

Md Jahan Shoieb

GO-NGO COOPERATION IN PREVENTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING FROM BANGLADESH: CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

Abstract

Bangladesh faces challenges of human trafficking, affecting men, women and children both as a source and destination country. To fight this menace from society, cooperation between Government Organisations (GOs) and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) is crucial in preventing human trafficking in vulnerable a country like Bangladesh. While the government is the key stakeholder in formulating laws and policies to prevent criminal activities like human trafficking, NGOs have the scope to work for the prevention, protection, reintegration and rehabilitation of trafficked persons as well as populations at risk. This paper tries to assess the level of cooperation between GOs and NGOs in preventing human trafficking from Bangladesh, identify key challenges and provide some policy suggestions. The study reveals that although there are some arrangements for GO-NGO cooperation in Bangladesh, those are yet to create a meaningful synergy to eradicate the menace of human trafficking from the country. Hence, more formalised and institutionalised collaboration is required for enhanced GO-NGO cooperation in preventing human trafficking from Bangladesh.

Keywords: GO, NGO, Human Trafficking, Transnational Crime, Civil Society Organisation.

1. Introduction

Human trafficking is a heinous crime that plagues societies worldwide, exploiting helpless individuals for various forms of involuntary labour, sexual exploitation, and organ trading. It is a crime that associates attractive profit with minimal risk.¹ Considering the victims' situation, this crime is termed modern-day slavery in contemporary times.² Its rapid intensity and adverse societal implications have become a major global concern. It is a serious crime that almost every country in the world suffers from either as a place of origin, transit, or destination.³ Trafficking, by

Md Jahan Shoieb is Research Fellow, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS), Bangladesh. His e-mail address is: jshoieb@biiss.org

© Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS), 2025

¹ "What Fuels Human Trafficking?" UNICEF USA, accessed January 13, 2017, <https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/what-fuels-human-trafficking>.

² Arif Ahmed, "Combating Sea-Route Human Trafficking in Bangladesh: A Critical Analysis on Legal and Institutional Framework," *Asian Journal of Research in Social Sciences and Humanities* 6, no. 7 (2016): 969.

³ "Counter-Trafficking in Emergency Contexts," International Organization for Migration, accessed February 01, 2025, <https://emergencymanual.iom.int/counter-trafficking-emergency->

and large, is an age-old incident. From the 16th to 19th century, the term “human trafficking” was viewed distinctly that we perceive it today and mostly manifested as forms of slavery and forced labour. During that time, the transatlantic slave trade was widespread that forcibly led the transportation of millions of Africans to the Americas. Although this trade was widely abandoned in the early 19th century because of the abolition movements, its legacy is still prevalent and influences the patterns of global trafficking. However, after the Second World War, the global community experienced extreme human rights violations, human dignity exploitation and resultant human trafficking.⁴ By that time, trafficking in persons was accepted globally as a crime against humanity. Gradually, the UN and other supra-national organisations started to declare a fight against this heinous crime.⁵ Realising the need for a more organised and comprehensive response to the menace, the UN has included it in the targets of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM). Thus, combating the challenges of human trafficking has been recognised and accepted as a global mission.

Because of its dense and large population, South Asia has become one of the most trafficking-prone regions of the world. According to an estimate by the United States (US) State Department, among the 1 to 2 million global trafficking victims, the majority originate from Asia.⁶ Bangladesh, with its high population and complex socio-economic conditions, is particularly susceptible to human trafficking. Among various causes, economic hardship is the most salient jeopardy factor making people susceptible to trafficking. Traffickers usually try to exploit the poor and aggregate their vulnerabilities by giving them false promises of better income-generating opportunities.

Climate change is viewed as another significant factor in human trafficking from Bangladesh. Traffickers also target those particular segment of society who become affected by various natural disasters due to climate change such as droughts, floods, and cyclones which often erode livelihood opportunities and heighten the levels of vulnerability.⁷ In this aspect, both the First National Study on Trafficking in Persons

contexts#:~:text=Human%20trafficking%20happens%20anywhere%20in,%2C%20and%20For%20sexual%20exploitation.

⁴ Kawshar Jahan, “Role of NGOs in Prevention of Women and Children Trafficking in Northern Border Areas of Bangladesh,” Dissertation for the Degree of Master in Public Policy and Governance, Department of General and Continuing Education, North South University, accessed January 31, 2025, http://www.northsouth.edu/newassets/files/ppg-research/ppg-1st-3rd-batch/339_Thesis-Kawshar%20Jahan.pdf.

⁵ Jahan, “Role of NGOs in Prevention of Women and Children”.

⁶ Jahan, “Role of NGOs in Prevention of Women and Children”.

⁷ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* (Vienna: UNODC, 2020); also see, UNODC, *First National Study on Trafficking in Persons in Bangladesh* (Vienna: UNODC, 2022).

in Bangladesh and the 2022 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Global Report on Trafficking in Persons (GLOTIP 2022) identified climate change-induced environmental disasters as one of the key drivers of human trafficking from Bangladesh along with cyber-enabled human trafficking, trafficking by marriage and trafficking for forced labour. The GLOTIP 2022 also found that the number of victims has reduced which indicates that the traffickers have become more active and have developed new ways to evade law enforcement agencies.⁸

In the context of Bangladesh, the issue of human trafficking has appeared as a major problem due to its transnational nature.⁹ The country, in recent decades, has appeared as a source as well as a transit country for male, female and child trafficking. In Bangladesh, human trafficking occurs mainly for forced labour and commercial sexual exploitation.¹⁰ According to the global report of the UNODC, Bangladesh is one of the most affected countries by intra-regional trafficking in South Asia and most importantly, India is a major destination country. As per studies, a good number of Bangladeshis are trafficked to neighbouring countries.¹¹ Besides, Bangladeshi people are also trafficked to Southeast Asian countries (e.g., Malaysia, Brunei, and Thailand); Middle Eastern countries (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Iraq, and Libya); and some European countries (e.g., Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Cyprus). There is a general perception that mostly women and children are trafficked and smuggled to neighbouring countries. However, in recent years, it has been revealed that men are also becoming victims of human trafficking and being trafficked to various countries.¹² Likewise, in the last four years consecutively, Bangladesh has been in Tier II in the Trafficking in Persons Report published by the US State Department in 2023. A practitioner working actively in this field has also recognised that the current scenario of human trafficking from Bangladesh is alarming since a huge number of people are being trafficked every year in various illegal ways.¹³

⁸ Interview with a Representative of UNODC, conducted in September 2023.

⁹ Interview with Mr Asif Munier, an Independent Consultant working on irregular migration issues, conducted in July 2023.

¹⁰ Md Ruhul Amin and Md Rashidul Islam Sheikh, "Trafficking Women and Children in Bangladesh: A Silent Tsunami of Bangladesh," *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development* 2, no. 4 (2011): 202–211.

¹¹ SM Azharul Islam, "Human Trafficking: A Key Security Challenge for Bangladesh," *BIPSS Commentary*, accessed February 01, 2025,

<https://bipss.org.bd/pdf/Human%20Trafficking%20A%20Key%20Security%20Challenge%20for%20Bangladesh.pdf>; "Bangladesh: Interview with Prof. Zakir Hossain on Human Trafficking," UNODC, accessed January 31, 2025, https://www.unodc.org/southasia/frontpage/2009/September/bangladesh_-interview-with-prof.-zakir-hossain-on-human-trafficking-.html#:~:text=A%20UNICEF%20report%20says%20that,in%20the%20last%20ten%20years.

¹² Interview with Mr Asif Munier.

¹³ Interview with Mr Bijay Basak, ADG of Bangladesh Police, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, conducted in July 2023.

As the prime actor, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has been making significant efforts to eradicate human trafficking. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) has been playing the leading role and other ministries like the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment also play crucial roles in this regard. At various times, the government has enacted several laws to reduce human trafficking. As the issue is a transnational one, Bangladesh is a signatory to important regional and global instruments for preventing human trafficking.

Besides the government, non-government organisations (NGOs), as part of the Civil Society Organisation (CSO), prevent human trafficking significantly. For a long time, NGOs have been playing a crucial role in curbing human trafficking and they are directly involved in numerous prevention activities. They often take prevention measures including awareness building, income generation, and capacity building activities, among others. Their activities, nonetheless, have positive impacts on society which are reflected in people's growing awareness of this issue. Due to their various preemptive steps, the number of trafficking activities has not increased noticeably, if not reduced.¹⁴ This indicates that addressing this grave issue requires more concerted efforts from both Government Organisations (GOs) and NGOs in coming days.

Against this backdrop, this article is an attempt to explore the challenges faced by GO-NGO cooperation in preventing human trafficking from Bangladesh and suggests a way forward to strengthen collaborative efforts in this aspect. To address this, a number of research questions have been posed: What are the current state of cooperation between the government and NGOs in preventing human trafficking from Bangladesh? What are the prevailing challenges in GO-NGO cooperation in preventing human trafficking from Bangladesh? How to enhance the level of cooperation between these two entities to eradicate human trafficking? The paper has been divided into five sections to answer the research questions. After the introduction, section two is on reviewing the existing literature. Section three elaborates on GO-NGO collaboration by bridging the key concepts. Section four sheds light on the state of GO-NGO cooperation in preventing human trafficking. Section five discusses challenges in the way of GO-NGO cooperation and section six concludes the paper with some recommendations.

The study is exploratory in nature and primarily based on qualitative analysis of data collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include key

¹⁴ Jahan, "Role of NGOs in Prevention of Women and Children Trafficking".

informant interviews of practitioners, policymakers, academicians, and security analysts, while secondary sources include relevant books, journal articles, newspaper reports, and think tank reports.

2. Reviewing Existing Literature

2.1 *Realising GO-NGO Cooperation in Addressing Human Trafficking*

Transnational organised crimes pose various challenges to global peace, security and stability. In recent years, transnational criminal groups have tended to transcend national borders and engage in different types of criminal activities such as human trafficking, drug trafficking, arms smuggling and money laundering. Addressing a complex transnational crime like human trafficking requires a collaborative approach involving both the government and the NGOs. As a part of civil society, NGOs play a crucial role in addressing organised crime like human trafficking through monitoring, advocacy and service provision. In Bangladesh's context, NGOs primarily work at the grassroots level in advocacy and awareness building on human trafficking.¹⁵ They mobilise public opinion and facilitate policy formulations to combat human trafficking effectively.¹⁶

Over the decades, CSOs have acted as effective watchdogs. They are vigilant about government actions and play a substantial role in holding states accountable. Their abilities to extract and disseminate information enhance the intelligence resources of law enforcement agencies.¹⁷ NGOs implement community-based programmes to address the root causes of criminal behaviour, which primarily source from illiteracy and poverty. By providing alternative means of livelihood, they can substantially reduce vulnerabilities to organised trafficking networks.¹⁸ Worldwide there are empirical evidences of NGOs working with the government to address the vulnerabilities of human trafficking. For example, in Eastern Europe, NGOs jointly work with law enforcement agencies to address trafficking in persons. Moreover,

¹⁵“Trafficking of Women and Children,” USAID Bangladesh, accessed January 30, 2025, https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pdabw357.pdf.

¹⁶“Action against Trafficking in Human Beings,” Council of Europe, accessed January 30, 2025, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/anti-human-trafficking/role-of-ngos>.

¹⁷ Louise Shelley, “Human Smuggling and Trafficking into Europe: A Comparative Perspective,” February 2014, Migration Policy Institute, accessed January 31, 2025, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/human-smuggling-and-trafficking-europe-comparative-perspective>.

¹⁸ Caroline M. Petrilla, “NGO roles in promoting restorative juvenile justice programmes,” European Forum for Restorative Justice, accessed January 31, 2025, <https://www.euforumrj.org/ngo-roles-promoting-restorative-juvenile-justice-programmes>.

programmes offering victim support and rehabilitation services have proven effective in reintegrating trafficking victims and reducing recidivism among perpetrators.¹⁹

Like the above case, the GO-NGO cooperation in combating human trafficking may become effective in Bangladesh since the country contains a large population within a small landmass. As of now, the GoB has endorsed the importance of GO-NGO cooperation to address this concern. In 2022, a joint Secretary of the Cabinet Division stated that the Constitution of Bangladesh upholds the vision of creating a country free of hunger, poverty and exploitation. Attaining these goals without cooperation from the NGOs will not be easy to address since they are counted as one of the important partners of the government. He also mentioned that the cabinet division of the government has taken initiatives to institutionalise the “GO-NGO Collaboration Platform”.²⁰

Apart from this, the notion of collaborative stakeholder relationships is becoming crucial in the twenty-first century. Empirical evidence suggests that a meaningful public-private partnership can help a government to ensure good governance in a particular sector.²¹ Collaborative action is particularly required in dealing with transnational organised crimes like human trafficking. An effective GO-NGO partnership has the potential to eradicate the menace of human trafficking in a more effective way as the problem is complex and it is difficult for the government to resolve this solely by itself.

2.2 Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling: A Brief Overview

In the lexicon of criminal justice or social work, the terms “human trafficking” and “migrant smuggling” are related to the illegal movement of people and the issues of forced labour and sexual exploitation. Although these two terms denote different crimes, they are used interchangeably. Hence, the distinction between these two terms is crucial for implementing sound government policies. A major difference between these two categories is that victims of trafficking are typically considered victims under international law since they are coerced into abuse and exploitation. However, the smuggled migrants are not labelled as such because they usually pay the smugglers

¹⁹ “Law Enforcement Manual to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings,” International Centre for Migration Policy Development, accessed February 01, 2025, <https://www.icmpd.org/file/download/54287/file/Law%20Enforcement%20Manual%20to%20Combat%20Trafficking%20in%20Human%20Beings.pdf>.

²⁰ “Workshop Introduces GO-NGO Collaboration Platform,” September 26, 2022, BRAC, accessed February 01, 2025, <https://www.brac.net/latest-news/item/1361-workshop-reintroduces-go-ngo-collaboration-platform>.

²¹ Iram Ejaz, Babar T Shaikh and Narjis Rizvi, “NGOs and government partnership for health systems strengthening: A qualitative study presenting viewpoints of government, NGOs and donors in Pakistan,” *BMC Health Services Research* 11 (2011): 122, <https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-6963-11-122>.

for their illegal movement across borders despite knowing the danger and exploitive conditions along the way.

According to a document from the US Department of State, the crime of human trafficking generally involves the exploitation of a person for commercial sex acts or forced labour through the use of fraud, coercion, or use of force.²² A reflection of this definition can be found in various international legal documents including the instruments of the UN. The term human trafficking generally suggests movement; however, to label it as human trafficking no cross-border movement is necessarily required. In human trafficking, individuals are compelled to be transported against their will. Anyone can be a victim of trafficking including men, women, transgender, children, adults, citizens, or non-citizens alike.²³

On the contrary, migrant smuggling occurs voluntarily. It generally occurs when a person agrees with a migrant smuggler to facilitate his/her crossing the international border and illegally entering a foreign country. Migrant smuggling usually means procurement to gain material or financial benefits by enabling illegal entry.²⁴ Considering the distinct nature of these two, this study has focused mainly on the issues related to human trafficking.

Table 1: Key Differences between Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling²⁵

	Human Trafficking	Migrant Smuggling
Action (s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer, transportation, recruitment, or receipt of a person generally by use of coercion, force, fraud, abduction, deception, or giving or receiving any financial benefits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illegally “procure” a person to facilitate illegal entry to a county in which the person is not a citizen or permanent resident.
Transnationality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required

²² “Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling: Understanding the Difference,” Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, accessed February 01, 2025, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/272325.pdf>.

²³ “Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling,” Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.

²⁴ “Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime,” United Nations Human Rights Office of The High Commissioner, accessed January 31, 2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-against-smuggling-migrants-land-sea-and-air>.

²⁵ UNODC, *Anti-Human Trafficking Manual for Criminal Justice Practitioners* (Vienna: UNODC, 2009).

Consent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As the means are established the question of consent is irrelevant If the victim is a child, the issue of consent is irrelevant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually, a smuggled person gives consent to the smuggling
Purpose	Different types of exploitation include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prostitution or other kinds of sexual violence Different kinds of forced labour Slavery or similar practices Involuntary servitude Removal of organs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For financial or other material benefits

Source: Compiled by Author, 2024.

The Table 1 above shows major differences between human trafficking and migrant smuggling. It is important to differentiate between human trafficking and migrant smuggling because it sometimes can create confusion among immigration officers, law enforcement agencies, policymakers and the relevant authorities in civil society organisations who are often involved in dealing with the victims of both the categories. also, it is crucial to understand these two notions for ensuring appropriate legal frameworks and support systems.

When human trafficking is confused with migrant smuggling, there is a concern that trafficking victims may become deprived of proper protections, services, or legal assistance to which they are entitled and may be vulnerable to being re-exploited. This is why national immigration as well as anti-trafficking laws need to provide proper definitions of human trafficking and migrant smuggling. At the same time, human trafficking awareness training is also important for law enforcement, immigration, and judicial officers. It is crucial to enhance the capacity of law enforcement officials to screen migrants.²⁶ Another factor that complicates the human trafficking situation in a country like Bangladesh is the gap in defining and criminalising the smuggling of migrants. As mentioned before, human trafficking and migrant smuggling are interconnected but separate crimes. The inability to address migrant smuggling as per the legal regime in Bangladesh is a major challenge for criminal justice practitioners. Moreover, migrant smuggling cases are often filed as human trafficking cases due to the absence of dedicated legal provisions, which is a challenge for field-level officers working with limited resources. In this aspect, the First National Study on human

²⁶ “Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling,” Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.

trafficking in Bangladesh recommends developing a national legislative and policy response to migrant smuggling.²⁷

2.3 Human Trafficking in Bangladesh: Existing Perspectives

There is a plethora of literature concerning human trafficking from Bangladesh. Different literature on human trafficking in Bangladesh focuses on various dimensions of the issue. Eshita for example, in her paper titled “Human Trafficking: Review of the Respective Act and Its Enforcement in Bangladesh” highlighted the deterioration of internal and external scenarios of human trafficking in Bangladesh.²⁸ In his article, Suwendu points out that Bangladesh is one of the transit and source countries of human trafficking.²⁹ Ruhi in her scholarly work titled “Human Trafficking in Bangladesh: An Overview” investigated the global trafficking industry and found it as one of the fastest-growing criminal nexuses. She mainly highlighted on the worldwide supply and demand aspects contributing to human trafficking.³⁰ Chowdhury in his article titled “Trafficking in Person in Bangladesh” took an endeavour to find the nexus between corrupt recruiting agencies, village-level brokers, officials, and regional gangs associated with human trafficking.³¹

Several studies partially discuss the roles of governments, NGOs, and International non-government organisations (INGOs) in combating or reducing human trafficking. Ahmed, for example, mentioned that to implement the National Plan of Action 2012-2014, different ministries of GoB, INGOs, and NGOs should work together.³² Gazi, et al. conducted a study on the current activities of various local NGOs to address human trafficking considering the underlying factors, the magnitude of the problem, and the modes and consequences of trafficking.³³ Siddiqui, et al. conducted a research on women and child trafficking in Bangladesh and their study reveals that the issue of human trafficking is tapped into confusion mainly because of various confusions regarding statistics, legal framework, and other aspects of human trafficking.³⁴ Amin and Sheikh in their article titled “Trafficking Women and

²⁷ Interview with an Official of UNODC, conducted in July 2023.

²⁸ Fahmida Sarwar Eshita, *Human Trafficking: Review of the Respective Act and Its Enforcement in Bangladesh* (Dhaka, Bangladesh: Proceedings of 50th IASTEM International Conference, 2017).

²⁹ Suwendu Biswas, *Human Trafficking in Bangladesh: An Overview* (Dhaka, Bangladesh: Foreign Affairs Insights and Reviews (FAIR), 2015).

³⁰ Ruh Afza Ruhi, “Human Trafficking in Bangladesh: An Overview,” *Asian Affairs* 25, no. 4 (2003): 45–56.

³¹ Mohammad Barad Hossain Chowdhury, “Trafficking in Person in Bangladesh,” *Resource Materials Series*, no. 89 (2013): 55–61.

³² Ahmed, “Combating Sea-Route Human Trafficking in Bangladesh”.

³³ Rukshan Gazi and Ziaul H. Chowdhury, *Trafficking of Women and Children in Bangladesh: An Overview* (Dhaka: icddr, 2001).

³⁴ Tasneem Siddiqui, Rozana Rashid, Rezwanul Karim and Nahid Alam, *Trapped in Confusion: The Trafficking of Women and Children from Bangladesh* (Dhaka: RMMRU, 2006).

Children in Bangladesh: A Silent Tsunami of Bangladesh” separately mentioned the roles of government and NGOs that are pertinent in preventing human trafficking.³⁵

Anwary in her article titled “Anti-Sex trafficking movement of Bangladesh and the Theories of Transnational Social Movement” looked into anti-sex trafficking movements in Bangladesh in terms of law enactment.³⁶ However, it falls short of commenting on the prevention activities of various NGOs. Asian Development Bank (ADB) in its trafficking-related country report on Bangladesh predominantly highlighted mainstreaming trafficking concerns in the country’s poverty reduction programmes. It is further mentioned that in prevention activities, mainly two components are targeted: awareness building and community empowerment in Bangladesh. Although the initiatives of different ministries and NGOs are discussed in the report, it does not evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different initiatives.³⁷

The discussion on reviewed literature demonstrates that there is a good number of studies about human trafficking in Bangladesh. These studies, so far, mainly shed light on nature, routes, modes, areas, causes, consequences, and to some extent prevention measures of human trafficking in Bangladesh. It is also observed that almost all the studies discussed above, focused mainly on four key components of human trafficking: prevention, protection, prosecution, and reintegration. Emphasis is also given to the necessity of integrated effort of relevant stakeholders including government, NGOs, civil society, and others involved in anti-trafficking policy formulation and implementation. Some studies have specifically dealt with what NGOs are doing at present. However, literature focusing on cooperation between the government and NGOs is scanty and this shows a significant research gap in this field. Therefore, the proposed study is an endeavour to fill the void by providing a discussion on cooperation between the government and NGOs in preventing human trafficking from Bangladesh.

3. GO-NGO Collaboration: Bridging the Key Concepts

Human trafficking is often a transnational phenomenon. However, a person can also be trafficked within the border of her/his country. For example, a girl or woman can be trafficked and sold to a brothel in her country which is a manifestation of national-level human trafficking. In recent decades, human trafficking and migrant smuggling have been increasing at a rapid pace. Particularly trafficking of women or

³⁵ Amin and Sheikh, “Trafficking Women and Children in Bangladesh”.

³⁶ Afroza Anwary, “Anti-Sex Trafficking Movement of Bangladesh and the Theories of Transnational Social Movement,” *Social Thought & Research* 28 (2007): 109–142.

³⁷ ADB, *Combating Trafficking of Women and Children in South Asia* (Dhaka: ADB, 2003).

girls for the global sex industry has been spreading fast to new regions and has become a major part of the illicit global economy.³⁸ Thus, this paper mainly analyses human trafficking from a transnational perspective.

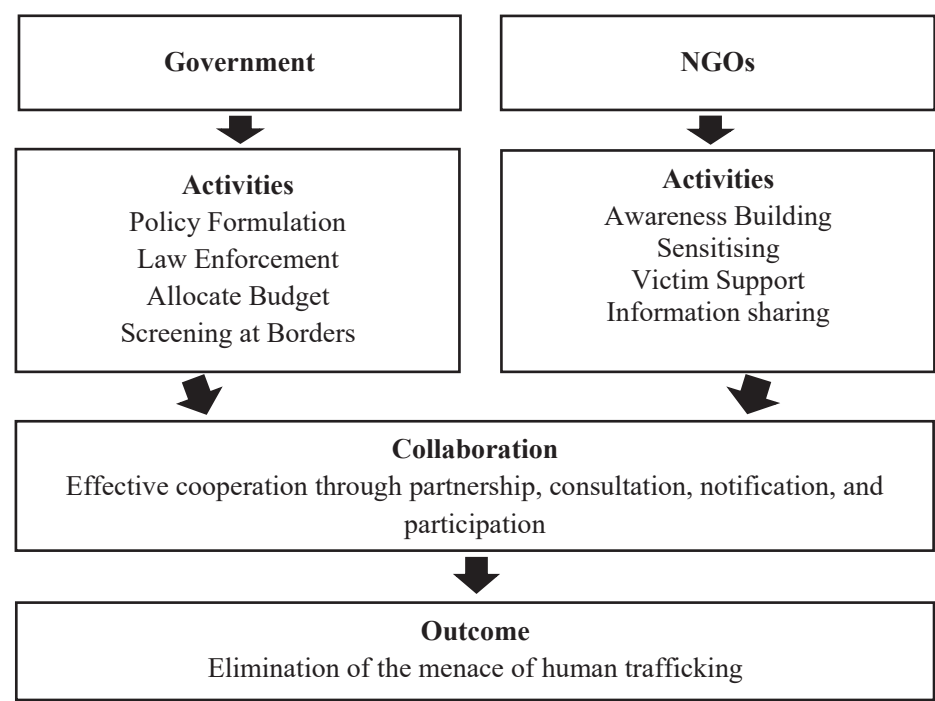
The crimes related to human trafficking undermine the safety and security of the countries involved. Thus, responding to the issue of trafficking requires the involvement of multiple stakeholders including the national government and its related agencies, such as health and public services division, international organisations, NGOs, CSOs, the media, businesses, academics, and individuals. With this in mind, this section focuses on the cooperation between the government and NGOs in preventing human trafficking in Bangladesh. In fact, there are some compelling reasons for selecting these actors already mentioned above in this paper. Usually, the government of a country holds a legitimate monopoly over the use of force and has the unique capacity to develop a national strategy. It can combat national, regional and transnational human trafficking by creating a comprehensive counter-trafficking mechanism involving government agencies as well as NGOs. On the other hand, many NGOs in Bangladesh have long been working in anti-human trafficking movements and they started their awareness-building and sensitising efforts before the government did.³⁹ Their roles encompass a wide range of activities which include conducting research, awareness raising, helping law enforcement agencies with victim identification, providing basic support to trafficking victims and helping them to reintegrate with mainstream society.⁴⁰ Given the critical role of the government and the NGOs in preventing human trafficking, the paper examines the issue of cooperation between these two actors in preventing the crime. Figure 1 shows a framework for GO-NGO cooperation considering the key actors and their major activities and approaches of collaboration.

³⁸ Maggy Lee, *Human Trafficking* (UK: Routledge, 2007).

³⁹ "Human Trafficking: A Brief Overview," Social Development Notes, No. 122, December 2009, World Bank, accessed January 25, 2025, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/166101468315536553/pdf/546830BRI0SDN01C10Human0Trafficking.pdf>.

⁴⁰ "Human Trafficking: A Brief Overview," World Bank.

Figure 1: A Framework on GO-NGO Cooperation⁴¹



The above Figure illustrates that a cooperative relationship between GOs and NGOs is crucial for a country like Bangladesh. The government has the supreme and legitimate authority to implement various state-sponsored projects, formulate policies and allocate budgets. It has access to the state’s financial sources as well as administrative control enabling them to adopt various plans and initiatives that can impact a whole nation. On the contrary, NGOs work mainly at the community level, directly engage with the people, and try to understand and resolve victims’ concerns, needs and aspirations. The combination of the government’s top-down approach and the NGOs bottom-up approach creates synergy in resolving complex societal problems. When both agree in cooperation, they can ensure proper utilisation of resources, decrease duplicity in efforts and ensure maximum impacts of developmental interventions.⁴²

GO-NGO cooperation can be materialised in three ways: First, NGOs can work in joint ventures with the government to implement important projects; second, they

⁴¹ Prepared by author.
⁴² Mohammed Monir Hossain, “GOs-NGOs Liaison Crucial for our Overall Development,” *Daily Observer*, July 24, 2023.

can develop the capacity and effectiveness of national; and finally, local governments can conduct advocacy for necessary and desired reforms.⁴³ As shown in Figure 1, there are four main ways of enhancing GO-NGO collaboration: partnership, consultation, notification, and participation. Partnership has been identified as the most important one since it is a complex engagement system.⁴⁴ A proactive partnership, approach, or collaboration allows NGOs to create an environment to facilitate policy formulation and implementation efficiently.⁴⁵ A meaningful and effective collaboration between GO and NGOs is imperative for both partners to accelerate the pace of various development activities.⁴⁶

4. State of GO-NGO Cooperation in Preventing Human Trafficking

Since human trafficking is a major problem in Bangladesh, both the government and NGOs are playing their part in its prevention. Drawing on the expert interviews, this section explores the roles of the government and the NGOs and the present state of cooperation between these two entities in preventing human trafficking from Bangladesh.

4.1 Government in Preventing Human Trafficking

In the context of Bangladesh, the government is the key stakeholder in preventing human trafficking. This major entity has been playing its fundamental role by formulating necessary laws and policies and strengthening task forces,⁴⁷ conducting awareness campaigns and providing necessary victim support.⁴⁸ Among all the ministries, the MoHA has been playing a central role in combating human trafficking. The Police Headquarters has established a specific monitoring cell that provides training to prosecutors and border and immigration security officials to ensure the screening of persons at land ports and airports. The primary aim of this venture is to ensure timely and regular information flow from different districts. In addition to that, the government has established mechanisms for recovery and repatriation of children

⁴³ Mohammad Jahangir Hossain Mojumder and Pranab Kumar Panday, "GO-NGO Teamwork for Strengthening Local Governance: A Review of Extant Literature in the Context of Bangladesh," *South Asian Survey* 1, no. 22 (2022): 1–22.

⁴⁴ Sergey Belyakov, "Increasing the influence of NGO's on Policy Making through Public Consultations: Lessons from Poland," *Policy Paper 4/11*, Institute of Public Affairs, Poland, accessed January 30, 2024, <https://www.isp.org.pl/uploads/drive/oldfiles/SergeyBelyakov.pdf>.

⁴⁵ Mokbul Ahmad, "Book Review: Stakeholders in rural development: Critical collaboration in the state-NGO partnerships by John M. Riley," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Non-Profit Organizations* 13, no. 4 (2002): 438–440.

⁴⁶ World Bank, *How the World Bank works with Non-governmental Organizations* (Washington D.C.: World Bank Group, 1990).

⁴⁷ IOM, "Combating Human Trafficking: All Stakeholders Must Join Together," accessed January 31, 2025, <https://bangladesh.iom.int/news/combating-human-trafficking-all-stakeholders-must-join-hands-together>.

⁴⁸ Interview with Professor Dr Obaidul Haaue, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka, conducted in January 2024.

who were forced to become camel jockeys and also ensures prosecution of persons associated with trafficking women and children.⁴⁹ The MoFA's role is also crucial in preventing human trafficking in the country. The Ministry and its missions abroad work together to build awareness, rescue traffickers, report them, and prosecute them.⁵⁰

The Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment is responsible for managing the migration process and ensuring the welfare and protecting the rights of migrants at home and abroad.⁵¹ The Ministry has formed vigilance task forces who conduct operations on a regular basis to prevent the illegal migration of workers. The objective of such operations is to protect workers from deception and not to go abroad illegally with high migration costs. In the process of Vigilance Task Force (VTF) operations, workers waiting in line for immigration at the airport are randomly picked for scrutinising and screening. Their documents like passports, work permits from the receiving country, and employment and manpower clearance from the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) are thoroughly checked to ensure lawful departure. If the VTF team finds any anomaly, the persons are off-loaded.⁵²

Moreover, the government has established the Counter Trafficking Committees (CTCs) at the union, upazila and district levels to ensure victims' increased access to services including legal assistance. A nationwide hotline known as 'National Emergency Service - 999' is being operated by the Bangladesh Police. Also, a monitoring cell has been established at the Police Headquarters to collect and analyse data on human trafficking. For dedicated and specialised investigation of human trafficking issues, a human trafficking cell has also been set up at the Criminal Investigation Department of Bangladesh Police.⁵³

4.2 NGOs in Preventing Human Trafficking

NGOs in Bangladesh are working on the prevention, protection, rehabilitation and reintegration of trafficking victims. Although prevention is the most vital component in combating human trafficking, it is often neglected. NGOs play an

⁴⁹ M Alamgir, *Combating Trafficking in Women and Children in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, 2004).

⁵⁰ "Bangladesh seeks enhanced international cooperation in combatting human trafficking through modern technology," Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accessed January 31, 2025, https://mofa.gov.bd/site/press_release/5b5a1c96-a9b4-4984-ab04-cc94afb39083.

⁵¹ Ahmed, "Combating Sea-Route Human Trafficking in Bangladesh".

⁵² "Bangladesh Country Report, 2016: Combating Human Trafficking," Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, accessed February 01, 2025, https://mhapsd.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mhapsd.portal.gov.bd/page/d9fa01c7_35a1_42f2_827c_1030c3e0e474/Country%20report%202016%20%20fina.pdf.

⁵³ Interview with a Representative of UNODC.

essential role in preventing human trafficking through grassroots outreach, victim support, and advocacy for stronger measures. They raise awareness, provide education and empower vulnerable individuals thereby, identifying and rescuing victims and offering them comprehensive support. Advocating for improved legislation and policies is another key area where NGOs currently play a substantial role in combating human trafficking.⁵⁴ In the prevention sector, NGOs are conducting awareness-building programmes and other activities that include community-level campaigns, grassroots-level meetings, cultural activities, regular coordination meetings, providing training to relevant stakeholders and conducting advocacy with local government, law enforcement agencies and media.⁵⁵ Besides, there are some NGOs which are working for women's empowerment to minimise the push factors behind the trafficking. Since the people living in the rural areas are not very educated and aware of the situation, the NGOs are working to make them aware of the situation.⁵⁶

There is a diversity in the activities of NGOs that are engaged in anti-trafficking initiatives. NGOs working in this field provide various services to the trafficking victims. Their services range from financial support to legal aid or vocational training for the victims. NGOs operate both in urban centres and rural areas where they are engaged in awareness building programmes and other preventive activities. Some NGOs are engaged in rehabilitation programmes like vocational training, financial aid, shelter, care and psychological support, while others provide legal aid to the victims of human trafficking. Their activities involve gathering evidence, providing legal aid, and even preparing financing court proceedings. Legal assistance also extends to awareness-raising, educating the victims about their rights and empowering them to take legal action when needed.⁵⁷

Overall, NGOs of Bangladesh are working both independently and jointly. In a joint effort, the Bangladesh Chapter of Action against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children (ATSEC), a coalition of 15 NGOs, is working in the country to prevent trafficking in children and women for sexual exploitation. It has established a national resource centre for the dissemination of information on trafficking issues. ATSEC is also working to sensitise and mobilise policy planners on the issue of human trafficking from Bangladesh. To increase awareness among the vulnerable segments of society, many NGOs conduct regular advocacy, share information and arrange various programmes. They also work to enhance the capacity of local

⁵⁴ Interview with Dr Obaidul Haque.

⁵⁵ Jahan, "Role of NGOs in Prevention of Women and Children".

⁵⁶ Interview with Mr Bijay Basak.

⁵⁷ Interview with a Representative of UNODC.

communities to protect vulnerable individuals as well as to respond appropriately and timely to human trafficking.⁵⁸

One of the key contributions of the NGOs in preventing trafficking is the initiative to empower women through facilitating alternative sources of income, educating girls, providing them training and raising awareness and some NGOs are currently playing significant roles in this regard particularly in rural areas. Examples include the Association for Community Development (ACD), Thengamara Mohila Shabuj Shangha (TMSS), Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) and Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA). These NGOs are working in providing shelters and generating employment for trafficking victims to effectively rehabilitate and reintegrate them into society.⁵⁹

4.3 State of GO-NGO Collaboration in Preventing Human Trafficking

At present, GO, NGOs and INGOs are playing crucial roles in combating and reducing human trafficking from Bangladesh. The GoB has come forward to initiate a GO-NGO cooperation mechanism in preventing human trafficking. To that end, the GoB has formed “the GO-NGO National Coordination Committee to Combat Human Trafficking”. MoHA is currently leading the GO-NGO coordination process which is a vital element for promoting partnership and is counted as an effective forum to facilitate the participation of all stakeholders in monitoring and implementing actions.⁶⁰ As per the existing data, 130 national NGOs are working on human trafficking issues and most of them are involved in various activities that include raising awareness, dissemination of information, repatriation, advocacy, rehabilitation, etc.⁶¹

To combat trafficking in children, the GoB initiated a 3-year project in 2000 aiming to curb the number of trafficking in children.⁶² Simultaneously, to help them extensively, the GOB formulated its future counter-trafficking strategies and published a counter-trafficking framework report.⁶³ The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) with support from the Norwegian government through

⁵⁸ Razia Sultana and Muhibbur Rahman, “Combating Human Trafficking: Bangladesh’s Experience and Challenges”, in *Human Trafficking in South Asia*, eds. Vinod K Bhardwaj and Sherap Bhutia (New Delhi, India: G.B. Books, 2014).

⁵⁹ Sultana and Rahman, “Combating Human Trafficking”.

⁶⁰ Government of Bangladesh, *Bangladesh Country Report, 2018 Combating Human Trafficking* (Dhaka, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, 2018).

⁶¹ Gazi and Chowdhury, “Trafficking of Women and Children in Bangladesh”.

⁶² Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, *The Counter Trafficking Framework Report: Bangladesh Perspective* (Dhaka: Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, 2004), 12.

⁶³ IOM, *IOM Press Briefing Notes: Bangladesh Counter-Trafficking Conference* (Dhaka: IOM, 2004).

the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) implemented the pilot Project titled “Coordinated Program for Combating Child Trafficking (CPCCT)”.⁶⁴ Under this Project, the National Task Force for Anti-Child Trafficking was formed comprising representatives of 10 government ministries and NGOs.⁶⁵ This has, indeed provided an opportunity for GO-NGO collaboration for minimising human trafficking in the country.

Notably, Bangladesh has made significant strides in recent years to combat human trafficking, acknowledging this crime as a serious violation of human rights. The government has enacted legislation, established specialised law enforcement units, and enhanced border control measures to tackle this pervasive issue. Simultaneously, NGOs have played a crucial role by raising awareness, providing support services to survivors, and assisting in the prosecution of traffickers. Under the supervision of the Public Security Division of the Ministry of Home Affairs, two projects are currently ongoing which involve implementation and monitoring of existing legislation on human trafficking, building capacities, rescuing and reintegrating the victims in collaboration with NGOs and INGOs.⁶⁶ Both the government and NGOs have been collectively observing the World Day against Trafficking in Persons since 2022 which is a glaring example of GO-NGO collaboration. Through this cooperation, the government has been able to work on establishing the annual reporting mechanism of trafficking in persons and has produced several important documents over time including the First National Study on Trafficking in Persons in Bangladesh. The NGOs also regularly collaborate with the government for national and international reporting on Bangladesh.⁶⁷ Also, the GoB along with regional and international actors is continuously making efforts to curb this problem.⁶⁸

Although there is some level of GO-NGO cooperation going on currently, those are mainly confined to requirements and formalised collaboration is absent between the two sectors. Hence, the question remains about the nature and current state of the collaboration.⁶⁹ According to a practitioner working directly in preventing human trafficking, “The government is trying to combat human trafficking. Laws and rules have been promulgated. Tribunals have been established. But due to the nature of the crime as well as corruption, it cannot be controlled well.”⁷⁰ Hence, collaborative

⁶⁴ Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, “The Counter Trafficking Framework Report”.

⁶⁵ ADB, “Combating Trafficking of Women and Children”.

⁶⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *First National Study on Trafficking*, 8.

⁶⁷ Interview with a Representative of UNODC.

⁶⁸ Interview with Razia Sultana, Senior Research Fellow, BIIS, conducted in September 2023.

⁶⁹ Interview with Mr Asif Munier.

⁷⁰ Interview with Mr Bijay Basak.

measures are expected to create synergy in anti-trafficking initiatives. According to a stakeholder, GO-NGO cooperation is necessary since the government usually does not have a proper structure for building awareness through peer-to-peer discussions. Moreover, the victims of this crime sometimes need intensive care and support, which can only be provided by NGOs due to the nature of their work.⁷¹

To address human trafficking in a comprehensive manner, a whole-of-society approach is essential for Bangladesh that aims to address the core reasons for trafficking such as poverty, lack of education, and social inequality. It is found that there is a lack of victim protection services and mechanisms in which GO-NGO collaboration can play a critical role in identifying the victims and providing them with the necessary support and rehabilitation services. They often have closer ties with communities, hence, it is easy for them to deeply engage with vulnerable persons. They also can play a vital role in other crucial areas such as victim care, psychological support, and reintegration into society, and can offer valuable insights and expertise to the government.⁷² If NGOs collaborate with GO's regulatory authority and have access to critical data and information, counter-trafficking actions can be amplified inevitably.

5. Key Challenges of GO-NGO Cooperation

The collaboration between government agencies and NGOs in Bangladesh faces several challenges.⁷³ An expert in the field mentioned that GO-NGO cooperation does not take place to a larger extent due to a lack of proper planning and policies. Sometimes, the cooperation seems to be confined to organising seminars and symposiums. Also, it is hard to bring or discuss the NGO agenda, the government's aim and the victim's position in the same line of thought.⁷⁴ Another expert noted that although the current level of cooperation is to some extent satisfactory, there is room for improvement in several areas such as victim support, evidence collection, prosecution, cooperation between criminal justice practitioners, and sensitisation of the concerned stakeholders. Cooperation between the government and the NGOs can also be improved in other areas like identifying, rescuing and rehabilitating the victims and preventing and prosecuting the crime of human trafficking. To attain this, both the government and the NGOs need to work on a larger scale than they currently

⁷¹ Siddiqui, Rashid, Karim and Alam, "Trapped in Confusion".

⁷² Interview with Mr Asif Munier.

⁷³ Interview with Shariful Hasan, Head of Programme, Migration, BRAC, conducted in September 2023.

⁷⁴ Interview with Dr Razia Sultana.

do to ensure a more meaningful approach.⁷⁵ Some key challenges of GO-NGO cooperation in combating human trafficking from Bangladesh are identified below -

5.1 *Lack of Effective Communication between the Government and the NGOs*

Although both the government and the NGOs are working hard to prevent human trafficking, it is observed that insufficient communication and coordination between different ministries of government and NGOs hinder effective collaboration. It is argued that a lack of joint strategic planning, regular follow-up meetings, information sharing, and a joint venture working policy often impede the flow of critical information and data which are regarded as major barriers to anti-trafficking efforts. An expert mentioned that lack of communication among different ministries of the government as well as between NGOs is a major challenge in addressing human trafficking effectively. The interviewee also mentioned that since NGOs work according to the mandates of donors, it is a common trend that their objectives and working methods vary which creates significant inconsistencies in their initiatives.⁷⁶

5.2 *Absence of a Formalised Collaboration*

There is a need for a whole-of-government approach in policy formulation of any kind since different ministries of the government have separate working plans and strategies. However, in various documents including the 8th Five-Year Plan, the necessity of collaboration is reiterated. Occasionally, joint steering committees or coordination committees are formed but, in some cases, these are done only on a need basis, not in a formalised way. In specific cases, some level of collaboration in particular projects is observed, however, these are only to fulfil the demands of donors and are not a formalised collaboration per se. On principle, both the government and NGOs have no problem with collaboration, but, on the ground, no effective collaboration is visible up until now.

5.3 *Lack of Appropriate Legal and Regulatory Framework*

An up-to-date legal and regulatory framework is crucial in preventing human trafficking. However, the existing regulatory frameworks of Bangladesh are weak need to be strengthened and upgraded to address the contemporary challenges of human trafficking. Collaborative actions are essential for ensuring the enforcement of laws and policies properly through the active participation of both the government bodies and the NGOs. One expert shared his views that although there exists a good legal mechanism for preventing and eradicating human trafficking from Bangladesh,

⁷⁵ Interview with a Representative of UNODC.

⁷⁶ Interview with Mr Asif Munier.

due to changes in key positions of the government, sometimes it has become difficult to review and update the existing mechanism to make it effective and up-to-date with time.⁷⁷ Another specialist in the field noted that there is a lack of comprehensive and pragmatic laws that can be implemented and monitored by NGOs. In addition, there are some loopholes in the existing legal mechanisms regarding human trafficking. Meanwhile, the government cannot force the perpetrators to obey the law due to the lack of an updated and comprehensive legal framework.⁷⁸

5.4 *Lack of Mutual Trust*

In some cases, a trust deficit between various government agencies and NGOs hampers a meaningful partnership. According to an expert, there is a trust deficit between the government and the NGOs that acts as a big challenge for combating human trafficking.⁷⁹ Lack of proper understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities, and conflicting or contradictory agendas create divisions, hinder mutual efforts and impede progress in preventing complicated crimes like human trafficking. There are also diversities in the activities of the NGOs and competitions over limited resources which count as significant barriers to counter-human trafficking. Other challenges include duplicity of interventions and lack of coordination in capacity building and advocacy.⁸⁰

5.5 *Resource Constraints*

As noted, resource constraints are one of the biggest challenges faced by the government and NGOs in addressing the problem of human trafficking. Shortage of resources (especially in the human resource sector) works as a major bottleneck in their ability to address the multifaceted aspects of human trafficking comprehensively. On average, one NGO worker typically serves fifty-four thousand people and working with this limited capacity poses challenges to its proper functioning.⁸¹ A practitioner also mentioned that manpower shortage is a major bottleneck in NGOs' functioning.⁸² Because of their limited human resources, they often become unable to work with the government in joint ventures. In brief, the lack of proper coordination and communication between the government and the NGOs, resource constraints and the absence of an appropriate regulatory framework are

⁷⁷ Interview with Mr Asif Munier.

⁷⁸ Interview with Dr Razia Sultana.

⁷⁹ Interview With Mr Asif Munier.

⁸⁰ Interview with a Representative of UNODC.

⁸¹ Jahan, "Role of NGOs in Prevention of Women and Children".

⁸² Interview with Mr Bijay Basak.

major challenges in the way of effective GO-NGO cooperation in preventing human trafficking from Bangladesh.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Preventing human trafficking from Bangladesh necessitates a robust partnership between the government and the NGOs. By adopting a collaborative approach, it is possible to create a more comprehensive and effective response to this grave issue. Strengthening communication, resource mobilisation, capacity building, trust-building measures, and legal frameworks will contribute to a sustainable and impactful fight against human trafficking. Both the government and the NGOs, by strengthening their coordination, mobilising funding, and enhancing capacity building can play a crucial role in preventing human trafficking from Bangladesh.

Although there are some arrangements for GO-NGO collaboration in Bangladesh, those arrangements are undertaken mainly on an ad-hoc basis or to fulfil the demand of donors. This has led to several challenges in the way of GO-NGO cooperation in preventing human trafficking from Bangladesh. To overcome these hindrances, both entities should come forward with positive intentions. Enhancing cooperation in preventing human trafficking requires a multi-faceted and coordinated approach involving various actors including GOs, NGOs, international institutions, individuals and communities. In terms of enhancing GO-NGO cooperation, institutionalised processes are crucial in establishing sustainable partnerships. Existing activities such as collaboration in reporting and capacity building should be amplified. Moreover, a harmonious GO-NGO relationship conducive to preventing human trafficking from Bangladesh can be ensured with the inclusion of NGO representatives in national coordination mechanisms, and international cooperation processes.

Besides, some specific reformations from the activists and practitioners for an effective GO-NGO collaboration are needed. For instance, a congenial environment is required for enhanced communication and partnership between the government and the NGOs. Regular communication channels, such as joint task forces, working groups, and inter-agency meetings, should be established to foster dialogue and information exchange between government agencies and NGOs. Sharing best practices, coordinating efforts, and aligning strategies will strengthen the overall anti-trafficking response. To enhance cooperation in this sector, building trust through regular dialogue and joint training is crucial. Simplifying regulations, appointing dedicated liaison officers, and forming joint task forces can also streamline further collaboration. Formalised platforms for information sharing and involving NGOs in

planning and implementation would ensure effective coordination. Addressing political interference involves creating independent oversight mechanisms and advocating for legislative reforms.

Another way to strengthen GO-NGO cooperation is resource mobilisation. The government should allocate adequate resources to reinforce anti-trafficking measures, including increased funding for government bodies and NGOs. Additionally, international donors and organisations should provide financial and technical support to bolster anti-trafficking initiatives in Bangladesh. Besides, resource mobilisation and capacity building of both government agencies and NGOs is also important to address the concern. Both stakeholders need to invest in capacity-building programmes to enhance their knowledge and skills in preventing human trafficking. Training sessions, workshops, and exchange programmes can contribute to improved collaboration and efficiency in handling trafficking cases. As there is a deficit of trust among different stakeholders, trust-building measures can lessen the gap. Hence, efforts should be made to foster trust and mutual understanding between government bodies and NGOs. Regular consultations, participation in joint initiatives, and sharing success stories can help bridge the trust deficit and encourage fruitful collaboration in this arena.

It is also essential to update and upgrade legal frameworks which should be done through combined efforts of the government and the NGOs. The government should continuously review and update existing legislation to address evolving forms of trafficking. Significant efforts are needed to ensure the efficient implementation of various interventions such as strengthening the capacity of criminal justice practitioners and enhancing cross-border coordination in rescue, reintegration, investigation and prosecution aspects of human trafficking. This process should involve close consultation with NGOs and civil society organisations to ensure that legal frameworks remain relevant and effective in reducing human trafficking.

As the lack of collaboration at the grassroots level is noticeable, enhanced cooperation and coordination at the grassroots level can provide synergy in preventing human trafficking from Bangladesh. It is important that, at the grassroots level, NGOs and related organs of the local government work collaboratively. In this aspect, the government apparatus can play an active role through its law-enforcing mechanisms and convey its plans and key messages to the NGOs, and accordingly, the latter can run their awareness-building campaigns.

Usually, NGOs fill resource gaps, identify victims, and advocate for anti-trafficking policies. NGOs empower communities, promote economic opportunities,

and strengthen data collection, which have lasting impacts on curbing the problem. Thus, NGOs need to extend their full support to the activities of the government and assist the associated government apparatus. This is equally important to ensure effective collaboration between the two entities. Although there are well-established policies, regulations and action plans, these are not always properly implemented. Since there is a National Action Plan on Human Trafficking, introducing a monitoring mechanism to oversee the collaboration between the government and NGOs is a demand of time. Such a mechanism would ensure the right path of collaboration between the two entities and will strengthen their efforts in preventing human trafficking in Bangladesh. This cooperative action between the government and the NGOs can create a synergy in addressing the root causes of human trafficking. By combining their strength and resources, both can ensure comprehensive, meaningful and sustainable solutions of human trafficking in the country.