

Kosi a kids' trafficking hub: Report

CONCERN Minister says committed to fight corruption, of which trafficking is a part

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PATNA: A study carried out by an NGO, Save the Children in 4,111 households in 20 villages of Khagaria and Araria districts found that 7.7% children in the 5-18 age group were trafficked.

"They were either transported to their employers and left under their control by the children's family members or they were delivered into the hands of third parties in the village itself", said Alex George, manager-research, Save the Children, who led the study team in association with Alakh N Sharma of the Institute of Human Development, New Delhi.

About 81% of trafficked children were Hindus, 19% Muslims and nearly 85% were from households of landless farmers. George said.

He cited indebtedness or under-employment as the root cause of trafficking. Most of the trafficked children were above the age of 10.

He suggested training the police, judiciary and members of panchayati raj institutions to deal with human trafficking,



■ Social welfare minister Parveen Amanullah and others at the launch of a study on child trafficking, in Patna on Saturday.

SANTOSH KUMAR / HT PHOTO

bonded labour and child labour, besides advising the government to implement land and legal reforms, educate poor children and prosecute the guilty.

Launching the study, 'Stolen childhoods: A study of child trafficking in the Kosi region of Bihar', social welfare minister Parveen Amanullah said meas-

ures had been initiated to empower people to intervene the functioning of Anganwadi centres.

"Provision has been made to empower panchayats to summon Anganwadi sevikas to a public meeting and question them on various problems", she said, adding paying bribes to BDOs and

other officers for sevikas' postings was a common feature of Anganwadis.

Amanullah said panchayats could now question, warn, impose penalty and even cancel the selection of sevikas. "The whole effort of decontrolling administration is aimed at rooting out corruption", she said while reiterating the government's commitment to fight corruption.

She urged academicians and NGOs to discuss at length the serious problem of child trafficking, especially in the flood-prone region of Kosi, caused by rampant poverty, migration, landlessness and marginalisation of farmers. "We are committed to fight corruption of which trafficking is an integral part", she asserted.

"We have successfully tackled corruption in Indira Awas Yojana", Amanullah said, adding, "We are tightening loose ends to ensure proper delivery of poor people's entitlements, that will help mitigate the problem to a large extent". On trafficking of children in the disaster-prone Kosi region, she asserted, "It has to be reduced".