



**THINKING THEOLOGY:  
HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

**15–18 NOVEMBER 2016**

**GODAVARI, NEPAL**

**REPORT**

**tearfund**

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## ABOUT TEARFUND

**Tearfund** is an international NGO recognised for its professional expertise in development, disaster response and advocacy. We believe that the local church is a powerful force for transformation in communities living in every kind of poverty. Inspired by the example and teaching of Jesus, we recognise that people have deeply interconnected material and spiritual needs. We seek to meet those needs by working through our local church partners. Churches are at the heart of their communities – full of dedicated, resourceful people who want to make a long-term difference.

# 1. OVERVIEW

**Thinking Theology** was organised by Tearfund with the aim of creating a space where people could explore theological ideas and issues that are related to human trafficking and sexual violence. This space served as a way of inspiring and supporting the global church to take action to prevent, challenge and end human trafficking and sexual violence. It also provided an opportunity for shared learning to take place; participants were able to learn lessons from the experiences of others who are working to prevent, challenge and end human trafficking and sexual violence in their individual contexts.

The five-day gathering brought together 111 participants from seven different countries and featured plenary sessions, workshops and group discussions.

## *Countries of origin of participants*

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS</b>
America	2
Bangladesh	10
India	34
Nepal	56
Pakistan	1
Sri Lanka	3
United Kingdom	5

The gathering was a wonderful time of building new friendships and networks, and learning from one another.

*'I was encouraged to meet friends who are working/engaged in similar work that I am engaged in.'*  
(Participant testimonial)

*'It was a great week indeed, of learning and hearing various views and experiences on [addressing] human trafficking and sexual violence.'*  
(Participant testimonial)

## 2. GATHERING CONTENT

Over the duration of the gathering, participants engaged in theological reflection and discussion around topics and issues related, both directly and indirectly, to human trafficking and sexual violence.

The gathering was highly engaging and created space for various group discussions, plenary sessions and question-and-answer sessions. This ensured that participants were able to share their own reflections, learning and experiences, providing a rich cross-cultural learning experience.

At the end of the gathering participants completed a survey:

- 100% of participants rated the quality of speakers as excellent, very good or good.
- 100% of participants expect to use their learning from this gathering in their work or church.

Provided in this section of the report are some of the key learning points from the gathering.

### 2.1 Plenary sessions

#### 2.1.1 – Plenary talk 1: Welcome session

- The welcome session provided **an introduction** to the gathering, sharing the hopes and expectations listed below:
  - To explore what the Bible says about human trafficking and sexual violence, and to reflect theologically, gaining an understanding of holistic mission.
  - To obtain an in-depth understanding of the pervasiveness of human trafficking.
  - To learn about the role of Christians in preventing human trafficking and sexual violence, and in providing support to victims and survivors.
  - To listen and learn from each other, helping to build networks among participants.
  - To consider how the church can work across denominations, and with other secular agencies and other faith groups, to prevent and challenge human trafficking and sexual violence.
- **Relevant biblical passages** which underpin the need for the church to address human trafficking and sexual violence were shared. These include the biblical account of Joseph being sold off by his brothers and entering into slavery.
- **Statistics** were shared to provide an overview of the global scale of forced labour, human trafficking and sexual violence and exploitation.
- Participants also spent time sharing with one another their **hopes and expectations** for the gathering.
- **Consequences of trauma** resulting from human trafficking and sexual violence were identified as follows: feelings of worthlessness; broken relationships; suicide; fear; aggressive behaviour; unforgiveness; addiction; rejection; hopelessness; dysfunctional family life; depression and mental ill-health; post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); shorter lifespan; mistrust.

#### 2.1.2 – Discussion: Recognising the marginalised in our communities

Key learning points:

- **The discussion identified people considered as marginalised, vulnerable or at risk in our communities.** Examples are: people with disabilities, girls, children, minority and/or

religious groups, low caste people (eg Dalits and Badis), widows, the poor, refugees, the mentally impaired, the elderly etc.

- **Marginalisation can look different in different situations.** Examples are: stereotyping; specific worldviews, traditions or cultural beliefs; government systems – corruption and impunity, lack of representation or legal protection; patriarchy and elitism; political exploitation or geographical domination; unequal opportunities – lack of communication facilities or access to resources; fear leading to a fatalistic mindset; lack of protection or encouragement.
- **Marginalisation can result in poverty, child marriage, isolation, migration, exploitation and a lack of support systems.** These increase vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and human trafficking.
- **Biblical references to sexual violence and human trafficking:** Genesis 1:26–27; Exodus 22:27; Deuteronomy 10:18; Psalms 10 and 82:3–4, 85; Proverbs 3:8–9 and 31:8; Isaiah 61:1–3; Micah 6:8–10; Matthew 5:3–5; Matthew 25; Luke 4:18–19 and 18:16; John 4; Galatians 2:10 and 3:28; Philippians 2:4; James 1:27.
- **God cannot tolerate marginalisation** – that is the clear message of the Bible. He sides with those who are marginalised and calls the church to speak out against injustice.

### 2.1.3 – Plenary talk 2: The call of the church to serve the marginalised

Key learning points:

- **Jesus demonstrated compassion and gave a voice to the marginalised** (Matthew 12:46–50). He used those who were marginalised as a central part of his ministry. For example, women were the first to encounter him after the resurrection (John 20:11–18). Jesus' teachings are still relevant within our own contexts and specifically call the church to serve the marginalised, eg in Matthew 25:31–46 (parable of the sheep and the goats). Jesus experienced homelessness: it is contradictory to worship Jesus in church and ignore the homeless.
- **God did not want people to be poor** (Genesis 1) but the fall caused broken relationships between man and God and poverty is a result (eg Matthew 26:11).
- Therefore, **the church has a responsibility to access and look after the marginalised in society, and to teach its congregations and communities about this responsibility.** The church must also take biblical principles seriously – think of Jubilee, with the redistribution of wealth, the release of slaves and giving rest to the land (Leviticus 25).
- **The result will be a change in attitude** – from the defeatist idea that the poor and those trafficked will always be there. The Bible and theology teach us that we should see all people as made in the image of God, and to recognise the church's call to intervene against injustice to see the kingdom of God come on earth.
- **There are also sociological challenges to be faced.** Without intervention, children can face the risk of being re-trafficked. There also needs to be a greater emphasis on understanding cultural norms, for example, the impact of colonialism on worldview.

### 2.1.4 – Plenary discussion: Exclusion and inclusion

During this session participants discussed this question: *'What does it mean for families, communities and churches to be inclusive?'* A plenary feedback session followed.

Key learning points:

- **Family:** If all people are family of God, then all people should be accepted in families with equal dignity, value and respect, avoiding comparison and competition. Housework should be shared and the opinions of all should be listened to. Parents should model fairness, giving time for each other and moving from an attitude of 'being served' towards an attitude of 'serving'.

- **Church:** The church should affirm the priesthood of all believers, irrespective of gender, caste or age, and include marginalised groups within communities. The church is called to love, acting in humility and transparency, without self-superiority, an inward-focus or judgement. The church is also called to be authentic, accepting people as they are and welcoming them into the church, rather than seeing it as an exclusive club. This is the 'early church model': outward focused; soft-hearted to scripture and the Holy Spirit; empowering women in leadership; building relationships and dialogue with churches of different convictions; rooted in love, respect and acceptance.
- **Community:** The apostles demonstrated a heart for the Gentiles and therefore Christians should mirror this attitude to others in their communities, loving them as they love their own families. This means abandoning a judgmental attitude, accepting inter-community marriage and committing a proportion of tithes to the poor in the community. By agreeing to be inclusive amid the diversity and mixed beliefs of the community, it is vital to be transparent, to have a willingness to be uncomfortable, to give a voice to the vulnerable, to focus on relationships, to practise harmony, to break down language and cultural barriers, and to call for participation across different groups.

### 2.1.5 – Plenary talk 3: Engaging with a broken world

Key learning points:

- **God created the heavens, the earth and humankind in perfect relationships.** However, in Genesis 3, man and woman fell into temptation and their relationship with God became broken. **In a broken world, people become minimised to statistics, have their voices silenced and get trapped within broken and destructive systems.**
- There are **four stages of brokenness** that can lead to human trafficking and sexual violence:
  1. **Man and women were created equal in God's image.**
  2. **Sin happened: gender equality was lost and Adam ruled over Eve.** This unequal partnership between man and woman persists to this day. 'Patidev' is an Indian term for the husband. It means 'husband god'. It is subservience like this which permits gender-based violence. Also, in Tamil culture the task of finding a groom for a daughter is likened to the task of saving a person from drowning. The speaker believes that this desperation to 'save' a daughter nurtures the dowry system.
  3. **A woman may tolerate apparently harmless inequality but this situation does not always remain harmless.** It can be taken advantage of by a man. The act of sex may become no longer the expression of the most intimate relationship between two human beings, but instead a matter for selfish pleasure. This is the context within which sexual violence may occur.
  4. **If a woman can be a sexual object for one man, she can also be traded or trafficked.** However, human trafficking is not restricted to women or for the purpose of sexual pleasure.
- **The concept of mission permeates the Bible.** God's righteousness restores broken relationships; in order to communicate God's righteousness and justice to a broken world, God's people must engage (Psalm 24:1). Christians should not be motivated by the magnitude of brokenness but by the majesty of God.
- **'Shalom' is the reality of restored relationships as God intended and the rule of God in your heart.** The result of this is peace with one another, a demonstration of love and a growing into the image of God (Imago Dei). There is restoration and healing leading to mental wellbeing, social security and trauma overcome. People are accepted, valued and respected. Shalom requires challenging the systemic structure and addressing the equality of women, both within and outside the church.

- **The conversation must go beyond just equality and celebrate uniqueness:** men and women make each other complete.

### 2.1.6 – Plenary discussion: Contextual challenges

During this session participants discussed the **'external' and systemic factors** that:

→ **a) Raise the risk of trafficking**

- Families are forced to find urgent solutions to fight rising prices, low income and poverty. Many people work in agriculture which is quiet for nine months of the year.
- There is widespread demand for cheap labour and products.
- Social norms see girls as someone else's property.
- Government laws are outdated, rarely enforced and do not address the present problems. Legislation is sometimes geared to favour those in power.
- There are few convictions against perpetrators and many loopholes in the system.
- Perpetrators at the top of the supply chain are difficult to trace.
- Communities have an inadequate knowledge of the effects of trafficking.
- The media lure children to cities; there are open borders and no birth certificates.

**b) Make aftercare and reintegration harder**

- There are ongoing problems of stigmatisation, little emotional support and sometimes outright rejection from families on the return of someone who has been trafficked (for reasons of health, shame etc).
- Improper media coverage may focus on the victim and their family rather than on the traffickers.
- Difficulty in accessing government schemes, such as housing and electricity, with complicated paperwork processes and very few viable employment opportunities.
- There is disunity among churches and church networks – some enforce stigma rather than welcoming victims back into communities, thereby preventing holistic restoration.
- Charitable organisations often only offer 'set packages' for recovery which do not allow space for different traumas and victims' own timescales. There is a severe lack of post-rescue guidance and understanding of survivors' pain.

During the session participants also discussed this question: **'What are the social and cultural norms that are driving human trafficking?'**

Key points shared were:

- Many **religious and traditional customs** have identified the abuse of women by men as commonplace.
- Arguably the **increase in progress and technology** has decreased demand for human labour and thus increased poverty, which in turn drives human trafficking.
- The **dowry system**.
- There is a distinct **lack of ownership for stopping trafficking, restoring victims and reducing stigma**.

### 2.1.7 – Plenary discussion: The problem of inequality

During this session participants **explored the difference between the root causes, the contributing factors and the consequences of inequality**. Some of the key points raised are given below. (This is not an exhaustive list but an insight into the key discussion points.)

- **Root causes:** socially constraining factors such as belief and culture; legislative causes; national economic factors. People are born into certain situations – this is known as their starting point in life.

- **Contributing factors:** education (gender discrimination in education perpetuates inequality); silence in the church; poverty and powerlessness; influence of the media; acceptance of violence and inequality in society.
- **Consequences:** any group of people seen as unequal or with less access to resources may experience a loss of self-esteem, of hope and of purpose in life.

The cycles of inequality need to be broken or they become multi-generational.

### 2.1.8 – Plenary talk 4: A biblical perspective on inequality

Key learning points:

- **Many accounts of inequality are recorded in the Bible.** There are laws that discriminate against women, eg Deuteronomy 25:11–12, where the law seems to punish a woman for helping her husband - but not the men who originally started the conflict. There is inequality between Jews and Gentiles, old and young, men and women, rich and poor, religious elites and laity, the healthy and the disabled.
- **However, inequality is reinforced by legal interpretation.** It is vital to differentiate between what the Bible *describes* and what the Bible *prescribes*: it describes instances of injustice against women but prescribes justice for all.
- **Prescriptive texts in the Bible include Leviticus 25** – the principle of Jubilee and cancellation of debts. **Isaiah 58, Amos, Hosea, Micah, the Proverbs and Psalms** all speak out for justice and fair treatment. In the New Testament, many of **Jesus' parables** refer to justice and exalt the marginalised, the poor and those excluded by society.
- The biblical perspective advocates that **inequality is implicitly wrong because it breeds injustice, exploitation, war and vulnerability.** As demonstrated by Jesus, inequality in our current contexts should be dismantled.
- **In the biblical context the alternative to inequality is the equal significance of each human being.** Equality does not necessarily mean 'to be the same', as people are all made differently and uniquely, but it does mean unity – seeing each member as significant within the body of Christ. The broken relationships that brought sin into the world put man, not God, at the centre, and consequently inequality and injustice flourish. The biblical answer to inequality is the cross of Christ.

### 2.1.9 – Plenary talk 5: Healing and restoration

Key learning points:

- **The way Jesus heals people is holistic.** For example, in Mark 5:28 Jesus does not just heal the woman physically, but there is a spiritual healing and a restoration of dignity, value and acceptance in society.
- **Restoration goes beyond basic human rights** – it is about experiencing 'shalom', the restoration of relationships with God, self, others and the rest of creation. This type of healing is about flourishing and truly being God's image-bearers. Shalom is both a future expectation as well as present experience.
- **Shalom is wounded when justice is absent.** Human trafficking is intentionally perpetuated by the powerful on the vulnerable, impacting their physical, spiritual, social and emotional wellbeing.
- **Christians are in a unique position in this journey to whole-life restoration and healing, and they are able to take others along with them.** 'Rescuing' someone with the security that brings is a crucial starting point, but more is needed – restoration is the journey leading to true peace, shalom and meaning of life. It is the journey from victimhood and dependency towards empowerment.
- Further questions were posed for participants to consider:
  - *Can there be healing without restoration?*
  - *Can there be restoration without healing?*

- *In your journey of restoration, are you called to include others, to address the situation around you?*

### 2.1.10 – Plenary talk 6: Advocating for the marginalised in a broken world

- At the beginning of this session the speaker asked participants this question: ***‘When you think of advocacy, what words come to your mind?’***. Answers shared by participants included:
  - It starts with us, church
  - Being an advocate means playing the role of a mediator skilfully
  - Advocacy is influencing the powerful for the powerless
  - Justice
  - Rights
  - Being a voice for the voiceless
  - Law
- The speaker also posed this question: ***‘What obstacles do churches have to participating in advocacy on behalf of those who are being trafficked or are victims of sexual and gender violence?’***. Some of the answers shared by participants included:
  - Perceptions about victims
  - Compassion fatigue
  - Ignorance about the issue
  - Lack of expertise
  - Lack of political influence
  - Fear and unwillingness
  - Lack of resources
  - Busy in ‘soul-winning’
  - Legal limitations
  - Members of churches may be complicit
- The speaker shared that **the church has the ability to advocate for the marginalised** by listening to and learning from survivors, treating them not as victims but as dignified human beings. This can break down cultural barriers and community marginalisation. The church can:
  - Facilitate dialogue between victims and perpetrators
  - Help survivors build sustainable livelihoods to generate income, thereby restoring their dignity
  - Bring hope
  - Act as an exemplary organisation
  - Bring people together for a cause and work towards a common purpose
  - Work with government officials
  - Provide relief to survivors
  - Create awareness of the vulnerability factors to human trafficking and sexual violence
  - Offer support and protection to survivors
- **A biblical example of advocacy:** Nehemiah advocated for change. He used his resources to help others and to engage with the government, addressing injustice by calling on political and religious leaders.
- **Authentic advocacy is rooted in love, not in agenda.** Our advocacy on behalf of others must address their needs and not be based on our own agendas.
- **Approaches to advocacy** that we can all take include prayer, raising awareness and non-violent direct action.
- Theodore Roosevelt: *‘Do whatever you can, wherever you are with whatever you have.’*
- Participants then discussed these questions:

*Is it okay to advocate on behalf of others?*

*If so, how do you use your power of advocacy in ways that empower others?*

*Are there ways that your advocacy might serve to accidentally silence or empower others?*

- Some of the answers given to the questions above include:
  - Understand the reason, the people's willingness and seek their consent. It is important to build their willingness.
  - We can empower others through process, for example, by teaching villages to write applications for government programmes and/or benefits.
  - The church has been given the amazing authority and privilege to advocate. God has chosen his church to be his prophet for society.
  - There is no authority at all unless given from above.
  - The church is the witness of God. By advocating to government it is not seeking a position for itself, nor is it promoting rebellion.

### 2.1.11 – Plenary talk 7: Unity

Key learning points:

- **Networking and coordination** are necessary for effective prevention of, protection from, and prosecution of human trafficking and sexual violence. All parts of the 'body' must work together.
- **There is a biblical mandate to pursue unity:**
  - God is a God of unity. *'Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.'* (1 Peter 3:8).
  - In Corinth there was division in the church and Paul was aware of the danger involved (1 Corinthians 1:10–17). He pleaded with the church *'... lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.'* (1 Corinthians 1:17)
  - *'Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.'* (Ephesians 4:3)
  - On spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:12–31): *'Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.'* (1 Corinthians 12:12)
- **When working together across different churches, denominations and organisations we must remember:**
  - *'...to live a life worthy of the calling you have received...'* (Ephesians 4:1). We should be accommodating, act with integrity, live out the faith with one mind and walk as heirs of the kingdom.
  - *'Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace'* (Ephesians 4:3). The seat of Christian unity is in the heart or the spirit.
  - *'There is one body and one Spirit...'* (Ephesians 4:4). All Christians are called to the same hope of eternal life through Christ.
  - *'...one Lord, one faith, one baptism...'* (Ephesians 4:5). Christ is the head of the church and all Christians are immediately subject to it.
  - *'...one God and Father of all...'* (Ephesians 4:6). This is about God's dominance and his relationship with his subjects.
- **Romans 14:1–2:**
  - Not agreeing at all times does not mean we are divided.
  - Unity means we embrace the differences of others with the love of Christ that dominates our differences. Unity does not mean we have to be uniform.
  - Unity is how I relate with the other person, community, church or faith.
  - It means we are one in our mind, purpose, vision and goal.
- The speaker then shared some examples of churches working together with other networks and organisations.

### 2.1.12 – Plenary talk 8: Conclusions and commitments

During this session participants reflected on these questions:

*What have you learned this week?*

*What have you rediscovered?*

*What has God spoken to you or affirmed?*

*What is going to be different for you in future?*

### 2.1.13 – Plenary talk 9: Information session

During this session the speaker shared information about ways to keep in contact with each other, and to continue personal learning and theological reflection around human trafficking and sexual violence. This included information on the Tearfund International Learning Zone (TILZ).

## 2.2 Workshops

### 2.2.1 – Transforming masculinities

In a role-play exercise designed to promote **discussion around power and violence**, and how power can be exercised to marginalise others, participants were divided into three groups: masters/owners, objects/possessions and observers. Masters/owners were given power over objects/possessions and could ask them to complete certain actions or tasks. After three minutes the roles were reversed. The participants then discussed how they felt being powerless and also how they felt having power. Main points raised in this discussion were:

- **The experience of being made to work hard did not help participants to be kinder** when they had their moment of being the taskmaster!
- Some observers felt **uncomfortable** watching masters make others do something difficult. But why didn't they intervene, say something to stop that unfair treatment?
- **Observers had not been told not to intervene, but still they did nothing.** The same is reflected in society – often people do not intervene unless they are affected.
- **The first idea that came to masters' minds was to make their objects/possessions do some of the worst things.** People are not sufficiently self-aware: we dislike observing injustice, but we are prepared to perpetuate the same kind of injustice ourselves.
- **Nobody was told to be violent, but most masters tended to violence in the sense that they told their objects to do difficult tasks.**
- **We treat others as objects/things because they have no voice.**
- **How can the marginalised speak up, when from early on they are conditioned to accept their plight as the norm?**

### 2.2.2 – Engaging with other religious views (Islam)

During this workshop participants explored how the church and Christian faith-based organisations can engage with Islamic views on exclusion and inclusion.

Some key learning points included:

- **MISSION as DIALOGUE begins and ends in DIFFERENCE** – *'Diversity not only envelops us, it works on us, gets inside us; if we are paying attention, we see that attentiveness to other religions affects how we experience, think through and practise our own religion.'* (Clooney, 2010, p6)<sup>1</sup>
- **MISSION as DIALOGUE begins and ends in RESPONSIBILITY** – *'...it is perfectly possible for persons of faith to maintain their own integrity while yet learning how to relate responsibly and sensitively to each other... It is only through maintaining that integrity in*

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<sup>1</sup> Clooney, FX (2010) *Comparative theology: Deep learning across religious borders*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

*relationship that the harmony of a wider multi-faith world can be promoted.'* (Barnes, 2002, pp4–5)<sup>2</sup>

- **MISSION as DIALOGUE begins and ends in DEPENDENCY** – *'The most profound thing I know is to find oneself on the other side of the planet, in a country with which one's own is at war, with someone as uneducated as one is educated, whose culture and religion one does not share or even know, with whom one shares no common tongue – and to find oneself utterly dependent upon that other for one's very life.'* (Lingis, 1999, p121)<sup>3</sup>
- **We need to ask ourselves 'Who am I?'** Understanding religious identity requires knowing and learning about oneself in community with others outside one's own religious tradition.
- **Learning from others and other traditions may empower us to be critical of the distortions in our own traditions and help us all discover respective resources for peace.** For this to occur friendship is paramount. Only friends can engage in conversation.
- Participants then discussed a series of questions. Two of these questions are captured below.
  1. *Since cordial relationships between Christians and Muslims are vital, what (in your experience) can we do in our respective ministries and contexts to improve on Christian and Muslim relations?*
  2. *If religious convictions have been one of the causes of conflicts between Christians and Muslims, what can we practically do to overcome this while remaining faithful to our calling and faith?*

### 2.2.3 – Engaging with other religious views (Hinduism)

During this workshop participants explored how the church and Christian faith-based organisations can engage with Hindu views on exclusion and inclusion.

Some key learning points included:

- **Features of the cultural reality which contribute to exclusion and inclusion:**
  - Patriarchal culture
  - Beliefs in karma
  - Fatalism
  - Child labour
  - Child marriage
  - Debt bondage
  - Honour/shame culture
  - Virginity
  - Corruption
  - Caste system: Nepal and India, both countries where a large proportion of the population is Hindu, operate a social and cultural 'caste system'. Caste is form of social stratification determined by birth, predetermining a member's lifestyle. Lower castes and minority ethnic groups are most affected and remain poor. Dalits are seen as untouchable and face discrimination, poverty, social prejudice and a lack of access to resources.
- **Hindu theology** includes such themes as honesty, not harming other living things and expects good behaviour/deeds, but the culture reflects practices and attitudes that are very different from the theology.
- It is also true that there is no single, 'gold standard' in Hindu theology – it is more a culture than a religion.

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<sup>2</sup> Barnes, M (2002) *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>3</sup> Lingis, A (1999) *The unlive life is not worth examining* in JR Watson (Ed.), *Portraits of American continental philosophers*. (pp 119–125). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press

- It is difficult to bridge the gap between Hinduism and Christianity due to very **different ideas of sin, salvation and God.**

### 2.2.4 – Capabilities: including those with disabilities

During this workshop participants explored the theology surrounding disability. The workshop looked at the compassionate, inclusive nature of God and the value of disabled people. It also considered the vulnerability factors that make individuals with a disability more susceptible to experiencing human trafficking or sexual violence.

Key learning points:

#### → Context:

- According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), disability is an outcome of the interaction between ‘impairment’ and the environment in which people live.
- It is estimated that globally there are over a billion people living with a disability, including children.
- In India, 40 to 50 per cent of families are affected by disability.
- According to the World Bank, only one to two per cent of people with a disability in India receive the rehabilitative services they need.
- According to UNESCO, 90 per cent of children with a disability in developing countries do not attend school.
- According to DFID, women and girls with disabilities are twice to three times more likely to be victims of physical and sexual abuse.

#### → How different worldviews contribute to discrimination against persons with a disability (PWD):

- Hinduism – disability is a result of bad karma; a PWD is lowest in the caste system.
- Islam – a PWD is an object of charity or disgrace in a shame-and-honour culture.
- Communism – a PWD cannot contribute to society and has no value.
- Buddhism – a PWD should deny and ignore his or her plight.
- Religious legalism – a PWD is an object of pity.
- Fascism – a PWD is an economic drain on society.
- Tribalism – disability is a taboo or curse so people avoid a PWD.

#### → How different worldviews fit with a biblical perspective:

Worldview	Historical	Postmodern	Biblical
<i>Perspectives of disability</i>			
Disability is	Abnormal in a normal world	Normal in a normal world	Normal in an abnormal world
<i>General summary of worldview</i>			
The centre of reality is	Humankind	Culture	God
Objective truth is	Knowable	Does not exist; all relative; is personal	Knowable and personal
Source of truth is	Science and reason	Pragmatic	God himself
Overarching story is	Life is what we see and it can be fixed	There isn't one	Creation/fall/redemption/consummation

General results of worldview	Historical	Postmodern	Biblical
View of self	Superior	Neutral	Valuable individual broken by the fall
View of people with disabilities	Inferior	Neutral	Valuable peer broken by the fall
Response to people with disabilities	Pity/fear	It's not a problem	Identification
Responsibilities towards persons with disabilities	Altruistic	Demands inclusion	Compassion, grace, justice
Relationship of community and people with disabilities	To fix differences	Demands sameness	Values differences and embraces inclusion

→ **Those with disabilities are part of the body of Christ:**

- *What does the body of Christ look like when it includes those with disabilities? What role do they play in the body? (See 1 Corinthians 12:12–27)*
- *'We encourage church and mission leaders to think not only of mission among those with a disability, but to recognise, affirm and facilitate the missional calling of believers with disabilities themselves as part of the body of Christ.'* (Lausanne movement, Cape Town Commitment)

### 2.2.5 – A biblical view of childhood and the place of children in the community

This workshop explored a biblical view of children and the place of children in the community. Participants were given an opportunity to reflect theologically on God's heart for children, the factors that make children more susceptible to human trafficking and sexual violence, and the role of the global church (including Christian NGOs) in addressing this.

Key learning points:

→ **Context:**

- It is estimated that globally there are 5.5 million children trapped in human trafficking. One in every three of these victims is a boy.
- Each year 150 million girls and 70 million boys are sexually abused. (*UN Study on Global Violence*)
- In India, 53 per cent of children are subjected to sexual abuse.
- In India, a rape happens every 30 minutes.
- Each year, across the world 15 million girls are married before the age of 18; that is one girl every two seconds (<http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/about-child-marriage/>).

→ **What is 'Child Theology'?**

- *'Child Theology is an investigation that considers and evaluates central themes of theology – historical, biblical and systematic – in the light of the child standing beside Jesus in the midst of the disciples. The child is like a lens through which some aspects of God and his revelation can be seen more clearly. Or, if you like, the child is like a light that throws existing theology into new relief.'* (Child Theology Movement)

→ **Children are included:**

- Children are close to God's heart.
- They are often at risk of exclusion within culture, but Jesus emphasised that children should be brought to him (Mark 10:13–16).
- Exclusion can be a factor which makes children more vulnerable to trafficking.

- Children are often viewed as objects of mission by adults: they need to be taught and protected, they are like 'empty vessels'. Instead, we should see them as subjects of mission and agents of holistic mission from whom we need to learn (as Jesus showed).

→ **Key questions we need to be asking:**

- *How are children omitted/excluded in the church? How are children omitted/excluded in wider society?*
- *What are the causes? How can they be overcome?*
- *Why is caring for children a particular responsibility of the church? (Luke 2:52; Genesis 21:17)*
- *Where is the voice of the church on children's issues? (Proverbs 31:8–9) How can the church be an advocate for children's rights?*
- *Where is the voice of children themselves? We very often reflect and make decisions (and structure programmes) on their behalf without giving them a voice.*

### 2.2.6 – A biblical perspective on work

This workshop explored a biblical perspective on work. It aimed to help participants understand the biblical principles for a positive view of work as a part of life and flourishing, to think about this in relation to their own cultures and experiences, and in relation to trafficking and SGBV, with particular focus on the issue of dignity in work.

Key learning points:

- **Theology of work:** an assessment of the problems and issues with regard to work and theology in our cultures.
- **What does theology do in life anyway?** It shapes our presuppositions and worldviews, as God and the Bible take primary space in our heart and life. It shapes our priorities. It is the foundation for our thoughts/ideas, our culture, our life. Therefore, it is a shaping factor of our deeper values around whether and why we work, and what work we engage in.
- **Systematic theology:**
  - **Creation:** God is the creator. He is good; he has purpose and goal in mind and is actively involved, just as he was in the acts of creation but now through the Holy Spirit. God worked to create; he endowed Adam and Eve with his image, giving them authority and dominion, the ability to create and the mandate to work (Genesis 1:26–28; 2:1–3, 15).
  - **The fall:** All creation has been fallen since the self-serving pride of Adam and Eve. Work has become full of hard labour and dangers from enemies and pests, with scarce harvests leading to famine, corruption and greed, and the consequent abuse of human lives (Genesis 3).
  - **Redemption:** God has set out to redeem everything he created from its fallen state, beginning with human beings. Work will receive its full reward and dignity (Colossians 3:23–24).
  - **Consummation:** God is determined to bring all of creation to its intended goal and completion in his new creation. Work will be fully rewarded and nothing entrusted to him will be wasted – everything will be accounted for (Isaiah 60, Revelation 21).
- **Biblical theology:**
  - **Covenant of works:** God endowed human beings with a 'cultural mandate' – he desires human beings to have authority and dominion under his lordship. Through obedience and service (work) as stewards we shall be rewarded (Luke 19:11–26).
  - **Kingdom of God:** God as sovereign king has established his rule. Everyone serves someone/something – if it is not God, it is some form of idol (Daniel 4:27–32, 37). Jesus declared that with his coming the kingdom of God has come. Therefore, in

God's new reality we live with a new vision (the resurrection of Christ and the age of the church), leading to the fulfilment of God's redemptive purposes and his new creation (Matthew 4:17).

- **In summary:** God worked, so did Jesus! Work was part of good creation, and our obedience and faithfulness at work show the true character of our lives. The rhythm of work followed by rest on the Sabbath gives meaning to our existence.
- Participants then discussed these questions:
  1. *What are some of the faulty theologies at work?* For example, the mindsets of bhagya (luck), karma and the caste system; class-consciousness.
  2. *What is the inherent theology that underpins worldviews about God or gods and why we work?*
  3. *What are the presuppositions underlying mindsets relating to work? What prevents people, especially the poor and those of low socio-economic class, from being able to work with dignity?*
  4. *How does social structure (eg the caste system, class-consciousness, the culture of honour/shame) shape our understanding of work?*
  5. *Why is there a big gap between our understanding/theology and our practices when it comes to work or vocation? How can we bridge this gap?*
  6. *What does Luke 19:11–26 teach about God and our view of work?* Study this passage together and draw out principles.
  7. *What implications does this theological understanding have for us in our own sector of work/ministry?*
  8. *If you were to begin a campaign 'Let's give dignity to every kind of work' what would your strategy be?*

### 2.2.7 – Developing resilience to environmental and socio-economic crises

During this workshop participants explored their understanding of resilience. The session considered the theological arguments and Bible verses that speak of the importance of helping individuals and communities to develop resilience. Participants were encouraged to develop a fuller understanding of the relationship between resilience and:

- a) preventing human trafficking and sexual violence
- b) helping survivors of human trafficking and SGBV rebuild their lives.

Key learning points:

- **The relationship between resilience, human trafficking and sexual violence:**
  - Inclusion/exclusion issues create a breeding ground for vulnerability.
  - Trafficking and SGBV have connections with increased levels of climate-induced vulnerability. See an example of this at:  
<http://www.glamour.com/story/heres-how-climate-change-is-sexist>
- **What the Bible says:**
  - Genesis 37: the story of Joseph, sold and resold (ie trafficked), with family issues playing a central role.
  - Genesis 41: 36–37
    - Seven good years would be followed by seven years of famine – variability of climate.
    - A strategic plan was made – Pharaoh appointed commissioners to put food in reserve during the good years to be used during the famine years.
    - This plan made the Egyptian nation resilient – the country was saved from the impact of years of climate variability.
- **A definition of resilience:** The term 'resilience' still has no universally agreed definition, even among development workers. Tearfund's suggested definition for households and communities is: *Resilience is the ability to deal with shocks, stresses and uncertainty.*

*Resilience can be understood as a set of interrelated capacities that allow people to **absorb, anticipate or adapt to shocks and stresses.***

- Participants then engaged in a theological reflection around **how churches can help communities to develop social, economic and environmental resilience in order to help prevent human trafficking and SGBV.**

### 2.2.8 – Peace and reconciliation

This workshop explored the theological importance of peace and reconciliation, giving participants an opportunity to explore what the Bible has to say about peacebuilding. It looked at some of the key concepts in making peace, such as repentance, forgiveness and justice, and at some of the key characteristics of the peacemaker. It also explored how peace and reconciliation help to:

- a) prevent human trafficking and SGBV
- b) bring healing and reconciliation for human-trafficking and SGBV survivors.

Key learning points:

→ **Context: conflicts in the world**

- Since 1945, armed conflicts have led to a far higher proportion of civilian casualties than was the case in either the first or second World Wars.
- Since 2011, the number of deaths from terrorism has risen from fewer than 10,000 to more than 30,000.
- Terrorism has a global impact: according to the Global Peace Index, out of 163 countries surveyed only 37 reported no impact of terrorism.
- The number of refugees and internally displaced persons increased dramatically between 2007 and 2015.

→ **Impact of conflict:**

- Loss of lives and property
- Economic vulnerability
- Weakened rule of law
- Decreased availability of social services
- People forced to flee for safety

→ **The relationship between conflict, human trafficking and sexual violence:**

- Worldwide, there are 21 million victims of human trafficking
- Women, children, migrants and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are most at risk of being trafficked
- Trafficking is used as a weapon of war (eg in Syria)
- Boko Haram has abducted and forced women and children into sexual slavery
- Abduction of women for sexual exploitation
- Forced or early marriage
- Recruitment of child soldiers
- Trafficking in human organs
- Prostitution
- Survival sex

→ **A chronology of peace in the Bible:**

- Creation and the fall
- Birth of Jesus Christ
- Crucifixion and resurrection
- Prince of Peace

→ **Biblical stories about repentance and forgiveness:**

- Conflict between Cain and Abel
- Mordecai and Esther
- Philemon and Onesimus
- Joseph and his brothers

- The prodigal son and the forgiving father
- Esau and Jacob

→ **Reconciliation:**

- Begins with God (Genesis 32:1–2)
- Is integrally linked to our reconciliation with God
- Must be intentional (Genesis 32: 2–5)
- Must be covered in prayers (Genesis 32: 9–12)
- Demands humility (Genesis 33:3)
- Requires vulnerability (Genesis 33:4)
- Nears completion in forgiveness (Genesis 33:4)

### 2.2.9 – Representation in the media

This workshop engaged participants in a theological reflection on how the media shape our perceptions and behaviour. It helped participants consider how the media are indirect drivers of human trafficking and sexual violence through the messages they portray and the stories they tell about gender, sex and other issues.

Key learning points:

- **God's value in creation.** We are all fearfully and wonderfully made – we must remember the importance of acceptance rather than just focusing on physical appearance.
- **How our minds and beliefs are transformed by the things we see, hear and do.** We are shaped by our practices and by the influences that surround us. These are not necessarily negative – but very often are. Because we are unaware of this, we miss the problems they create for us.
- **Women or men should not be seen as objects of pleasure.** They are made in the image of God and have value in themselves, not just in what they do for us.
- It is really important for people to start to understand how the media shape us – we spend so much time engaging with media which interpret the world for us.
- **Pornography affects us as individuals, as families and as society:**
  - **As individuals:** pornography is addictive and has been linked to depression, anxiety and stress.
  - **As families:** pornography makes a person more individualistic; it can prevent people from having meaningful relationships and it can leave spouses feeling undesired.
  - **As society:** pornography objectifies women; it is thought to have caused an increase in dominating and sexually-imposing behaviour and decreased empathy for victims of sexual violence. This can be seen as contributing to the perpetuation of human trafficking.
- **The need to keep our thoughts pure (Proverbs 22:11).** Pornography does not help us do this. We should consider how we might need to change our habits and practices in order to change our thinking. Our body is the temple of Christ and defiling it is wrong. We were created to worship God and pornography is a worship disorder - our affections and attention are given to the wrong thing. The Bible places emphasis on the value of family and sex in God's plan.
- We need to help those struggling with pornography to live with a paradox of a **safe and exposed** life. We need to support them in a non-judgemental way, so that they can be honest about their problem and strive to overcome it without fear of verbal abuse or physical violence.

### 3. PARTICIPANT LEARNING

On the final day, participants were given the opportunity to write down one significant thing they had learnt. Some of the responses were as follows:

- A biblical understanding of marginalisation and the mandate to work with the marginalised and excluded members of our communities.
- A deeper understanding of masculinity.
- The need to build further capacity and understanding on these issues.
- The need for this work within our own communities.
- I learnt more about marginalisation and inequality.
- I discovered that when unity is there we can do more.
- I have learnt more about the other organisations doing good work to prevent human trafficking and to provide support for victims.
- I now understand more about the challenges rural source communities face.
- I have rediscovered that Christians are not meant to live in isolation but rather to live with the world and for the world.
- Advocacy can involve prayer.
- Ways to prevent human trafficking and sexual violence.
- A biblical perspective of human trafficking and sexual violence.
- God has sent us to serve the marginalised people and our community to fulfil his kingdom.
- Biblical perspectives on gender norms.
- Biblical perspectives on biblical justice.
- Unity in the body of Christ is possible through healing and reconciliation.

## 4. GATHERING COMMITMENTS

At the end of the gathering, participants were given the opportunity make commitments regarding how they were going to apply what they had learnt. Some of these commitments are detailed below.

- To explore opportunities for developing and funding programmes to prevent human trafficking in Nepal.
- To become a better advocate for the marginalised.
- Our organisation will look to become involved in promoting livelihoods to help prevent human trafficking.
- I will prepare a module on the harmful effects of inequality and pornography to teach in the church and community.
- To get involved in a network of others working to address human trafficking.
- I want to talk to my church about the biblical perspective of human trafficking and sexual violence.
- My church must speak out against human trafficking and sexual violence.
- There are so many problems in this world; our local church must speak out against these problems and take action.
- I will encourage my church to be more inclusive – to make all people feel accepted and welcomed.
- To educate people in my church and community about treating all people equally.
- To advocate on behalf of the marginalised and vulnerable.
- To speak with my church about forming a safe job migration committee (to provide information and advice to minimise risk for people who migrate to find work).
- To lead a seminar on trafficking awareness at church.
- To seek dialogue with IJM (International Justice Mission) about possible partnership opportunities.
- I will love and care and respect people more.
- As a theologically trained person, I feel more responsible to address these issues theologically and to help others to know/think from a biblical perspective.
- To network with churches, and to empower and support them to have active involvement in addressing human trafficking and sexual and gender-based violence.
- To look for opportunities to include human trafficking and sexual violence in the theological curriculum.
- To learn more about the other organisations working to prevent and respond to trafficking.
- I move on with a renewed sense of commitment to seek out the least, the last and the lost.

## 5. SUMMARY STATEMENT

The gathering made clear the enthusiasm for, and value of, theological reflection on issues affecting churches and their communities in general, and on human trafficking and sexual and gender-based violence in particular. Participants (from NGOs, churches and theological colleges) all relished the opportunity to think about what the Bible has to say about aspects of people's lives that contribute to violence and trafficking. Such insights are vital in helping the participants develop their work, ministries and missions in ways that show God's heart and reveal his kingdom. There was enthusiasm for engaging with challenging and sometimes contentious topics, such as gender and building relationships with those of other faiths, and a consistent desire to engage with the practical realities of living out this theology in daily discipleship.

## 6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to explicitly acknowledge the efforts of the Tearfund team based in Nepal. Thank you for working tirelessly to make the gathering possible, helping to coordinate the complex planning and implementation of the gathering with patience and dedication.

We would also like to express appreciation to all the individuals who attended the gathering. Thank you for your active and enthusiastic participation. We understand that it is only through individuals, churches and organisations seeking to respond to the holistic needs of individuals and our communities in a Christ-centred way that will truly see individuals flourish and communities thrive. We also recognise that addressing the injustices of human trafficking and sexual violence requires collaborative efforts among different churches, non-governmental organisations and governmental bodies.

*The Thinking Theology team*