

How do illegal migration, and humanitarian crises influence the increase in organ trade in some Asian countries?

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	2
INTRODUCTION.....	3
1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND.....	5
1.1. Organ Trade.....	5
1.1.1. Human Trafficking for Organ Removal.....	5
1.1.2. Organ Purchase and Sale.....	6
1.1.3. Forced Organ Harvesting/Procurement.....	7
1.1.4. Transplant Tourism.....	8
1.2. Illegal Migration.....	9
1.2.1. Pakistan.....	10
1.2.2. Iran.....	11
1.2.3. Nepal.....	12
1.2.4. Bangladesh.....	13
1.3. Humanitarian Crisis.....	14
1.3.1. Refugees and Migrants.....	14
1.3.2 Humanitarian Crises In Asia.....	15
1.3.3. Organ Trade, Illegal Migration, and Humanitarian Crises.....	16
2. THE INFLUENCE OF ILLEGAL MIGRATION AND HUMANITARIAN CRISES ON ORGAN TRADE.....	19
2.1. Migrants and Brokers.....	19
2.2. Illegal Migration - Organ Trade and Humanitarian Crises - Organ Trade.....	20
2.2.1. Nepal.....	20
2.2.2. Iran.....	21
2.2.3. Bangladesh.....	23
2.2.4. Pakistan.....	25
CONCLUSION.....	29
REFERENCES.....	33

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to reveal how illegal migration and humanitarian crises influence organ trade in some selected Asian countries. Therefore, first, it seeks to generally understand the social and economic factors observed in the selected Asian countries, namely Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Iran, which contribute to organ trade. Second, the causes of organ trade will be analyzed from the perspective of illegal migration and humanitarian crises. In addressing these objectives, the study seeks to answer the research question how illegal migration and humanitarian crises influence the increase in illegal organ trade in the selected Asian countries.

This paper will focus on three main concepts which are, organ trade, which is a broad and intricate practice that involves different practices such as Human trafficking for organ removal, transplant tourism, organ harvesting, and organ sale (Ambagtsheer et al., 2013), these different practices. These different practices make up a problem that ranges from the economic to the social, thus making their research more difficult to do. The second main concept is Illegal migration, which can be classified as the act of someone entering or residing in a nation where they are not citizens, in violation of the existing immigration laws and regulations of that country (Castles, 2010), and the last one are humanitarian crises, which are emergency situations that endanger the health, safety, or welfare of a community or people inside a nation and that the state's resources are insufficient to handle are known as humanitarian crises (Crisis Humanitaria, u.d).

The choice of the topic of this study arose from the need to approach an alarming phenomenon that combines the vulnerability of migrants and refugees and their relationship with the organ trade. It was urgent to study the context in which millions of individuals are forced to flee their homes due to conflict, persecution, economic and environmental crises, and in which many find themselves in precarious situations that make them susceptible to organ trade networks.

This study seeks to investigate how external factors, such as humanitarian crises and illegal migration, increase and affect the demand for organs and organ trade. By understanding these issues, it aims to contribute to the investigation of these problems and perhaps lead to the formulation of more effective policies to protect vulnerable populations and combat the illicit organ trade in the Asian region, an issue that, although often overlooked, has profound social and ethical implications.

This research will be organized into multiple sections that will deal with the issue of organ trade in the context of illegal migration and humanitarian crises in Asia. First, a theoretical background will be presented, including information gathered on the organ trade, covering aspects such as human trafficking for organ harvesting, transplant tourism, as well as the non-consensual harvesting and sale of organs. This section will also provide a general analysis of illegal migration in each country involved in the research, as well as general information on humanitarian crises in Asia, with a subchapter dedicated to exploring the interrelationship between organ trade, illegal migration and humanitarian crises. The second part of the study will focus on the findings, beginning with a clarification of key terms that will facilitate understanding of the chapter. It will then be divided by country, presenting specific information on the relationship between humanitarian crises - trade in organs and illegal migration - trade in organs in each national context. Finally, the paper will conclude with an analysis summarizing the relationship between illegal migration, humanitarian crises and organ trade by country, followed by recommendations for future research in this area.

The study is based on secondary research and content analysis. Using secondary research in this study allows having a broader view of the topic and analyzing a wide range of sources, enriching the investigation and analysis, especially because conducting primary research would not be feasible due to the nature of the topic. The thorough analysis of existing studies provides a solid foundation for the investigation, it helps to compare the findings, and also makes it possible to provide an answer to the research question. In case of the present research, studies and academic articles published in scientific journals and specialized databases will be reviewed, they will be analyzed and there will be an information comparison to understand the social and economic factors that contribute to the organ trade in countries such as Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Iran. Finally, conclusions will be drawn from the findings to see how illegal migration and humanitarian crises influence the increase in illegal organ trade in the examined Asian countries.

1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1.1. Organ Trade

Organ trade is a complex situation that involves a large number of factors and practices. When we talk about organ trade, we are inclined to think that is just the action of removing the organs from a body and commerce with it, but in fact, it involves a wide range of practices. As Ambagtsheer et al. (2013) stated these practices can include the following:

- human trafficking for organ removal: the illegal transportation and recruitment of people to benefit from a service or their body in this case benefit from the removal of their organs;
- organ purchase and sale: it can be made online, in the black market, as an independent seller, or through an intermediary;
- forced organ harvesting/procurement: the involuntary collection of organs even from dead people;
- transplant tourism: the travel across border lines to ‘supply countries’ to receive an organ.

1.1.1. Human Trafficking for Organ Removal

Human trafficking, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, hiding, or receipt of people through force, fraud, or deception, intending to exploit them for profit (UNODC, n.d.). It has been an issue for centuries, since, as Burke (2022) stated, humans being exploited is another way of slavery. In 1948 the United Nations introduced the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) “as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations” (United Nations General Assembly, 1949, p.1). In this document article 4 states that “no one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms” (United Nations General Assembly, 1949, p.2). In spite of this, an increasing change from slavery to modern slavery, so-called human trafficking can be seen. Burke (2022) points out that there is an underlying factor that led to this practice, such as poverty, the corruption of the government and law enforcement, and population growth; this is a common factor in the territories where the resources are not sufficient for everyone.

Human trafficking is a serious violation of human rights, and it's commonly understood as the trade of people for three main purposes: to exploit them sexually, to force them into labor, or to harvest their organs. According to Budiani-Saberi (2013), in a rising number of countries since the late 1970s, the removal of organs from poor and vulnerable individuals have often occurred for transplantation, driven by desperation and exploitation, where those living in poverty are coerced or deceived into giving up their organs, usually without their full and informed consent.

Because of the clandestine and illegal nature of human trafficking for organ removal purposes, it is hard to get statistics but according to the article of the UNODC (n.d.) in which the World Health Organization is mentioned in 2007 5 to 10% of all transplants worldwide used organs from the black market, and due to the rise of unhealthy lifestyles this number can be higher now. The high demand for human trafficking in the context of organ removal is largely fueled by the severe global shortage of organs available for legitimate transplants. Despite over 150,000 transplants being performed worldwide each year, this only meets a small fraction - less than 10% - of the global demand. As a result, patients facing organ failure often turn to illicit means to obtain the organs they need, driving a thriving and highly profitable black market in organ trafficking, estimated to be worth between 840 million and 1.7 billion USD annually (UNODC, n.d.).

1.1.2. Organ Purchase and Sale

According to Francis-Cummings (2022), individuals who knowingly engage in the buying or selling of organs for transplantation can face penalties. Nevertheless, a thriving global trade in human organs continues to exist, driven in part by companies that prefer to maintain their private status to avoid increased scrutiny from external investors. This raises concerns, as the prevailing view is that public health should take precedence over private wealth. According to Wilkinson (2015), the term “organ sale” encompasses a variety of practices that go beyond the common belief that one person sells a kidney to another in need. It also includes arrangements in which individuals are compensated for granting rights to their organs post-mortem, particularly in jurisdictions where prior consent from the deceased is mandated for cadaveric organ donation. Furthermore, in contexts where the consent of relatives is required, it may involve financial

compensation to family members for permitting the use of organs from their recently deceased relatives for transplantation purposes.

The term “organ sale” as utilized in this context, explicitly excludes the sale of bodily products, which encompasses items such as blood, eggs, hair, and sperm, due to significant distinctions between these categories. Notably, the potential for enduring harm is typically lower in the case of blood and hair donation. Conversely, the donation of eggs and sperm introduces further complexities, particularly concerning the implications of creating and raising additional individuals in the future (Wilkinson, 2015).

1.1.3. Forced Organ Harvesting/Procurement

Forced organ harvesting is understood as the illegal practice of surgically removing a person's one or more organs against their will. Forced organ harvesting is a form of exploitation and violence involving various heinous acts such as kidnapping and forcible organ removal, or people being tricked into believing they need surgery and, consequently, being part of organ theft through a fake operation. Many victims of this practice have previously been exploited through human trafficking and other forms of slavery, while others are murdered to order and have their organs removed to fulfill a specific order (Wales Safer Communities, 2021).

According to Zimmerman (2023), the non-consensual removal of a human organ for transplantation purposes violates fundamental ethical principles, including autonomy (the right to make decisions about one's own body), informed consent (the right to give informed consent before any medical procedure), and human rights (the right to be treated with dignity and respect). When organ harvesting is not only non-consensual but also results in death or falsely claims brain death without meeting the criteria, it breaches the Dead Donor Rule, which is an expression originated from John Robertson in the late 1960s (Rodríguez-Arias, 2018). Robertson explains that the Dead Donor Rule is both ethical and legal, and it requires that donors cannot be killed to obtain their organs. It prohibits organ retrieval that would predictably cause the death of the donor, and that organ retrieval is only permissible after a declaration of death (Robertson, 1999). Forced organ removal goes against the 3rd guiding principle on human cell, tissue, and organ transplantation of the World Health Organization (WHO) which says that “live donors should be informed of the probable risks, benefits, and consequences of donation completely and understandably; they should be legally competent and capable of weighing the information; and

they should be acting willingly, free of any undue influence or coercion” (World Health Organization, 2010, p.3).

1.1.4. Transplant Tourism

According to Shimazono (2007), in the bulletin of the World Health Organization the most prevalent method of trading organs across international borders involves individuals traveling to other countries to undergo organ transplantation, a practice commonly known as “transplant tourism”. According to Broumand et al. (2017), this phenomenon has become increasingly popular, people tend to travel for transplantation because many of them seek to sidestep long waiting lists, either because it is not available in their home country, such as Tajikistan and Azerbaijan, the facilities are inadequate in their homeland, or access organs that may not be readily available in their home country. At this point, the influence of sociocultural factors on organ donation and transplantation is a major concern.

Transplant tourism occurs in two distinct scenarios, each with its unique set of circumstances and challenges (Broumand et al., 2017). In highly developed countries, transplant tourism often arises due to lengthy waiting lists for organ transplantation. In these situations, individuals may travel to other countries to undergo organ transplantation, often to access organs that are in short supply or to bypass lengthy waiting periods. This scenario is often characterized by affluent individuals seeking to expedite their access to organ transplantation, countries with well-established healthcare systems and strict regulations, and/or a high demand for organs, leading to a thriving black market. In contrast, in underdeveloped countries, transplant tourism takes on a different form. In these countries, the lack of prohibitory regulations and oversight creates an environment conducive to the buying and selling of organs. This scenario is often marked by impoverished individuals feeling compelled to sell their organs to make a living, countries with limited healthcare resources and inadequate regulations, and/or countries with a high risk of exploitation, with vulnerable individuals being taken advantage of by unscrupulous actors. In both scenarios, transplant tourism raises significant ethical concerns and highlights the need for more effective regulation and international cooperation to ensure the safe and ethical practice of organ transplantation (Broumand et al., 2017).

The concept of transplant tourism lacks clarity, making it difficult to define and understand. Shimazono (2007) reported that live donors were transported from the Republic of

Moldova to the United States of America (USA) and from Nepal to India. Additionally, there are cases where both recipients and donors from various countries travel to a third country. As it can be seen, transplant tourism is a broad branch of organ trade, and since the illegal activity is not as explicitly displayed as in other forms of organ trade, it is ignored by the authorities (Shimazono, 2007).

1.2. Illegal Migration

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) in its World Migration Report 2024 (2024) stated that in 2020 the global estimate is that there were around 281 million international migrants, which equates to 3.6 percent of the global population. The global distribution of international migrants exhibits a notable gender disparity, with a significantly larger proportion of males compared to females. Over the past two decades, this disparity has intensified, resulting in a widening gender gap. In the year 2000, the male-to-female ratio among international migrants was 50.6% to 49.4%, corresponding to approximately 88 million male migrants and 86 million female migrants. By 2020, this ratio had shifted from 51.9% to 48.1%, with the number of male migrants increasing to 146 million and female migrants to 135 million. Notably, the proportion of female migrants has been steadily decreasing since 2000, while the proportion of male migrants has increased by 1.3 percentage points over the same period (International Organization for Migration, 2024).

In 2020, Europe and Asia collectively hosted approximately 87 million and 86 million international migrants, respectively, accounting for 61% of the global international migrant population. Following these regions, North America had nearly 59 million international migrants, representing 21% of the global migrant stock. Africa comprised 9%, Latin America and the Caribbean 5%, and Oceania 3% of the total international migrant population. Outstandingly, Asia experienced the most significant growth in international migration from 2000 to 2020, with an increase of 74%, equivalent to approximately 37 million individuals. Europe followed with the second-largest growth, adding 30 million international migrants during the same period. North America and Africa also saw increases of 18 million and 10 million international migrants, respectively (McAuliffe and Oucho, 2024).

Illegal migration represents a complex phenomenon that is influenced by a variety of socio-economic, political, and environmental factors. According to Castles (2010), irregular

migration fundamentally arises from the inequality between the demand for labor in destination countries and the ability or willingness of governments to create legal pathways for migration. This imbalance often forces individuals to seek alternative, unauthorized means of entry or residence, as formal channels may be insufficient or inaccessible. Irregular migration is defined as the situation in which an individual enters or resides in a country where they do not hold citizenship, in contravention of the established immigration laws and regulations of that country (Castles, 2010). While a significant portion of irregular migrants are engaged in the workforce, not all of them participate in the labor market; some migrate to reunite with family members or for personal lifestyle choices, which may result in their irregular status. Additionally, asylum-seeking individuals who are denied may also find themselves categorized as irregular migrants (Castles and Miller, 2009).

The Asia-Pacific region, which is home to over half of the world's population, has witnessed significant migratory flows over the past five decades. These movements have been triggered by various factors, including colonial and East-West conflicts, which led to substantial refugee flows. Additionally, post-colonial population movements in European countries have been observed. Furthermore, the region has experienced a significant migration of skilled laborers to North America, Oceania, and Europe. The oil-producing states have also been a major destination for labor migrants since the mid-1970s. In the 1980s, a notable trend emerged, with large movements of labor from countries experiencing slower economic growth, such as the Philippines, Indonesia, Burma, and Bangladesh, to Japan and the newly industrialized “tiger economies” of Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand (Castles and Miller 2009, pp. 125-147).

1.2.1. Pakistan

Illegal migration in Pakistan represents a complex and pressing concern, shaped by a combination of domestic economic pressures, regional conflicts, and the aspirations of individuals seeking improved living conditions. With approximately six million emigrants, constituting three percent of its total population, Pakistan ranks among the top ten countries globally in terms of emigration. The primary destinations for Pakistani emigrants include the Gulf States, India, and Europe, with a particular emphasis on the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UNDESA, 2017). Generally, individuals from Pakistan who

migrate to North America and Europe often do so with their families and intend to establish long-term residency. In contrast, migrants heading to neighboring countries or the Gulf States are predominantly low-skilled and semi-skilled seasonal workers. Their migration patterns are typically short-term, averaging a duration of four to five years (UNDESA, n.d).

In 2016, the majority of emigrants from Pakistan originated from the Punjab province, followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Sindh, and Baluchistan. This trend is not unexpected, given that Punjab is the most populous province in the country. However, in 2017, emigration flows exhibited a notable decline across the country, except for the northern areas, which witnessed a significant 15.4% increase. Conversely, the provinces of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, and Baluchistan experienced substantial declines in emigration, with reductions of 41.3%, 48.1%, 37.19%, and 29.1%, respectively (Government of Pakistan, 2018).

According to the UNODC, in 2013 Pakistan's geographical location positioned it as a source, transit, and destination country for irregular migrants. In the context of migrant sneak-in, Pakistan is primarily regarded as a transit nation. Many of these new arrivals utilize Pakistan solely as a transit point in route to their final destinations, and only a fraction of the irregular migrants currently in Pakistan employ a smuggler to enter the country. Three principal smuggling routes traverse Pakistan, leading to three key destinations: Europe, Australia, and the Gulf States (UNODC, 2013).

1.2.2. Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran serves as a country of origin, transit, and destination for migrants, influenced by its geopolitical context, demographic factors, and economic opportunities. It is also recognized as one of the largest host countries for refugees globally. A significant Iranian diaspora exists both regionally and in Western Europe, North America, and Australia. Additionally, Iran remains susceptible to various forms of irregular migration, including trafficking and smuggling. In light of the new migration challenges it faces, the Iranian government is seeking to adopt a more cohesive approach to develop a comprehensive policy framework and enhance its institutional structures (International Organization for Migration, n.d).

Azadi et al. (2020) indicated that the total number of Iranian-born emigrants has seen a dramatic increase, rising from approximately half a million individuals before the 1979

revolution to an estimated 3.1 million by 2019. This growth corresponds to 1.3% of the country's population before the revolution and 3.8% in 2019. The primary destination countries for Iranian migrants include the United States, Canada, Germany, and the United Kingdom, highlighting the diverse pathways available to those seeking opportunities abroad. Furthermore, it is estimated that around 700,000 Iranian-born individuals have pursued higher education at foreign universities, indicating a significant trend of academic migration. Additionally, Iran remains vulnerable to various forms of irregular migration, including trafficking and smuggling (Azadi et al., 2020).

1.2.3. Nepal

An estimated three million Nepalese individuals are currently engaged as migrant workers abroad, contributing to the economy through the remittance of foreign currencies. With a total population of approximately 26.4 million, Nepal has sent over 10 percent of its citizens to work in foreign countries, primarily within the productive age group of 20 to 40 years. This statistic does not account for the significant number of Nepalese employed in India, which is estimated to be around three million. The absence of visa and work permit requirements for Nepalese citizens in the Indian job market complicates the ability to maintain accurate figures for this demographic trend, which has historical roots spanning centuries. The movement of labor across borders reflects both the economic opportunities available to Nepalese workers and the longstanding ties between Nepal and its neighboring countries (Kunwar, 2015).

The underlying factors driving labor migration in Nepal are largely consistent with global trends. Poverty, limited job opportunities, declining agricultural productivity, and the devastating impact of the 1996-2006 armed conflict are among the primary motivations behind international labor migration. In many Nepalese villages, labor migration has become an ingrained cultural phenomenon, where individuals temporarily relocate abroad for work, returning with financial resources and valuable experiences gained from living in urban environments. Furthermore, the youth population displaced by the decade-long Maoist-led armed conflict found foreign employment to be an attractive and secure alternative for livelihood and safety. Over time, this option evolved into a necessity for many, as they sought to escape the instability and insecurity of their home environment. The convergence of these push and pull factors has contributed to the

widespread phenomenon of labor migration in Nepal, with significant implications for the country's economy, society, and demographics (Kunwar, 2015).

Historically, the British colonial desire to increase the area under its control was connected to Nepal's out-migration. During that period, national governments also established circumstances that compelled individuals to labor for the British expansionist goal in order to further their own political objectives. As a result of this forced relocation, networks for various kinds of migration were created. Nepal's high rate of migration for long-term contract work abroad, particularly to Malaysia and the Gulf, is still caused by global forces that make local livelihood opportunities like farming precarious as well as current political-economic issues like conflict, climate change, and natural disasters (Adhikari, 2023).

1.2.4. Bangladesh

As stated by Siddiqui (2010), over the past 25 years, Bangladesh has witnessed notable economic and social advancements; however, it continues to be classified among the least developed countries. Historically, migration has served as a prevalent livelihood strategy for the Bangladeshi population, with emigration from Bengal dating back to the 18th century, closely linked to the impacts of colonialism.

Migration from Bangladesh is influenced by various macro- and micro-level factors enclosing economic, social, and catalytic realities. The Bangladeshi government has imposed restrictions on certain categories of female labor from engaging in independent emigration; nevertheless, many women opt to pursue migration through unofficial channels. This complex interplay of factors highlights the ongoing challenges and dynamics of migration in Bangladesh (Siddiqui, 2010).

In 2020 a collaborative survey conducted by the IOM and the Government of Bangladesh shed light on the demographic characteristics of potential migrants in the country (OIM, 2020). The findings revealed that the majority of potential migrants were young, male individuals of suitable working age, possessing at least some formal education. Notably, 40% of these individuals were unemployed before considering migration and a staggering 90% had either no personal income or insufficient income. Contrary to prevailing perceptions, the survey found that both regular and irregular Bangladeshi migrants shared similar characteristics in terms of age and educational level. This challenges the common assumption that irregular migrants are typically

younger, less educated, and less likely to be employed. The survey identified key drivers of migration, with the primary motivation being the pursuit of better job opportunities and livelihoods. Additionally, the potential for migration to enhance social status was also a significant factor, highlighting the complex interplay of economic and social factors that influence migration decisions in Bangladesh (OIM, 2020).

1.3. Humanitarian Crisis

Humanitarian crisis has a lot of definitions. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2024), humanitarian crises, including conflicts, natural disasters, and pandemics, frequently give rise to significant human rights concerns. On the other hand, worsening human rights conditions can sometimes lead to crises, which makes the humanitarian needs of impacted communities even more urgent. A complete and coherent strategy that emphasizes both humanitarian response and human rights protection is required to address the needs of vulnerable populations, as highlighted by the complicated relationship between humanitarian emergencies and human rights.

Humanitarian crises are defined as emergencies that pose a threat to the health, safety, or welfare of a community or population within a country, which cannot be adequately addressed by the resources available to the state in question (Crisis Humanitaria, n.d.). Such crises may arise from various factors, including political events (e.g. wars or armed conflicts), environmental disasters (e.g. earthquakes or tsunamis), or other circumstances that overwhelm the state's capacity to respond. In these instances, international assistance and cooperation become essential to fulfill the basic needs of the affected population, including access to food, healthcare, education, and the reconstruction of infrastructure. An illustrative statement regarding this concept is: “Requesting assistance during a humanitarian crisis does not signify a loss of sovereignty; rather, it represents a state’s obligation to its citizens” (Crisis Humanitaria, n.d.).

1.3.1. Refugees and Migrants

People who are most affected by humanitarian crises are often left stranded as they lose their homes and stability in their lives, many of them often becoming refugees. The 1951 Refugee

Convention defines a refugee as a person who “*owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it*” (United Nations Assembly, 1951, p.6).

A fundamental difference that we must keep in mind is the distinction between a refugee (political) and a migrant (economical or forced) (Espinar, 2010); a refugee is a person who, due to circumstances that he/she has not decided, has to leave or move from his/her home. They are those who are feared of persecution as a result of who they are, what they believe in or say, or because of armed conflict, violence or serious public disorder (UNHCR, n.d.). On the other hand, a migrant is someone who, regardless of the reason, leaves, transits or arrives in a country other than their own, or in a territory where they did not live or work before (Secretaría de Gobernación, 2016) .

Among the factors that increase trafficking risks for refugees are their physical insecurity; social, economic and political marginalization; victimization by smugglers facilitating refugee movement; experience with sexual violence; social isolation or other negative consequences resulting from sexual violence; pressure to engage in survival sex; severe disruptions to family structure; and lack of legal protection (Wilson, 2011).

1.3.2 Humanitarian Crises In Asia

The outlook for the Asian region is complex and there are many factors such as social and economic problems, human rights, and aggressive climates that influence this, resulting in various humanitarian crises throughout the region. Asia is not only the region with the highest number of migrants globally but also ranks fourth in terms of displaced populations. In particular, religious persecution in countries such as Myanmar and Afghanistan has resulted in thousands of individuals becoming vulnerable to human smuggling activities. This situation highlights the urgent need for comprehensive responses to address the challenges faced by displaced persons and migrants in the region (Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile, 2016).

If a regional view is taken, it can be seen that these are some of the causes that generate crises, not only in the country of origin but throughout the region. In Myanmar, the escalation of

armed conflict has resulted in increased civilian casualties and displacement. Similarly, in Afghanistan, the Taliban has intensified its repression, particularly targeting women and girls (Amnesty International, 2024).

Throughout much of the region, there has been a noticeable rise in intolerance towards dissent, characterized by heightened restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression, assembly, and association across various countries and territories. Individuals who criticize government policies, including human rights defenders, political activists, and journalists, have faced arbitrary arrests and detentions, while protests against injustice are frequently met with excessive and sometimes lethal force (Amnesty International, 2024).

Moreover, entrenched patterns of discrimination continue to affect religious and ethnic minorities, lower castes, women and girls, LGBTQ¹ individuals, and indigenous peoples. Members of these marginalized groups are disproportionately disadvantaged in nations experiencing economic crises and are often the first to suffer the severe consequences of climate-related weather events. Despite this, governments in the region have consistently failed to implement effective measures to reduce carbon emissions and to provide adequate protection and adaptation strategies (Amnesty International, 2024).

1.3.3. Organ Trade, Illegal Migration, and Humanitarian Crises

Organ trade and migration is a complex and delicate issue due to the vulnerability of the migrants. The trafficking of human beings for the purpose of organ removal (THBOR) is a longstanding issue. Due to a global shortage of legally sourced organs, it is estimated that the illegal trade in human organs generates approximately 1.5 billion USD annually, stemming from around 12,000 illicit transplants. THBOR poses significant threats to human security, particularly affecting the most vulnerable populations, including the unemployed, homeless individuals, and migrants. For example, in 2017, an increasing number of organ trafficking cases were reported in Lebanon, where Syrian refugees, facing dire circumstances, sought desperate means to support themselves and their families (Gonzalez et al., 2020).

Migrant workers are particularly vulnerable to human trafficking and forced labor. Corrupt labor brokers often misrepresent the wages and working conditions that workers can expect in their destination countries. They impose exorbitant fees for securing employment,

¹ LGBTQ: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning

which migrant workers find impossible to repay even after years of labor. As a result, these workers are compelled to endure hazardous working conditions due to their overwhelming debt (Solidarity Center, n.d.). A crucial aspect of human trafficking is that the transportation and transfer of victims are deliberately orchestrated by traffickers to facilitate exploitation. From the trafficker's perspective, migration is an integral component of the trafficking process. Contrary to the notion that trafficking is merely a point on the migration line, as suggested by the Solidarity Center (n.d.), the reality is that migration is a necessary step in the trafficking process. While victims may initially be unaware of their impending exploitation, they often become aware of their situation only after migration has taken place. Ultimately, the complex dynamics of trafficking reveal that migration is a fundamental aspect of the trafficking process, serving as a means to an end – the eventual exploitation of the victim. In this context, migration and trafficking are inextricably linked, with the former being a critical component of the latter (Shibba, 2013).

Humanitarian crises consistently trigger various forms of movement and migration, with no week passing without such occurrences. The movements associated with humanitarian crises are complex. Individuals may relocate within their own countries or across international borders, either temporarily or permanently, through legal or irregular means. They may choose to move independently or with the aid of external actors. Some individuals benefit from evacuation mechanisms, voluntary migration programs, or support from social and diaspora networks, while others are compelled to rely on clandestine networks, undertaking significant risks as they travel by land or sea (Martin et al., 2014).

Human trafficking in the context of humanitarian crises has been largely overlooked, as it has not been recognized as a direct consequence of these crises (Meçe, 2020). However, research suggests that humanitarian crises significantly increase the vulnerability of refugees who are often treated as commodities in political negotiations between nation-states and subjected to dehumanizing practices in refugee camps (Wilson, 2011). Furthermore, operational gaps in some countries that accept refugees, coupled with the disproportionate efforts made by the international community to support them in managing humanitarian crises, have created an environment in which refugees become a lucrative target for human traffickers. Despite this, human trafficking has been perceived as a secondary effect rather than a primary consequence of

humanitarian crises, resulting in its neglect in the design of humanitarian responses (Meçe, 2020).

2. THE INFLUENCE OF ILLEGAL MIGRATION AND HUMANITARIAN CRISES ON ORGAN TRADE

In order to provide a clear conceptual context for the findings that follow, this chapter will begin by defining some important terms, then the study will review the influence of illegal migration and humanitarian crises on organ trade in each selected country, allowing for a more detailed and contextualized analysis of each particular situation. This means that the relationship between illegal migration and organ trade, as well as the connection between humanitarian crises and organ trade will be discussed. Through this approach, the study seeks to identify and understand the direct interrelationships between these two factors and the phenomenon of organ trade, which will allow us to obtain a more global and comprehensive view of the correlation between all the elements involved. This analysis will not only contribute to a better understanding of the complex dynamics underlying these problems, but will also facilitate the identification of patterns and trends.

2.1. Migrants and Brokers

It should be clarified that the study will refer to two types of migrants, economic migrants and forced migrants, each of which has certain specifications that create a quite noticeable difference (Ruiz, 2010). Economic migrant is seen as an individual who *“normally leaves a country voluntarily to seek a better life. Should he or she elect to return home they would continue to receive the protection of their government. Refugees flee because of the threat of persecution and cannot return safely to their homes in the circumstances then prevailing”* (UNHCR, 2006a, p. 10). On the other hand, forced migrants are part of *“a migratory movement in which an element of coercion exists, including threats to life and livelihood, whether arising from natural or man-made causes (e.g. movements of refugees and internally displaced persons as well as people displaced by natural or environmental disasters, chemical or nuclear disasters, famine, or development projects)”* (IOM, 2004, p. 25).

This study will use the term “Broker” or “Middle-men” which *“is a middle person who, for monetary gain, contacts potential donors for organ buyers. Brokers either work in organized groups or are members of the community who have links to other agents or organ buyers. They assist in the preparation of fake certificates and documents and facilitate donors’ travel to the*

places where kidneys are extracted and transplanted. Being a broker is a high-profit business” (Ācārya et al., 2015, p.VI).

2.2. Illegal Migration - Organ Trade and Humanitarian Crises - Organ Trade

2.2.1. Nepal

The sale of organs, especially kidney is the practice the study focuses on in the case of Nepal. The increase in the number of kidneys needed for transplantation has been on the rise and with it the sale of kidneys is a phenomenon that is currently on the rise. This phenomenon is present in the countries with lower income, such as Nepal, which serve as the suppliers of this organ, and the countries with higher income are the beneficiaries of these ones (Mavrellis, 2017). To provide an overview of this phenomenon the total amount of kidney transplants performed in the European Union between 2012 and 2018 can be analyzed. While in 2012 the total number of kidney transplants was 18,854, this number was 21,227 in 2018 (Ministerio de Sanidad, Consumo y Bienestar Social, 2019). This implies that there was an increase of about 11%, indicating that as the years go by more kidneys suitable for transplantation are needed. Based on statistics from 2017, organ trade produced around 840 million to 1.7 billion USD (Mavrellis, 2017), giving us the understanding that it is quite a lucrative practice.

Nepal is a country found in South Asia, in the middle between India and China, with a population of approximately 31 million people (International Monetary Fund, 2024). The focus of the sale of kidneys in this country can be located in the village of Hokse, which lies approximately 50 kilometers east of the capital city, Kathmandu, as it has a high proportion of villagers who have sold their kidneys, from which they receive a payment between 200 and 900 USD maximum. As a result, the community has earned the nickname “kidney village”, providing the world’s most affordable kidneys (Mavrellis, 2017).

The humanitarian crisis that helped increase the sale of organs in this town, and in general in Nepal was the 2015 earthquake, with brokers targeting vulnerable people who lost their homes and livelihoods. The earthquakes had a direct impact on the weak houses in this town, which required urgent repair or reconstruction. Some residents started to sell their kidneys for those repairs, for food or to rebuild their lives again (Cousins, 2016, p.833). Ganesh Gurung, a sociologist and founder of the Nepal Institute for Development Studies, declares that he does

not have statistics on the amount of organ trafficking before the earthquake, but he has stated that it definitely got worse since then. *“When I have gone out to rural villages, people have left to go to India. Yes, they might be going for work, but a higher percentage than before have gone to sell their organs”* (Gurung, n.d. cited by Cousins, 2016, p.833).

The complicated panorama of illegal migration in Nepal is impacted by transnational networks, weak borders, and socioeconomic inequality. Nepal is both a source and a transit nation for irregular migrants looking for better opportunities, this is because it's a crucial location between the important South Asian migration networks. Despite government initiatives, a large number of Nepalese migrants choose to go through irregular routes, leaving them vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, and hazardous circumstances. Smugglers, recruiters, brokers, and facilitators are among the many characters that shape Nepal's migrant smuggling scene. These actors work in complex networks that reach national and international borders. These networks take advantage of the vulnerability of migrants attracting them into illegal migration schemes using dishonest recruiting techniques, coercion, and false information, which may lead to their involvement in human trafficking (Pokharel, 2024).

2.2.2. Iran

The case of Iran has an interesting point of view, because it is the only country in the world in which the sale and purchase of kidneys is legal. Iran approved kidney living non-related donation (LNRD) and set up a system for transplantation in 1988. This system, which was set up by the government, paid organ donors for their donations and controlled and financed the transplant procedure. For easier communication between participants and recipients, an impartial third-party association was established. Patients with end-stage renal failure volunteer to work for this organization, the Dialysis and Transplant Patients Association (DTPA), which continues to perform this role today (Major, 2008).

Initially, the majority of the donations came from those who were emotionally connected to the patient, like their spouse or partner, but this grew quickly and expanded to include strangers, and eventually, after the majority were non-relative organs (Tayebi, 2012). In addition to government aid, donors also frequently receive payment from the charity and/or the receiver of the new kidney, as well as free health insurance. The recipient of the “new” kidney undergoes a heavy immunosuppressors dose, which is subsidized, and those who cannot afford the operation

themselves can acquire a new organ thanks to charitable organizations. Most importantly, payment to the participating medical and surgical teams or any “middleman” is prohibited (Major, 2008).

The Iranian model, where the supply of organs meets demand and donors are regularly reimbursed and well-cared for, is frequently regarded as the gold standard. Transplant tourism accounts for about 10% of global transplants. Desperate donors typically only earn a tenth of the average kidney asking price, which is approximately 15,000 USD. The hospitals where the transplant procedures are performed, or middlemen are said to receive a large portion of the money (The Lancet, 2007, p.1901). With the implementation of this plan by the Iranian government, some rules and regulations were taken to avoid transplant tourism, this one being that foreigners were not allowed to receive a kidney from Iranian donors or donate a kidney to Iranian patients. But with the worldwide shortage of organs for transplantation such as kidneys, Iran became a preselected destination for transplant tourism, because foreigners could be transplanted from donors of their own nationality, after full medical workup, with the authorization of the Ministry of Health. After some time, foreigners started to choose Iran as a country for their transplants, involving huge recompensation to private hospitals, medical staff and donors, somehow changing the aim of the program for foreigners from “travel for transplant” to “transplant tourism” (Ossareh et al., 2015).

Iran is currently having a migrant’s humanitarian crisis. Because of its geopolitics, demographics, and economical potential, Iran is a country where migrants, including internal migrants, originate, transit, and arrive. The majority of Iran’s 4.5 million refugees and migrants are from Afghanistan, making it one of the world’s largest refugee and migrant populations. There are around 2.6 million Afghan refugees who registered through government-led headcount. The Iranian Ministry of Interior’s Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs (BAFIA) organized the headcount exercise with the goal of locating unauthorized Afghan people in Iran and issuing them a temporary headcount slip (International Organization for Migration, 2023). Vulnerable Afghan citizens and refugees now find it extremely difficult to purchase even the most basic necessities because of the huge rise in living expenses brought on by inflation and the scarcity of employment options. They also experience increasing prejudice and hostility as a result of economic strain. Iran is also among the nation’s most vulnerable to natural disasters globally. Iran’s infrastructure and population are severely damaged by frequent earthquakes,

droughts, floods, landslides, and powerful storms, which disproportionately impact the most vulnerable members of host communities, refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants (European Commission, 2024).

Over the past five years, it has been documented that human traffickers in Iran exploit both domestic and foreign victims, like refugees or migrants. The continuing economic crisis in Iran, coupled with severe and persistent environmental degradation, significantly exacerbates the problem of human trafficking in the country. This phenomenon disproportionately affects vulnerable and marginalized communities, including ethnic and religious minority groups, refugee and migrant populations, as well as LGBTQ persons, women and children (United States Institute of Peace, 2024). Beni Sabti, expert on Iran's clerical regime from the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security, says that high prices and inflation are forcing Iranians to sell their organs and sometimes even their children, this is because of the government corruption and also the inflation of the cost in general. Sabti affirms that inflation is not 40% as the government wants to show but may be reaching 80% (Sabti, n.d. cited by Weinthal, 2023). Weinthal stated that *“with the worsening economic crisis and skyrocketing inflation, the sale of organs abroad is reaching alarming levels in Iran ... Organ trafficking has become a serious problem, with people selling kidneys, liver, cornea, bone marrow, sperm and eggs to get out of poverty”* (Weinthal, 2023).

2.2.3. Bangladesh

The operational basis for organ trafficking in Bangladesh is the organ bazaar (public organ market) which has existed for more than a decade. This situation is clandestinely supported by the national media which openly publishes advertisements in newspapers seeking kidneys, livers, corneas and any other human body parts suitable for transplantation. Every day, classified ads related to organ sales reach millions of people who find themselves in situations of extreme economic vulnerability. Among these individuals are people living in the suburbs and/or street and village peasants, who, due to the precariousness of their living conditions, are forced to consider desperate options to try to improve their financial situation. In this context, some of them end up selling their body parts as a way to escape the poverty that surrounds them (Moniruzzaman, 2012).

Recipients of these organs tend to be both local residents and foreigners. However, it is important to note that the majority of buyers are Bangladeshi-born foreign nationals, and the common scenario of organ trafficking is that local recipients (almost all of whom are wealthy) find organ sellers within their own country and travel abroad to undergo organ transplant. These people seek to purchase organs to undergo transplantation procedures, which are generally carried out in countries such as India, as well as Bangladesh, Thailand and Singapore (Moniruzzaman, 2012). This phenomenon not only reflects the desperation of those who sell their organs, but also highlights a complex and problematic system connecting both donors and recipients in a context of economic and social inequality. Donor decisions are often driven by economic necessity and lack of viable alternatives.

In 1999, the Parliament of Bangladesh took a significant step by passing the Organ Transplantation Act. This legislation is primarily aimed at prohibiting trade in body parts and the publication of classified advertisements related to this practice. The law explicitly states that any individual who violates its provisions may face imprisonment ranging from a minimum of three years to a maximum of seven years. In addition, it provides for the imposition of a fine that cannot be less than 300,000 takas, the official currency of Bangladesh (Moniruzzaman, 2012). Despite the existence of this legislation, organ trade continues to increase in Bangladesh. This phenomenon is particularly alarming in a country where approximately 78% of the population live on a monthly income of around 12,500 takas, which is equivalent to approximately 113 USD. This translates into an average of only 3 USD per day for the majority of the inhabitants (Red de Solidaridad de la Maquila, 2023). The price of an organ on the black market is around 100,000 takas, or approximately 1,400 USD. However, it is important to note that this price has been gradually decreasing due to increasing demand (Moniruzzaman, 2012).

Bangladesh is being hit by different crises, first a political crisis, beginning with the widespread and violent protests in Bangladesh that have tragically claimed the lives of more than 600 people. These demonstrations erupted in response to the reinstatement of a civil service quota system, which generated significant discontent among the population. In an attempt to control the situation, the authorities have resorted to extreme measures, including blocking communication services, imposing curfews with shoot-on-sight orders, as well as using weapons to confront protesters. Participants in these protests have been vocal in their demands, which include the need for electoral reform and seeking justice for the victims of the unrest. The scale

and persistence of the demonstrations have led to a political crisis that has forced the Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, to abandon her post and flee the country amidst a climate of instability and violence (International Rescue Committee, 2024).

The second aspect to be considered is the refugee crisis and the climate crisis. In particular, the Rohingya refugees, who come from Myanmar, are in a situation of extreme vulnerability. This vulnerability has been exacerbated by the extreme floods that have affected approximately 5.5 million people in the region. These floods have had a devastating impact, destroying critical infrastructure that is essential to the daily lives and well-being of the affected communities. The destruction of these infrastructures has not only hindered access to basic services, such as drinking water and medical care, but has also aggravated the humanitarian needs of the population. In this context, the most vulnerable populations, such as Rohingya refugees, as well as women and girls, face particularly serious security risks. These risks include exposure to violence, exploitation and lack of protection in an already precarious environment (International Rescue Committee, 2024).

It has been identified that there is a relation between the increasing exposure of vulnerable migrant and refugee populations, as well as children, to the crime of organ trafficking (Fatima, 2023). This situation highlights the urgent need for comprehensive measures to protect these at-risk groups who often find themselves in precarious circumstances that make them susceptible to exploitation by traffickers. The intersection of migration, vulnerability and illicit organ trafficking underscores the crucial importance of raising awareness and implementing effective strategies to combat this serious human rights violation.

2.2.4. Pakistan

The case of Pakistan involves different organ trade practices. One of these is non-consensual organ harvesting. There is a great example of this practice, and it is the case of the dismantling of an organ trafficking network in 2023, which was dedicated to the forced harvesting of organs from residents of Pakistan. This gang managed to do this practice allegedly 328 surgeries without the consent of the person involved. All of this was led by the gang leader with the alias “Dr. Fawad”, they managed to sell those organs for up to 10 million Pakistani rupees (around 34,000 USD). Pakistan’s Federal Interior Minister, Mohsin Raza Naqvi, has claimed that a criminal organization was involved in removing patients from hospitals, carrying out kidney

transplant operations clandestinely and privately. These illicit activities were being carried out in several locations, including Taxila region, Lahore city and Pakistan-administered Kashmir. Naqvi explained that the gang was able to operate more easily in Kashmir due to the absence of specific legislation regulating kidney transplants in that area. This lack of legal regulation made it easier for operations to take place without the restrictions that might exist in other regions of the country, allowing the gang members to carry out their criminal activities with less risk of arrest (Saifi and Regan, 2023).

The commercial trading of human organs became illegal in Pakistan in 2007, and in 2010 a stricter law was implemented, making harvesting and trafficking organs criminal by up to 10 years in jail and a fine of one million rupees which is around 3,400 USD (Saifi and Regan, 2023). Before this law was passed, two-thirds of the 2000 kidney transplants carried out in Pakistan were on foreigners, making the country a popular destination for “transplant tourism” (Naqvi, 2007). Prior to the law, the nation was a center for the commerce of organs for rich Pakistanis and foreigners seeking transplants, and kidney sales and purchases were normal, with some poor Pakistanis selling their kidneys to make ends meet. However, illegal kidney transplants have persisted, and local media have stated that they have become more common in recent years (Saifi and Regan, 2023). According to the information stated before, Pakistan can be related with the sale of organs and also the transplant tourism.

Currently, Pakistan is going through different crises and problems that have affected the stability of the country. From a political perspective, as a result of the authorities’ ongoing attacks on political opposition, dissent, and voices critical of the military and administration, political instability grew in Pakistan. Violence against minority groups, arbitrary arrests and detentions, disproportional limitations on protests, and enforced disappearances were among the ongoing infringements in human rights. Incidents of violence and protests against religious minorities, with victims receiving little to no justice (Amnesty International, 2024).

On top of the political instability Pakistan is leading with other two major crises, the first one being the climate crises. Up to October 2024, we can talk about monsoon floods which have resulted in significant deaths and destruction. The first two months of the season had 60% more rainfall than usual (Zaman, 2024). In Pakistan, the monsoon season lasts from July to September. At least 337 rain-related fatalities have been reported nationwide since the beginning of July, with 170 children among the deceased. Communities were submerged by flooding, resulting in

thousands of people being displaced, according to the National Disaster Management Authority (2024). In a report made by Action Against Hunger in August 2024, they stated that heavy rains and monsoons in Sindh cause low-lying regions to flood, damaging houses, infrastructure, and crops. Accessing emergency services and relief supplies may become challenging as a result of the floods' potential to interfere with communication and transportation networks. Similar landslides and floods can occur in Balochistan during the monsoon season and strong rains, especially in hilly areas. This may lead to community dislocation, property destruction, and fatalities. Water shortage is a problem in all areas, and monsoon and heavy rain can restore water supplies, offering much-needed respite. However, too much rain caused stagnant water and waterlogging, which raised the danger of waterborne illnesses including malaria and dengue (Action Against Hunger, 2024).

Last, but not least, another important crisis affecting Pakistan is the refugee crisis. The country also hosts the second-largest number of refugees in the world, a significant portion of whom predominantly originate from Afghanistan. This situation is complicated by the fact that the vulnerabilities faced by these individuals are worsened by the prevalent and deep-rooted poverty that affects many regions within the country, as well as by the inadequate access to essential basic services. These services include, but are not limited to, safe drinking water, adequate sanitation facilities, and comprehensive health care, all of which are critically lacking in numerous communities throughout the nation (United Nations Population Fund, 2024).

Following the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in 2021, many Afghans escaped to Pakistan in search of protection and safety from the resulting instability. After that, the Afghan refugee community in Pakistan faced a number of upsetting difficulties, such as waves of arbitrary detentions, arrests, and harassment by the government, which were made worse by the idea of being forced to leave the nation. The administration imposed a strict 30-day limit for people to leave the country as part of a major crackdown on what it called "illegal immigration" in October. Because of this strategy, Pakistan repatriated around 490,891 Afghan refugees to their country between September and it will continue to the end of the year. Following the announcement of this deadline, Pakistan started a significant increase in the number of refugee arrests, arbitrary detentions, harassment, and discrimination. These people's vulnerability was exacerbated by the systematic denial of adequate legal protections, access to legal representation,

and communication with their families. Many of them were detained in detention facilities located throughout the country (Amnesty International, 2024).

CONCLUSION

The research was about the connection between illegal migration, humanitarian crisis, and organ trade and highlights that these are correlated. However, it is important to emphasize that none of these problems are direct results of the other, meaning that there are more factors that come into play in order to make an intersection of the three issues mentioned above. These topics have a complex root, and due to the nature of them, the information that can be found is minimal. Most of the information found about illegal migration, organ trade, and humanitarian crisis tend to be from a western perspective, which can result in incomplete information, overlooking the complexities of other regions. This westernized view leaves unnoticed what other regions might go through and it makes the point of view and ideas on this subject very subjective.

Based on the information exposed in the findings section, the study could affirm that the first fact that underlies these three phenomena mentioned is the humanitarian crisis, since it creates a state of alert and emergency. Humanitarian crises create an outcome of great vulnerability, where this one might create a bridge to illegal migration and the organ trade expands. People who are most affected by humanitarian crises are often left stranded as they lose their homes and stability in their lives, many of them often becoming refugees. When the intersection between humanitarian crisis and organ trade is made, we can conclude based on the findings that one of the most affected individuals are the refugees. Refugees can be the perfect target for organ trade due to that humanitarian crisis creates a perfect environment for people to feel desperate to seek help or income to support their family, or to simply survive. In many cases this is where organ brokers come in and with illegal tactics and false information carry the individual to the organ trade.

In analyzing the case of Nepal, it is evident from the findings presented in the previous section that the country is facing a severe climate crisis, accompanied by unfavorable economic conditions. This situation is aggravated by the high rate of illiteracy and lack of adequate education among the population, which limits their ability to understand the implications of organ sales and the information provided by intermediaries or brokers. The intersection between the humanitarian crisis, organ sales, and illegal migration is particularly acute in the aftermath of the earthquake, when many Nepalis chose to migrate illegally to India. While some did so in search of job opportunities, as explained above, a significant number were driven to sell their

organs in the neighboring country. In this context, the climate crisis acts as a catalyst that increases the vulnerability of residents, leading them to make desperate decisions to obtain economic resources and ensure their survival. In addition, the normalization of this practice in certain areas of the city contributes to people being more likely to consider it as a viable option in the face of adversity.

The case of Iran presents a complex and fascinating picture regarding the sale of organs, specifically kidneys, which is legal in the country. As mentioned in the previous section, this government policy has had ambivalent effects: on the one hand, it has significantly reduced the transplant waiting list and decreased reliance on dialysis; on the other hand, it has facilitated the emergence of transplant tourism. Although Iranian law prohibits a foreigner from purchasing a kidney from an Iranian donor, it does not prevent both donors and recipients from traveling to the country to perform the surgery. This situation raises questions about the donor's motivations, which may range from economic and family reasons to the possibility of being a victim of organ trafficking. The previous section evidenced the existence of intermediaries or "brokers" involved in the trafficking of people, both nationals and refugees and migrants arriving in Iran, largely due to the migration crisis caused by the influx of Afghan refugees after 2021. The intersection of these phenomena is particularly evident in the case of individuals illegally crossing borders into Iran, fleeing the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. Upon arrival in Iran, these migrants find themselves in a context equally marked by the humanitarian crisis, which, coupled with their economic precariousness, may lead them to consider the sale of an organ as a viable solution to their problems. This web of factors highlights the complexity of the relationship between migration, the humanitarian crisis, and the organ trade in the region.

Bangladesh, like the countries previously analyzed, is immersed in a refugee crisis and a climate crisis, which exacerbates the need for organ sales. In this context, the existence of a public market for organs, where both the need and demand for organs are openly advertised, is notable. The combination of natural disasters, such as floods and the refugee crisis from Myanmar creates an environment of vulnerability that allows individuals with high purchasing power to take advantage of the needs of refugees, thus facilitating the sale of organs. The intersection between the climate crisis and the Rohingya refugee situation highlights the complexity of the challenges these populations face. Not only must they deal with the consequences of their forced displacement, but they are also forced to adapt to an increasingly

hostile environment, exacerbated by the effects of climate change. This situation highlights the urgency of addressing the multiple dimensions of the crisis in Bangladesh, where economic and social vulnerability is intertwined with exploitation in the organ market.

In Pakistan, one of the most significant factors related to organ trade is non-consensual organ harvesting. As mentioned above, there are organized gangs that engage in organ harvesting from individuals without their consent, operating in hospitals and other places. This problem is particularly alarming, as it mainly affects people who come from low-income neighborhoods or who lack the education necessary to understand the seriousness of the situation in which they find themselves. The lack of information and adequate resources to defend their rights makes these populations vulnerable victims of a system that takes advantage of their precariousness. In addition, the practice of organ selling is also observed in Pakistan, highlighting the intersection between humanitarian crises and illegal migration. This intersection is a consequence of the overall situation in the country, which is marked by refugee crises and climate crises. These adverse conditions are leading an increasing number of people to consider organ selling as an option to survive in an increasingly hostile and challenging environment. Economic desperation and the lack of viable alternatives to improve their quality of life drive many to make extreme decisions, which in turn perpetuates a cycle of exploitation and vulnerability in the context of the organ trade.

The intersection of organ trade, humanitarian crises and illegal migration in Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Iran presents a complex and worrying scenario. In these countries, the exploitation of vulnerable populations, especially the poor and poorly educated, is exacerbated by the lack of legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms to combat organ trafficking. Humanitarian crises, such as internal, armed, political conflicts, and natural disasters, coupled with economic instability, have led many people to consider organ sales as a survival option. In addition, illegal migration is interconnected with organ trade, as those fleeing away from difficult situations are often forced to sell their organs to finance their journeys or escape exploitative conditions. This dynamic not only affects individuals but also reflects a regional problem, where shared borders and socioeconomic challenges facilitate the movement of traffickers and victims. It is therefore crucial to implement comprehensive strategies that include strengthening legal frameworks, raising public awareness and support for vulnerable populations, and fostering

international cooperation to address these interconnected issues and protect the rights of those at risk.

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