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CASE STUDY

Fighting Trafficking Across Borders

USAID helps build the networking capacity of governments and NGOs key to the anti-trafficking effort in South Asia.



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The South Asia Regional Initiative/Equity Support Project (SARI/Equity) built partnerships with nearly 600 organizations in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

CHALLENGE

Trafficking is a pervasive problem throughout South Asia. Although each country faces its own challenges, the phenomenon crosses borders and affects communities across the subcontinent. Bangladeshi men and women migrate to Malaysia, the Persian Gulf, and Jordan to work in the construction or garment industries or as domestic servants. Recruitment offers are sometimes misleading or fraudulent, and victims may find themselves in situations of involuntary servitude or abuse. Women and girls are trafficked in India for commercial sexual exploitation and forced marriage, and men, women, and children are held in debt bondage. As a result of decades of conflict in Nepal and Sri Lanka, both are now source countries for men, women, and children trafficked for involuntary servitude, forced labor, and commercial sexual exploitation in India, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. Despite a desire across the subcontinent to address this problem, a lack of institutional capacity and cross-border networks has hampered the ability of governments and civil society to respond effectively to the problem.

INITIATIVE

Between 2000 and 2006, USAID supported the South Asia Regional Initiative/Equity Support Project (SARI/Equity) in its efforts to build and strengthen local capacity to address trafficking and violence against women in South Asian countries. SARI/Equity launched regional action forums, awarded small grants and fellowships for action-oriented research, provided technical support, and set up a Web site to serve as a platform for sharing best practices. The initiative built partnerships with almost 600 organizations in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

RESULTS

SARI/Equity strengthened networking and cooperation within and across borders by identifying effective approaches, encouraging their replication, and enhancing the knowledge and

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A subgrants program encouraged innovation and sharing, such as enlisting rickshaw drivers to distribute stickers and watch for unusual movements.

skills to fight trafficking. The regional action forums brought together prominent experts from the region to collaborate on anti-trafficking initiatives. They produced several guides, including a Victim Witness Protection Protocol, a Handbook for Practitioners on Minimum Standards of Care and Support, and a Resource Book on Livelihood Options for survivors of trafficking. All were translated into local languages and widely disseminated. These guides are now used globally as a model by the United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT). SARI/Equity's subgrants program encouraged innovation and sharing. For example, one subgrant enlisted rickshaw drivers to distribute anti-trafficking stickers and watch for unusual movements and events. Finally, SARI/Equity created a cross-regional NGO exchange program to build capacity and establish stronger networks.

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