



National Strategic Action Plan
to
Monitor and Combat Human Trafficking
(2021-2025)

Adopted by the Government of Sri Lanka



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FOREWORD

The Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) while acknowledging that trafficking in persons constitutes a gross violation of some of the most fundamental values of our society, such as human rights, respect and equality and recognising that women and children occupy unique and privileged positions in the society and are entitled to all rights and require legal protection in conditions of freedom, dignity and security and also observing that it is not only women and children, but also men that fall prey to human trafficking and understanding the discrete nature of human trafficking which makes it challenging to gain an accurate picture of its true extent/scale and nature, put forward this National Strategic Action Plan to Monitor and Combat Human Trafficking for the Years 2021 -2025.

This National Strategic Action Plan (NSAP) to Monitor and Combat Human Trafficking (2021-2025) has been developed through a participatory and consultative process and builds on the 2015-2019 Action Plan. It involved active participation of stakeholders from the National Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force. When formulating the Action Plan, a series of processes were followed which included an internal review of the action plan, desk review of national laws, policies, regional and international instruments. Several cluster meetings and consultations with members of the Task Force were organized to discuss the various aspects of the plan. Consultations were also held with the civil society, private sector, academia, non-government stakeholders to gather input. These valuable inputs and recommendations made the Plan more comprehensive, relevant, consistent and implementable within the planning period. Despite the fact that regular meetings of the Task Force and the consultations planned to formulate the Action plan were delayed due to COVID-19, Task Force members continued their activities to counter human trafficking in 2020 in line with the 2015-2019 Action Plan, while formulating the NSAP for 2021-2025.

The GoSL is committed to curb human trafficking in all its forms and manifestations. The GoSL ratified the United Nations Protocol (Palermo protocol) to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons in 2015. In 2006, the GoSL introduced the Penal Code (Amendment) Act No. 16 of 2006 which comprehensively defines human trafficking in line with the provisions of the Palermo protocol. The GoSL endorsed the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) on the identification, protection and referral of victims of trafficking in 2015 which provides a step-by-step guide to all agencies involved in the identification and provision of assistance and protection to victims of human trafficking.

This Action Plan has been developed in conformity with the aspirations of the Palermo Protocol of 2000, Penal Code (Amendment) Act No. 16 of 2006 and other relevant legislation. It is predicated on 4 pillars – namely, prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership and will be a guiding tool for implementing actions to combat trafficking in persons in Sri Lanka. It will be used to raise awareness, stimulate national and community action, and build ownership and commitment from all Government and non-government stakeholders to combat trafficking in persons. It details the strategies and activities, mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation and measurement of performance of the interventions aimed at combating trafficking in persons. The

Action Plan also seeks to operationalize the implementation of the SOPs endorsed by the Government.

Victims of trafficking are some of the hardest to reach and most vulnerable victims. Hidden away, deceived, exploited and frightened, victims are deprived of their normal lives and are exploited through a variety of coercive practices all for the direct gain of their perpetrators. Victims need to be identified and provided with a tailored victim centric and human rights-based response that addresses the impact this crime has had on them and that helps us to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Delivery on the commitments in this Plan is reliant on the commitment and contribution of members of the National Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force. The Government also recognises the role played by civil society in responding to this issue and to tackle this heinous crime and support victims of human trafficking.

Even as progress is being made, it is essential that our understanding of this complex issue continues to evolve so that we can respond effectively. COVID-19 has further exacerbated the vulnerabilities of individuals. Our actions should also focus on responding to the emerging human trafficking trends and the unscrupulous recruitment practices in the COVID-19 context. The nature of human trafficking is not static; we know that traffickers prey on those in our communities who are most vulnerable and marginalized and that, due to the clandestine nature of trafficking, many cases go undetected and unreported. The work that takes place on the ground in communities is critical to responding effectively.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to the officers at the Ministry of Justice, members of the National Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force, civil society organizations, non-government stakeholders, development partners for their input and efforts. I thankfully acknowledge the support extended by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) of the United Nations for their continuous advocacy, technical support, active involvement in gathering inputs from the civil society and their tireless efforts.

M.M.P.K Mayadunne
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Chairperson of the National Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force

February 2021

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ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

AG	Attorney General
BRAC	Border Risk Assessment Centre
BSU	Border Surveillance Unit
CID	Criminal Investigations Department
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DIE	Department of Immigration and Emigration
DOL	Department of Labour
DPCCS	Department of Probation and Child Care Services
DS	Divisional Secretariat
FBR	Family Background Report
FE-DO	Foreign Employment – Development Officer
FM	Foreign Ministry
GoSL	Government of Sri Lanka
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JMO	Judicial Medical Officer
MOD	Ministry of Defence
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
MOL	Ministry of Labour
NAHTTF	National Anti-human trafficking Task force
NCPA	National Child Protection Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRM	National Referral Mechanism

NSAP	National Strategic Action Plan
RAC	Risk Assessment Centre
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SLBFE	Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment
SMFEP	State Ministry of Foreign Employment and Promotion and market diversification
SMoWCD	State Ministry of Women and Child Development
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
TIP	Trafficking in Persons
UN	United Nations
UNCTOC	United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime
VOT	Victim of Trafficking

Introduction

Human Trafficking is a heinous crime which affects men, women and children. It has been identified as one of the fastest growing crimes in the world that profits from the exploitation and victimization. Human Trafficking can take place both within the country and across borders(externally) and is considered a gross violation of human rights. This crime could take many forms which includes but not limited to forced/exploitative labour, commercial sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, organ removal, forced begging. Victims are often disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals in a dependency relationship with their traffickers.

The 2017 Global Estimates of Modern Slavery report published by the ILO, IOM and the Walk Free Foundation states that an estimated 40.3 million people across the globe were victims of modern slavery/human trafficking in 2016. The magnitude of the crime is difficult to assess as this largely depends on reported incidents and data.

The United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons especially women and children defines Human Trafficking as “ ... *The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purposes of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs*¹.”

Prohibition of all forms of slavery, servitude, forced labour, sexual exploitation, organ trade as well as children’s rights to protection, human rights to liberty and security, with respect to the dignity of each human being, are stipulated in many human rights instruments including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Similarly, the Trafficking Protocol also recognizes the importance of tackling human trafficking holistically with full respect to human rights. Article 2 of the UN Trafficking Protocol indicates that the first two purposes of the Protocol at minimum are “to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, paying particular attention to women and children,” and “to protect and assist the victims of such trafficking with full respect to their human rights”.

A set of interrelated “push” and “pull” factors contribute to human trafficking. “Push” factors include extreme poverty, unemployment, lack of education, inadequate social programs, gender-based inequality, corruption in countries of origin. “Pull” factors include the perceived financial rewards of and the demand for cheap, exploitative, unregulated labour practices in some economic sectors. Victims may also be ‘pulled’ into trafficking through the promise of money and what is portrayed as or believed to be a better life.

¹ Article 3(a) of the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, 2000

While human trafficking affect both men and women, the overrepresentation of women and children as victims in global statistics reflects their particular and continuing vulnerability in many parts of the world.

The extent of human trafficking, either in Sri Lankan or internationally, is difficult to assess due to the hidden nature of the crime, the reluctance of victims and witnesses to come forward to law enforcement and the difficulty of identifying victims in practice.

Victims may not come forward to report the crime owing to myriad of reasons:

- Fear for their own lives;
 - Social stigma
 - Inability to self-identify as victims / Not understand that they are victims of human trafficking.
 - Be taught to distrust outsiders, especially law enforcement and other government authorities;
 - Foreign victims may fear that they will be detained and deported because of their irregular status,
- or they may have limited language skills.
- Be completely unaware of their rights or may have been intentionally misinformed about their rights.
 - Fear of retaliation/reprisals by traffickers/ that they will harm their families if they report their situation to, or cooperate with law enforcement.

In line with internationally accepted best practices outlined in the Trafficking Protocol, an effective response to human trafficking will be predicated on four core pillars (4P Paradigm) namely preventing human trafficking, protecting victims, prosecuting the perpetrators and building partnerships with both Government and Non-Government Stakeholders.

The National Strategic Action Plan to monitor and Combat Human Trafficking (2021-2025) will focus on the above areas with new initiatives while building on the ongoing efforts to combat human trafficking.

National context and response to Human Trafficking

In several reports², Sri Lanka is cited mainly as a source and to a lesser extent, a destination country and a country of transit for human trafficking. With approximately 150,000-200,000 Sri Lankan workers migrating annually for overseas employment, it becomes crucial to safeguard their rights and ensure that they secure employment in a safe and dignified manner and prevent exploitative situations. According to the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) statistics, majority of the migrant workers migrate to the Middle Eastern countries for semi or less skilled categories of employment³ and can be exposed to the risk of human trafficking. In 2018, less-skilled and domestic worker categories represented 55.2 per cent of the total departures for foreign employment. Non-payment of wages, deception regarding nature and conditions of employment, forced labour, excessive and long hours of work without breaks, restricted mobility, compelled to work for several employers, retention of travel documents by

²Trafficking in Persons report, U.S Department of state

³SLBFE Annual statistical report of foreign employment, 2017

employer, physical and sexual abuse were highlighted in some cases related to human trafficking taken place in destination countries.

Within the country, individuals can be deceived through false promises for better job opportunities and trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation from rural to urban areas. Along the coastal belt, young boys can be trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation. There are also indications of foreign women being trafficked into Sri Lanka for commercial sexual exploitation. The Judiciary has convicted traffickers involved in trafficking in Uzbek women to Sri Lanka for commercial sexual exploitation / forced prostitution on several occasions. The Department of Immigration and Emigration was able to crack down on a potential trafficking syndicate in 2017 involving vulnerable Nepalese women transiting in Sri Lanka. In 2019, the Government initiated 11 new prosecutions related to human trafficking. 2 convictions were reported during the period of April 2019 – March 2020.

While the Government and other stakeholders have made several interventions in the past to collect data pertaining to human trafficking, comprehensive data/statistics on the victims is still limited. It has been observed that majority of the victims do not come forward to report the crime due to a myriad of reasons including fear or social stigma attached to the crime.

Traffickers use various methods to lure and groom potential victims. These methods often include intimidation, false work pretences, or a technique in which the trafficker pretends to be interested in their potential victim. Traffickers maintain control over their victims through the use of force, sexual or physical assault, threats of violence or blackmail, confinement, abuse of power, or preying on their vulnerabilities. Victims often suffer physical, sexual, financial, emotional and psychological abuse, and often live and work in horrific conditions. The effect of this crime on victims can be traumatic and inherently lifelong. The Government of Sri Lanka is committed to adopt a victim-centered approach based on respect for human rights when assisting victims of human trafficking.

Combating this crime requires a multidisciplinary, coordinated approach. The Government of Sri Lanka has taken several key initiatives to address human trafficking. The establishment of the ‘National Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force’ in 2010 under the leadership of the Ministry of Justice and Prison Reforms enabled to put in place a strong coordination mechanism between all relevant government ministries, departments and institutions. This paved the way for these entities to share information and collaborate, which immensely boosted awareness and placed much importance on the subject matter.

The Task Force is the national coordination body which advises and monitors activities to be implemented in combating human trafficking. It also aims to strengthen the co-ordination among key government stakeholders, to increase prosecutions and to improve the protection accorded to victims. The Task Force meetings are convened by the Ministry of Justice and the members meet regularly to share information, identified trends and good practices among participating stakeholders.

The members of the Task Force include *inter alia* senior officials of The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Defence, State Ministry of Women and Child

Development, Attorney General's Department, Ministry of Labour (MOL), Ministry of Social Services and Social Welfare, Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Police - Crimes Division, Immigration and Emigration Department, Police Women and Children's Bureau, Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE), Ministry of Foreign Employment, National Child Protection Authority, Police Criminal Records Division, Department of Probation and Child Care, Victim and Witness Protection Authority, Chief Judicial Medical Officer. The members of the Task Force also work in coordination with international organizations and non-governmental organizations to share information and assist efforts of such institutions in assisting and protecting victims of human trafficking.

The Task Force has initiated and implemented policies and several activities with regard to the identification and protection of victims of trafficking. The 'Standard Operating Procedures' (SOP) on the identification, referral and protection of victims of human trafficking was endorsed by the Cabinet of Ministers in 2015, expanding counter trafficking awareness to districts/grassroots level through capacity building and awareness programmes, media and public information campaigns, setting up district level anti-trafficking fora, strengthening the capacities of prosecutors, judges, immigration officials, Police, diplomats, Sri Lankan airlines crew, recruitment agents, local government officers, demonstrate the Government's strong commitment to improve the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) related to the identification, referral and protection of victims of Human Trafficking (VOT). The GoSL enacted the Victim and Witness protection legislation in 2015 with a subsequent amendment in 2017. Special Anti-Trafficking units are in operation within SLBFE and the CID.

The Government of Sri Lanka recognizes the importance of cooperation and coordination between different government institutions in the protection and assistance of victims of human trafficking in a victim centered approach, their sustainable reintegration into society and most importantly the prosecution of offenders involved in human trafficking. The formulation of this National Action Plan is a result of such coordinated efforts of the Government. The Action Plan will be implemented by respective government institutions addressing the protection of victims, prosecution of offenders and the prevention of human trafficking while strengthening collaborations with both Government and Non-government stakeholders.

Legal and Policy Framework and Standard Operating Procedures

International and Regional legal framework

Sri Lanka ratified the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) in September 2006. The supplementary protocol to the UNTOC, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (Palermo protocol) was ratified in June 2015.

Sri Lanka has also ratified the 'SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution'.

Additionally, Sri Lanka has become a party to a number of conventions to eliminate forced labour and slavery and to protect the rights of migrant workers and children. Among the most notable instruments are; The UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, Slavery Convention, core conventions of the ILO including those on minimum age for employment (C138), worst forms of child labour (C182), Forced labour Convention (C29), Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (C105) Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention (P 29), 1930 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at work, Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Inter-Country Adoption, SAARC Convention on Child Welfare.

National legal framework

Legal provisions dealing with human trafficking

Human Trafficking as a concept was introduced to Sri Lankan law for the first time in 1995 with the enactment of the Penal Code (Amendment) Act No.22. The definition of trafficking in Section 360C of the Penal Code underwent further changes with the Penal Code (Amendment) Act No. 16 of 2006. These changes brought the provisions in the Penal Code more in line with the UN Palermo Protocol.

Section 360C (1) of the Penal Code (Amendment) Act No. 16 of 2006 criminalizes human trafficking as follows.

Whoever;

(a.) Buys, sells or barter or instigates another person to buy, sell or barter any person or does anything to promote, facilitate or induce the buying, selling or bartering of any person for money or other consideration;

(b) Recruits, transports, transfers, harbours or receives any person or does any other act by the use of threat, force, fraud, deception or inducement or by exploiting the vulnerability of another for the purpose of securing forced or compulsory labour or services, slavery, servitude, the removal of organs, prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation or any other act which constitutes an offence under any law ;

(c.) Recruits, transports, transfers, harbours or receives a child or does any other act whether with or without the consent of such child for the purpose of securing forced or compulsory labour or services, slavery, servitude or the removal of organs, prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, or any other act which constitutes an offence under any law, shall be guilty of the offence of trafficking.

The prescribed penalty for trafficking is imprisonment of no less than two and no more than twenty years, which can be combined with a fine. For a trafficking offence involving a child

[Section 360C.(1)(c)], defined as a person less than 18 years of age, the minimum penalty of imprisonment is enhanced to three years and maximum penalty to 20 years [Section 360C.(2) and (3)].

Other relevant legal provisions

The following is not an exhaustive list of legislation but are notable and are of significance within the context.

Penal Code

- Section 360A of the Penal Code criminalizes procurement for prostitution and sexual abuse. In addition, the Act No. 06 of 2006 amended the Penal Code offences in relation to debt bondage, serfdom, forced or compulsory labour, slavery, recruitment of children for use in armed conflicts (Section 358A); illicit forms of adoption (Section 360D); and the solicitation of a child for sexual abuse (Section 360E). The 2006 Amendment also requires computer service providers to take necessary steps to prevent child sexual abuse (Section 286B) and impose a general duty to inform the police when premises are knowingly being used for child sexual abuse (Section 286C). The 2006 Amendment applies to offences committed in whole or partly in Sri Lanka (Section 2).

The Assistance to and Protection of Victims of Crime and Witnesses Act

- The Assistance to and Protection of Victims of Crime and Witnesses Act No. 04 of 2015 was enacted by the Parliament in February 2015. The Act makes provisions for *inter alia* safeguarding the witnesses and measures for victim's treatment, reparation, restitution and rehabilitation and also compensation, thus encouraging the victims/witnesses to assist in the investigations/prosecutions.

As provided for in the Act, "Victims of Crime and Witnesses Assistance and Protection Division (Division)" was established by the Inspector General of Police in November 2016. Further, the Authority is responsible for the "Victims of Crime and Witnesses Assistance and Protection Fund".

It should be particularly noted that section 31 of Act No. 4 of 2015 provides for recording of evidence or statement of victim of crime or witness, by securing such testimony or statement without his/her presence before a Court, Commission or law enforcement authority through technical means by which contemporaneous or near contemporaneous audio-visual linkage between the Court, the Commission or the law enforcement authority and any other remote location within Sri Lanka on grounds of expediency or as a measure of protection to be afforded to a victim of crime or witness, if it be in the best interest of justice and is found necessary. The evidence recorded through such means will be considered as a proper statement in terms of section 110 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

- In November 2017, the Parliament of Sri Lanka amended Section 31(1) of the Assistance to and Protection of Victims of Crime and Witnesses Act, No. 4 of 2015 by enacting “Assistance to and Protection of Victims of crime and Witnesses (Amendment) Act No. 27 of 2017”. This important amendment introduced provisions to record statements within Sri Lanka as well as outside Sri Lanka. One of the salient features of the amendment is the provisions that provide for Sri Lankan expatriates to give evidence through Sri Lankan missions in the countries they currently reside. This addresses the difficulties encountered by the Police Officers in taking statements from victims who are outside Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) Act

The SLBFE Act *inter alia* makes provision to take action against unauthorized recruitment practices. A few notable provisions are as follows:

- Section 40 of the SLBFE Act No. 21 of 1985 as amended by Act No 04 of 1994 and Act No.56 of 2009 states that, the contract of employment between the employer abroad and the person recruited for employment by such employer shall, before it is signed by such employer or his agent and such person, be read and explained in a language that the employee understands. At the time of any violation of the conditions there on, SLBFE will take action with the assistance of the Sri Lanka Mission in the destination country.

- Section 44 of the SLBFE Act No. 21 of 1985 as amended by Act No 04 of 1994 and Act No.56 of 2009 states that when an incident is reported to the SLBFE by or on behalf of any person recruited for employment outside Sri Lanka in relation to the contract of employment of the person not having been observed by the employer or the licensee having failed to take possible steps to ensure that those terms and conditions are observed by the employer, an officer authorized by the SLBFE shall, after an inquiry, make an award directing the licensee to pay such person such sum of money as may be determined by the authorized officer of the SLBFE.

- Section 63 of the SLBFE Act No. 21 of 1985 as amended by Act No 04 of 1994 and Act No.56 of 2009states that, any person who forges or alters any document required for, or relating to, the emigration of any person for the purpose of employment or has, in his possession or under his control any instrument or article which may be used for the purpose of such forgery or alteration; or by means of intoxication, coercion, fraud or wilful misrepresentation, causes or induces, or attempts to cause or induce, any person to emigrate, or enter into any agreement to emigrate or leave any place with a view to emigrating for the purpose of employment shall be guilty of an offence under the SLBFE Act, and shall on conviction after summary trial by a Magistrate be liable to a fine and to imprisonment of either description for a term not exceeding two years.

- Persons other than the licensed agents who are engaged in foreign employment recruitments are liable for a fine and imprisonment of either description for a period not exceeding four years. (Section 62 of the SLBFE Act as amended)

- Persons other than the licensed agents who receive money for themselves and on behalf of another for recruitment are liable for a fine and for imprisonment for a period of two years. The

Magistrate shall in addition order the offender to refund the fee or money which is the subject of the offence, to the person from whom the offender receive such fee or money.

Immigrants and Emigrants Act No. 20 of 1948 and subsequent amendments

According to Section 45 A of the above Act , the facilitation of an individual to enter into Sri Lanka knowing that the entry of such person is violating the provisions of the Act, conceals or harbours a person knowing that person has entered into Sri Lanka or is remaining in Sri Lanka violating the provisions of the Act or employs such a person is an offence punishable with imprisonment. Section 45 C further states that organizing one or more persons to leave Sri Lanka in contravention of any of the provisions of the above Act is an offence. To ‘organize’ according to the Act, means the recruitment of a person knowingly making false promises of employment in a foreign country with an intention of inducing persons to leave Sri Lanka, obtaining monetary benefits for such purpose, the transportation of persons by sea, land or any other manner without obtaining valid travel documents, receiving and harbouring persons whether in Sri Lanka or in a foreign country.

These provisions will enable timely prevention and detection of potential situations of trafficking in persons.

Prevention of Money Laundering Act No. 5 of 2006

The offence of Money Laundering is defined under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act No. 5 of 2006 as receiving, possessing, concealing, investing, disposing or bringing into Sri Lanka, transferring out of Sri Lanka or engaging in any other manner in any transaction, in relation to any property derived or realized directly or indirectly from “unlawful activity” or proceeds of “unlawful activity”. Human Trafficking is explicitly listed under “unlawful activities” in the Act. Any income derived from it will result in freezing of accounts, forfeiture and sentencing.

Prevention of Crimes (Amendment) Act, No. 29 of 2017

The Parliament of Sri Lanka enacted the Prevention of Crimes (Amendment) Act, No. 29 of 2017 making human trafficking a finger-printable offence. Making human trafficking a finger-printable offence will not only expedite the process of accurately identifying offenders but will also contribute to maintaining accurate records on human trafficking in the database established at the Criminal Records Division of the Police.

Other legal provisions and policy frameworks

The Government of Sri Lanka has taken several initiatives focusing on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and abuse as well as child labour within the framework of child rights. These initiatives include reforms to laws addressing discrimination against women and children as well as education for children. Further, several policy instruments have been formulated to protect the rights of migrant workers.

- Constitutional provisions: Articles 11 (freedom from torture and cruel inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment) and Article 27 (the directive principles of State Policy) of the Constitution of Sri Lanka indicate the right to freedom from exploitation. Notably, Article 12(4) authorizes affirmative action for the advancement of women and children. Moreover, directive principles of state policy provide for the elimination of economic and social disparity and exploitation (Article 27.7). These principles also require the state to promote the special interests of children and youth and protect them against discrimination and exploitation (Article 27.13). The Constitution also provides for in camera judicial proceedings in relation to sexual matters (Article 106.2(b)) and Article 17 provides the right to a constitutional remedy for violations of fundamental rights. Under Article 27 (13) of the Constitution on Directive Principles of State Policy and Fundamental Duties, the state pledges to promote with special care the interest of children and youth so as to ensure their full development, physical, mental, moral, religious and social and to protect them from exploitation and discrimination.

- Notable reforms to laws include the amendments to the Penal Code by the inclusion of new offences, establishing more severe penalties and providing compensation for victims of offences of sexual violence against women and children; The Penal Code amendments of 1995 and 1998 criminalize violence against women and children and enhanced the penalty in relation to the existing offences.

- In terms of labour laws, Sri Lanka abolished slavery in 1844 by enacting the Abolition of Slavery Ordinance prohibiting forced labour.

- The Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act as amended in 1999 and in 2003, prohibit the employment of children less than 14 years of age and provides for employer compensation to victims whose rights are violated. Hazardous occupations Regulations formulated under this Act restrict persons under 18 years of age from engaging in hazardous occupations.

- The Government of Sri Lanka by regulations to the Education Ordinance in 1997, made education and attendance at school compulsory for every Sri Lankan child aged between 5 and 14 years. Notable changes were made to these regulations in 2016 raising the age for compulsory school attendance from 14 to 16 years.

- The Brothels Ordinance and the Vagrants Ordinance criminalise many acts in what is considered prostitution and vagrancy. The brothels Ordinance of 1889 provides for the suppression of brothels. Any person who keeps or manages the management of a brothel commits an offence. The Act also makes it an offence if a landlord knowingly rents the premises for the running of the brothel where there is “habitual prostitution.” Similarly, a tenant or occupier who runs a brothel commits an offence.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Other National Action Plans

- The development of SOPs on the identification, protection and referral of victims of human trafficking demonstrates Government's strong commitment to improve the identification and protection of victims. SOP was a result of a consultative process led by the Ministry of Justice with NAHTTF members with technical support from IOM. SOPs received the approval from the Cabinet of Ministers and was officially launched in March 2015.
- In line with the above SOPs endorsed by the cabinet of ministers, institution specific SOPs have been developed. State Ministry of Women and Child Development developed SOPs with a focus on child trafficking. Further, the Department of Immigration and Emigration has also developed SOPs. The Department of Labour has a separate SOP on special investigations of child labour.
- The National Policy & Action Plan on Migration for Employment for Sri Lanka (2020-2023), Migration Health policy (2012), Sub-policy and National Action Plan on Return and Re-integration of migrant workers (2015), Policy Framework and National Plan of Action to address Sexual and Gender based violence in Sri Lanka (2016-2020), National Human Rights Action Plan of Sri Lanka (2017-2021) and the National COVID-19 Response Plan for Migrant Workers (2020) are some of the key policies and action plans that reinforce certain key components in the current National Strategic Action Plan to Monitor and Combat Human Trafficking (2021-2025).
- COVID-19 has disproportionately affected migrants. Recognizing the need to urgently respond to the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable migrants, the SLBFE, with technical assistance from IOM and ILO, formulated the National COVID-19 Response Plan for Migrant Workers in May 2020. GoSL is currently implementing health screening, quarantine and other protection measures for all including migrant workers and victims of human trafficking. In line with the said COVID-19 National response plan, the GoSL has taken steps to facilitate the repatriation and reintegration of migrant workers and to reduce the risks related to human trafficking.

Formulation of the National Action Plan

The current National Strategic Action Plan to Monitor and Combat human trafficking (2021-2025) builds on the previous 2015-2019 plan implemented by the Government of Sri Lanka. Some of the challenges encountered during the implementation of the previous Action Plans include *inter alia* lower number of victim identifications due to the reluctance of victims to come forward and report the crime, lack of awareness of the crime and the importance of identification, referral and protection of victims of human trafficking. The current Action Plan aims to address these challenges by increased awareness training, capacity building, effective public outreach activities, research, technology tools, enhancing access to quality services for victims, multi stakeholder cooperation and expeditious investigations leading to prosecutions.

The National Action Plan 2021-2025 has been developed through a participatory and consultative process. It involved active participation of stakeholders from key ministries, departments, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), International Organizations and members of the public. Key activities undertaken in connection with the formulation of the action plan included (a.) An internal review of the progress of the previous National Action Plan (2015-2019) (b.) Desk review of national laws, regional and international instruments and declarations pertaining to trafficking in persons (c.) Analysis of the emerging trafficking trends (d.) Consultations and cluster meetings with the members of the National Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force (e.) National consultation with the CSOs/Non-government stakeholders.

Several consultations with the National Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force were organized to discuss the various aspects of the current action plan and to review the activities implemented in the past. The Ministry of Justice in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) facilitated a National civil society consultation with the participation of NGOs, CBOs, Academia, International Organizations, UN agencies and thematic specialists to gather input, recommendations and civil society perspectives of the ground realities.

The National Action Plan has been developed in conformity with the aspirations of the Palermo Protocol of 2000, Penal Code (Amendment) Act No. 16 of 2006, Assistance to and Protection of Victims of Crime and Witnesses Act No. 04 of 2015 and Amendment Act No. 27 of 2017 and other relevant legislation mentioned in the preceding sections. The National Action Plan will be a guiding tool for implementing actions to combat trafficking in persons in Sri Lanka. It will be used to raise awareness, stimulate national and community action, and build ownership and commitment from all Government and public stakeholders to combat trafficking in persons. The action plan details the strategies and activities, monitoring and evaluation and indicators to measure performance of the interventions aimed at combating trafficking in persons.

The Anti Trafficking response set forth in this Action Plan aims to achieve the following:

- (i.) Preventing Trafficking in persons both internally and across borders through increased awareness, institutional capacity building and other preventive measures
- (ii.) Identification of victims through effective screenings and outreach activities
- (iii.) Providing protection and contributing to sustainable re-integration of victims whilst enabling their recovery
- (iv.) Intensifying investigation and prosecution efforts and penalising offenders to the full extent of the law
- (v.) Cooperation and Coordination among relevant stakeholders

The National Action Plan provides for the major duties in achieving the aforementioned objectives (measures), the participation of various authorities in execution of them, coordination

of activities of these authorities through NAHTTF and other measures in the sphere of combating human trafficking.

This Action Plan is a flexible document which will be adapted to reflect the growing experience in this area and the new challenges which may arise. The activities set out in this Plan are not proposed as an exhaustive list and the GoSL recognizes the need for further measures and action whilst responding to novel trafficking trends. The consultative structures will be utilised to develop Annual institutional Work Plans that may seek, in addition to the targets in this Plan, to address emerging needs.

Budget

Funds will be sourced predominantly, upon request, through general annual budgetary allocations given to NAHTTF Member Institutions by the Treasury, for any relevant Anti trafficking activities coming under the purview of each institution. Additional funds will be sought through other national and international funding sources as appropriate.

Vision, Goal and Objectives of the National Action Plan

Vision

Combat human trafficking in Sri Lanka through strengthened collaborative efforts of all stakeholders - by addressing the root causes and vulnerabilities that expose individuals to the risk of human trafficking, preventing the crime, prosecuting the perpetrators, protecting/assisting victims of human trafficking in an expeditious manner and responding to the emerging needs and trends whilst adopting a victim centric and human rights based approach.

Goal

The overall goal of this action plan is to set an effective strategy to combat Human Trafficking in Sri Lanka. Government of Sri Lanka is committed to collaborate and strengthen its efforts with government and non-government stakeholders, regional and international bodies to combat Human Trafficking.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the GoSL also recognizes the need for urgent measures to address the vulnerabilities of individuals and to effectively respond to human trafficking.

Objectives

The government's response to human trafficking will be predicated on the following 4 pillars.

Prevention: Prevent Human Trafficking

1. Increase efforts in creating greater awareness among all relevant state and non-state stakeholders at both national and local levels on human trafficking and on the referral mechanisms and ultimately contribute to the reduction of levels of vulnerability that lead to trafficking.
2. Strengthen co-ordination efforts among task Force members for the effective implementation of interventions and strategies to address human trafficking.
3. Facilitate and improve research and data collection on human trafficking for greater understanding and for evidence-based policy making.

Protection: Identify, Assist, and Protect the Victims of Human Trafficking

4. Improve appropriate assistance to and protection of victims of human trafficking in a holistic and victim-centred approach.
5. To build institutional capacity of relevant stakeholders to be able to provide effective protection and assistance to victims of TIP.

Prosecution: Dismantle Human Trafficking Networks and Hold Traffickers Accountable

6. Enhance the capacity of stake holders with appropriate skills and capabilities for effective identification /detection, investigations and prosecution of the crime.
7. Implementing strategies / actions for investigations and prosecutions in an effective manner.

Partnership: Crosscutting Approaches and Institutional Effectiveness — Enable Prevention, Protection, and Prosecution through Collaboration/partnership

8. Strengthen coordination and partnerships with both government and non-government organizations to support a comprehensive response to human trafficking.
9. Building and improving national and international coordination and cooperation to address human trafficking.

PREVENTION

The broader preventive strategy under this section predominantly focuses on;

- Training for frontline personnel
- Awareness-raising activities
- Vulnerability reduction
- A strengthened data collection system, research and assessments to enhance knowledge on emerging trends
- Strengthened legislative provisions
- Enhanced co-ordination and cooperation among stakeholders
- Reduction in the demand for exploitative labour

Objective	Focus area	Activity	Indicators	Time Frame	Lead implementing institution (s)
1. Increase efforts in creating greater awareness among all relevant state and non-state stakeholders at both national and local levels on human trafficking and on the referral mechanisms ultimately contributing to the reduction of levels of vulnerability that lead to trafficking	1(a.).Relevant government officers have enhanced their capacities to effectively identify and refer victims of human trafficking both at national and local levels	Conduct a mapping of officers who could be potential first respondents to trafficking. Identify the target group from each institution to undergo comprehensive training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping completed by each TF member and respective target groups identified 	2021	SMoWCD, Women's Bureau, NCPA, FM, DIE, SMFEP, SLBFE, DOL, DPCCS, MOJ
		Develop multi sectoral anti-human trafficking resource kits to assist with prevention and awareness raising initiatives. The above resource material will be in line with the latest training material developed/endorsed by MOJ/Task Force. Include the SOPs and the referral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing / updating material by TF members and availability of the resource kits 	2021-2022	SMoWCD, NCPA, FM, DIE, SMFEP, SLBFE, DOL, DPCCS, MOJ

		mechanism already in place as part of the training curriculum.			
		Develop and disseminate a dedicated training manual on the identification, reporting and investigation of child trafficking in Sri Lanka	● Availability of the Manual	2021-2022	NCPA
		TF member institutions to conduct trainings on identifying and responding to human trafficking and SOPs - for government officials at both national (labour attaches, officials attached to diplomatic missions, immigration offices) and district levels (WDOs, GN, FEDO, Counselling assistants, Child protection officers, labour officers, probation officers, SLBFE officers, judicial medical officers) particularly targeting the districts prone to regular and irregular migration and high-frequented travel destinations	● No. of trainings conducted (desegregated by institution, gender, district)	Throughout 2021-2025	Task Force members
		Conduct trainings for labour officers/labour inspectors to enhance their knowledge on exploitative labour conditions/human trafficking and effective screening/identification of victims	● No. of programmes conducted for labour offices annually (desegregated by gender, district)	2021-2024	DOL
		Incorporate human trafficking as a topic for discussion at district level meetings convened by local government officials with a view to enhancing victim identifications and referrals.	● Circulars to be issued/directives to be sent by relevant TF members	Monthly meetings – throughout 2021-2024	SMoWCD, NCPA, SMFEP
		Issue circulars/directives/guidelines to the respective local government officials attached to divisional and district secretariats or district/provincial offices on screening/identifying trafficking	● Circulars to be issued/directives to be sent by relevant TF members	2021-2022	SMoWCD, NCPA, SMFEP, DPCCS, DOL

		cases and developing a referral mechanism from local to central levels (Through Women Development officers, child protection officers, child rights promotion officers, probation officers, Foreign employment development officers, labour officers/inspectors)			
		Pursuant to the above district level meetings, identified potential cases to be referred to the TF member institution at central level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Relevant government officers such as WDO, FEDO, increasingly refer cases to relevant TF member institution for further action and follow up through the respective line Ministry ● Cases referred by local levels are recorded and promptly followed up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No. of trainings conducted (desegregated by institution, gender) 	2021-2024	SMoWCD, NCPA, SMFEP, DPCCS, DOL
		Conduct a training for national hotline operators to enable them to effectively categorize potential cases and refer them to the relevant division to take immediate action		Throughout	NCPA, SLBFE, Police /CID, SMoWCD
		Conduct awareness programmes to promote safe and regular migration and identification of potential victims of human trafficking to licensed foreign employment agencies, SLBFE officers at conciliation division and district centres, officers attached to Sri Lankan embassies abroad, SLBFE Airport unit, and other relevant government officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No. of awareness programmes conducted (desegregated by institution, gender, district) ● No. of officers sensitized (desegregated by target group, gender) 	2021-2024	SLBFE

	<p>Training for government officials involved in responding to human trafficking (including officers posted abroad in Sri Lanka missions) on preventing and detecting money laundering for human trafficking</p> <p>Organize exposure visits and experience sharing sessions with Sri Lanka missions abroad with a view to preventing human trafficking</p>	<p>●No. of programmes conducted (desegregated by institution, gender)</p>	<p>2021-2023</p>	<p>DIE, AG's Department, CID</p>
<p>1(b).Community members/ general public make informed decisions to prevent trafficking as a result of awareness raising / on the basis of available information</p>	<p>Educate aspirant sri Lankan migrant workers of their rights, entitlements and services offered by both SLBFE and the Sri Lanka missions abroad during pre-departure orientations</p> <p>Conduct awareness sessions among community members, community-based organizations (CBOS), NGOs, youth at district level on human trafficking and safe and regular migration</p> <p>Conduct awareness sessions on child trafficking for school children through School Child Protection Committees.</p> <p>Conduct awareness sessions on child trafficking for parents and the general public</p>	<p>●No. of training programmes conducted</p> <p>● No. of aspirant migrant workers sensitized</p> <p>●No. of awareness sessions conducted (desegregated by district, institution, gender)</p> <p>● No. of community members sensitized</p> <p>●No. of awareness sessions conducted (desegregated by district, school, gender)</p> <p>● No. of students sensitized</p> <p>●No. of awareness sessions conducted (desegregated by district, and gender)</p>	<p>Regular programmes between 2021-2024</p> <p>2021-2024</p> <p>2021-2024</p> <p>2021-2024</p>	<p>SLBFE</p> <p>SLBFE</p> <p>SMFEP, SLBFE, MOJ, SMoWCD, NCPA</p> <p>NCPA</p> <p>NCPA</p>

		Conduct awareness sessions among community members targeting at risk-areas, particularly who are targeted by the recruitment intermediaries/subagents in Badulla, Puttalam, Batticaloa (2021), Chilaw, Trincomalee, Ampara (2022), Vavuniya, Jaffna and Nuwara Eliya police divisions (2024)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No. of programmes conducted (desegregated by district, gender) ● No. of community members sensitized 	Badulla, Puttalam, Batticaloa (By 2021), Chilaw, Trincomalee, Ampara (By 2022), Vavuniya, Jaffna and Nuwara Eliya police divisions (By 2024)	Police
		Incorporate human trafficking as a topic into the awareness programs conducted for tourist Service Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No. of awareness sessions conducted (Disaggregated data available -Locations, target group, No. of participants) 	Annually	Police / tourist police
		Develop a communication strategy to design/ implement a public information and media campaign targeting island wide reach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Communication / awareness strategy developed and in place 	2021-2022	MOJ and relevant TF members
		Organize street drama and forum theatres at local levels highlighting the common forms of trafficking /exploitation in line with the communication strategy developed, utilising public information campaign tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No.of street drama / forum theatres conducted (disaggregated by district) 	2021-2024	MOJ and relevant TF members
		Develop and implement mass media campaigns and disseminate anti-trafficking messages via Newspaper articles, TV, Radio, billboards and using other visibility mechanisms and continue to monitor its effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No. of campaigns conducted using media / visibility material 	2021-2024	MOJ, NCPA, SMFEP / SLBFE

		Develop anti-human trafficking awareness material such as leaflets, posters, banners to assist with local prevention and awareness raising initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of awareness material produced by each TF member institution • Location and types of programmes/events during which the material were disseminated 	2021-2022 (Material will be updated as required in the subsequent period)	MOJ, NCPA, SLBFE
		Develop pre-departure information booklets for Sri Lankans intending to travel abroad for employment with relevant information and contact numbers and disseminate the same	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information booklets developed and disseminated 	2021	SLBFE
		Implement a national awareness campaign against child sex tourism and pornography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of campaigns / events conducted annually (desegregated by district/target areas if any) 	2021-2024	NCPA
		Reach out to the general public on child labour through awareness seminars, school education, social and cultural (religious) events, disseminating leaflets/posters, and through media (TV, Radio, drama and social media)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of programmes / events conducted annually by (desegregated by district) • Number of media initiatives implemented (TV/Radio programmes/drama etc.) 	Annually	DOL
		Sensitization of media personnel/journalists on human trafficking and its various forms, ethical reporting of cases, irregular migration / holding relevant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of programmes held • Number of journalists 	2021-2023	MOJ

		events around the features of elucidation of such information in mass media and engage the media as a way carrying out advocacy for integration of TIP related issues	sensitized		
		Conduct events / panel discussions at national or local levels targeting the anti-trafficking day with a view to engaging with the NGOs, CSOs, INGOs to highlight the importance of the topic to the general public and to create public dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of events held (Disaggregated by district) 	2021-2024	TF members led by the MOJ
		Set up/activate project steering committees comprising of key members of the Task Force to provide input / advice to outreach activities and for the development of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical working groups / project steering committees established are working on providing input for the assigned outreach tasks. 	As required through 2021-2025	MOJ, TF members
		Awareness raising on prevention and identification of child labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of programmes conducted at divisional/district level 	2021-2024	DOL
		Strengthen the screening procedure by developing and introducing tools/mechanisms to effectively identify potential victims among the individuals charged for violating immigration/visa conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of individuals screened as potential victims of trafficking and referred to the law enforcement authorities for investigation (Annual data) 	2021-2025	DIE
		Conduct reactive and proactive intelligence analysis of internet based suspicious activities/websites operating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intelligence analysis effectively conducted 	2021-2025	DIE
2. Strengthen efforts for the effective implementation of interventions and strategies to address human trafficking	TF members have strategies and tools to make appropriate interventions to address human trafficking.				

		from foreign countries via the Investigations Unit of the Department of Immigration and Emigration.	via RAC and alerts issued / action taken on suspicious activities		
		Establishment of a Border Risk Assessment Centre (BRAC) in collaboration with the Ministry of Defence to better coordinate and share intelligence pertaining to crimes/trafficking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of a Border Assessment Centre (BRAC) 	BRAC is established and continue its operations	DIE, MOD
		Establish and continue operations of a Border surveillance Unit (BSU) consisting of immigration officers to minimize organized crimes and to effectively identify human traffickers and smugglers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of a Border surveillance Unit 	BSU is established and continue its operations	DIE
		Issue directives to entry exit/points, visa section, detention centre and legal sections for the effective identification and screening of cases involving trafficking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directives/guidelines issued to relevant sections 	2021-2022	DIE
		Organize discussion forums/symposiums between immigration officers, CID, SLBFE, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, AG's Department to share experiences and trends and to collectively identify solutions for the challenges encountered related to trafficking in persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of forums held 	Bi- Annually	CID, DIE, SLBFE, FM, AG's Department, MOJ
		Conduct Task Force meetings at regular intervals (monthly meetings) to coordinate measures/actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TF meetings regularly convened by MOJ and attended by TF members 	Monthly meetings	MOJ and TF members
		Strengthening data collection and analysis by maintaining adequate data on databases and generating reports on incidents pertaining to human trafficking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TF members maintain their annual records on human trafficking TF members share trafficking related data 	Annually	MOJ and TF members

			with MOJ		
		<p>Conduct rapid assessments and research related to the emerging trends, root causes of human trafficking and the lower number of prosecutions for evidence-based decision/policy making and to design effective responses</p>	<p>● Annual data/records maintained by MOJ</p> <p>● Number of assessments / researches conducted</p> <p>● Interventions and policy level decisions made/ action taken, based on the findings/ recommendations emanating from research/assessments.</p>	2022-2024	MOJ with input/data from TF members
		<p>Conduct legal aid/awareness clinics to assist migrant workers/their families and victims of human trafficking</p>	<p>● No. of legal aid clinics conducted (Disaggregated by district and No. of individuals advised)</p>	Annually	Legal Aid Commission / MOJ
		<p>Regular and close monitoring of the operation of licensed foreign employment agencies.</p> <p>Blacklist, suspend and cancel licenses of the recruitment agents who commit malpractices.</p>	<p>Action taken against unauthorized recruitment practices:</p> <p>● No. of cases instituted under the SLBFE Act for identified offences – per year</p> <p>● No. of agencies backlisted/ whose licenses have been cancelled per year due to malpractices</p>	Throughout 2021-2025	SLBFE
		<p>Revise and update the SLBFE Act encompassing key aspects of state policy on labour migration and in line with the UN convention on the protection of</p>	<p>● SLBFE Act revised / amendment enacted</p>	2021-2023	SLBFE

		rights of all migrant workers and their families			
		Implement action to address the vulnerabilities of stranded, aspirant and returnee migrants due to COVID-19 and to prevent trafficking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National COVID-19 response plan for migrant workers is finalised and actions are being implemented 	2021 onwards	SLBFE, SMFEP, FM
		Implement a new security system at border controlling points to monitor illegal/irregular migration, use of visit visas with the ultimate aim of securing employment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Security system established and strengthened 	Throughout 2021-2025	Police
		Carry out surveillance operations to prevent commercial sexual exploitation in the tourism sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of surveillance operations carried out Number of suspicious incidents/cases reported 	Throughout 2021-2025	Police (tourist police)
		Strengthen the cyber surveillance operations and design online tracking systems to track sex offenders/paedophiles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cyber surveillance mechanisms/systems established 	2021-2023	CID/Police / DIE
		Conduct inspections on hazardous child labour and take adequate preventive measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of inspections carried out per year (Annual data) 	Throughout 2021-2025	DOL
		Enact/Amend laws/regulations to prevent child labour in hazardous occupations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hazardous occupations regulations reviewed and amended 	2021	DOL

PROTECTION

A victim centric and a human rights-based approach is paramount when assisting victims of human trafficking. The Government is committed to securing the safety and protection of individuals who have been exploited by criminals. The Government recognizes that victims must feel empowered to make viable options about their future to help in their long-term recovery. Sustainable reintegration options are required to protect the victims and to ensure that they do not fall into the cycle of re-trafficking. The protection of victims may also play an important role in supporting criminal investigations into the activities of traffickers. A victim whose rights have been respected and whose needs have been met is more likely to be in a position to assist in investigations.

The 'protection' pillar mainly focuses on;

- Enhancing the services for victims of human trafficking based on a victim centric approach
- Capacitating stakeholders on the provision of assistance to victims
- Economic, social, psychosocial reintegration of victims in a sustainable manner
- Sensitizing the general public on the available victim protection services, rights and entitlements

Objective	Focus area	Activity	Indicators	Time Frame	Lead implementing institution (s)
3.Improve appropriate assistance to and protection of victims of human trafficking based on a holistic, victim-centred approach.	3(a). Provide victims with shelter and other support services such as counselling, psychosocial support, security, medical, re-integration, legal and translation assistance	Ensure effective operation of the shelter for female victims of trafficking with trained staff, adequate maintenance of facilities and access to specialized services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified victims have access to shelter with adequate services 	Throughout 2021-2025	SMoWCD
		Assist victims to gain access to support services such as medical, psychosocial, economic reintegration/ livelihood support, interpretation support, logistical support to attend investigations and prosecutions; provide security/protection to victims; grant compensation through victim assistance fund established by the Victim and Witness Protection Authority.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified victims have access to adequate services (desegregated by types of services received) • No. of assisted victims of human trafficking 	Throughout 2021-2025	MOJ/SLBFE/Victim and Witness protection Authority DIE (With regard to Foreign Victims)

		Provide documentation and translation support to foreign victims of trafficking	●No. of foreign victims provided with documentation and translation support	Throughout 2021-2025	FM in coordination with relevant embassies and consulates
		Provide counselling and individualized psychosocial support to victims	● Identified victims have access to adequate support services	Throughout 2021-2025	SMoWCD, NCPA (Through officers attached to divisional and district secretariats)
		Provide legal counselling and assistance to victims and represent their interests where necessary	●No. of victims of human trafficking seeking legal assistance annually	Throughout 2021-2025	Legal aid commission
		Facilitate smooth repatriation of victims in coordination with embassies, provide documentation assistance where necessary and ensure victims are not arrested or detained for offences traffickers committed during the trafficking process	● No. of victims of human trafficking receiving repatriation assistance (Annual data)	Throughout 2021-2025	FM, SLBFE, DIE
		Engage with state and non-state stakeholders in countries of destination to obtain legal support for vulnerable migrants and victims / Enter into agreements to acquire legal assistance	● Availability of a panel of lawyers and/or identified NGOs and INGOs to provide continued legal assistance to Sri Lankan migrant workers / VOTs	Throughout 2021-2025	FM, SMFEP, SLBFE
		Operate safe shelters / places of safety for child victims including child victims of trafficking with adequate standards and living conditions	● Places of safety are available for child victims at provincial level	Throughout 2021-2025	DPCCS

		Design and implement effective re-integration programmes for child victims of both transnational and internal crimes including human trafficking upon conducting ‘best interest determination’ assessments for children and conducting family tracing where appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-integration programmes designed and implemented • Number of child assisted/ VoTs effectively re-integrated (Annual data) • Types of services offered 	Throughout 2021-2025	DPPCS
		<p>Ensure effective operation /maintenance of the shelters attached to Sri Lankan missions abroad and “Sahana Piyasa” welfare centre.</p> <p>Implement special programmes (including reintegration in coordination with the SLBFE reintegration unit) and referrals for trafficked, abused and exploited returnees that need special attention upon their return.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of vulnerable migrants assisted (including VOTs) • Types of services offered / assistance provided (Annual data) 	Throughout 2021-2025	FM/SLBFE/MOL
	3(b). Effectively identify and refer victims to support services in a coordinated manner	Set up district level anti-trafficking forums in identified districts (targeting high migration prone / irregular migration prone areas, tourist areas) to link local government officers and community members to effectively identify and refer victims to necessary support services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. of the forms held (Disaggregated by district) 	Throughout 2021-2025 (Targeting Kalutara, Polonnaruwa, Badulla, Matale, Trincomalee,	MOI, relevant TF members

				Jaffna and Vavuniya districts in 2020 in the pilot phase)	
		Conduct an assessment to identify and map out available service providers for VoTs, including shelters, legal aid services, health support services, psychosocial counselling, return and re-integration support, skills development etc.	● Availability of the assessment	2021-2022	MOJ with input from TF members
		Develop guidelines on SOPs with a focus on child trafficking based on the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) on the identification, referral and protection of victims	● SOP guidelines on child trafficking developed and adopted	2021 - 2022	SMoWCD, NCPA, DPCCS
		Issue circulars to TF member institution staff with a view to institutionalizing the SOPs on the identification, referral and protection of victims of human trafficking endorsed by the cabinet of ministers.	● Circulars/guidelines issued by each TF member institution	2021 - 2022	TF members
		Build the capacity of shelter staff, counselling assistants attached to divisional and district secretariats, Sahana Piyasa, shelters attached to Sri Lankan embassies abroad	● No. of programmes conducted annually ● Number of officers trained (Disaggregated by TF member institution)	2021-2025	FM, SMoWCD, Women's Bureau, SLBFE
		Identify and train officers attached to overseas embassies including labour	● No. of programmes	2021-2023	FM, SLBFE
4. Build institutional capacity of relevant stakeholders to be able to provide effective protection and assistance to victims of TIP.	4(a). Relevant government officials have enhanced their knowledge and services to identify, assist and protect victims				

		attaches on victim identification / screening, assistance, protection and referrals	conducted annually		
		Conduct training programmes to child protection service providers and introducing the guidelines on SOPs on child trafficking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No. of trained officers by disaggregated government agency (Labour officers, child rights promotion officers, probation officers) ● No. of programmes held (At least 10 programmes per year by each responsible agency) 	2021 - 2025	SMoWCD, NCPA, DPCCS, DOL
		Enhance the knowledge of officers attached to the Legal Aid Commission and Victim and Witness Protection Authority on human trafficking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No. of programmes conducted by the Legal Aid Commission and the Victim and Witness Protection Authority for its officers (desegregated by gender, district) 	2021-2023	Legal Aid Commission /Victim and Witness Protection Authority/ MOJ
	4(b). General public are sensitized on the available victim protection services, their rights and entitlements	Carry out public sensitization workshops on the existing victim protection mechanism and on the services offered to victims to enhance knowledge on the rights and entitlements and on the victim assistance fund as way of promoting public cooperation with investigators and prosecutors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No. of programmes held (desegregated by gender, district) ● Target group ● No. of participants 	Annually	Victim and Witness protection authority

PROSECUTION

The investigation of trafficking offences is often complicated by the clandestine nature of the criminality and hence, requires a strong law enforcement response. The prosecution of human trafficking offences presents a number of challenges. The reluctance of victims to come forward and report the crime, the frequent need to rely on evidence collected abroad in relation to transnational trafficking and the potential for suspected victims and witnesses to be either traumatised by their experience or intimidated, makes the collection of evidence a complex undertaking. Continued efforts will be made to overcome these challenges and ensure a robust enforcement response.

The ‘prosecution’ pillar mainly focuses on ;

- Providing targeted training and education for prosecutors, Judges, law enforcement and other relevant state officials.
- Developing systems, strategies, tools to carry out investigations and prosecutions expeditiously.
- Enhance intelligence collection coordination and collaboration.

Objective	Focus area	Activity	Indicators	Time Frame	Lead implementing institution (s)
5. Enhance the capacity of stakeholders with appropriate skills and capabilities for effective identification /detection, investigations and prosecution of the crime	Relevant law enforcement and other state officials have enhanced their capacities to effectively identify and investigate human trafficking	Conduct training to enhance skills, knowledge and capacities of the officers attached to the Anti Human Trafficking and Smuggling investigations Bureau to conduct investigations expeditiously. Follow up trainings /refresher sessions will be conducted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers attached to the Anti Human Trafficking and Smuggling investigations Bureau undergo a comprehensive training/ refresher trainings conducted by both national and international legal experts. (No. of officers trained) 	2021, 2023, 2025	CID
		Conduct training programmes for Police officers attached to (a.) local police stations (b.) Community Police units and (c.) police officers newly recruited to the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers attached to local police stations, Police Women and children’s Bureau and 	2021-2024	Police / Police Women’s and Children’s Bureau/ Tourist

		Sri Lanka Police service / Police Training College (d.) Tourist Police (e.) Police Women's and Children's Bureau <i>During the initial phase priority will be given to Badulla, Puttalam, Batticaloa, Chilaw, Trincomalee, Ampara, Vavuniya, Jaffna and Nuwara Eliya police divisions considering the number of cases reported in the past.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> community police units, newly recruited police officers, tourist police are trained on the topic. (Disaggregated by target group and total no. of officers trained per year/ police unit and location) 		Police / National Police Academy
		Conducting training on evidence gathering to support effective prosecutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of training programmes conducted annually 	Throughout 2021-2025	DIE
		Conduct training for officers attached to special investigations unit of Police attached to SLBFE to effectively screen and investigate potential cases.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of training and refresher programmes conducted annually 	2021-2023	SLBFE / Police
		Conduct training for the Special Police Unit attached to NCPA to screen and investigate potential child trafficking cases.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of training and refresher programmes conducted annually 	2021-2023	NCPA / Police
		Update the counter trafficking module in the training curriculum of Police Academy / Police training college	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of newly recruited police officers are trained on the topic 	Annual trainings	Police
		Conduct a training needs assessment and based on the outcome, carry out training for State counsels / prosecutors of the Attorney General's Department by both national and international legal experts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of prosecutors trained 	2021, 2023, 2025	AG's Department
		Conduct training for Judicial Medical Officers (JMO) on international best practices, implementation of laws, policies and procedures that guide prosecution of human trafficking crimes and victim protection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of JMOs trained 	2021-2022	JMO / MOJ

		Put measures in place to ensure that human trafficking incidents directly reported and referred to CID/Police are investigated promptly and forwarded to AG's Department for advice and instructions without delay.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No. of human trafficking cases investigated per year and forwarded to AG's department (Under section 360 C of the Penal Code – Disaggregated by the No. of investigations initiated, No. of cases forwarded to AG's department annually and form of exploitation) 	Throughout 2021-2025	CID / Police – Crimes Division
		Put measures in place to ensure investigations and prosecutions for human trafficking are promptly advised and progressed without delay.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No. of human trafficking cases indicted/ prosecuted per year (Under section 360 C of the Penal Code – Disaggregated by form of exploitation) ● No. of convictions per year (Under section 360 C of the Penal Code – Disaggregated by form of exploitation) 	Throughout 2021-2025	AG's Department
		Strengthen the capacities of Judges (Magistrates and High Court Judges) to address human trafficking by conducting trainings using international experts/thematic specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No. of Programmes held ● No. of Judges (Magistrates and High Court Judges trained by desegregated district/area) 	Throughout 2021-2025	Judicial Service Commission / MOJ

6. Implementing strategies / actions to respond to human trafficking in an effective manner	TF members have developed systems, tools to conduct investigations and prosecutions effectively and expeditiously	Take legal action against the malpractices / unauthorized recruitment practices and prosecute the offenders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Offenders are prosecuted for carrying out unauthorized recruitment practices (No. of prosecutions under the SLBFE Act against unauthorized recruitment practices – Disaggregated by offence) ● Number of surveillance operations carried out (Annual data) 	Throughout 2021-2025	SLBFE / Police/ SLBFE
		Receiving complaints related to child trafficking, effective screening and referral to law enforcement authorities for investigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No. of cases related to child trafficking referred to law enforcement authorities and the No. of cases prosecuted 	Throughout 2021-2025	NCPA / Police
		Implement / Facilitate a system to record the statements from victims and witnesses who are in remote locations or outside Sri Lanka in line with the Assistance to and Protection of victims of crime and witnesses Act No. 4 of 2015 and its amendment Act No. 27 of 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Measures implemented to facilitate recording of statements from remote locations ● No. of cases facilitated with remote recording of statements (Annual data)) 	Throughout 2021-2025	CID, Police, AG's Department
		Establish and maintain a database to update/record trafficking crimes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Database is established and trafficking related data/incidents are 	2021-2023	Police / CID

		continuously updated/recorded on the system		
		<p>Strict enforcement of child labour laws to protect and safeguard the welfare of children below 18 years by carrying out inspections and taking legal action against the violations</p>	<p>● Legal action taken against violations (Disaggregated by No. of incidents/type of cases/convictions)</p> <p>(Annual data)</p>	Throughout 2021-2025
		<p>Issue directives / circulars to the local police stations / Police- women and children desks on the effective screening and identification of victims and charging the perpetrators under section 360 C of the Penal Code for human trafficking</p>	<p>● Circulars / directives issued</p>	2021-2022
		<p>Assign two special senior officers to handle human trafficking and related matters under the direct supervision of the Attorney General</p>	<p>● Two officers with expertise on human trafficking assigned to handle trafficking matters</p> <p>● No. of human trafficking cases prosecuted</p>	Throughout 2021-2025
		<p>Public sensitization on the need for victim cooperation with the investigating authorities is carried out by developing, printing and disseminating Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials on victim cooperation with the investigation and prosecution authorities</p>	<p>● IEC material developed and disseminated</p>	2021-2022
				AG's Department
				MOJ / Victim and Witness protection authority

PARTNERSHIPS

Strengthened coordinated efforts and partnerships among Government stakeholders, other states, non-government stakeholders, private sector and the civil society is crucial in the fight against human trafficking.

The ‘partnerships’ pillar mainly focuses on ;

- Enhance engagement and collaboration with civil society, NGOs, private sector and all levels of government to support knowledge exchange, strengthen partnerships and inform policy responses.
- Collaborate and partner with international organizations and foreign governments for capacity building initiatives and to prevent and combat human trafficking.
- Promote cooperation through applicable legal instruments and reciprocity.
- Use diplomatic engagement to promote regional and international partnerships and policies in areas of the world particularly vulnerable to human trafficking.

Objective	Focus area	Activity	Indicators	Time Frame	Lead implementing institution (s)
7. Strengthen coordination and partnerships with government, non-government organizations and the private sector to support a comprehensive response to human trafficking	Knowledge sharing and cooperation between government authorities and relevant NGOs through increased coordination and a more systematic exchange of information.	District/divisional level committees formed to engage with community members/community based organizations to enhance understanding of human trafficking , identification of victims of human trafficking and referrals for assistance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types and number of forums held by (Disaggregated participating government agencies, district) 	Throughout 2021-2025 on a quarterly basis	MOJ / TF members
		Collaborate with Private sector entities and Non-government organizations to address trafficking and to provide services to identified victims.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborations built with identified stakeholders to address / respond to human trafficking at national and local levels 	Throughout 2021-2025	TF members

			(Disaggregated by collaborations with private sector entities and/or NGOs by TF members)		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Convene regular Task Force (TF) meetings for better coordination among the TF members to address human trafficking ● set up working groups/steering committees as needed to develop anti-trafficking responses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● TF meetings convened on a monthly basis and minutes are recorded. ● Steering committees set up to develop material / specific anti trafficking responses 	Throughout 2021-2025	MOJ / Relevant TF members	
	Coordinate intelligence on human trafficking and improve information and intelligence sharing within the relevant government and law enforcement officers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Trafficking information/intelligence is shared among relevant stakeholders for timely action 	Throughout 2021-2025	TF members	
	Convene civil society/CSO stakeholder meetings to present and discuss issues of concern pertaining to human trafficking, share best practices for informed decision and policy making of the TF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No. of CSO meetings convened with the participation of key TF members (No. of meetings held annually) 	2021-2024	MOJ with the participation of key TF members	
	Undertake joint research activities on human trafficking for informed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research activities undertaken through partnerships built 	Throughout 2021-2025	TF members	

		policy and decision making.		Findings are shared through consultations and /or published		
8. Building and improving national and international cooperation and coordination to address human trafficking	Strengthening the international engagement approach to better leverage multilateral and bilateral partnerships in countering this crime.	Participation in/ contributing to key international programmes and for driving innovation to address human trafficking.	● Findings are shared through consultations and /or published	● Participation/active representation at migration /counter trafficking related fora and exchange visits for government officials	Throughout 2021-2025	SMFEP, SLBFE, MOJ, Police AG's Department, DIE
		Continue through the global and regional policy dialogues to enhance cooperation among countries of origin, promoting fair recruitment standards and the rights of migrant workers based on international human rights and labour standards		● Number of activities implemented under the strategic vision of relevant dialogues	Throughout 2021-2025	SLBFE, MOJ SMFEP, MOJ
		Promote effective and coordinated regional responses to prevention and deterrence, detection and investigation, prosecution and victim compliance, and support and protection, including through representation and participation at forums such as the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons, and related transnational crime	● Active participation and representation at the regional and international human trafficking forums		Throughout 2021-2025 (No. of representations made at forums annually)	MOJ, FM, AG's Department, DIE and other relevant stakeholders

		Enter into bilateral agreements to protect the rights of migrant workers and to prevent human trafficking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GoSL and destination countries are working together to prevent irregular migration and trafficking, identify & protect VoTs, support investigations & prosecutions of trafficking Cases ● Availability of MOUs / bilateral agreements, MLA agreements 	Throughout 2021-2025	FM, SMFEP
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Monitoring and Evaluation

One of the key objectives of the implementation of this Action Plan is to ensure the coordination among different stakeholders and to increase the accountability of state institutions committed to fight against human trafficking. The members of the National Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force will operate as a monitoring body to ensure the successful implementation of the Action Plan. Monitoring and periodical evaluation of the specific measures identified by each Task Force member institution will ensure effective delivery of each activity to the realization of overall objectives of the Action Plan.

Task Force members will update and monitor the implementation of activities at the regular Task Force meeting convened. The Task Force members will further share the annual updates and progress with the Ministry of Justice which will be utilized to compile internal annual progress reports.

Periodic review and assessments of the action plan will be done by the Task Force led by the Ministry of Justice and targeted actions would be reviewed and modified if found to be deficient. Monitoring and Evaluation measures review all actions included in this plan and any possible proposals for improvement or new actions will be included to the plan after consideration. Evaluation will be based on an analysis of the indicators in place and other qualitative and quantitative data.

A final evaluation will be conducted by the Ministry of Justice at the end of the action plan period, based on consultations with the Task Force members and upon reviewing the annual internal progress reports shared with the Ministry of Justice and the chairperson of the National Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force.