate to provide education and skill based training for girls to reduce early marriage and other problems in the community. We should also help women and children to access resources, we should always help the needy."

As we work towards the realisation of Agenda 2030 for the Sustainable Development goals, we must put communities at the heart of solutions to tackle these issues.

ISLAMIC RELIEF IS COMMITTED TO WORKING WITH LOCAL ACTORS TO REDUCE THE RISK OF CHILD LABOUR IN RAUTAHAT. LEARN MORE IN OUR REPORT, HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT: A STUDY OF CHILD LABOUR AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN RAUTAHAT, NEPAL AND DONATE TODAY TO SUPPORT OUR VITAL WORK.

*\*Names have been changed to protect identities.*





### Debt bondage and dowry abuse: Kiran tells her story

In South Asia and many other impoverished parts of the world, there are millions of people trapped in bonded labour, which is also known as debt bondage or debt slavery. It is the most common but least known form of modern day slavery.

People experiencing forced labour often become subject to debt bondage, in which they are trapped in a cycle of labour. It usually begins when poor people have no choice but to take a loan or wage advance from their employer or member of the community to cover emergency or major expenditures such as dowries. They subsequently find it impossible to repay the loan for a combination of reasons, including high interest rates and low pay. Often they are forced to work in harsh conditions.

#### KIRIN'S STORY

All three of Kiran's sons are survivors of child labour. The mother-of-four, who lives in Nepal's Rauthat district, tells her story.

"I cannot read and write. My parents could not afford to send us all to school, so they chose to send my eldest brother.

"I got married when I was 14, my husband was 19. My parents could not afford the dowry for an educated and economically stable man, so they arranged for me to marry my husband who is also illiterate and comes from a poor family.



“We struggled a lot, particularly during and after my pregnancies. There were times we did not have enough food and water. I became very sick and I could not produce enough milk, so we had to give the baby formula milk. The children were very weak and sick because there was not enough food. I often went hungry so that I could feed my children. The hospital was very far away and we could not afford take them to hospital.

“Things started to improve when my husband began working at the brick factory and he started to earn a bit of money - but it still was not enough to cover everything we needed. Then my three sons started working at brick factories.

Kirin with her youngest son, Sang\*, 14, who was working three jobs to help his family make ends meet. “Manish worked in a brick factory in Kerala, India. He worked very long hours, often with little food and he didn’t always get enough money to send home. He had a lot of debt to pay back so he worked a lot to try and pay it back but the interest rate was very high. He ran away from the factory and when he came back to home he was very thin and weak. He is still very sick and he can’t work anymore so he stays at home. As a mother, it makes me very sad. It is difficult for me to see him in this condition.

“In 2016, my daughter Priyanka got married to a brick factory worker from Kathmandu. Her in-laws asked for 200,000 rupees (£1,300) for the dowry. We ended up contributing 150,000 rupees (£1,000) and some gold pendants. We also had to collect 30,000 rupees (£200) for the wedding day. It was very difficult to get all of these funds together: all of my sons and my husband contributed towards the dowry but it was not enough so we got a loan, 20,000 rupees, with about 30% interest. We have paid back 10,000 rupees so far. We have 16,000 to pay back and it keeps increasing every year.

“On the wedding day, my son in law said he was not attracted to my daughter because she is dark skinned but the wedding went ahead anyway and the groom accepted the dowry. A year after the wedding, my daughter’s in laws started to abuse her and my family because she had difficulty getting pregnant. Once

the neighbours found out that she has still not gotten pregnant, they also started to abuse me and my family; they started to blame me for all the problems.

“My daughter’s husband has started having an affair and is no longer engaged in improving the marriage but he does not want to divorce my daughter. We are planning to file a case so that we can get the divorce and get the dowry back from her husband. I want my daughter to remarry but we cannot afford the dowry, we need to first get 200,000 dowry back from her current husband. It’s a very difficult situation.

“Women in this community suffer a lot. A lot of us are illiterate, we cannot inherit property and we only get financial support through our husbands. I want to see a lot of changes, I want more job opportunities for women so they can become financially independent. A lot of women suffer health complications especially during birth because all the health centres and hospitals are far away or they cannot afford it.”

Kirin has found a lifeline through our project with local partner the Rural Development Centre. Working together to reduce child labour and human trafficking, we’re supporting vulnerable families like Kirin’s. Her youngest son, Sang\*, is receiving skill-based training designed to help him build a future free from exploitation and poverty.

**DONATE NOW TO SUPPORT OUR LIFE-CHANGING WORK IN NEPAL AND AROUND THE WORLD.**

*\*Name changed to protect his identity*



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Nasruddin, 37, works in a brick factory in Rauthat, Nepal.

*“I worked 20 hours a day and was beaten for falling asleep”*

### Nasruddin - a former child worker speaks out

Human trafficking and child labour are the world's fastest growing global crimes. A complex, cross-cutting global business, it sees 40 million people trafficked every year. Some 71% are women and girls – most of whom will end up being sexually exploited.

Across the world 152 million children are trapped in child labour - 73 million facing the worst forms including child slavery. Child labour steals childhoods. People's hopes of escaping poverty and building a better life for their families are exploited. They often fall deeper into poverty.

#### TRAFFICKED AT 10-YEARS OLD

It's a trap that former child worker Nasruddin, now 37-years old, knows all too well. Aged just 10, he was forced to drop out of school in Nepal and trafficked to neighbouring India.

“My father knew a few people in India, which is why I was sent to work in a textile factory,” he says. “It was a scary time for me, especially being away from my family, in a foreign country at such a young age.” During his time at the factory, he often experienced severe physical, psychological, financial and emotional abuse.

#### DREAMS OF ESCAPE SEEMED IMPOSSIBLE

“I worked from 6am to 2am every day without a break, and I was given 2 rotis (flatbreads) with a red or green chili a day. There were times where I was so tired that I fell asleep whilst sewing hundreds of garments and would be beaten by the men for falling asleep. My job was to sew the smaller items on garments like wedding dresses, because they said little children's hands were smaller and were able to do the embroidery de-



tails better.”

Nasruddin was never given his full salary or wage for any of his hard work. “I used to dream of escaping, but where could I go with the 5 rupees I had in my pocket?”

After a dispute with traffickers, Nasruddin’s father went to pick him up from the textile factory. “They let me go, but I didn’t receive any salary for the five years I worked there. I was only given new clothes for the journey.”

Like many child labour victims with no formal education or skill based trainings, Nasruddin soon returned back to India to find work. “When I was 15 I returned to Bangalore with a few friends to work in a brick factory.”



#### **DOWRY DEMANDS DRIVING DEBT BONDAGE**

This time with he had the added cultural pressure to meet dowry demands which were common in his community, and continue to still provide for his family.

“At the age of 12 years old I was engaged to a local girl and I got legally married at 22. It took me 10 years to meet the dowry demand of 40,000 Rs (£265). I managed to save up 10,000 Rs, borrowed 10,000 Rs from my father and I got a loan for the rest.”

Nasruddin is from Rautahat, one of the poorest districts in Nepal and home to some of the most underprivileged and marginalised castes in the country. The pressure to meet dowry demands is a key factor driving the debt bondage industry, where struggling families

take high interest loans due to social pressure to meet dowry demands. They’re subsequently trapped in debt bondage, unable to pay back the loans.

And abject poverty drives global child labour slavery and human trafficking practices; disrupting millions of children’s education, development and life chances as they struggle to find employment that allows them to escape the cycle of poverty. As such, there is a continuation of a generational survival state where survivors and their families are re-victimised.

**Derailing the generational cycle**

Nasruddin’s 14-year old daughter, Najmun, was working with him in a brick factory in Rautahat. But then, as a child thought highly vulnerable to child sex trafficking, she received support from Islamic Relief and our local partner the Rural Development Centre.

Our project in Rautahat, which is tackling child labour and trafficking, has helped her father learn to recognise the importance of girls’ education. Through family sessions focused on solutions to increase parents’ involvement in their children’s learning, parents were encouraged to attend teacher learning circle meetings to understand teachers’ concerns. Regular conversations with parents and the community about their role in supporting children’s education helped raise awareness.

Nasruddin decided to send his daughter to school, as he wants a better future for his children. The project also offers educational support to help children develop vital knowledge and skills for life and work.

[FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE PROJECT AND CHILD LABOUR AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN RAUTAHAT IN OUR NEW REPORT, HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT: A STUDY OF CHILD LABOUR AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN RAUTAHAT, NEPAL. \*\*DONATE TO ISLAMIC RELIEF NOW TO SUPPORT OUR LIFE-CHANGING WORK WITH PEOPLE LIKE NASRUDDIN AND NAJMUN.\*\*](#)

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FÖR EN VÄRLD SOM BRYR SIG