

# Transnational Organized Crime poses a threat to all nations: Is the Protocol Effective to Combat These Crimes or It Failed to Secure Its Effectiveness?

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## Abstract

*Transnational organized crimes are those crimes which are committed by international criminals, in a large group or different sub-groups, coordinated across international border. To combat these crimes, UNTOC (The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime) was introduced in 2000 by the UN which is also known as the Palermo Protocol or Palermo Policy. It came into force in September 2003. Although 20 years has been passed since it came into force, however, the question remains how effective is this protocol to prevent organized crimes. The present study will demonstrate how effective is the policy itself. If it failed what are the reasons behind the failure of the policy. It will also find out what measures should be taken so that the policy can play an effective role to combat those types of crimes.*

**Keywords:** Organized Crime, Palermo Protocol, Human Trafficking, Sex Trafficking, Forced Labour, Child trafficking, Organ trafficking

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION:

This article will demonstrate about the policy response against transnational organized crime and then further discuss critically how the policies are, or not, sufficient. Here, the policy means the Palermo protocol/UNTOC (The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime) which came into force in September 2003. Some forms of organized crime will be discussed first and the Palermo protocol will be introduced briefly. At first, I have selected one organized crime to response which is “human trafficking.” To address the issue, this essay will deeply discuss about trafficking and highlight in every single market of human trafficking like organ trafficking, child trafficking, sex trafficking, forced marriage and forced labour. My analysis aims to show how the policy is ineffective to combat trafficking and how it has failed to achieve its goal. I will also show the link between human trafficking and money laundering where the protocol is also unsuccessful to combat that crime. To set up my argument, I will bring recent data and statistics. I would also count on critique discussions of academic articles and online journals as well news reports to support my argument. Finally, my conclusion will agree with the statement which I have made in introduction that the policy is ineffective.

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## **1.1 TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME:**

“Illegal activities, conducted by groups or networks acting in concert, by engaging in violence, corruption, or related activities in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or material benefit” is the definition of organized crime. When these groups or networks, or these actions, operate in two or more countries, it is considered transnational organized crime.

Transnational Organized Crime or TOC, is defined as organized crime that is coordinated across national borders. It involves marketplaces or groups of people operating in multiple countries to organize and carry out illicit economic operations. These criminal groups use systematic violence and corruption to further their goals. This transnational organized crime is always changing and can take many different shapes. There is movement among the groups and networks engaged, and routes used for one commodity trafficking are frequently used for others. Transnational criminal organizations frequently engage in the following illicit activities: the trafficking of people, weapons, drugs, minerals, and wildlife; the manufacturing and distribution of counterfeit goods; extortion and fraud; money laundering; and cybercrime.

Those self-sustaining groups of people who operate internationally with the intention of gaining control, influence, financial, and/or commercial gains—either entirely or partially through illegal means—are referred to as transnational organized crime. They may also use a transnational organizational structure, transnational communication channels, or a pattern of violence and/or corruption to conceal their illicit activity. Transnational organized crime groups function within a variety of organizational structures, including hierarchies, clans, networks, and cells, and they are not limited to just one of these. They also perpetrate a variety of crimes.

According to the US National Security Council Transnational organized crime groups engage in cooperative criminal behavior and exhibit specific traits, such as but not exclusive to: they use violence and other actions that could intimidate others, or they make overt or covert threats to do so; they take advantage of national boundaries to further their agendas, gaining power, enriching their organization, and evading detection; they try to influence politics, the government, and business through both legal and illegal means; their main objective is to make money, not only through illegal activity but also through investments in legal businesses; and they use their organizational structure to shield their leadership and membership from scrutiny, punishment, and/or legal action.

## **1.2 THE PALERMO POLICY:**

The global convention against transnational organized crime, the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC, often known as the Palermo Convention) was sponsored by the UN in 2000. On September 29, 2003, the Convention went into effect. The first international convention to combat transnational organized crime, human trafficking, and terrorism was held in Palermo, according to Mayor Leoluca Orlando. The UNTOC tightened its regulations on the smuggling of wildlife in 2014. The aim of this protocol was to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons especially women and children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

The three additional protocols (sometimes known as the Palermo Protocols) of UNTOC are: Procedure to Stop, Suppress, and Punish Human Trafficking, Particularly of Women and Children. Protocol Prohibiting the Air, Sea, and Land Transportation of Migrants. Protocol for Combating Illegal Firearm Manufacturing and Trafficking. The Protocol, which bears the name of the Italian city where UN members met and signed this historic international agreement, has defined and significantly influenced the legislative, programmatic, and moral responses to modern slavery over the last 20 years. Children are considered a particular instance under the Palermo Protocol, for which only two requirements apply: movement and exploitation. This is because, even if they are aware of or agree to being relocated, a child cannot provide agreement to be exploited.

## **2.0 DEFINITION OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING BY UN:**

By the virtue of Art. 3.2, an offence which is committed in more than one state or has substantial effects/preparation in another state is classified as “transnational organized crime”. This definition distinguished ‘human trafficking’ from migrant smuggling. Art. 3(a) of the Palermo Protocol defines 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 purpose 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.”

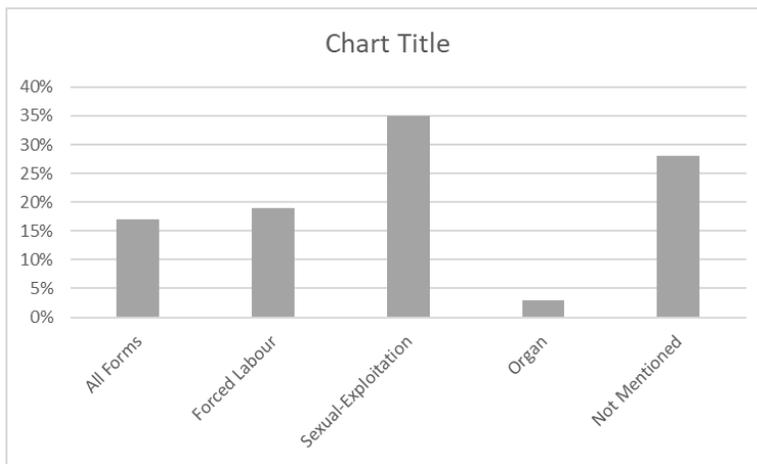
Following this universal definition, the person who is recruited, transported, and transferred in order to laboured for the exploitation through illicit means like as food or coercion can be classified as a trafficked person. It also defines exploitation in a

broad way which includes sexual exploitation, forced labour, child labour, slavery, servitude, and removal of organs as well. According to the most recent global figures, approximately 150 million children are forced to work, with nearly half of them doing dangerous jobs, modern slavery affects one out of every four children, the majority of whom are females. Whether it's the forced labour of Sub-Saharan Africans or refugees from the Middle East, or the trafficking of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, exploitation of Central American migrants bound for the United States, sexual enslavement of women and girls in Europe, or forced labour of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, desperate families and individuals often feel they have no choice but to risk exploitation in order to survive. Thus, we can see that, it poses a threat to all nationals.

### 2.1 VARIOUS FORMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING:

There are many kinds of human trafficking. These are child trafficking, organ trafficking, women trafficking, and child trafficking. We can also categorize the forms of victims based on the coercion or torture they have faced. It can be forced labour, modern slavery, sex trade, sexual exploitation, cybercrime such as pornography, organ trafficking etc. The international mafia are more active to play their vital role in the field of organ trafficking as this is the path by which money laundering can be done more easily which is discussed later in this article.

**Figure 1:** Types of human trafficking mentioned in UK press



**Source:** Review of the media framing of human trafficking

The UK media press framed the types of human trafficking from where it can be seen that 35% victims of human trafficking were faced with sexual exploitation whereas 19% were trafficked who were also victims of forced labour. Among the victim of

human trafficking 28% of them did not mention the way they did face torture and coercion. On the other hand, 17% of trafficked victims were tortured by all means. The media framing also highlighted that 3% of victims who were trafficked also the victim of organ trafficking. The reason behind organ trafficking is not highlighted here because it mostly happens in the third world countries such as Bangladesh, Nepal as well as some African countries and some parts of India.

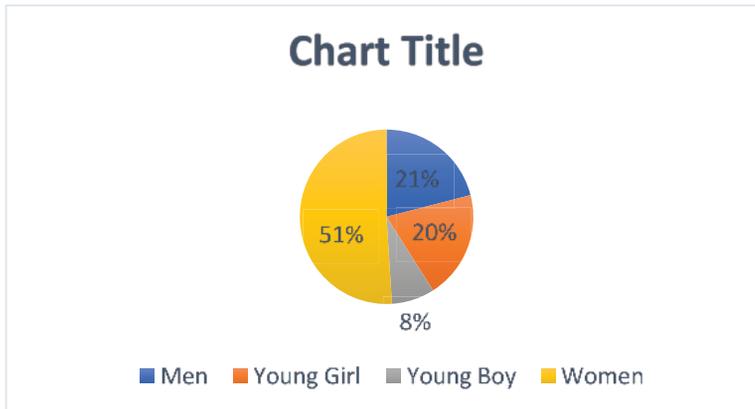
### **3 SEX TRAFFICKING, SEX TRADE & SEXUAL EXPLOITATION:**

Many academic aspects suggest that the Palermo policy has completely failed to decrease sexual exploitation in relation to human trafficking. Evidence shows that, everyday 35 million people are victims of sex trafficking, and the estimated market value is \$99 billion. Among them, 21 million are women and girls. Christina Seideman in the article of "The Palermo Protocol: Why It Has Been Ineffective in Reducing Human Sex Trafficking" found the policy as not effective because of the disagreement of wording, inaccurate reporting, and inability to enforce compliance. Some countries among 147 are disagreed to accept the definition following Art 5 by UN regarding three areas. The policy identified consent is irrelevant as it focuses on the act, method, and purpose whereas several countries think that consent is relevant. Furthermore, trafficking does not require to cross the global boundary following the policy which clearly indicates the legitimacy of trafficking! And it also failed to differentiate between compensation and non-compensation for service. Additionally, data are inaccurate with false and misleading information because of self-reporting information, cultural pressure, and the black-market economy. She proposed a solution that the policy should introduced various rules regarding sex trade by which traffickers as well as clients can be convicted. But on this point, question may be arisen, by which manner, will we able to do this? Unlike UK OR Italy, in many countries, prostitution is illegal. Therefore, undoubtedly it might be discouraged victims may not want to file complain against traffickers. This is clearly problematic.

#### **3.1 WHY WOMEN ARE TRAFFICKED MORE THAN MEN?**

When I am writing this, I am surprised to observe that there is not enough study to raise the point why majority trafficked victims are women. In my view the main rationale behind this is "sex industry". Women victims of human trafficking are mainly victim of sex trafficking. They faced sexual coercion and used to forced marriage, tortured for prostitution, and faced sexual exploitation. Notably as this era is technology based, cybercrime such as pornography plays a vital role to contribute more to encourage traffickers to women and children.

**Figure 2: Ratio of Victims**



**Source:** UNODC Elaboration of National Data

#### 5.4 ACADEMIC VIEWS:

Some academics argued to decriminalize sex-work. According to them, by decriminalizing prostitution, sex workers will be able to work safely. Also, it will help to reduce marginalization and vulnerability. Amnesty International defined decriminalization, is the transition from "catch-all offences that criminalise most or all aspects of sex work," such as laws that target noncoercive third parties who purchase sex work, to "laws and policies that protect sex workers from exploitation as well as abuse" which is endorsed by The World Health Organization, UNAIDS, the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW), Human Rights Watch, Lambda Legal, the American Civil Liberties Union, and Freedom Network USA.

In contrast to evidence which presents the view that despite its emphasis that anti-trafficking and physical and sexual assault legislation be maintained or implemented, organizations who perceive decriminalisation as offering permission and impunity to would be exploiters have attacked the idea. Because another angle of research demonstrates that it is prohibition that promotes impunity and increases the vulnerability of sex workers to violence and exploitation, including human trafficking. Criminalizing sex work is barking up the wrong tree since it is fighting sex rather than traffickers and the crime itself, and it does not address the systemic conditions that sex work is based on. These academics highlights that it is hardly possible to reduce sexual exploitation and sex trafficking following the policy regulation. Sex trafficking has already created a large commercial market in the murky world. So, necessary amendments should be made so that it will be possible to stop violence, exploitation, abuse in sex trade and besides that introduce new provision which can be stopped sex trafficking.

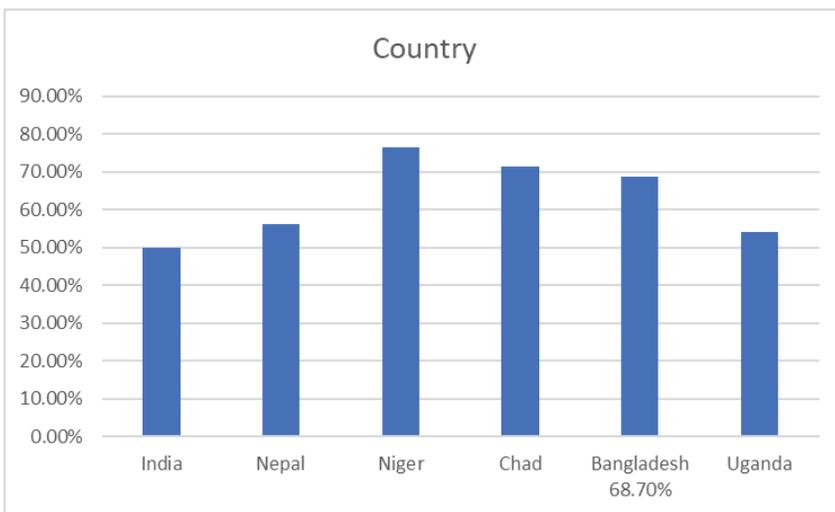
#### 4.0 MODERN SLAVERY, FORCED MARRIAGE & FORCED LABOUR:

The victims of modern slavery are more afraid to disclose to anybody what’s happened or happening to them. They came in Europe for their studies or different purposes, but they are now used in forced labour as well sexual exploitation. These traffickers are stealing victim’s passport so that victim will be unable to leave. Twenty millions of people were recognised in 2016 for forced labour exploitation. Though the link remains unexplored and unauthorized, but following definition of modern slavery, one in every 130 women and girls in the world is enslaved, and females account for 84% of all forced marriage victims, according to Walk Free Foundation report from 2020. Unsurprisingly, most of the victims of forced marriage are children.

#### 4.1 FORCED MARRIAGE:

The top three countries of forced marriage are Niger, Chad, and Bangladesh. I believe the major motive of forced marriage is poverty. Why I am saying that is, if we carefully the notice of the list of countries, we may able to notice that all are third world countries and majority of the people lived there below the poverty line. Economic imbalance of these countries paly a vital role as poor economy contribute to encourage parents for forced marriage. Surprisingly not only girls but nowadays young boys are also victim of forced marriage some of these countries. The South Asian Subcontinent is the place where forced marriage is very common even though it is prohibited by laws in countries eg: Bangladesh, Pakistan, India.

**Table 1: Top 20 States for Child Marriage**



**Source:** Child Marriage in South Asia, Semantic Scholar

## **4.2 FORCED LABOUR:**

Not only forced marriage, but children are also used in various sectors of forced labour such as begging! Though it cannot be found in the UK, but it is a common scenario in India, Bangladesh, and the middle east as well. In 2014, the criminal court of Cairo identified two children were kidnapped by traffickers and were forced to begging. In this case, though it was possible to identify the criminals and they were convicted but we really do not know, how many cases are not identified yet. Forced begging is a common human trafficking that occurs in many different forms all over the world and policy does not address it clearly.

Besides children and women, men are also victims of human trafficking. There are three times as many victims of forced labour as there are of sex trafficking worldwide. Men account for 42% (nearly 6.72 million) of forced labour victims in the private sector. And the number has been increased during the pandemic. Most shockingly, the police sometimes also refused to protect them from traffickers. This can be considered horrific and terrific as well. The Palermo protocol remains ambiguous about it and the policy response is insufficient as these victims were even unable to make a complaint against traffickers.

## **5.0 CHILD TRAFFICKING, SEX INDUSTRY, CYBERCRIME & PORNOGRAPHY:**

Among trafficking victims, 27% are children. Every year, 5,000 Nepalese girls who are under 18, are trafficking into India as sex workers. The main trafficking routes run from south to north and east to west: from Latin America to North America, Europe, and the Middle East; from former Soviet bloc countries to the Baltic States and Western Europe; from Romania to Italy, and through Turkey and Cyprus to Israel and the Middle East; from West Africa to the Middle East; from Thailand and the Philippines to Australia, New Zealand, and Taiwan; and from Cambodia, Myanmar, and Viet Nam to Thailand. Most shockingly, not only in Asia but also in Europe, children are forced to prostitution. BBC reports present that, lots of girls under 18 have been trafficked from Romania to the UK for prostitution. And unfortunately, some of them are brainwashed (according to the reports) that they wanted to stay and police officers were kind of helpless to help them as prostitution is legal in the UK. In last three years, 6,000 victims were identified in the UK whereas only 95 of them were prosecuted. This is very unfortunate that, same as UNTOC we also do not have any effective policy or law in relation to protect these girls from sex trade.

Nevertheless, NGOs and other international human rights organizations are working to prevent child sex trade and they are taking different programs. To protect child sex trafficking, Shared Hope introduced three strategies to combating sex trafficking. These are awareness and prevention training, victim restoration and empowerment, and justice through legislative advocacy. But the question can come into mind, are

these steps effective to combat children sex trafficking? Highly unlikely! Because this is the era of technology, and this crime has already crossed the global arena. Pornography is one of them and traffickers are using girls and forced them to involve in it. The porn industry's worth is estimated to be anywhere from \$6 billion to \$97 billion, with more realistic estimations ranging from \$6 billion to \$15 billion. sex trafficking cases involving just teenagers accounted for more than half (51.6%) of all active criminal human trafficking cases in the United States. In the US, a 13-year-old teenage was manipulated to provide child pornographic videos which was released on twitter. This case indicates that how child pornography and child sex trafficking has been increasing day by day.

### **5.1 ROLE OF UNICEF TO PREVENT CHILD TRAFFICKING:**

To combat child trafficking, UNICEF is working in various field such as providing education, emergency relief, child's health and nutrition etc. but why we cannot still stop this crime? To response this, academics give some ideas such as professionals who meet child trafficking victims must respond to their needs. As a result, an efficient practise refers to a multidisciplinary team's collaborative action, which should include a culturally sensitive posture, trauma-informed treatment, and a victim-centred approach in their work. Professionals must get specialised skills and training to do so.

Even though following their (UNICFE) own study, children are one third victims of overall human trafficked victims worldwide. But sometimes situation or surrounding circumstances are also liable for child trafficking. The classical example can be "refugee crisis" all over the world. The most recent example can be "genocide in Gaza". Even before "Ukraine-Russia war" or not a long ago "Afghanistan crisis" can be examples of refugee crisis. Also, in Bangladesh "Rohingya refugee crisis" has created a big market for traffickers to traffic children. Majority of them faced kidnapping while crossing international border.

Therefore, the capacity of international organizations or the local stakeholders are limited as these are sensitive global crisis and the capacity is very limited to work in those situations against traffickers. Most shockingly, many of those children were also victims of organ trafficking. Unfortunately, the role of the international community to raise this issue cannot be seen in a large scale.

## **6.0 ORGAN TRAFFICKING AND IT'S CONNECTION WITH MONEY LAUNDERING:**

This is the unseen form of human trafficking. According to Global Financial Integrity (GFI), trafficked organs are used in 10% of all organ transplants, including the lungs, heart, and liver. The estimation of WHO is that 10,000 kidneys are exchanged on the black market every year, or more than one every hour. The average wait time for a kidney transplant in the United States is 3.6 years. Waiting times in the United Kingdom are typically 2 to 3 years, but they can be longer. Unlike Iran, in every country, selling organ is illegal but contrastingly, laws are very limited for prohibiting this crime.

Sadly, despite an estimated yearly flow of cash exceeding \$1 billion, law enforcement officials and anti-money laundering (AML) professionals find it difficult to discover linked financial activities because of a number of factors, including a lack of domestic laws prohibiting citizens from travelling abroad, the transnational nature of the crime, and the sophistication of the purveyors, who are familiar enough with the laws governing organ trafficking to use shell companies and sanitised (legal) offerings on public websites to get around them.

However, this crime is linked with another field of organized crime which is money laundering. Because victims are forced to work, the money they earn must be disguised before being deposited into the official financial system. While detecting financial transactions related to organ trafficking may be challenging for banks, it is not impossible because some indicators are available such as wires payment, email money transfer, and bulk cash withdrawal, transaction between charities and medical tourism sites, banking staff indication of potentially ill customers moving large amounts of funds to numbered companies etc.

But the counter argument is, government has limited capacity regarding to respond the high volume of SARs and criminal-justice responses to banking misconduct tend to be lax. Criminals are allowed to conduct money-laundering activities by banks and governments are aware about it. All efforts to curb transnational organized crime have thus been rendered futile by financial professionals. Gangsters, drug traffickers, human traffickers, gun traffickers are well aware that dirty money is frequently overlooked or ignored by Western financial institutions, only irresponsible are caught off guard.

## **7.0 AN ANALYSIS OF OVERALL SCENARIO:**

The above discussion and data analysis represent that “Human Trafficking” is a felony or grave offence against humanity worldwide. This traffickers and international criminal are globally strong are maintained network among them. There is not a single country in the world who are not facing this problem. In the 21<sup>st</sup>

century, undoubtedly trafficking is a crime which stand against humankind. Sufficient awareness cannot be observed by UNESCO or some other major international communities. Moreover, there is no well-planned measure or lack of study to prevent trafficking.

## **7.1 THE ROLE OF UNTOC:**

Yury Fedotov said, “Human trafficking has taken on horrific dimensions as armed groups and terrorists use it to spread fear and gain victims to offer as incentives to recruit new fighters.” Ruth Dearnley, the CEO of stop trafficking, is hopeful as awareness are creating among people and communities. But question might be asked, is it fruitful? Traffickers are using modern technology now-a-days to sell people via dark-web or deep-web. Can we really create awareness about it among people and communities?

The response is, in a short period of time, they identified a lack of understanding of the subject is one of the most significant hurdles to anti-trafficking initiatives. Migrant smuggling, immigration and asylum, prostitution, and other types of organized crime are frequently interwoven with human trafficking. Therefore, the methods adopted to counteract it. Recognize the complexity of the crime, which cannot be dealt in a vacuum, as the first step in combating human trafficking and prosecuting traffickers. Currently, the key project of them is ACT (active communities against trafficking) to united community against trafficking. Does not it clearly indicate that, the community is not assembled yet to combat trafficking? Another central focus of them is ‘chocolate campaign’ which relies on lots of supporters to reduce child trafficking. However, not all research shows that, child trafficking is decreasing as we have already discussed about recent data which shows the chain of child trafficking is still active.

## **7.2 MEASURES WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED:**

Although it seems that it is too difficult trafficking to vanish into thin air, but at least we may try to minimize this by taking some effective measures by which The Palermo Protocol can be more effective to combat human trafficking. First of all, the policy can take into account how to protect child trafficking. We should not forget that most of organ trafficking victims are children. So, if we can at least minimize child trafficking, organ trafficking will be reduced as a result. As it was more closely connected to money laundering, therefore the states can effectively work against transferring black money by which financial gain of international criminals will be limited.

But still the question may remain how we can prevent child trafficking? As I mentioned earlier at the beginning that most of the trafficked children were refugee,

therefore the international authorities should have a look on it. The 1967 Protocol (Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees) although expands the scope of the Convention to cover all people escaping conflict and persecution and removes geographic and time-based limitations. But still we are experiencing a huge number of refugee crisis.

Awareness should be created and basic education program should be taken to prevent women trafficking. Law enforces agencies strictly follow the guideline to combat cybercrime and pornography so that cybercriminals filed will be narrower. Social media platforms nowadays can be a better medium to create awareness. Child education program should be increased as well. Recognizing the intricacy of the crime—which cannot be addressed in a vacuum—is therefore another step toward stopping human trafficking and bringing the traffickers to justice. Every aspect of policy must incorporate anti-trafficking measures, from raising police wages in destination nations to enhancing female education in source countries to reduce the vulnerability of girls to trafficking. We can no longer afford to ignore the problem of human trafficking and think that it can be resolved with a few more task teams or specialized groups. Everyone must understand how it impacts them and what they can do to put an end to it.

## **8.0 CONCLUSION:**

Since the creation of the UNTOC, they are taking many policies and steps to combat human trafficking but as we can observe from the above analysis that the protocol has completely failed to combat crime in every single market of human trafficking. Their policies are ineffective which was already recognized by many academics. The convention cannot successfully work in different areas of human trafficking. It has not achieved its objective yet. There is also lack of evidence about the implementation of the UNTOC. Not even there is any strong proof that it is used widely to combat crimes. The failure of the protocol to combat trafficking can be seen in every sector such as organ trafficking, child trafficking, sex trafficking, forced marriage and forced labour. Therefore, undoubtedly, the regulations should be introduced with some changes in policies so that it will be effective to combat organized crime in various market, like trafficking.

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