Addressing Human Trafficking and Unsafe Migration in Nepal

In the 2016-2018 Biennium, Zonta International has committed US$1 million to UN Women’s project, The Future We Want: Creating sustainable foundations for addressing human trafficking and unsafe migration of women and girls in Nepal.

GOAL
Create sustainable foundations for addressing the link between human trafficking and foreign labor migration of women and girls in Nepal.

PROJECT OVERVIEW
Nepal has long been a country of origin for labor migration and trafficking in persons, particularly women and children, for the purposes of sexual, labor and other forms of exploitation. Trafficking often takes place as part of undocumented migration and is a serious violation of human rights.

The government of Nepal has made a commitment to combat human trafficking with a comprehensive approach that includes policy reform, enforcement and programs that meet the practical needs of women at risk and provides alternatives to unsafe migration. However, despite policies, plans and programs in place to counter trafficking and promote safe migration, there is a lack of synergy at the operational level. Trafficking and migration are generally dealt with as separate issues through stand-alone approaches that fail to address the link between trafficking and migration.
PROGRESS
A Programme Steering Committee, chaired by The Secretary of the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare (MoWCSW), was established to oversee programme implementation, provide strategic guidance, policy advice and programmatic direction, and ensure inter-ministerial coordination. The MoWCSW approved the project work plan for 2016-2018 in January 2017.

On 2 February, UN Women and the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare organized the first policy discussion, ‘Addressing the Nexus between Migration and Human Trafficking in Nepal’ to bring together stakeholders to expand understanding of the issues and challenges to addressing the link between labor migration and human trafficking. The discussion was organized around the visit of His Excellency Per-Anders Sunesson, Ambassador-at-Large for Combating Trafficking in Persons from the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

More than 50 participants attended, including Joint Secretary of the Nepal Law Commission, government officials of relevant line ministries, representatives of CSOs, development partners, UN agencies and other stakeholders such as media.

While recognizing the government’s ongoing efforts to address unsafe labor migration and human trafficking, interaction between the panelists and participants focused on the need for a functional mechanism of coordination among ministries and government offices to fill the gaps in laws and policies, programs and implementation. The Ambassador-at-Large of Sweden for Combating Trafficking in Persons shared the experience in Sweden to address issues of sexual exploitation with victims of human trafficking, and stressed the responsibility of destination countries.

The first policy discussion successfully created a platform for the government of Nepal, CSOs, development partners, UN agencies and other stakeholders such as media to further advance policy dialogues for concrete recommendations by taking a more coordinated approach. At the end of the policy discussion, the Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE)—the second highest administrative position in the ministries and government offices—emphasized the government’s commitment to strengthening the existing inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms and encouraged CSOs, development partners and UN agencies to provide concrete suggestions to the government. He also suggested inviting other relevant line ministries such as the Ministry of Home Affairs, which is in charge of law enforcement, to follow-up discussions to look at the issues and challenges in a more comprehensive and coherent manner.

NEXT STEPS
In the coming period, the project will work on the following priorities:

- Commencement and completion of a mapping survey to analyze the risk factors for unsafe migration, trafficking and violence against women and prevailing structural discrimination in the selected districts
- Commencement of a gap assessment to identify operational gaps, linkages with various stakeholders and recommendations between the policies/plans and programs related to labor migration and trafficking
- Establishment of linkages and partnership with networks of returnee women migrant workers and survivors of human trafficking to design and roll out vocational skills and entrepreneurship development training
- Designing of awareness campaigns to create an enabling environment for women’s leadership as well as women’s active participation in economic activities
- Follow-ups of the policy dialogue among the MoWCSW, MoLE, other key line ministries, CSOs and other stakeholders