

SACRED-SECULAR COALITIONS: FAITH-BASED ANTI-TRAFFICKING GOVERNANCE IN EAST NUSA TENGGARA

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HISTORY JOURNAL

Received: March 7, 2026

Revised: March 25, 2026

Published: April 29, 2026

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ABSTRACT

East Nusa Tenggara is nonetheless plagued by human trafficking due to chronic poverty, unpredictable migration and insufficient official protection, and remains one of Indonesia's most vulnerable to trafficking. The study explores how religious leaders and secular institutions might assist with local government to fight trafficking, focusing on coalitions and cooperation between churches, non-governmental organizations and government throughout NTT. Using a qualitative case-study design backed by documentary analysis our study maps the institutional structures, norms and practices through which religious, social and legal authorities engage at the community level to address trafficking. Findings demonstrate that religious leaders provide not only pastoral care, but are also protective infrastructure, early prevention and advocacy. Secular government is fragmented and relies on religious networks for execution. This paper begins with the concept of a "sacred-secular" coalition and argues that anti-trafficking legislation must acknowledge and integrate religious institutions into collaborative governance, rather than just as service suppliers.

Keywords: church, human trafficking, East Nusa Tenggara, local government, sacred-secular coalition

1. Introduction

The poor execution of preventative policies and laws is a reflection of the failure of the Indonesian government to fight human trafficking. Many trafficking instances in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) have revealed the lack of competence and professionalism of law enforcement agencies in tackling trafficking on the ground. The United States government's 2006 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report placed Indonesia in Tier 2, meaning that Indonesia had made significant efforts to combat trafficking in persons offenses (hereinafter TPPO) but had not yet fully complied with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking (Scor et al., n.d.). This is proven by the still high number of TPPO cases, especially in NTT (Suwarno, n.d.). In practice, brokers in trafficking syndicates are people excluded from the legal channels associated with the official migrant labor service mechanism in Indonesia. They conduct illegal migrant-worker placement enterprises using open networks across two nations, passing victims to other brokers and organizing travel, so. Ironically, recruiters in trafficking instances are typically recruited from the very same migrant-worker-sending areas where recruiters, brokers, and community or public personalities are already known. The victims are mostly parents and children who are enticed by false promises of abroad work (Naibaho, 2011). The parents, believing these assurances, are given an advance payment; the children rely on the same arrangement because their parents do. Then recruiters transmit the prospective workers to brokers who are in charge of the transportation. At this step, the name, address and date of birth on the passport are sometimes faked after the prospective workers have filled out the relevant documentation. Illegal networks need easy access to carry out their activities so prospective workers are first placed in areas close to immigration offices before departure. Proximity to immigration offices minimizes the chance of being inspected during long trips and makes it easier to manipulate identity and coordinate the "group." Victims are separated from their communities and grouped together with other prospective workers in temporary "shelters" until passports are acquired, before being sent overseas (Paksi & Hutami, n.d.). Human trafficking is usually seen as a crime against humanity that has been hard to figure out for many years. This is mainly because traffickers have knowledge, networks and access to judges, political elites, law enforcement agencies whereas victims usually lack legal knowledge and endure financial difficulties making them easy to persuade (Goma, 2022). At least 657 migrant workers from NTT have been found dead, 51 of them died in 2024, 50 of whom left through illegal ways while only one who used a

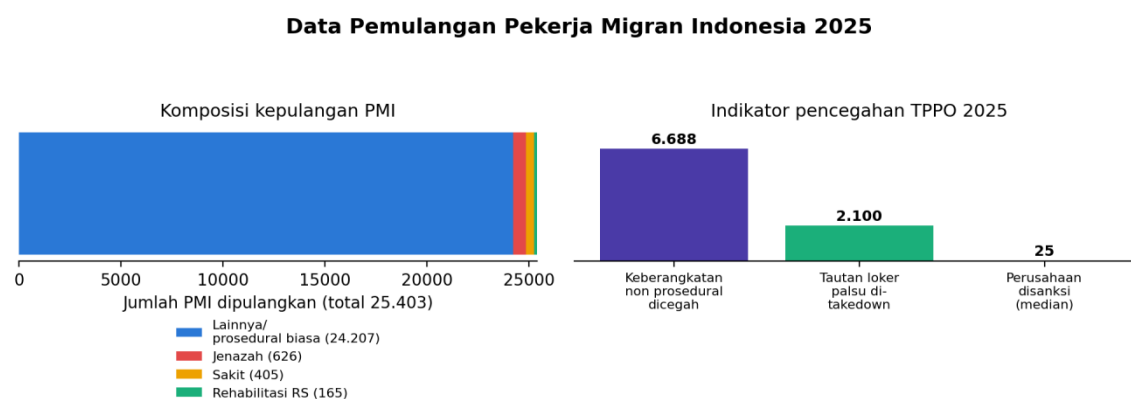
legitimate method arrived safely. This circumstance highlights a failure on the part of the government to regulate migration, and a long-standing gap in governmental measures to prevent irregular departures and safeguard communities from trafficking networks (Paksi & Hutami, n.d.). In response, the Indonesian government has introduced national legislation and approved several regulations, yet issues persist concerning the effectiveness of execution. A collaborative approach between stakeholders, including government bodies, community groups and local actors is important. Strong law enforcement and better education can reduce the unfairness and ignorance that allow trafficking to flourish. Education programmes, especially those that provide information on citizens' rights to protection and employment, have been shown in previous research to lessen vulnerability to trafficking. These programs are based on Catholic theological ideas of human dignity, and the moral duty to protect the vulnerable (Panda, 2025; Wetangterah, 2023).

As of 13 March 2025, the Indonesian National Police (Polri) had identified 1,503 Indonesian victims of TPPO, more than half of the total reported for all of 2024. NTT is one of the top three contributing regions nationally for trafficking instances, which is often related to cultural and socio-economic issues. The major variables that create room for trafficking syndicates to function include uneven development, high poverty rates, the topographical characteristics of NTT and corrupt local governance. Trafficking in Indonesia, especially in NTT, is a long-standing problem, multidimensional and needing multidimensional responses involving actors at all levels (Ham & Jhon, 2024). The issue has been of concern to both national and municipal government, which has sought responses through regulation and policy. The Government cannot fight trafficking alone – which erodes human and territorial security. Unfortunately, these policies are not strategically conceived and leave limited possibility for active participation by non-government organizations and local communities. Actors outside of government are needed to sustain governance and law enforcement (Wetlin et al., 2025). Indonesia has had an uneven development that has created lasting divides between its cities and rural areas. NTT is one of Indonesia's less-developed provinces based on Human Development Index (HDI) criteria, and NTT is among the top ten provinces sending migrant labor abroad, much of this movement being through non-procedural or illegal pathways. Limited access to education and health care, essential aspects of human development, is a major contributor to trafficking in NTT. NTT's dry-land, climatically unstable topography, which also drives populations to migrate for better opportunity, exacerbates these developmental issues. Victims in the majority of cases are not aware that they have been influenced and they believe that they have been overseas of their own accord (Elu & Yusuf, 2025). Indonesia has many legal instruments to combat trafficking, but the power of the law enforcement is restricted and the cooperation of the related authorities is still minimal. Sometimes, government has not been fully dedicated to ending trafficking. This is partly because to do so would involve diverting financing to a national task force, and there is no viable scheme for funding and strategic resourcing as yet. There is need for collaboration across entities at best including government and religious institutions like church. The church is essential in the implementation of several initiatives and community participation, such as victim support, awareness, and community action, as well as counseling and education programs on trafficking (Hayon, 2023; Masehi, 2024). These activities are part of a bigger plan which has to be further strengthened with continued assistance from local governments and specific policy execution. This study thus asks how religious institutions and secular government currently interact in NTT in an anti-trafficking response and what conditions would allow that interaction to evolve from informal, ad hoc cooperation to a structured sacred-secular coalition that can close the protection gaps documented above.

Several recent releases of official data confirm the magnitude of the problem stated above. Kementerian P2MI, detikFinance, 17 July 2026. 2025 prevention efforts, according to figures from the Ministry of Migrant Worker Protection (P2MI), saw continued takedown activity targeting fraudulent job-posting links, along with a range of other enforcement indicators. This points to an active but reactive enforcement posture rather than a preventive one. Repatriation data of Indonesian migrant workers in 2025 also show a considerable number of returnees who need assistance for reintegration. They consist of both regular labour migrants and trafficking survivors whose needs are not systematically differentiated in the current repatriation data (Kementerian P2MI, as reported by detikFinance, 17 July 2026). Gender-disaggregated data on identified TPPO victims in Indonesia between 2015 and 2019, compiled by the government's TPPO Task Force and shared via the Zero Human Trafficking Network, further confirm the long-standing pattern in which women and children comprise the majority of identified victims, even as more recent reporting—discussed further below—suggests this profile is broadening to include young men and students. Taken together, these data sources suggest that while the level of state enforcement activity has increased, the vulnerability profile of NTT's population has not substantively changed, supporting the case made in this study that enforcement alone, without structural engagement with community-level actors who are the first to reach vulnerable populations, is unlikely to reduce incidence of trafficking in the province.

2. Theoretical Review/Framework

The dream of a better life typically ends in misery, with trafficking becoming its dominant theme—organs sold, women enslaved for sexual exploitation, children abandoned. Indonesia has neither ratified or implemented the law on the Eradication of the Criminal Act of Trafficking in Persons (Law No. 21 of 2007) as a new law yet its enforcement is inadequate. Each year, a large number of people die because of trafficking in NTT. NTT's Migrant Worker Protection Agency (BP3PMI) recorded 106 migrant worker deaths in 2022. From January to July 2023, 82 coffins were repatriated to Indonesia. NTT is known for amicable connections with religions, but its religious and moral principles are not yet fully reflected in public conduct and legislation. The Flores Volunteer Team for Humanity (TRUK-F), an actor in the forefront of prevention, intervention, and advocacy against this crime, has since 2000 helped 17 adolescent victims from West Java who were exploited in Sikka through recruitment schemes such as Sasasi Bintang, T999, and Lybra. Unfortunately, there were problems with the legal process, revealing systemic problems in implementation: only three out of four perpetrators were criminally punished, not under anti-trafficking law, but under labor regulations, which reduced the penalties and indirectly rewarded the perpetrators. In another case in April 2024, a member of the Sikka Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) was found guilty, but was not immediately imprisoned due to illness and remained in public office until August 2024. These cases are not only violations of national law, but also violate key principles of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): (1) SDG 1 (No Poverty) – Most NTT families are struggling economically, with limited access to education, creating a ripe environment for trafficking; (2) SDG 5 (Gender Equality) – prevailing patriarchal culture undermines the position of women, and makes them more vulnerable to exploitation; (3) SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) – uneven regional development limits access to jobs in the poorer provinces; and (4) SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) – law enforcement remains not enough victim-centered.



Sumber: Kementerian P2MI, dilaporkan oleh detikFinance (17 Juli 2026)

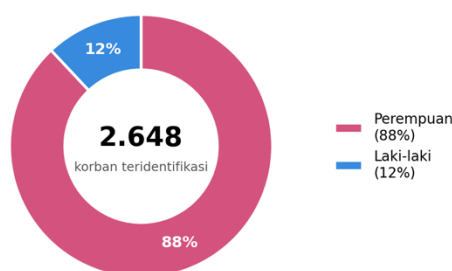
Figure 1. Data on the Repatriation of Indonesian Migrant Workers and Indicators of Human Trafficking Prevention in 2025

Data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs show an alarming increase in cases of trafficking. "Recorded cases in the last five years were 361 in 2021, 752 in 2022, 798 in 2022, 314 in 2024 and 794 in 2025," said Judha Nugraha, Director of Indonesian Citizen and Legal Entity Protection at the Ministry. As of July 15, 2025, the number of trafficking victims in the January-July 2025 period reached 404 cases, with the highest number of cases per month recorded in January 2025, reaching 60 cases, according to data from the National Criminal Information Center (Pusiknas). In the first two weeks of July 2025, Polri managed to handle 14 new cases, and 95 students were among the victims. The number of cases processed since the start of the year continued to increase. "The main drivers of trafficking from a legal point of view are poor governance and corruption, bad law enforcement, abuse of technology, and ongoing impunity," said Indonesian Minister of Law Eddy OS Hiarij. The increase in cases also shows a growing victim profile, moving from women and children from vulnerable and excluded groups to more and more young people often targeted via digital technology. Corruption and extortion cannot be isolated from trafficking. Law No. 21/2007, although still in force, could not cover new forms of trafficking, thereby creating, without intention, spaces of impunity. Other reasons include poor inter-agency coordination and little civil society involvement. Victims should have access to justice and the state should adopt a non-punishment concept and not criminalize victims, who need remedies such as equitable compensation, restitution, recovery

services and long-term reintegration support as policy priority. Underlying all of these contributing variables is poverty. Abduction, coercion, detention, deception, forgery and abuse of power are frequent tactics. Trafficking cases are primarily driven by poverty and limited access to welfare, particularly among marginalised populations. These factors make NTT a recurrent site of such vulnerabilities, giving it the moniker of a province in “human emergency”. Marginal conditions and neglected resources make NTT fertile ground for traffickers. The important capital to combat trafficking is the combination of local government, policymakers and religious groups supporting preventive initiatives. Concrete policies needed include expanded training, job creation in disadvantaged, distant and frontier (3T) areas, improved vocational education and digital proficiency so communities can separate legitimate information from false. NTT is still the fifth largest province sending Indonesian migrant labor abroad, so the general public needs to pay attention to this. Indonesia has a legal framework that criminalizes trafficking in persons, Law No. 21 of 2007 on the Eradication of the Criminal Act of Trafficking in Persons, which provides for severe sanctions for perpetrators and rights for victims, and Law No. 39 of 2004 on the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers Abroad. Law No. 21/2007 is further elaborated in nine articles, namely Article 2 (Trafficking in Persons), Article 3 (Child Trafficking), Article 4 (Trafficking of Multiple Persons), Article 5 (Trafficking with Violence), Article 6 (Sexual and Other Exploitation), Article 10 (Involvement of Children in Trafficking), Article 11 (Trafficking by Corporations or Organized Groups), Article 13 (Victim Rehabilitation) and Article 14 (Other Criminal Acts).

Profil Korban TPPO Teridentifikasi di Indonesia, 2015–2019

Sebagian besar korban adalah perempuan dan anak dari kelompok rentan



Sumber: Gugus Tugas Pencegahan dan Penanganan TPPO (Kemen PPPA), via Zero Human Trafficking Network

Figure 2. Profile of Identified Human Trafficking Victims in Indonesia, 2015–2019

Other than legislations, the government has also taken concrete action such as the formation of a task force for TPPO, the One-Stop Integrated Service (LTSP) and the Active Migrant Village program (Desmigratif). The example of Wilfrida shows the need for the government and church roles and the constant urgency of TPPO. If the victim and the issue had gotten enough attention earlier she may be protected, and the levels of trafficking reduced. In contrast, the LTSP program was unsuccessful because of the unwillingness of immigration authorities and the Migrant Worker Placement and Protection Agency (BP3TKI) to participate and the inability to move the immigration system infrastructure without prohibitive costs for passport-issuing equipment. Desmigratif needs to take concrete steps to prevent and mitigate: first, provide clear labor market information; second, manage productive abilities through training and mentoring; third, provide adequate education and religious guidance for families and children; fourth, make available productive cooperatives to support local economy. These projects work best when local government, religious actors and the community itself become the engine. Law enforcement is similarly important, and it involves both repressive and preventive action – the latter by means of guard posts and patrols at trafficking hotspots such as airports and seaports. The importance of law is shown in the fact that an unjust system enhances vulnerability and makes trafficking easier. Such institutions are often constructed on injustices based on political, cultural or religious objectives. The church, in conjunction with the government, should also raise awareness and sensitivity through transformative Christian religious education. “Trafficking is a complex social problem which churches have to face up to. Christian education should not be about passing on information or telling biblical stories but also addressing social challenges such as trafficking. Learning should not be confined to cognitive development but should also be transformational – materials and methods that allow individuals to take on open and inclusive ways of thinking. Thus, education must be immediately pertinent to social problems, but it must also continue to be a way for Christians to find sufficiency and meaning in life.

Christian education in congregations should be rooted in theological and biblical concern for freedom, justice and peace (Schipani, 2016). It should focus on self-acceptance, self-awareness, self-discovery and vocational calling, preparing congregants not only to grasp understanding but to confront broader and more complex life challenges. The church cannot ignore the reality of trafficking; education should expand knowledge of Christ and sense of purpose of the congregation, while creating room for spiritual growth with the ultimate objective of developing strong positive individuals anchored in care and love. Unfortunately, recent studies have shown that Christian education has a narrow concentration on the memorization of biblical events without delving into their deeper meaning. Sound Christian education should also recognize and pay attention to societal challenges and occurrences. The church's anti-trafficking work shows a correspondence between heavenly unity and human unity, especially for those who are victims of trafficking. In Indonesia, criminal consequences for trafficking should be implemented not only at the national level but also at the regional level. The effects of trafficking on the individual, if not addressed, include loss of freedom and human rights. Victims of trafficking are often faced with negative stigmas such as victim blaming, physical brutality while being trafficked, and long term mental and physical injury. The effects reach beyond the person to society: rampant trafficking fuels rising crime, erodes economies, disrupts social development and undermines confidence in law and authority.

The ongoing occurrence of trafficking in NTT despite an appropriate legal architecture suggests that the problem is less in the legal realm and more in the domain of governance. Collaborative governance theory argues that complex, multidimensional social problems that cross jurisdictional, institutional and sectoral boundaries cannot be solved by the government acting alone, but require structured, ongoing engagement between state and non-state actors who bring complementary resources, legitimacy and reach (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012). Trafficking in NTT is precisely this kind of cross-boundary issue. It crosses over: law enforcement, labor migration policies, education, poverty alleviation and community trust. None of these can be addressed by any one agency alone. Faith-based organizations have their own place within this structure. Churches in NTT enjoy what may be called 'embedded legitimacy', unlike secular NGOs. This is a status accumulated over generations of pastoral presence, moral authority and community confidence which formal state institutions, especially in distant and neglected areas, sometimes lack (Wetangterah, 2023). This embedded legitimacy allows religious actors to perform functions that extend beyond service delivery: they identify at-risk individuals before formal systems are aware of them, they provide continuity of care that outlasts short-term government programs, and they mobilize community-level social pressure against recruiters and brokers who are often personally known within the community.

The notion of a "sacred-secular coalition" in this study refers to a mode of governance where religious institutions are recognized as structural partners in policy formulation and implementation, not as auxiliary or informal providers of welfare to which government may call upon at will. This distinction matters because the existing literature on church-state cooperation in Indonesia's anti-trafficking response has framed religious engagement mainly as charitable substitution—churches filling the gaps in state capacity—rather than institutionalized co-governance (Hayon, 2023; Masehi, 2024; Panda, 2025). A substitution model risks two outcomes: first, it allows government to under-invest in its own enforcement and protection capacity on the assumption that religious networks will absorb the shortfall; second, it leaves religious actors without the authority, resources, or legal standing to address the structural drivers of trafficking – corruption, weak enforcement and impunity – that lie beyond the reach of pastoral care alone. Conversely, a coalition approach would explicitly integrate religious groups into planning, resource distribution and monitoring activities, while leaving enforcement and prosecuting authority with the state. This theoretical distinction underpins the analysis in the Results and Discussion section which assesses existing government-church interactions in NTT against the criteria of a genuine coalition – shared planning, durable infrastructure and mutual accountability – not just the presence of religious involvement.

3. Method

This study is a qualitative case study with NTT as the unit of analysis. Given the sensitive nature of trafficking as a study issue, where direct primary data collecting presents ethical concerns, a qualitative, document-based approach was selected. All data were obtained from secondary sources, namely: (1) reports and statistics published by government and law-enforcement institutions, particularly the Indonesian National Police (Polri), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Kemenlu), the National Criminal Information Center (Pusiknas), and NTT's Migrant Worker Protection Agency (BP3PMI NTT); (2) the Trafficking in Persons Report published by the United States government; (3) case documentation from the non-governmental Flores Volunteer Team for Humanity (TRUK-F); (4) Law No. 21/2007 on the Eradication of Trafficking in Persons and Law No. 39/2004 on the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers; and (5) grey literature related to trafficking, migration, and faith-based

social action, cited throughout this article. The data collection through documentary examination included pertinent reports, official statistics and previous studies that were discovered, collated and integrated into case narratives and argumentative claims. The earliest data utilized is from 2020, the most current from 2025. The study does not contain any interviews, surveys or fieldwork. The analysis is based only on secondary and documentary sources. There are no informal interactions with specialists. Each document and source was carefully reviewed to uncover common themes about government response and the role of faith-based actors in victim support and prevention. The study is geographically limited to NTT and the data sources range from the 2006 TIP Report to mid-2025, yet trafficking in NTT is likely to predate the earliest sources studied. Thematic analytical coding was conducted: the sources were read-through to establish familiarity with the content and provenance of each document, and then re-read to extract passages relevant to three broad categories defined a priori to the analysis: government response and enforcement activity, faith-based and civil-society response, and structural or socio-economic drivers of vulnerability. Passages within each category were then compared across sources and time periods to identify recurring patterns, points of convergence between government and religious accounts, and instances – such as the Desmigratif and LTSP cases discussed below – where documentary evidence enabled a direct comparison of programs that worked as intended and those that did not. This comparison reading across cases serves as the basis for the coalition framework created in the Results and Discussion section. Like all studies, this research has limitations. (1) The use of secondary sources limits the ability to verify the accuracy of the reports on which it is based (2) The absence of direct fieldwork means that lived experience and practice in the NTT's trafficking phenomenon cannot be captured. (3) The findings may not be representative of trafficking dynamics in other Indonesian provinces, as the study is limited to a single province.

4. Results

In East Nusa Tenggara, governance continues to be conducted within a fragmented terrain, where formal state procedures exist alongside, and are complemented by, faith-based community organizations. Although there are legal structures such as Law No. 21/2007 and institutional arrangements such as the TPPO Task Force, the implementation at the local level is weak and inconsistent. This is clear from case reports and secondary data which reveal recurrent deficits in inter-agency cooperation, inadequate law enforcement capacity and low public trust, particularly in distant regions. The church and its affiliate organizations have become actors filling voids that government has been unable to fill. Church-based initiatives in NTT, including networks of priests and organizations like TRUK-F, are actively involved in prevention, victim accompaniment and advocacy - serving as shelter, companion, psychological counselor and community educator, often reaching populations excluded from government programs. Central and local governments have expressed concern over trafficking and sought countermeasures through law and policy. However, these regulations are often not strategically structured and provide limited scope for active participation by non-government organizations and local communities. This raises the question of whether the church's role in supporting state governance in NTT is sufficient and what its limitations are. The success or failure of a policy may depend on the availability of support resources or trust in religious organizations operating outside formal authority – highlighting the significance of a structured cooperation, here conceptualized as a sacred-secular coalition, between local government, law-enforcement institutions and religious actors.

There are government programs that already provide part or all of the basis for such a coalition. The Active Migrant Village program (Desmigratif) is based on four components and has already achieved some of this collaboration such as effective provision of labor market information, productive management through training and supervision, appropriate education and religious guidance for families and children, and productive cooperation to support the local economy. These programs are most effective when implemented with the involvement of local government, religious leaders and the local people. One specific realization of such cooperative growth is to strengthen and evaluate Desmigratif through a church role backed by local government. Examined against the collaborative-governance metrics detailed above, Desmigratif almost, but not quite, conforms to a coalition arrangement: religious participants are assigned a specific role in a formal program framework, as opposed to an incidental role. What seems to be missing from the documentary record is a durable mechanism for joint planning and monitoring between village-level religious leaders and district or provincial authorities. The coalition's effectiveness continues to depend on the initiative of individual clergy and local officials, rather than institutionalized procedure.

Conversely, the failure of the LTSP program illustrates a precondition that must be met for a truly effective church-government coalition to develop: the LTSP failed because immigration authorities and BP3TKI were unwilling to participate, and because immigration infrastructure could not be relocated due to the high cost. Thus,

institutional coalitions need not only participation, but also material infrastructural investment. Goodwill and moral authority on the part of religious players cannot substitute the technical and financial capabilities that the state can supply. The LTSP case is instructive precisely because it involves no religious actor at all – its failure stemmed entirely from inter-agency reluctance within government – yet it demonstrates the baseline condition of institutional commitment that any coalition, sacred-secular or otherwise, needs to function. Desmigratif demonstrates how partial coalition-building works in practice, and LTSP demonstrates what occurs when the secular coordination itself breaks down, reminding us that the role of the church cannot be relied upon to make up for government agencies refusing to join in coordinated action.

4.1. Discussion

The law enforcement role of such a coalition should be a combination of repressive and preventative roles. preventative measures include guard posts and patrols in trafficking-prone locations and repressive actions that close existing gaps, including stopping the trafficking operations altogether. In addition to government action, the church must develop knowledge and sensitivity through religious education that improves public consciousness. The sacred-secular coalition paradigm directly contributes to several of the SDG elements in ways that pure civil or general social activity cannot under the SDG development frame. Church-based community networks can contribute to SDG 1 by identifying the most economically needy households before they are approached by recruiters, and by providing an alternative to state poverty-alleviation initiatives that often function on lengthier administrative cycles. Specifically identifying patriarchal norms as a vulnerability element in religious education – as opposed to viewing trafficking as solely an economic phenomena – is an intervention that tackles a driver that cannot be reached by labor-market remedies alone. In terms of SDG 16, the coalition model's focus on victim-centered enforcement, elaborated on below, directly responds to the trend identified in the Sikka cases, where perpetrators were prosecuted under less severe labor regulations rather than trafficking law, leading to outcomes that fall short of the strong, accountable institutions referenced in this goal.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the church's role in NTT's anti-trafficking landscape has already gone some way beyond simple charitable substitution, especially through programs like Desmigratif, but has not yet been institutionalized into the kind of structured, mutually accountable partnership that collaborative governance theory associates with effective responses to cross-boundary social problems. The difference between current practice and a fully realized sacred-secular coalition is less one of the willingness of religious actors to participate – evidence suggests that willingness is substantial and sustained – than of government's willingness to formalize that participation via shared planning structures, dedicated funding, and joint monitoring mechanisms comparable to those it would extend to any other institutional partner.

5. Conclusions

This study explored drivers and implications of human trafficking in East Nusa Tenggara, the role of faith-based organizations in addressing gaps in government action, and efforts to create a "sacred-secular" alliance. The evidence collected shows that low levels of education and human capital, patriarchal societal norms, geographic hardship and inconsistent execution of the legal framework, especially Law No. 21/2007, nevertheless perpetuate trafficking in NTT. The issue is confirmed by data from Polri, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Pusiknas at the national level. In response to these deficiencies, the Catholic Church and associated organisations such as TRUK-F have effectively provided the services that the formal government institutions have failed to provide – housing, counselling, education, advocacy and victim accompaniment. The replacement obviously has limits: religious actors cannot compel government action or modify the structures that eventually produce impunity. The main contribution of this study is to suggest that the relationship between church and local government in NTT's anti-trafficking efforts is not merely a coincidental co-existence but can be reconstituted into a more intentional sacred-secular coalition – one that treats religious institutions as true partners of government rather than incidental service providers. This research leads to a number of specific policy proposals. First, central and local government should formalize cooperation with churches and networks of clergy, combining it with initiatives such as Desmigratif for effectiveness building at the village level among government, religious leaders and communities. Second, law enforcement must be modified so that trafficking cases are always punished under Law No. 21/2007, not under less severe labor restrictions. Third, victim-centered enforcement should be established as a policy priority, ensuring access to justice, fair compensation, restitution and long-term assistance. Fourth, the failure of the LTSP should be a lesson for future coalition processes. Fifth, investment in vocational training and technological literacy is required to assist NTT people in differentiating valid labor information from falsehoods. The study has clear limitations: it cannot, without fieldwork, capture the lived realities of trafficking cases as they unfold, and its reliance on secondary and documentary sources means questions of accuracy and completeness in the underlying government and NGO reporting cannot be independently verified. Since the analysis is confined to one province, the findings should be taken as indicative rather than definitive for other parts of Indonesia affected by trafficking, where the relative importance of religious and secular authority, and the specific denominational or interfaith

makeup of local religious institutions, may be quite different from the largely Catholic and Protestant character of NTT. Future research should employ field-based approaches—interviews with clergy, government officials, and survivors themselves—that can test whether the sacred-secular coalition model proposed here holds up under direct observation, and comparative work, to examine whether similar faith-government arrangements emerge in other high-prevalence trafficking provinces of Indonesia, such as West Nusa Tenggara, North Sumatra, and West Java, where different religious majorities and local governance traditions may produce different coalition dynamics. Yet the documentary evidence presented here paints a fairly clear picture: the government alone has not closed the protection gap in NTT, religious institutions have filled that gap in ways that go far beyond charity, and the policy task ahead is not to choose between state- and church-led responses but to formally integrate the two into a governance arrangement equal to the scale of the problem.

6. Acknowledgment

Authors give big gratitude and appreciation towards academic colleague and the institute government of home affairs that has gave critics, guidance, and supports trough out the entire writing process. All the supports are acknowledged and any remaining errors and limitations in this article are solely the responsibility of the authors.

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